

Teacher



Magazine of the
BC Teachers' Federation

Volume 28, Number 5
May/June 2016

relax
refine
revisit
rethink
recommit
revive
reflect
renew
reconcile
retire
rejuvenate
recharge
replenish
revitalize

This is your MAGAZINE

Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? An event, topic, or issue you want your colleagues to know about?

If so, consider writing for *Teacher*.

We also welcome letters to the editor. If you have any thoughts about any of the articles you have read here and want to share your opinion with other teachers, send your letter to teachermag@bctf.ca.

For more information about magazine themes or to submit an article, contact Susan Croll, editor of *Teacher*, scroll@bctf.ca or 604-871-1877.

Teacher reserves the right to edit or condense any contribution considered for publication. We are unable to publish all letters we receive. Please keep your letter to a maximum of 250 words.

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Dear members,

This edition of Teacher is the last for this school year. Even though there is still a month or more of school to go, we want to wish everyone a wonderful summer.

—Susan and Karen

Thanks members FOR ALL YOU DO

Last month, our colleagues in the Ontario Elementary Teachers' Federation and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation won a significant victory in the Ontario Superior Court, which ruled that the provincial government "substantially interfered" with teachers' right to collective bargaining.

Sam Hammond, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, called the decision "a total vindication" of the union's "pursuit of democratic rights."

This is an important win for Ontario teachers and all of us in public education, as it is another ruling that confirms our collective bargaining rights are protected by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

As we prepare for our Supreme Court of Canada hearing next November, this decision is heartening. It also highlights how teacher unions all across the country are so determined to defend our rights and protect public education.

It's one of the reasons I'm proud and happy that the BCTF is rejoining the Canadian Teachers' Federation after a positive vote at the March Annual General Meeting. By working in solidarity with teachers and unions across the country, our voice is louder, our impact is bigger, and our fight for public education is stronger.

I'm proud that our union has become closer to the provincial and federal labour movement over the last several years. It was one of the priorities for me as a table officer, but especially as president.

As this is my last president's message, I want to say that it has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve as president of our strong and proud union. As teachers, we never stop advocating for public education. We work hard to improve the working lives of teachers as well as the learning conditions for our students. The BCTF fights passionately for social justice, professional autonomy, bargaining rights, and public education as a whole.

I want to thank and acknowledge the work of our BCTF staff and past and present members of the Executive Committee. Special thanks to the other two full-time table officers, Glen and Teri. Finally, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks for your support, encouragement, and solidarity over the years. I look forward to being on the Executive Committee for one more year as past president, and continuing on with all of our important work.

Thank you for all you do in classrooms and schools, locals, and communities every day.

Jim Iker

Merci chers membres POUR TOUT CE QUE VOUS FAITES

Le mois dernier, nos collègues de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario et de la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario ont remporté une victoire importante à la Cour supérieure de justice de l'Ontario, qui a statué que le gouvernement provincial avait « substantiellement interféré » avec le droit à la négociation collective des enseignants.

Sam Hammond, le président de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario, a qualifié la décision de « justification totale » de « la recherche par le syndicat de droits démocratiques. »

Ceci est une victoire importante pour les enseignants de l'Ontario et nous tous dans l'enseignement public, car c'est une autre décision qui confirme que nos droits de négociation collective sont protégés par La Charte canadienne des droits et libertés.

Comme nous préparons pour notre audience devant la Cour suprême du Canada en novembre prochain, cette décision est très encourageante. Elle met également en évidence la façon dont les syndicats d'enseignants à travers le pays partagent la volonté de défendre nos droits et de protéger l'enseignement public.

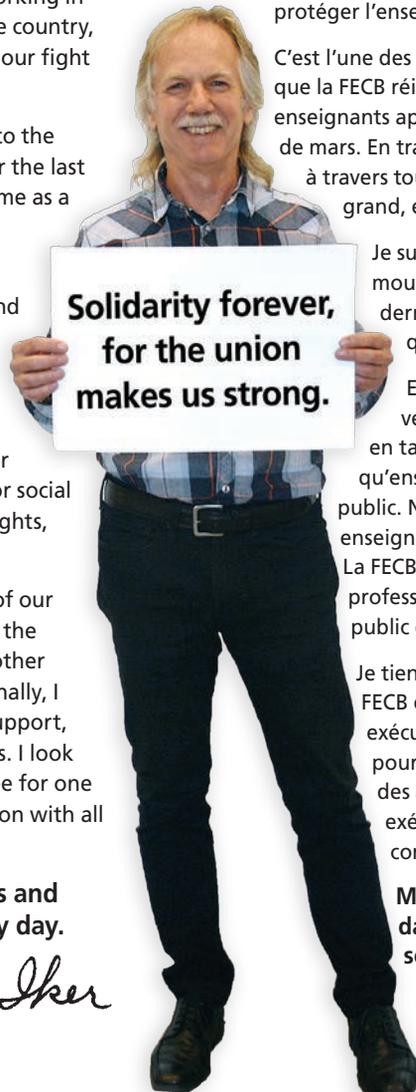
C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles je suis très fier et très heureux que la FECB réintègre la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants après un vote positif lors de l'Assemblée générale annuelle de mars. En travaillant en solidarité avec les enseignants et les syndicats à travers tout le pays, notre voix est plus forte, notre impact est plus grand, et notre lutte pour l'enseignement public est plus forte.

Je suis très fier que notre syndicat se soit rapproché du mouvement provincial et fédéral du travail au cours des dernières années. C'était l'une de mes priorités en tant qu'officier élu, mais surtout en tant que président.

Et, comme ceci est mon dernier message de président, je veux dire combien cela a été un honneur absolu de servir en tant que président d'un syndicat si fort et si fier. En tant qu'enseignants, nous ne cessons de plaider pour l'enseignement public. Nous travaillons dur à améliorer la vie professionnelle des enseignants ainsi que les conditions d'apprentissage de nos élèves. La FECB se bat passionnément pour la justice sociale, l'autonomie professionnelle, les droits de négociation et pour l'enseignement public dans son ensemble.

Je tiens à remercier et à souligner le travail des équipes de la FECB et de tous les membres passés et présents du Comité exécutif. Enfin, je tiens à offrir mes sincères remerciements pour votre soutien, encouragement et votre solidarité au fil des ans. Je suis très impatient de continuer à siéger au Comité exécutif pour un an en tant que président sortant et de continuer l'ensemble de notre important travail.

Merci pour tout ce que vous faites quotidiennement dans les classes et les écoles, les syndicats locaux et au sein de vos communautés.



Feeling DRAINED heading into summer?

Let's break this pattern

By Dr. Andrew Miki,
registered psychologist, Vancouver

I OFTEN USE the analogy of a gas tank to explain the continuum of mental health to educators. When you drive all day but routinely refill before nearing empty, you don't need to worry about your level of fuel. We can look at mental health in a similar way. If we are able to routinely refuel our minds, brains, and bodies, life seems manageable.

If you have to drive a further distance each day and don't have an opportunity to refill regularly, your level of fuel steadily decreases and the need to refuel becomes more important. If you are travelling a long distance and miss the last turn off for a gas station, you'll eventually run out of fuel. You will have to pull over, ask for help, and call a tow truck. When it comes to mental health and you've run out of your own reserves, you need to see your family doctor or a psychologist.

When I meet teachers in my private practice, I see they are stretching themselves not just for days or weeks, but often for months and years. To break this pattern, I believe teachers need to develop a new process that helps to build resiliency to stress. The summer holiday is a good opportunity to refuel the gas tank. Many teachers ideally begin September with a full tank, but watch it slowly decrease. When report cards are due later in the fall, they experience a small but sharp decline. The holiday break in December can increase or decrease the level of fuel depending on family, social, and financial stress. January to March is a grind because of the weather and another round of report cards.

Spring break provides an opportunity to refill and replenish. However, the last few months are often the most difficult because of the stress of budgets, cutbacks, potential layoffs and transfers, job postings, organizing end-of-year activities, and final reporting. By this time, many teachers are running on empty. If this situation speaks to you and your experience, you may feel drained heading into summer, and you need to ask yourself if you feel this way every year.

As demanding as this sounds, it does not capture all of the other stressors that teachers face daily. New curriculum, large class sizes, the overwhelming needs of students, interactions with colleagues, administrators, and parents—the list goes on. How can teachers possibly keep their level of fuel high in light of increasing demands and decreasing support?

While there is not a simple or universal solution, teachers can learn to develop a process to manage stress. Consider how many processes you have in place to create lesson plans, run your classes, and prepare report cards. But like most people, you probably do not have an explicit process to manage stress. This means that when your level of stress rises, you may not have the skills to effectively manage it.

Recognize you are stressed

The first step to building your resilience is to recognize where you are on the mental health continuum. How stressed are you? Are you healthy, unhealthy, or somewhere in between? You also need to recognize the triggers that increase your stress and how your physiology (e.g., sweating, tension, irritable bowel), your thoughts (e.g., tendency to overthink or gravitate to black-and-white thinking), behaviours (e.g., become more reactive), and emotions (e.g., anger/frustration, anxiety/worry, sadness, guilt) are impacted.

“Having an emotional regulation toolbox means you will be better equipped to handle different situations.

Recognize whether your lifestyle habits provide you with a solid foundation to manage stress. If you have a poor diet (e.g., skipping meals) or a sedentary lifestyle, summer may be an excellent time for you to work on improving these areas. If you can build healthier patterns heading into the next school year, the next challenge is to learn how to retain as much of it as possible so you can manage your workload and corresponding stress.

Regulate your emotions and thinking

When our emotions and level of stress spike upward, it is difficult to think clearly, objectively, and realistically. Instead, we often tend to be influenced by black-and-white thinking. So, the second step is to improve your ability to regulate your emotions and to learn how to react to stress wisely.

Having an emotional regulation toolbox means you will be better equipped to handle different situations. Find strategies that resonate with you. Formal relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness, and progressive muscle relaxation are useful in certain situations, while physical activity, listening to music, reading a book, being in nature, or working on a hobby are helpful in others. Just keep in mind that if you rely exclusively on one strategy (e.g., exercise), it may not always be possible to use it in specific situations, like that difficult parent interview.

Resolve your situation and move forward

The last step in this initial process is called resolution. When stress rises, we can have many thoughts that ruminate on one or several issues. For example, thinking about implementing new curriculum next September may increase the intensity of your stress and emotions. If this is the case, you need a process to break this pattern because your thoughts can potentially reignite even more stress.

After recognizing and regulating your emotions and stress level, start the resolution process by reviewing your thoughts to identify main issues. Our thoughts give us an idea of our position at the time, but the main issue is often buried or obscured by our thoughts. You may be focusing on details about the new curriculum, but behind those thoughts may be deeper and more worrisome thoughts like, “I’m not sure if I can manage,” “I resent all if this added work,” “This is unfair,” and so on.

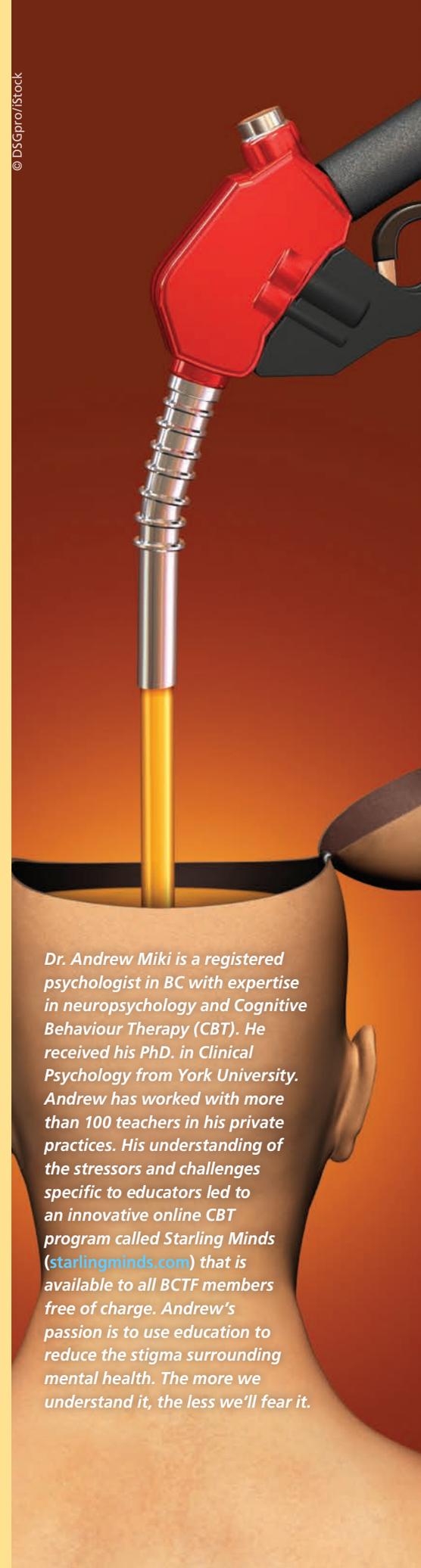
Resolution means you have a process to help you develop a clear position or conclusion on the main issue leading to more objective or balanced thinking. Not only is balanced thinking mentally healthier, it helps break the pattern of increased rumination. Coaching or talking to yourself in an assertive manner also helps you to retain new thinking.

Of course, we cannot always rely on managing our thoughts to help resolve issues. Sometimes we have to evaluate the factors that are under our direct control, identify the uncontrollable factors, and decide whether we can take action. Occasionally, we have no other choice but to accept the situation because it is beyond our level of control.

“But as teachers you know that as difficult as a situation seems, advocacy and taking action with others are often helpful strategies that can defeat a sense of powerlessness and change the status quo.

The key to building a process to help increase your resiliency to stress this summer is to have a framework (e.g., recognition, regulation, resolution), and a conscious intention to develop skills in any of these areas. Rather than passively relying on time away from work to refill your gas tank, think about what you can do this summer to start this process. Like keeping physically fit, we will always need to monitor and work on our mental health. Increasing your mental fitness will put you in a better position to manage stress, break old patterns, and keep doing what attracted you to teaching in the first place—making a difference to other peoples’ lives. ■

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Dr. Andrew Miki is a registered psychologist in BC with expertise in neuropsychology and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). He received his PhD. in Clinical Psychology from York University. Andrew has worked with more than 100 teachers in his private practices. His understanding of the stressors and challenges specific to educators led to an innovative online CBT program called Starling Minds (starlingminds.com) that is available to all BCTF members free of charge. Andrew's passion is to use education to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. The more we understand it, the less we'll fear it.

Resources for REFUELING

By Allan Lee, BCTF Assistant Director, Health and Wellness



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Recognizing and acknowledging

For some people, recognizing and acknowledging that they feel overwhelmed and need some help is the most difficult step. Reflecting on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is a skill that is not often taught or practiced explicitly. If you feel like you need to check-up on your well-being, consider two useful online resources:

- **Canadian Mental Health Meter**—An online questionnaire to help you reflect on your individual strengths and focus on areas that need support. This questionnaire is a quick way to self-reflect and identify the parts of your life that may need additional exploration.
- **Here to Help Screening Self-tests**—An online screening test that assesses different factors that contribute to overall well-being. From social support to self-esteem, this test provides a quick overview of your mental health status.

Access these resources at the BCTF Health and Wellness Program at bctf.ca/wellness.

Developing regulation

For teachers who identify they need additional support, finding the appropriate regulation tools is the next step in coping with elevated stress. Whether it's personal or professional stress, it's important

FINDING THE TIME, energy, and motivation to refill our gas tanks is not an easy task. It requires us to acknowledge that we have many important personal and professional responsibilities in our lives, and to recognize that self-care is a critical component to well-being. At the BCTF Health and Wellness Program, we hear about the difficulties teachers face in their classrooms and how it has negatively affected their mental health. We hear that teachers don't have enough time to eat well, exercise regularly, engage in relaxation activities, or even see their physicians. If you feel this way, you are not alone. Many teachers feel challenged when professional responsibilities conflict with personal self-care.

to identify the activities that speak to you. The Health and Wellness Program suggests you try out one of these:

- **Starling Minds Program**—A BCTF online program where members can confidentially reflect on their current mental fitness and explore a variety of effective coping strategies. Designed specifically for teachers, this interactive program guides you through situations that you may encounter at school and provides suggestions on how to cope with common stressors. Members can access this free, online program by creating an account with their BCTF member ID (which is not your certificate number) at www.starlingminds.com.
- **Crisis Centre Mindfulness Training**—It's important to have a range of regulation tools and strategies to draw upon when you feel stressed or overwhelmed. Try out formal relaxation techniques such as meditation or mindfulness, at www.crisiscentre.bc.ca/mindfulness/

Finding resolution

Seeking a resolution in any situation, whether personal or professional, can be challenging. Finding a healthy resolution requires us to acknowledge our feelings in a transparent way, consider alternative ways of interpreting the problem, and look for innovative strategies

to move forward. Health and Wellness encourages you to find a personalized resolution strategy that works for you:

- Check in with a colleague or friend who may provide you with a fresh perspective on your situation. Consider how to implement their suggestions for a healthy resolution.
- Self-help resources that address a variety of concerns and challenges are available at bctf.ca/wellness.
- Seek professional help in clarifying the situation and developing resolution strategies. Professional counselling services through your district's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and your extended health benefits are appropriate anytime you are finding it challenging to find a resolution.

Finding recognition, regulation, or resolution is not always easy or simple. It requires active reflection, a desire for change, and taking a risk to try a different way of being. Trying out one of these resources can be a great way to motivate you to make some meaningful changes to your own personal health and wellness. ■





School closures

More than buildings on the chopping block

By Murray Helmer, President, Cariboo Chilcotin Teachers' Association

ON APRIL 26, Cariboo-Chilcotin school board trustees determined the fate of Bridge Lake Elementary School, after earmarking it for closure months earlier. Bridge Lake now joins ten other district schools that make up ever-growing educational ghost towns, while the communities affected slowly watch their populations dwindle away, as often happens when the heart is ripped from any community.

It is a scenario that has become alarmingly typical in this province, where decreasing funds for education and a mandate to consolidate schools to maximize capacity has been the Liberal government's educational mantra for the last decade. Bridge Lake, and communities like it around the province, lack the services and facilities typically found in urban areas and, by default, the school becomes the centre of the community, as a multifunctional hub for students and residents alike.

As a designated "community school," Bridge Lake provides a breakfast snack for all students, and operates a hot lunch program

for all students four days a week. Generating funds through an annual dinner auction, the not-for-profit society overseeing this program also uses the school to operate the Meals on Wheels program, which serves food to residents of the surrounding communities. The society also provides funding for Kidspace, which operates after-school activities for the students, and for playground and other sports equipment. Bridge Lake School also houses a StrongStart program to provide early childhood education for three- to five-year olds from the surrounding communities.

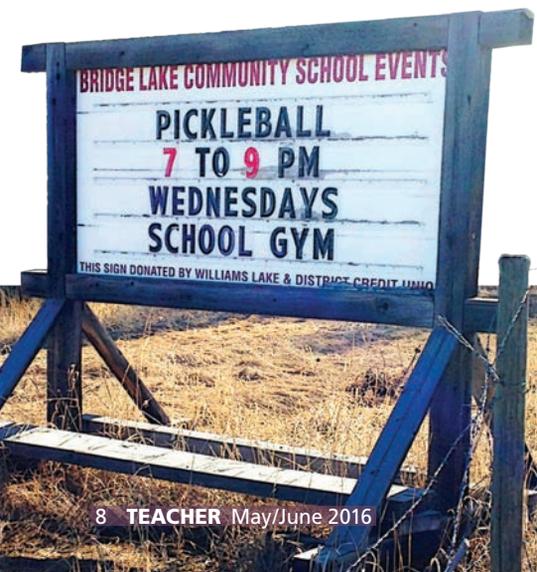
The school continues to be a hub of activity outside of school hours, offering a variety of adult-oriented classes, providing meeting space for local clubs and organizations, and as a home for the public library. The school also doubles as the local community centre, providing space for a variety of sports. The Rhythmic Gymnastics Club, based out of the school and sponsored by a community member, even travelled to Austria to participate in the World Gymnastrada in 2007, giving the rural students an opportunity of a lifetime.

On April 26, four trustee votes and the stroke of a pen spelled the end to Bridge Lake School, and all that it offers its community.

Teachers face layoffs, re-employment uncertainty, and guaranteed relocation. Students will be transported to another school, adding at least an hour or more to the round trip on the school bus. For four months of the school year, students will leave for school in the dark, and arrive home in the dark. Participation in after-school sports will require parents to drive students home, as there is only one bus run after school. And while the parents are out, they'll likely pick up groceries or other supplies that they may have purchased in their own community, causing the local economy to suffer. From there, it is a slippery slope of decreasing property values and fewer services, with nothing to attract new families into the once-thriving area.

Proponents of the closure point to their desire to fill existing schools to their capacity to make best use of existing space, but structural capacity and instructional capacity are not the same thing. Those of you who may have attended a BCTF AGM at the Hyatt Hotel can attest to the fact that an elevator filled to capacity with delegates does not deliver as efficient a service as one providing the rider with a solo trip. The same can be said for education delivery. That's not to say that the professionals in our schools aren't doing an excellent job, because they are. Simply put, there just aren't enough of them to cope with the ever-increasing needs of our students.

Prior to 2002, our collective agreement contained guarantees around the provision and staffing of non-enrolling services. The amount of learning support, counselling,





Murray Helmer photos

“For four months of the school year, students will leave for school in the dark, and arrive home in the dark.”

and teacher-librarian time allocated to a school was tied to student enrollment, and additional students equated to increased service levels. Where this collective agreement once existed, the statement “Intentionally Left Blank/Removed By Legislation” now appears, the legacy of legislative contract stripping by the Liberal government in 2002, and one of the reasons the long-awaited Supreme Court ruling sometime next year is of utmost importance to our teachers and our students.

What remains of these non-enrolling positions in our schools cannot hope to meet the challenges brought to the forefront by our neediest students. Boards are under no obligation to meet even minimal staffing levels, and schools are left on their own to fight for diminishing resources in these areas. Running schools at capacity only exacerbates this already problematic situation.

The final chapter for School District 27’s closed schools came this fall, when the board declared multiple school sites surplus and offered them for sale through a bidding process. The community’s hopes were buoyed by the one school that refused to

stay closed, despite the board’s best efforts to the contrary. Forest Grove Elementary was officially closed by the school board in 2004, but sustained community pressure and obstinacy saw it reopen as a non-religious independent school the following year. By attracting students from the public system, and the funding that comes with them, the independent school was able to put financial pressure on the district through lost enrollment revenues. In addition, the community also successfully ran a candidate in the school trustee election, whose mandate was to see their school reopen. This two-pronged strategy ultimately convinced the school board to reopen Forest Grove Elementary under the public school umbrella two years later, where it remains today with a steadily increasing enrollment.

While individual schools may be the sites of public protest and push back right now, a comprehensive and sustained public response is needed to ensure funding levels for education increase to the point where no school is threatened with closure, and all children can get an extensive and enriching educational program in their community school. What better venue to make this outcome a reality than during the upcoming provincial election to be held May 9, 2017, and not to only make this an election issue, but to elect a government intent on funding education adequately and make school closures a thing of the past. ■



257 schools CLOSED

Since 2002, more than 250 public schools in BC have been closed.

Muriel Baxter
 Mountain View Elementary
 Max Turyk Elementary
 C L Salvador Elementary
 Grasmere Elementary
 Elkford Elementary
 Canal Flats Junior Secondary
 Chapman Camp Elementary
 Columbia Valley Elementary
 Edelweiss Elementary
 Meadowbrook Elementary
 Radium Elementary
 Wasa Elementary
 A I Collinson Elementary
 Gordon Sargent Primary School
 Wyndel Elementary
 South Creston Elementary
 Glenbank Elementary
 Mount Begbie Elementary

+238 more

A summer reading program in BHUTAN

By Catherine Quanstrom,
teacher, Smithers

"Hello Ma'am." "Welcome to our school Ma'am." "Would you like me to carry that for you, Ma'am?"



Catherine Quanstrom photos

WITHIN MY FIRST DAY at Tang Central School (TCS), I was struck by the good manners of the students, and by the courteous way they addressed staff, teachers, and visiting teachers. My colleague, Heather Robertson of Nelson, BC, and I came to Central Bhutan's Tang Valley for three weeks last summer as part of the Bhutan Canada Foundation's inaugural Summer Reading Program.

The Bhutan Canada Foundation (BCF) carries on a long tradition of co-operation between the two countries. Early modernization of Bhutan's education system began in the 1950s, when the Bhutanese government invited a Canadian Jesuit priest, Father Mackay, to develop schools throughout the country. In the 1960s, English became the language of instruction, enabling Bhutanese graduates to study at colleges and universities throughout the world. As a partner in Bhutan's ongoing development, the Bhutan Canada Foundation sends teachers to underserved areas, typically for one- to two-year contracts.

From the time they enter school, Bhutanese students are in full English-language immersion. Students at TCS had obviously benefitted from the Bhutan Ministry of Education's efforts to provide fluent English-speaking teachers, and also to provide English-language educational materials at all levels, from Pre-Primary to Class 10. As a result, the verbal fluency of nearly every student I encountered—particularly those in Class 2 and higher—was impressive. The intent of the Summer Reading Program was to assist students

who were struggling to keep pace with their peers in reading English.

However, one drawback I found to the grade-level materials provided for all students was the complexity of the language. As teachers know, students who struggle require simpler texts in order to gain fluency and competence. Texts that are too difficult also hinder comprehension. Because Heather and I had experience with struggling readers, we shared with our Bhutanese colleagues what we had found to be best practices at home in Canada, including the recommendation that teachers continue to differentiate reading tasks for students so that those who struggle have a better chance of developing mastery.

In addition to our work with students, the staff at TCS asked us for professional development. They were particularly interested in 21st Century Learning. As a Himalayan country that has forgone land lines in favour of cell towers, Bhutan is already linked to the Internet, allowing teachers there as much access to information as I have in Smithers. However, it is not a wealthy country and much of the population is spread throughout its remote valleys and rural villages.



Above: Catherine's colleague, Heather Robertson, with Bhutanese students

By helping students become fluent readers of English, Bhutan is giving its citizens access to the world community. This small, peaceful country is making thoughtful, intelligent strides in English language learning, and I am pleased to have been able to play a small role by working with the delightful students and teachers of Tang Central School.

For more information on the Bhutan Canada Foundation, visit bhutancanada.org ■



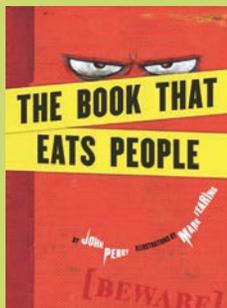
Lucinda's last list (OF BOOK REVIEWS)

By Lucinda Tooker, teacher-librarian, Maple Ridge

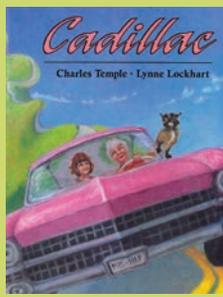
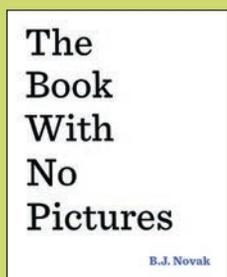


THANKS LUCINDA, for sharing your favourite children's books with BC teachers this past three years. After teaching for 34 years, in northern Alberta, northern BC, and then in Maple Ridge, Lucinda is retiring and joining her lighthouse keeper husband. We wish her a fulfilling retirement along with good health and happiness. We also hope she has a huge stack of children's and young adults' books to keep her company as she weathers the winter storms of coastal BC. All the best, Lucinda!

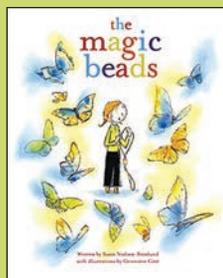
CALLING ALL FANS of children's and young adult literature! *Teacher* invites you to share your favourite reads and become a guest reviewer for the magazine's Kids' Lit page. We will feature a different guest reviewer each edition. All teachers of every grade, subject, or discipline, including specialist teachers, are welcome to submit reviews. If interested, please contact Susan Croll, *Teacher* editor, at scroll@bctf.ca or call 604-871-1877.



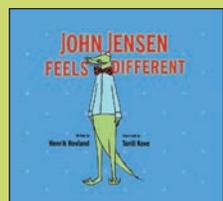
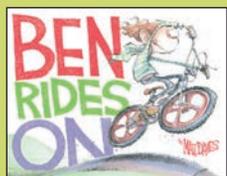
MY STUDENTS frequently request their favourite read-alouds. The first is *The Book That Eats People*, by John Perry, with its delightfully sinister tone and its admonishment to "never read this book with sticky fingers." The second is *The Book with No Pictures*, by BJ Novak, which they love because it's the book that "makes adults say silly things."



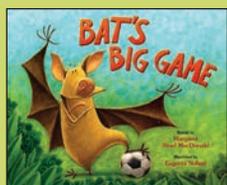
I prefer books with more sly humour, such as *Cadillac*, by Charles A. Temple. The rhyming verse and repeated phrase "Boom shacka-lacka-lacka, Boom shacka-lack" build tension as Granny tears around town in her old, pink car that runs on just seven cylinders. In *The Interrupting Chicken*, by David Ezra Stein, the little bird constantly interrupts her father with each new story as he tries to settle her down to sleep.



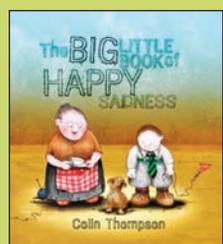
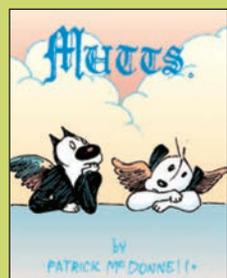
I am also a sucker for the underdog, stories that feature characters who have to find inner strength. In *The Magic Beads*, by Susan Nielsen-Fernlund, an anxious girl, who has recently moved into a shelter with her mother, eventually settles on a creative and personal item to bring to show-and-tell at her new school. When his bicycle is stolen in *Ben Rides On*, by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Matt Davies, a boy has to tap into his inner strength and, as a result, forges a relationship with the bully who stole it.



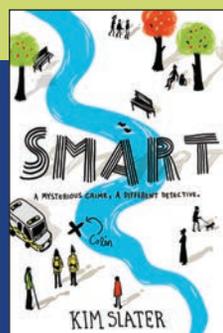
Confusion and sadness also appeal to me. In *John Jensen Feels Different*, by Henrik Hovland, the protagonist tries to blend in with his non-crocodile neighbours and co-workers, but after a doctor (who happens to be an elephant) points out that "no two are exactly alike," John Jensen learns to appreciate his individuality. The notion of love and loss is handled beautifully in Oliver Jeffers's book *The Heart and the Bottle*, when a girl puts her heart away after the loss of someone close, and feels nothing until a little girl shows her how to get her heart out of the bottle again.



One of my favourite books to read aloud when it's time to talk about personal responsibility is *Bat's Big Game*—or, as I like to call it, "Bat's total lack of personal integrity"—by Margaret Read MacDonald. In a modern take on a fable by Aesop, Bat wants to be on the winning soccer team, so he switches from the animal team to the bird team, and back again, before being caught and sent away.



My students know that I love pet stories, especially if they feature rescued animals, which I have incorporated into a series of lessons about responsible pet ownership. In *The Big Little Book of Happy Sadness*, by Colin Thompson, a lonely boy and his grandmother fill the empty place in their hearts with a comical, three-legged rescue dog. In *Mutts: Shelter Stories*, Patrick McDonnell combines comic strips, photographs, and short anecdotes about rescued house pets in a heartwarming book of advocacy.



Finally, there are a few young adult novels that impress me. The first features a girl living with cerebral palsy whom everyone underestimates until she gets a computer with a voice synthesizer. In *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, 11-year-old Melody is finally able to participate fully in her classes and even join a quiz club but, like real life, the ending is ambiguous. In *Smart* by Kim Slater, Kieran—whose classmates and step-brother torment with the nickname "Downs"—overcomes his own learning difficulties and a heartbreaking home situation to solve a murder in a gritty neighbourhood in Nottingham. ■

Always an activist

Jim Iker reflects on his time as BCTF president

By Susan Croll, Editor, Teacher

“How about those Canucks, eh?” BCTF President Jim Iker would joke with the line of reporters and photographers crowded into the boardroom at the BCTF building for yet another news conference. He never tired of asking this question and mentioning the Habs’ star goalie Carey Price—from Anahim Lake—and by the smiles and responses from the people in the room, neither did they. A little bit of banter was the way Jim liked to break the ice and warm up before the microphones and cameras began whirring and clicking in the room.

The banter was also Jim’s way of connecting with journalists. Bargaining between teachers and the government was the story of 2014 and, like a tennis match, the ball was lobbed back and forth countless times. With each lob came another round of requests for interviews.

Through these interviews, and with the stakes increasing as teachers began job action in the spring, Jim Iker became a household name in BC. Yes, humorous comments were made about his long hair, but ultimately he became known for his cool, calm, steady manner, and his famous answer to every question. “We just want a fair deal for teachers, and better support for kids.”

As the dispute continued, the public began to understand insider educational terms like “specialist teachers” and “class composition.” Even more astonishing was that bargaining clauses like E.80 and E.81 became part of the public debate.

Thinking back, Jim says that two things were clear in that round of bargaining. “First, the government was trying to break our union. They thought they could. Secondly, thanks to the determination and strength of members, we proved them wrong. They couldn’t and they didn’t.”

Nonetheless, he describes those last five or six days of June 2014 as a low point for him. “The BCTF wanted to enter mediation and I thought we were close to getting it. Justice Stephen Kelleher was part of those mediation talks. But government stalled, went in circles. At the end of the day, they simply did not want mediation, nor an agreement at that time. It was frustrating for the bargaining team. We could have been in mediation in the summer, but government refused. They weren’t interested in finding a deal.”

Jim had a huge responsibility on his shoulders. As chief negotiator for the union, he wanted to ensure that teachers made real gains and that students had access to more support, notably through the hiring of more specialist teachers and more one-on-one time.

A few things kept his spirits up. He walked everyday, which helped him keep clearheaded. He listened to music. “I love music. Sometimes, I’d even listen to part of a song just before I had to do an interview. I like the energy

of music and it grounds me, as did getting home to Topley once in a while.”

He also attributes sleeping well to getting through bargaining. “Believe it or not, I slept when my head hit the pillow. The nights were short and the days were long. I guess it was because I was so tired. Thankfully, I did not lay awake and replay the day.”

When an agreement was finally reached in the second week of September 2014, some members declared that job action had been a waste of time and didn’t achieve anything worthwhile. While Jim respects these views, they don’t jive with his own. “One of the great things about our union is our diversity. There are going to be lots of different ideas and opinions. That is one of the strengths of the BCTF.”

He explains that the strike was important for the union to reach a deal at the bargaining table, and with the help of Vince RReady that happened.

“Teachers moved the government off of their agenda. They initially insisted on concessions and because of the strength of our collective action, the concessions never became reality.” He notes that extended health benefits were improved and better wages and rights for teachers teaching on call were also achieved.

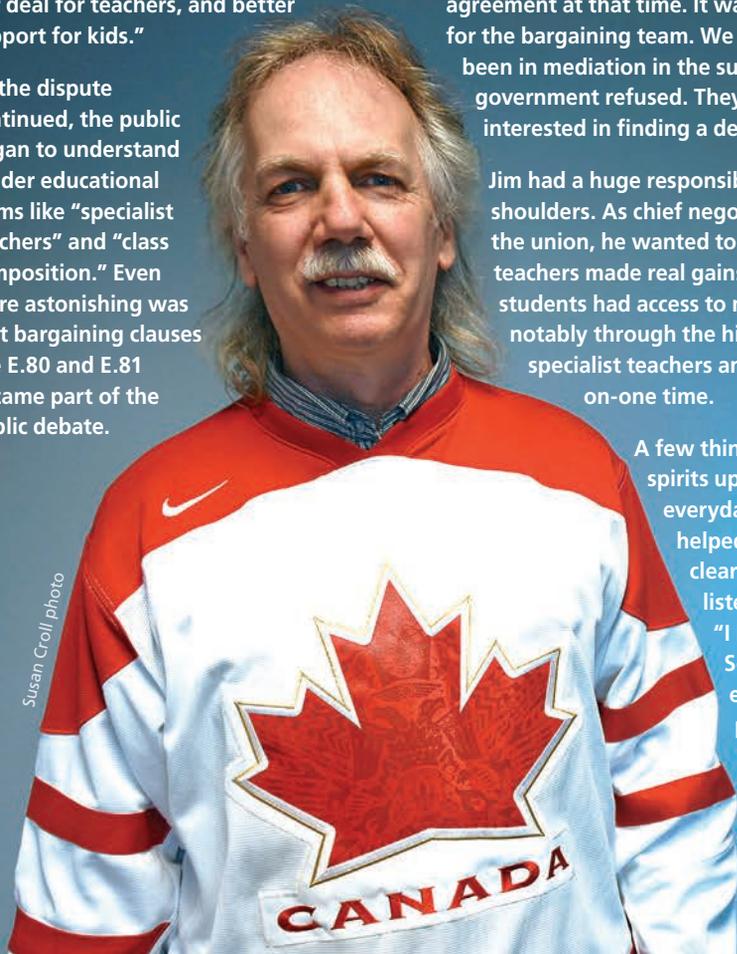
“We also managed to get the Teacher Education Fund written into the collective agreement and that this fund could only be used for additional bargaining unit members. Undoubtedly, chronic underfunding is still a huge problem, but the Education Fund has meant more classroom and specialist teachers. Without it, we’d have even fewer teachers.

“We protected the outcome of our court case as government wanted to negate the decision if it was not in their favour. As well, we negotiated a settlement for our retroactive grievance. Depending on how the Supreme Court of Canada rules, a settlement to the grievance might have been forever lost.”

He applauds the support teachers received from the labour movement, teacher unions across Canada, as well as parents and much of the public. “It was this level of solidarity and financial support that helped us to get an agreement.”

Reflecting upon the future of public sector bargaining in BC, he suggests that unions need to work together more closely. “Public sector unions need to be organized and

Susan Croll photo



understand each other's issues. We need to stay informed, strong, and co-ordinated."

Curriculum change came quickly on the heels of collective bargaining. Revised curriculum was in draft form, and government wanted feedback from teachers and was eager to get going on implementation. From Jim's perspective, teachers need more time, more support, and funds for resources if change is going to happen in any meaningful way. The union pressed government for additional non-instructional time and funding for implementation.

"Even though we were able to win two additional non-instructional days for teachers to become familiar with the new curriculum, we know we need more time and funding for resources. Government needs to step up. The timeline on curriculum implementation also needs to slow down. And Grade 10 should not be part of the graduation years."

Like the job action, members have diverse opinions about the revised curriculum. Jim recalls a local meeting he recently attended. "Two teachers came up to me to tell me how excited they were with the curriculum changes. Five minutes later, at the same meeting, another teacher told me that they wanted the BCTF to pull out of all committees and further meetings with the Ministry of Education because government wasn't addressing class size and class composition."

While both points of view are important, Jim explains that if the BCTF pulled out of everything we disagreed on with government, we would only be talking to ourselves.

"A working relationship with Ministry staff and government is necessary but we can never lose sight of our role as advocates. Every time we meet Ministry staff, government, or partner groups, I advocate. I advocate for better funding, for more support in the classroom, for more specialist teachers, and for government to invest in additional non-instructional time and resources for curricular change. My role as BCTF president is to remind government that they can always do better and I like to remind them of that constantly."

He beams when he speaks about our international solidarity work, and the BCTF's advocacy on Aboriginal education. "The BCTF formed a task force on Aboriginal

Education in 1998 and has worked tirelessly since then. We want to see Aboriginal students succeed and eradicate the inherent racism at all levels of society, schools included."

He believes reconciliation is significant for BC teachers and public education because of the state's colonial legacy in trying to "take the Indian out of the child" through residential schooling.

"Now is the time for understanding and healing. To go forward we must address the needs of Aboriginal students and their cultures, learn about the First Peoples' Principles of Learning, and integrate these principles into our own teaching. *Project of Heart* engages both students and teachers to do this and helps right the wrongs of the past."

Jim also stresses that safety for every student, regardless of gender, ethnicity, culture, or sexual orientation must be paramount for students to learn. He applauds the work of teachers, students, trustees, and parents who have tackled homophobia and transphobia and fought for safe and welcoming policies and practices in school districts.

Even though Jim will no longer serve the BCTF as president, he remains on the provincial Executive Committee for one year as past president. His advice to the incoming Executive Committee is simple. "Work together, involve members, remember our core values, continue relationships with government, parents, trustees, and the broader labour movement."

Jim thanks all BCTF members for their inspiration, strength, and support, and adds that it was the ongoing love and support of his family that allowed him to be a BCTF activist, especially since his family lives in Topley, BC and he spends his working time in Vancouver.

Paraphrasing Gloria Steinem, he says a president is the face of members. "We are not a single torch, we are a collective, all lighting each others' torches together." He believes the BCTF is a strong union because of teachers' never-ending advocacy, our commitment to public education, and to building a better world for everyone.

"I am so proud of members and the BCTF. We made it through two rounds of really tough bargaining. We are intact. Thank you members and—for the record—I will always be an activist."



Susan Croll photo

Jim moved from southern Ontario, via Halifax, to the tiny village of Topley, BC, just west of Burns Lake, in 1977. He was hired as a primary teacher, and became a Kindergarten and learning-assistance teacher at Topley Elementary School. He met his wife, Cheryl, an intermediate teacher, at the same school.

As a first-year teacher, it didn't take long for Jim to get involved in his local, the Burns Lake and District Teachers' Union. Bargaining is one of Jim's loves and, along with his local bargaining team, he negotiated three collective agreements between 1988 and 1994. Sadly, his school became yet another victim of underfunding, and was closed in 2010.

Jim has served on five out of seven BCTF provincial bargaining teams, including the first provincial team in 1995. He led BCTF bargaining teams as chief negotiator for the 2011–13 and 2013–19 collective agreements.

- 1990** Elected President, Burns Lake District Teachers' Union
- 2002** Elected to BCTF Executive Committee
- 2008** Elected Second Vice-President
- 2010** Elected First Vice-President
- 2013** Elected President

Jim and Cheryl have two children and four grandchildren, and are eager to spend more time with them! ■



Janica Blaikie (fourth from left, back row) and Peter Campbell (sixth from left, back row) with Royal Oak Middle School students

Tessa Lloyd photos

Saanich students shine in film CELEBRATING unsung Canadian hero

By Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF Communications Director



Janica Blaikie with Project of Heart artwork.

Right, Dr. Bryce.

ONLY ABOUT 10 of Janica Blaikie's 60 Grade 8 students knew anything at all about the history of Canada's residential school system when they came into her class last fall. But, by spring, an unforgettable learning experience led them to become star players in a new documentary about the courageous medical doctor who blew the whistle on residential schools.



More than 80 years after his death, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce is getting overdue recognition as a true hero who advocated for public health for all Canadians and spoke out about the rampant tuberculosis and appalling conditions in residential schools. His voice was

initially silenced by the government but his landmark study, *The Story of a National Crime*, was finally published after his retirement in 1922.

The doctor's great-grandson, Andy Bryce, teamed up with Victoria filmmaker Peter Campbell to document his ancestor's contributions. "He was not properly recognized in his own time, but today his story teaches us a lot about courage, integrity, and honesty," Bryce said.

Entitled *Finding Heart*, the film was commissioned and funded by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. It recognizes how Dr. Bryce paid the price for going up against the federal government on behalf of Aboriginal children. "He taught us that doing the right thing is always the right thing to do," Campbell said.

The film focuses partly on Dr. Cindy Blackstock of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, who led an initiative to have a plaque installed in the Ottawa cemetery where Dr. Bryce is buried. She brought hearts created by children across Canada to make a "heart garden" at his gravesite, and survivors offered songs and prayers in his honour.

In her classroom at Royal Oak Middle School, Blaikie used the BCTF's *Project of Heart: Illuminating the Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools in BC* to help her students imagine how it felt for Aboriginal children to be taken from loving homes to schools where they were abused and forbidden to speak their languages. Their reactions? "Sorrow, truth, sadness," she said. "It was a powerful learning experience."

"When I hear the words 'residential schools' I mostly think of loss—loss of lives, loss of culture, loss for the students and the students' families, and loss in the Native communities," a girl says in the opening sequence of the film.

"I can't imagine how helpless the kids must have felt who attended. It's just sad," says a boy.

The students later presented their new historical knowledge and awareness to other classes at their own school and a nearby elementary school.

Gail Stromquist, the BCTF's Aboriginal Education co-ordinator, approached Blaikie about whether her students would like to be part of the documentary. "We had talked about Dr. Bryce in the classroom, so it was perfect," Blaikie said.

Right: Andy Bryce, great-grandson of Dr. Bryce.
Below: Gail Stromquist, Peter Campbell, Charlene Bearhead.



“His story teaches us a lot about courage, integrity, and honesty.”

On the afternoon of the premiere of *Finding Heart*, the entire student body, along with many parents and guests, filled the gymnasium. Among the guests was Ry Moran, Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and, coincidentally, a former student of Royal Oak Middle. "You kids are part of something very exciting—the repair of a really broken relationship," he said. "You are all part of the work of reconciliation."

Another guest was Katie Bonnell, a dancer with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, which is on a cross-Canada tour performing *Going Home Star*, a ballet about truth and reconciliation. Bonnell said she wasn't taught this history in school so, like many Canadians, she was shocked by it. Through the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg, the dancers met survivors, heard their stories, and participated in a sweat lodge. "We learned so much," she said. "And it's something we can't look away from, now that we know the truth. It's an honour to be entrusted with the portrayal of this story."



The 15-minute version of *Finding Heart* is available via YouTube.ca on the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation page. It is also linked to the BCTF's *Project of Heart* ebook, bctf.ca/HiddenHistory, on the page about Dr. Bryce.



Elder Barney Williams

“WHO HERE KNOWS about the history of residential schools?”

All of the students raised their hands.

That was a moving moment for Barney Williams, a survivor of both Christie School on Meares Island and Kamloops Residential School, and an Elder of the Tla o qui aht Nation in Tofino. He began by greeting the assembly in Nuu Chah Nulth, his native language:

"One of the things they tried to do to me as a little boy was to literally beat my mother tongue out of me. Sometimes they put a block of wood into my mouth for up to eight hours at a time to force me not to speak my language."

"It's exciting for me as a survivor to see so many hands go up. It's wonderful to know that you believe me, that you believe these things happened to me. I'm not telling you this so you will feel sorry for me. I'm telling you because *it actually happened.*"

Williams thanked the Creator for the gift of peace in his heart. "As a child I had a lot of anger in my heart towards the system and white people, because it was white people who beat me and raped me. A lot of bitterness.... I still think about that dark chapter in my life when they were trying to make me into something I was not. Yet I stand here today proud to be an Aboriginal man, and proud of my culture."

Williams urged the students to understand that reconciliation is a Canadian problem, not a First Nations problem. He ended by saying: "Thank you for listening. Good luck in your studies, and reach for the stars!" ■

2016 BCTF Annual General Meeting



Barb Parrott



Dorscie Paterson, 103 years old, speaks with colleagues from her former school, Vancouver Technical Secondary



AGM delegates



AGM delegates

Delegates mark 100th BCTF AGM in style

ON MARCH 12, 2016, veteran AGM chairperson Barb Parrott made a grand entrance to the Hyatt Regency ballroom dressed in Victorian-era bonnet, elbow-length cape, lace-collared blouse, long skirt, and white gloves. She took to the microphone and announced that she hoped all the women teachers present were suffragettes, like her. And indeed it was 1917, the same year as the first BCTF AGM, that some women in our province finally did win their fight for the vote.

And so began the 100th Annual General Meeting, and the celebration continued with a look back at our proud history, while keeping our eyes firmly on the future. Highlights included a visit from one of the oldest former BCTF members: Dorscie Paterson, who taught hairdressing and beauty for many years at Vancouver Technical Secondary School, and is still feisty at 103. Eighty years her junior, first-year teacher Mahima Lamba from Delta offered a thoughtful and spirited reflection on her hopes for the future of our profession.

In his final President's Report to the AGM, Jim Iker asked delegates to time travel to 100 years ago, when the first cross-Canada phone call was made by routing calls through the USA. By contrast, he noted, today members could use their smart phones to log onto the new BCTF mobile website for the meeting documents and more.

As is customary every year, the Executive Committee put forward a Leadership Report outlining the Leadership Priorities for the coming year. The priorities for 2016–17 are:

1. **Engage and support members** in the process of curriculum change, and continue to advocate for the resources and time necessary for teachers and students to implement new curriculum effectively.
2. **Campaign for education funding** to improve class sizes and composition, support students with special needs, and provide the range of teacher support positions required to provide a range of

essential educational services to meet diverse needs.

3. **Promote social justice** by contributing to building a civil and inclusive society in our communities and globally, and proactively addressing systemic forms of discrimination for students, staff, and society.
4. **Build the strength of the union** through increased member engagement and the active support for member leadership and involvement in the union at all stages of their teaching careers, including seeking an equitable representation of our membership at all levels and in all facets of our organization.
5. **Continue to build the capacity of the union**, both provincially and locally, to be prepared for bargaining in 2019 through the provision of training, particularly with a focus to increase the participation of women members.

WELCOMING words

AT THE START of every meeting, the BCTF acknowledges that the meeting is taking place on Aboriginal territory, out of respect for First Nations and to remind everyone the land we live and work on is still unceded.

This year the BCTF invited Elder Shane Pointe to give the First Nations welcome. Shane is a Musqueam Elder and Knowledge-Keeper, and the current Elder-in-Residence for the Vancouver School Board. His thoughtful words set delegates on course for the whole AGM but through his warm humour, he also conveyed that if delegates were here to make the BCTF a stronger and more united union, then we also had to keep light-hearted and not take ourselves too seriously.

Elder Shane Pointe



Your new BCTF Executive Committee



As of June 30, 2016, Jim Iker will step down after three terms. First Vice-President Glen Hansman and Second Vice-President Teri Mooring were acclaimed President and First Vice-President respectively. Chilliwack teacher Clint Johnston was elected Second Vice-President. Members-At-Large elected were: Rae Figursky, Burnaby; Carole Gordon, Central Okanagan; Norm Sabourin, Okanagan; Robin Toszczak, Greater Victoria; and Kip Wood, Nanaimo.



HOPES and DREAMS for our profession and union The next 100 years!

YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP as Mahima Lamba, a Delta teacher, spoke about her hopes and dreams for new teachers as the BCTF moves into its second century. She turned stereotypes on their head, and her message was reflective, wise, and forward thinking. "People say everyone my age is entitled. And to that I say, well yes. You're right. We are. Of course we are. I'm entitled to good working conditions. I'm entitled to the same pay as a male teacher. I'm entitled to an environment that respects my cultural diversity. And our students are entitled to quality public education. What would have happened in the last 100 years if no one had any sense of entitlement?"

She reminded delegates that teachers of today are more representational of the students

and families in our schools. "Young teachers are increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. Young teachers include more women of colour, people with diverse gender identities, and people of Aboriginal ancestry. New teachers wear a variety of identities and we are proud of who we are. I hope that the leadership in our schools and in our union will reflect that diversity too."

She ended with good advice straight from her Kindergarten classroom. "If someone is bothering you, you can use your words to ask them to stop. Look both ways. It's okay to be different. You win some, you lose some. And the most important, like Elder Shane Pointe had us do when he welcomed us yesterday afternoon, hold hands and stick together."



The 1997 AGM resolution that changed PUBLIC EDUCATION forever

"WHERE WERE YOU when I needed you?" said Murray Corren as he accepted his BCTF Honorary Life Membership. But he wasn't talking about the BCTF. He explained these words were shouted at him as he and his late partner marched in a Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Educators contingent at a Pride Parade in San Francisco in 1996. The young man shouting those words was also gay, but he did not feel kindly toward teachers. He had been ignored by his teachers and felt invisible to them as a young gay man struggling for affirmation. Murray told delegates that this young man's words "shook me to the core through the remainder of the summer. I was faced with a difficult choice. I could remain silent and closeted for the rest of my career, doing nothing to acknowledge and support queer students in my classroom."

By the time September came, Murray had made up his mind. He and a small group of LGBTQ+ colleagues brought a resolution to the 1997 BCTF AGM calling on the Federation to establish a program to

eliminate homophobia and heterosexism in the BC school system. It was a courageous and bold initiative, and an organized and vocal opposition, including some teachers, tried to stop Murray and his colleagues. A media frenzy ensued and protestors lined the steps of the Hyatt Regency, hurling abuse. After long debate, the resolution passed.

The next decade saw significant developments in the Federation's programs, a Supreme Court of Canada victory in the Surrey School Board Book Banning Case, a BC human rights settlement that brought about major curriculum change at the Ministry level, and finally, the legalization of same-sex marriage—all of which Murray led or was part of. He ended his speech by coming full circle and referring to the young man's disappointment. "To him, I say, thank you for shouting your anger and disappointment. I heard you. I listened. And I tried to make it better." Undoubtedly, Murray's continuous efforts throughout the years have made BC schools, and his union, a better place too.



© Ryan Lane/istock

Who wants kids drinking lead?

By Mike Wisla, BCTF staff

IN FEBRUARY 2016, officials in Prince Rupert revealed there were high levels of lead in four different schools' drinking water. The lead comes from lead piping, and the lead solder used in piping. While the practice of using lead pipe and lead solder has now been removed from the *BC Building Code*, many older buildings may still have lead products in the water supply system.

The solution to dealing with lead in drinking water follows what is known as the hierarchy of controls. The ultimate solution is to eliminate the sources of lead. Replacing piping and solder that contains lead is ideal. Failing this, applying engineering controls such as filters help control the hazard. Further down the hierarchy, administrative controls are implemented. One such control recommended by the Centers for Disease Control is to run cold water for five minutes before using. Young children and pregnant women are advised to use filtered or bottled water.

The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control have declared there is no safe blood lead level for children.

Jennifer Rice, the NDP MLA for North Coast, also introduced a private member's bill calling for regularly scheduled water testing in schools.

Further information about lead safety is available on the BCTF website at bctf.ca/NewsReleases.aspx?id=39786.

SUPPORTING kids in care

Delegates hear impassioned plea from Maple Ridge teacher

By Susan Croll, Editor, Teacher

ERIN TALBOT was only eight years old when social workers and police officers came to her school and told her they were taking her to live with a new family. She had endured a physically abusive situation at home for many years, and a friend and neighbour encouraged her to talk to the school counsellor about what was happening to her.

For ten years she lived as a ward of the state, or what is colloquially known as “in care.” Her experiences living in care, but more notably what happened to her when she “aged out” of care, have given her great understanding and empathy for vulnerable students also living in care.

But it was her attendance last year at a BCTF workshop called *Paige’s Story: Abuse, Indifference, and a Life Discarded*, and the support of two other teachers that motivated her to take action.

Paige was the subject of a scathing report by the Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, who called out both social workers and teachers for “professional indifference.” Barely 20 years old, Paige died of a drug overdose in a communal washroom in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Throughout her short life, Paige had been exposed to violence, neglect, open drug use, and inappropriate living conditions. She changed schools 16 times, had to move more than 50 times, and was shuttled between homeless shelters, safe houses, youth detox centres, foster homes, and single-room occupancy hotels.

Erin explains that although her life in care was not as chaotic as Paige’s, it could have turned out just as badly. She describes aging out of care as socially isolating and more traumatic than her abusive childhood. “I was aged out a year early at 18 instead of 19 because I was considered mature for my age. I was given some money to buy a mattress and based on the money allotted to me, I could only afford to rent an apartment in a building riddled with drug dealing and crime. I survived, but only barely, because I had three part-time jobs. I had no family, no one to take care of me. I had to do it all on my own.”

Living on her own at such a young age meant she did not have family to talk to about her

future, her plans, or her dreams. She missed out on applying for student loans because she was unaware they even existed. Looking back, she marvels that she ever managed to get through university and become a teacher.

Erin credits her teachers, her school community, one teacher-advisor in particular, and a supportive social worker, for making a qualitative difference in her life. “My teachers were like a surrogate family. When I was first put in care, I was in group counselling at my school. I learned in small groups. There were childcare workers. My teachers knew what had happened and they accommodated me.”

Shaking her head and sighing, she says that education used to be the great equalizer. But she fears that because of relentless cutbacks and dwindling budgets, education is losing this capacity to create equal opportunities. “A constant decrease in the number of specialized staff, along with increased class sizes means that teachers, counsellors, and childcare workers are not available in the same way anymore to help vulnerable kids.” That’s why Erin brought forward the following resolution to the BCTF AGM this spring:

That the BCTF work with other partners to establish a task force with regard to “vulnerable or at risk students” in the care of Ministry of Children and Family Development to critically examine what changes are needed to the processes and structures of the public education system to more effectively support their educational, social and health needs.

Her powerful speech introducing the resolution was based on her own childhood and her experience teaching children growing up at risk. Due to her eloquence, Resolution 129 passed unanimously.

Erin hopes the task force will shed more light on the hurdles vulnerable children face daily. “The signs of abuse are not always easy to detect. School staff can easily miss them. And kids don’t always tell anyone. Fewer counsellors juggling multiple schools means that kids can’t always find a counsellor when they need one, or decide to talk. Kids who are abused continually think it’s normal so when they do decide to talk about it, it’s important that someone is there to listen. If not, it could be an opportunity lost.”

She also believes that school staff and social workers need to work more closely with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). “Often neither knows what the other is doing. Better co-ordination should happen. Reporting channels need improvement. Many teachers report abuse and neglect with no response. Just like teachers, social workers need smaller caseloads too.”

In the end, she says it is really about how a society chooses to take care of its most vulnerable. “Both the Ministry of Education and the MCFD are so underfunded and under resourced. It’s no wonder kids in these situations feel disposable. Let’s remember that every child is important, and school is important to every child. The life lessons that children and youth learn in K–12 are imperative to who we become. Almost all my life lessons come from what I learned at school. That is too important to forget.” ■

Susan Croll photo

AGM DELEGATES vote to change Teachers' Pension Plan

By Victor Choy, BCTF Assistant Director, Pensions

After initial discussion in 2012 about changing the design of the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) to make it more equitable for all members, an extensive province-wide consultation took place throughout the fall of 2015. During these consultations, TPP members discussed the merits of changing the plan, and provided the Federation with feedback. Based on this information, the BCTF executive drafted a recommendation for AGM delegates. After vigorous debate, delegates passed the following resolution.

That the Teachers' Pension Plan design change of the pension formula include:

1. *delinking from the Canada Pension Plan's Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE).*
2. *a single accrual rate of 1.85% be applied to Pensionable Service.*
3. *an Early-retirement Reduction Factor of 4.5% under age 61.*
4. *removal of the 35-year Pensionable Service cap.*
5. *an unreduced pension for those with 35 years of Contributory Service.*

1 Delinking from the Canada Pension Plan's YMPE allows the TPP to become autonomous, without external controls. The erosion of a member's pension caused by the plan's original use of the YMPE is eliminated. This means members will receive a larger lifetime pension.

2 A single and higher accrual rate is fairer because every member builds their pension at the same rate according to their salary. Our current plan's split-rate system builds a member's pension at the effective rate of 1.51%. The new plan builds the pension at a higher rate of 1.85%.

3 Early-retirement Reduction Factor. In pension language, "early retirement" refers to retirement before the age of 65. The changes include a reduction of 4.5%

for every year under 61 years of age. This still represents a subsidy for early retirees because the actuarial reduction should be 6.7%. For most plan members who retire around age 60, this reduction is offset by the higher accrual rate.

4 Removing the 35-year Pensionable Service cap translates into the removal of an employment restriction. Currently, any teacher who continues to work after completing 35 years of teaching no longer builds pension service. With this change, as long as the teacher is employed by a school district, they will contribute to the TPP and build their pension.

5 Unreduced pension for 35 years of Contributory Service. This change recognizes the service of long-term

employees. This benefit will be measured as Contributory Service, where any time worked in a month gains that whole month's credit. Teachers teaching on call, teachers who work part time, job share, or who have taken pregnancy or parental leaves will benefit from this change as it represents greater equity to a member's pension benefit.

Accrued pension for current service up to December 31, 2017, will remain intact. The changes will begin for service that starts January 1, 2018.

BCTF staff members are preparing an online pension calculator so teachers can project retirement dates and view corresponding pension amounts.

Please contact Victor Choy at 604-871-1949, or email him at vchoy@bctf.ca for further information or with questions about your pension. ■



Jack MacDermot photo

The silent INTRUDER

By Mike Wisla,
BCTF Assistant Director,
Health and Safety

WHAT IS RADON? Is there radon in your school? What can be done about it? These questions are occurring with greater frequency as we become more and more aware of this silent intruder.

According to CAREX Canada, a national research organization that documents and distributes scientific information about workplace carcinogens, radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas produced by the natural breakdown of uranium in soils and rocks, and is colourless, tasteless, and odourless. Radon is found in air, water, and soil. Commonly found in older buildings, its levels vary depending on factors like soil type, foundation condition, airflow, and ventilation. Not all parts of BC are impacted equally.

People are wondering if they should be concerned. CAREX Canada identifies radon as a group one carcinogen. In 2012, Health Canada attributed 16% of lung cancer deaths—over 3,000 cases—to radon exposure. Radon exposure is the second highest cause of lung cancer after smoking. Combined with smoking, the risk increases to one-in-three.

Success stories

Despite these grim statistics, some positive actions are happening. The Kootenay Lake School District has launched a program to test for radon in their schools. During testing the district found locations to range from a negligible amount of radon in some cases to over 800 becquerels in others (the becquerel is the basic unit of radioactivity in the International System of Units). The limit established by Health Canada is 200 becquerels. The district then established a program to remediate. Paul Boscarior, president of the Nelson District Teachers' Association, stated that the community has been happy with the testing and remediation efforts of the district. Boscarior said the biggest surprise he found was how levels

could range widely within the same building—a testament to the need for testing to be comprehensive.

Similar success was found in the neighbouring Kootenay-Columbia district. Fred Nock, a local teacher and Health and Safety contact for the Kootenay-Columbia Teachers' Association (KCTU), led the initiative. Nock researched radon testing in his district and found that some testing had occurred five years ago. The testing was never completed and some detectors' data was no longer useful. He discovered an Interior Health program that provides radon detectors. Through discussions between the KCTU and the school district, Fred obtained two release days to talk to teachers and place the radon detectors. Teachers feel positive about the process and look forward to the results.

The key to solving radon issues in schools is through testing and remediation. Many schools have not been tested in many years, and some locations have never been tested. The BCTF Executive Committee passed a motion asking the provincial government to conduct mandatory testing in all BC public schools, and to remediate locations with readings over 100 becquerels, the standard set by the World Health Organization. Similar motions are scheduled to be debated by the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) this spring. ■

For more information on radon and its health effects visit the website of CAREX Canada at www.carexcanada.ca/en/radon/, or the radon resource page of the BC Lung Association at www.radonaware.ca.



Fred Nock with school radon detectors.

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System Monitor

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Criminal record checks and fingerprinting FACTS

BY Kelly Shields, BCTF Director, Field Services

Many teachers have turned to their union for answers when the police have requested fingerprinting following completion of a criminal record check. Here's what members need to know:

1 Is fingerprinting a new requirement?

No. Previously, individuals applying for a Criminal Review Check (required every five years by the Teacher Regulation Branch), who worked in a vulnerable sector such as education, were flagged for further review if an individual had a name, date-of-birth, and gender match to someone on the national database of pardoned sex offenders. However, under the new procedure introduced by the Criminal Record Review Program (CRRP) on November 30, 2013, individuals are now flagged for further review if they have a gender and date-of-birth match.

If a gender and date-of-birth match is found, the individual will be required to supply fingerprints to confirm their identity.

This change in procedure arises because not all provinces/territories require the submission of fingerprints when changing your legal name. The CRRP saw this loophole in their processes and closed it.

2 Are there more male teachers than female teachers who must be fingerprinted?

Yes. Approximately one in four male teachers and one in seven female teachers are affected, as statistically there are more males on the national database of pardoned sex offenders.

3 Does the fingerprinting originate with the TRB?

No. It originates with the Criminal Record Review Program and the RCMP.

4 Do teachers need to comply with the request to provide their fingerprints?

Yes. Failing to comply with the request for fingerprinting places the teacher's certification at risk.

5 Can the Federation mount a legal challenge to the practice of requesting fingerprints?

No. In terms of a legal challenge, the Federation does not think that a legal argument would succeed, when one balances the inconvenience to teachers against the serious risk to children if a sexual offender was given access to school children. There is no contract language on this issue that could be grieved.

6 Who does the fingerprinting and what will it cost?

A fingerprint check can be done through the local RCMP or police detachment. The cost is \$60–\$100, depending on the jurisdiction. Electronic fingerprints currently take three business days to process where there is no print match. Paper fingerprints are no longer accepted.

7 Do teachers have to pay for the fingerprinting?

Yes, unless your local has negotiated an agreement that your board will pay the costs.

8 What happens if a positive match occurs?

Results indicating a match will be subject to the risk assessment process to determine whether the teacher is a risk to work with children and will result in a meeting with board representatives.

Should this occur, contact your Local President immediately as you will need representation.

9 What happens if there is no match?

When there is no match, the CRRP notifies the teacher in writing and sends a clearance to their school board indicating that the teacher is cleared to work with children.

10 If a member is fingerprinted once, can the fingerprints stay on file so that the member need not be fingerprinted again?

No. Fingerprints are used only to confirm identity. The RCMP shreds the fingerprints 90 days after a search is completed and the results are returned to the police service. The fingerprints are not added to the RCMP National Repository of Criminal Records and are not stored, for confidentiality reasons.

Please contact your Local President for further information. ■

Words from the WISE

Retiring teachers reflect on their careers



Jean Sanderson
Tahsis, K–Grade 3
30-plus years teaching



Karen Yuen Beattie
Saanich, Grade 1
42 years teaching

1 What is the most memorable anecdote from your teaching career?

Memorable One morning we were “quietly” reading when we heard the roar and rumble of some big mechanical equipment outside. Naturally, we all trailed into the hallway to check it out through the window. One child zipped in to join us from the direction of the bathroom. After a while we decided that the entertainment was over, so back to reading we went. The latecomer nipped off back in the direction of the bathroom again. I said “Where are you off to now?” He looked back and said, “Just going to wipe my bum!!”

2 What is the biggest change in public education you’ve witnessed since you began teaching?

Change The greatest change was the installation of my Smartboard a few years ago. I was both excited and terrified. I dearly loved my blackboard and took great pride in my notes, pictures, science diagrams, etc. When I realized that the smartboard would replace my blackboard I was horrified, as I always thought that I could use it as a backup if all else failed! Now I cannot imagine life without it. The possibilities are endless.

3 What is the best retirement advice you’ve received? Or, what advice do you have for either the BCTF or new teachers?

Advice New teachers, find some creative mentors as soon as you can. Go to the primary conference whenever you can afford to do so. The inspiration and support will give you a wealth of resources. Enjoy every aspect of your professional development. Get as involved with your union as much as time and energy permit. Take care of yourself, so you can take care of your students and colleagues. Above all, try to have some fun every day.

Memorable Taking my classes and many parents to tour Canada’s oldest Chinatown is one of my most memorable field trips. This trip was the culmination of a year-long study of Chinese events like the mid-autumn moon festival and Chinese New Year. I am proud of my Chinese heritage and wanted to share this with my students. Having the children’s names written out by a master calligrapher, visiting the Tam Kung Temple (the oldest Chinese temple in Canada) where you had to walk up 52 flights of stairs to enter the temple, singing for the residents at the Chinese Care Home (including my mother...she lived to be 100 years in Chinese years!), allowing the children the opportunity to try their hand at Chinese brush painting with an artist, listening to the clinking of tiles during a mahjong game, visiting the Chinese Public School and seeing my classrooms when I was a student there, and having a Chinese barber play “O Canada” on his erhu as the students sang our country’s anthem in his small barber shop. And visiting Chinatown was never complete unless we had a fortune cookie with our Chinese lunch!

Change One of the many changes I’ve seen as a teacher are technological advances. Gone are the days of having to fill the Gestetner machine. I used to depend on film strips, movie projectors, and slide shows for information, but now rely on YouTube, DVDs, CDs, and Pinterest. We had to balance our attendance register on the last day of each month, and you were not allowed to leave for summer holidays until you balanced it. Communication with families is now done by computer, yet I remember dialing those phone numbers “Evergreen- EV5-1649 or Granite- GR.” Report cards are no longer handwritten, but composed on the computer. But for all these technological advances, my most treasured memories will be of children gathered at my feet listening with “wide-eyed expressions” and wondering how the story is going to end.

Advice My advice to new teachers is to believe that your students and colleagues have something to offer you each day. Throughout my career I was guided by Henri Matisse’s quote: “What I had to do I did the best I could.” Thank you, Saanich School District, so very much for giving me the opportunity to grow and smile throughout my 42 years of teaching. With my sincerest gratitude to all who have crossed my path during these many years of teaching.



Gary Stobart
Campbell River,
Grades 1-7
38 years teaching



Ann Marie Davidson
Prince Rupert, Salt Spring
Island, Grades 2-7
34 years teaching



Ken Warren
Ladysmith,
Student support teacher
17 years teaching



Jo Ann Lyon Hildebrandt
Kitimat,
Special ed/resource
38 years teaching

Memorable One of my most vivid memories was my very first day as a primary teacher. As the bell rang, I clearly remember looking out at the 35 expectant young faces in my Grade 3 class, and wondering what I had got myself into. However, that was nowhere near as terrifying as the first parent/teacher night, when close to 70 parents came into my class to see what I was teaching their children.

Change I began teaching when there were no photocopiers or computers in the classroom. If you wanted multiple copies you had to use this dreadful machine called a Gestetner, where you had to ink the roller before running off sheets. I have seen an incredible shift to technology over my career, the use of student computers, smartboards, tablets, and iPads. These devices are incredible in helping prepare students for the world they live and work in, although I must admit there are times when everything crashes that I am very glad I am able to go back to the old ways.

Advice Teaching is a challenging profession. You will be more than a teacher to your students, you will be a mentor, mediator, counsellor, coach, and confidant. There will be those challenging days when you wonder how much longer you can do this job, and there will be days when you can't see yourself anywhere else. The most amazing thing is that you will shape the young minds who will be our future. I don't really think there is a more worthwhile reason to teach than that.

Memorable Rather than learn about First Nations customs and culture from a textbook, it made more sense for my Grade 4 students at Westview Elementary in Prince Rupert to visit local communities. After chartering a Greyhound bus for two days, my students and I, along with a handful of wonderful parents, headed to the historical village and living museum of 'Ksan near Hazelton. Elders in Kitsumkalam, Kispiox, and Kitwancool warmly welcomed us and explained the stories of their totem poles and traditions along the way. Friendships from that trip still remain.

Change Elementary prep time and digital technology were non-existent in 1981. We didn't have so many students with complex mental health issues as now. When I started, contracts were bargained locally and amicably here in the Gulf Islands. The loss of local bargaining was followed by the loss of critical class size and composition language in 2002. Contract negotiations have grown into lengthy disputes resulting in virtually no increased support for our students, who need it now more than ever.

Advice New teachers, find balance in both your teaching career and your life. As a teacher, you will never be "done" as the "to-do list" is endless. While still working hard, find time to celebrate with your students. The same is true for your personal life. I thrive in the outdoors and when I spend time paddling, running, or walking with my dog, I return feeling more patient, calm, and energetic. It's important to feed your soul and look after your own well-being to be effective in a classroom.

Memorable At the end of my first day of work in a classroom, I thought I'd made a dreadful mistake. I was 47 years old and a newly minted English and Social Studies teacher. My first assignment as a TTOC was in Grade 9 Metal Shop in a junior high school. The boys, and they were all boys, were quick to sense and take advantage of my lack of training and experience and they worked me like a piece of old tin. When the bell rang I felt like I'd lived through a modern-day sequel to *Lord of the Flies*. I made it back the next day and managed the class more successfully, and never again felt as lost as I had on that first day.

Change I've seen significant changes in public education in BC during my seventeen years of teaching. Serial underfunding has created incredibly complex teaching assignments, and class size and composition issues that were unheard of when I started. Although I am a student-support teacher and struggle to fulfil my duties, I am in awe of the work done by classroom teachers under unimaginably difficult conditions. I am honoured to be considered their colleague.

Advice One piece of advice I'd like to offer to new teachers is to mine your colleagues. No experience, no situation, and no student's situation is unique. There will be someone on your staff who has worked under similar circumstances and can either help or at least commiserate with you. It may take work to unlock colleagues' knowledge, but the reward is worth it. Teaching can be lonely, but collegial practice has been the most surprising and the most gratifying part of my teaching career.

Memorable The most memorable experience of my career was our successful work with a primary student with autism, who was deathly afraid of the local swimming pool. Even approaching the building caused him severe anxiety. Over the course of several months and with the assistance of a fabulous education assistant, we were able to have him not only enter the building, but actually go into the water!

Change Two things come to mind. The first is the move from segregated classrooms to inclusion for students with special needs. The second is the behaviour of students. When I first began teaching, the majority of time was spent on instruction rather than dealing with inappropriate classroom behaviours. Now it seems that far more time is spent dealing with student behaviour.

Advice Show genuine interest in all of your students, including those with special needs. Spend direct time with them, work with them, teach them. Get to know them. See them as an individual first and their disability second. Ensure that when the student is asked, that they will identify you as their teacher, and not the educational assistant.

Words from the WISE

Retiring teachers reflect on their careers



Wayne Keil
Gold River, Teacher-librarian,
Grades 2, 4, 6, 7
37 years teaching



Laurie Mitchell
Qualicum, Counsellor/math/
science, and distributed learning
30 years teaching



Daphne VanAlstine
Kootenay Lake,
Kingergarten, Grades 2–6
40 years teaching

1 What is the most memorable anecdote from your teaching career?

Memorable Our students attended a Red Cedar Awards ceremony in Vancouver. As we come from a small village in Gold River most of our students had never been to Vancouver. Their eyes grew wide as they saw, for the first time, people begging in the streets. When we entered a church to admire the architecture they saw an older person lying on the bench sleeping. This real life experience opened up more questions than I could have wished for and became a topic we explored further in school.

Change The biggest change I've seen is the rise of technology. I remember the first time our school was introduced to the computer. It was in the library where I was the librarian. The community was invited to a supper at the school where I demonstrated our IBM 286 with 16 MB of RAM and a 5¼-inch floppy. Everyone looked on as I demonstrated our World Book Encyclopedia CD and saw a cheetah running on the screen. There was cheering with people clapping. Haven't we come a long way!

Advice My advice for new teachers is to remember that so much of the learning happens outside of your lesson plans. You can be teaching from what you think is the best lesson plan you have ever written and somewhere in the middle someone says something and the lesson goes, what you may think, is south. But through my years of teaching I have found these discussions have been some of the best learning experiences for the students and me. Each student comes with their past experiences and can see things in a light that you or other students have never even considered. So always be willing to listen and learn. Sit back and enjoy the ride!

Memorable I recently met a former student at a social gathering. I had not seen her since 1989. She is 45 years old and her daughter is about to graduate from high school. She recognized me right away, (and thankfully I recognized her), gave me a huge hug and thanked me for helping her pass Math 11 back in 1987! She introduced me to her husband and her mother as "Ms. Mitchell...the one I've told you about...the one who helped me pass Math 11 so I could graduate." Both her husband and mom gave me a warm handshake and said I am talked about often in the family setting. Later in the evening, I was presented with a beautiful gift that my former student had purchased for me at the silent auction. She had seen me admiring the item earlier in the evening. I was so touched by this act of gratitude shown to me all these years later. I realized that I had made a lasting and positive impression on my student. My family was there to witness and share in this lovely moment. It felt like a perfect way to end a long and meaningful career in public education!

Change I remember being a student at SFU in the early 1980s. The university computer that managed the student documents took up the entire bottom floor of the registrar office! Now my students are holding computers, more powerful than the one at SFU, in their hands! The advent of the internet and personal computers has been the biggest change in my 30 years of public education.

Advice The best advice I received is to retire when you are healthy and energetic and still loving the work—not burned out! I am ready to take on the next phase of my life with optimism and wonder, and feeling great!

Memorable With my passion for nature and outdoors, much of my teaching has centered around science and environmental education. I am proud of my 20-year contribution to the West Kootenay Regional Science Fair, co-ordinating judges and helping to facilitate student participation at the Canada-Wide Science Fairs. I feel that science projects fit perfectly with the "new" curriculum of inquiry-based learning. I encourage new teachers to participate in science fairs and encourage their students to be curious. I took my students on many field trips, including seeing spawning salmon, releasing juvenile sturgeon, observing a mountain sheep feeding program, and visits to farms. My students participated in ball races down creeks, forced twigs to bud, made bird nests, created terrariums, and planted greens.

My most memorable moments are when I organized events and activities in the school and the community, like co-ordinating Nelson schools in an Olympic Torch Relay.

Change The most significant change in teaching has been with technology. I remember when teachers hand wrote report cards, then gave them to the secretary to type!

Advice Over the years, I have worked as a Teaching Advisor for ten student teachers. New teachers, don't take yourselves too seriously, have fun with the kids, laugh with your colleagues, and connect with the parents. And above all...take your students outside as often as you can!!

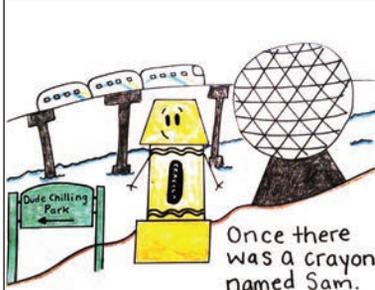
2 What is the biggest change in public education you've witnessed since you began teaching?

3 What is the best retirement advice you've received? Or, what advice do you have for either the BCTF or new teachers?

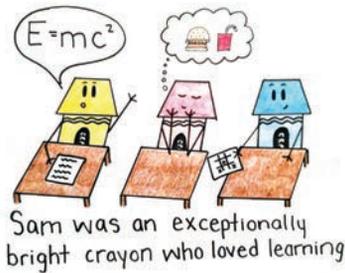
ANDREA O'BRIEN is a TTOC in Chilliwack. While she was in teacher training at UBC, the Vancouver School Board was deliberating their gender identities policy. Andrea created this artwork in support of LGBTQ students.

The Rainbow Revolution

BY ANDREA O'BRIEN

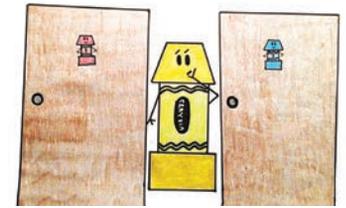


Once there was a crayon named Sam.



Sam was an exceptionally bright crayon who loved learning.

But everyday, Sam dreaded making the same decision.

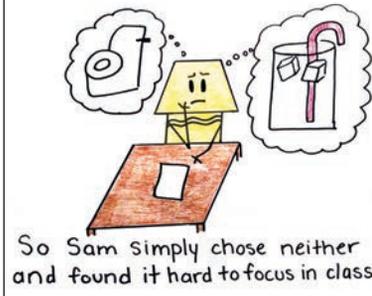


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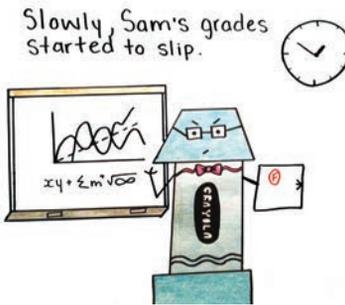
You see, Sam never quite felt welcome in either bathroom.

5



So Sam simply chose neither and found it hard to focus in class

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Slowly, Sam's grades started to slip.

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So Sam started finding reasons to stay home.



8

Sam fell more and more behind in school.



9

Then one day, Sam heard great news.



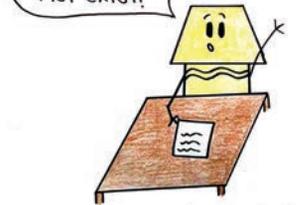
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Sam was thrilled! Finally, Sam felt welcome somewhere.

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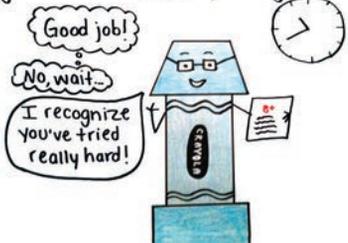
The limit does not exist!



Sam started coming to class more.

12

Soon enough, Sam's grades started improving.

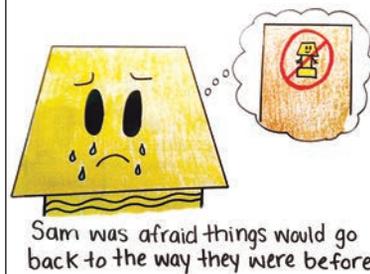


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Sadly, it appeared that not everyone was as happy as Sam.

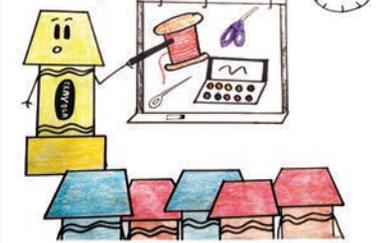
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Sam was afraid things would go back to the way they were before.

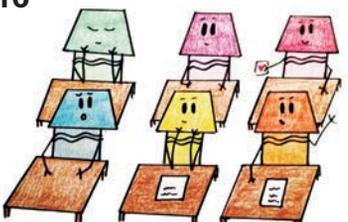
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So Sam and some friends came up with a plan.



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Slowly, Sam's school started looking a little more colourful.



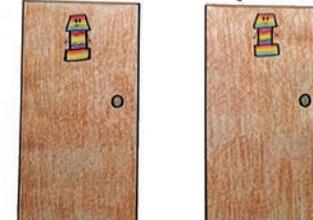
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The teachers didn't seem to mind...



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The students stuck to it and with the policy behind them, things started looking different



19

And when the students' costumes came off, they looked different too.



Save our schools

CHICAGO TEACHERS and supporters stage city-wide day of action

By Glen Hansman, BCTF President-Elect



Glen Hansman photo

CHICAGO TEACHERS are once again taking to the streets to save their school system. On April 1, 2016, they carried out a one-day strike and city-wide day of action that drew huge support from parents, residents, and organizations like Fight for 15 and Black Lives Matter. University faculty—whose schools will close because of a nine-month budget impasse the current governor insists on—also held rallies on university campuses.

The BCTF has enjoyed a long-lasting relationship with the Chicago Teachers' Union, and I was pleased to be able to be present in Chicago on April 1 to continue the tradition of mutual support and solidarity. Paul Finch, Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Government Service and Employees Union (BCGEU) also travelled to Chicago to show his union's support.

Dozens of protesters rallied against the "school-to-prison pipeline," marching to the county jail from a nearby school. Several youth activists took the stage at Chicago's Suder Elementary, asking state lawmakers to "fund our schools, not our jails."

Chicago spends more than \$112,000 a year per youth in prison but only \$15,000 per youth in school.

The one-day strike and action turned into a broader effort to protect rights against a hostile state government and against the prevailing austerity agenda. Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) President Karen Lewis and the Reverend Jesse Jackson called for greater solidarity among teachers, workers, and people becoming increasingly marginalized by government's economic and social inequality measures.

Now the CTU has served notice for a 30-day countdown culminating in a possible full-out

strike. In February, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced cuts and layoffs, including the ending of the teachers' seven percent pension pickup they've received since the 1980s. The union doesn't dispute the \$480 million budget shortfall, but say that the CPS is "broke on purpose."

When Chicago teachers walked out of their classrooms in 2012, they were protesting a slate of austerity measures and education "reforms" they believed would erode their livelihoods and the profession of teaching. They also protested initiatives that would make the city a haven for charter schools.

But the past four years have seen continued budget cuts, school closures, and a new Republican governor. The CPS, the city of Chicago, and the state of Illinois continue to be in financial turmoil caused by tax cuts, bail-outs for banks and big businesses, and other fundamentally flawed decisions that negatively affect workers and marginalized Chicago residents.

"The clock has started," says CTU President Karen Lewis. "CPS has created this fiscal mess and refuses to go after hundreds of millions of dollars in existing revenue that is already out there. Our whacked-out governor isn't helping. Hand-in-hand, both will wind up hurting our members and our students in the long run. We have no choice but to prepare ourselves for a possible strike." ■

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What is the school-to-prison pipeline?

The "school-to-prison pipeline" is an American term that refers to the policies and practices that push schoolchildren, especially the most at-risk students, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. This pipeline reflects the prioritization of incarceration over education.

Inadequate resources in public schools, including overcrowded classrooms, a lack of qualified teachers, high-stakes testing, and school shootings have led schools to embrace zero-tolerance policies that automatically impose severe punishment regardless of circumstances.

Overly harsh disciplinary policies push students down the pipeline and into the juvenile justice system. Suspended and expelled children are often left unsupervised and without constructive activities; they can also easily fall behind in their coursework, leading to a greater likelihood of disengagement and drop-outs. All of these factors increase the likelihood of court involvement.

Black and Latino boys and men get the short end of the stick as far as this phenomenon is concerned. An estimated 40 percent of all students who are expelled from U.S. schools are Black. This leaves Black students over three times more likely to face suspension than non-Black students. When you add in Latino numbers, 70 percent of all in-school arrests are Black or Latino students.

Nearly 68 percent of all men in U.S. federal prisons never earned a secondary school diploma. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Information for this article came from the American Civil Liberties Union, <http://bit.ly/1WmzNJA>, and Education Week, <http://bit.ly/1UnjEiH>.

Concussion protocol for the CLASSROOM

By *Kate Turcotte, researcher, BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit*

HAS ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS ever suffered from a concussion? Did the concussion happen at school? Did the student miss class time? How long did it take the student to reintegrate into the classroom? Did your school know how to support this process? Is there a concussion policy in place? Despite being a hot topic, concussion still raises a lot of questions.

Concussion can occur when a person receives a hit to the head or body, resulting in a sheering movement of the brain within the skull. In addition to sports-related incidents, leading causes of concussion include falls and motor vehicle crashes. Wearing a helmet cannot prevent concussion, but may mitigate the severity of the injury by absorbing energy on impact.

You cannot see a concussion with diagnostic imaging. Signs and symptoms of concussion can appear immediately or over several days. Signs are what you see, such as poor balance; symptoms are what you feel, such as dizziness. These can be physical (headache), mental (poor concentration) and emotional (depression). Immediate medical attention is required for red flag symptoms.

For a student, the recovery process involves balancing activity levels. Completing schoolwork, socializing, participating in physical activity, and using technology should be undertaken gradually. Physically, the student may tire easily, be sensitive to light or sound, or suffer headaches. Cognitively, they might have difficulty understanding concepts

or expressing ideas, or have difficulty with organization. Emotionally, they may be easy to anger, become anxious, or have difficulty with motivation. Progress may fluctuate, doing well one day but not the next.

The Return to Learn Protocol guides a student back to school through the gradual reintroduction of cognitive activities. Learning accommodations may be required to integrate the student back into the school setting, tailored to each student's individual needs, and adapted over time. The goal is to support the concussed student in participating in school without exacerbating symptoms, delaying recovery, or having a negative impact on academic success or social relationships.

The development of a Return to Learn Plan requires collaboration with the student and the student's school-wide support system, including the parents/guardians, and classroom teachers. To maintain a focus on moving forward with recovery, the student should not be expected to make up past assignments or tests.

Concussion can take days, weeks or months to resolve. The Return to Learn Plan needs to be



Red flag symptoms

- neck pain
- increased confusion or irritability
- repeated vomiting
- seizure or convulsion
- weakness in arms/legs
- tingling or burning in arms/legs
- deteriorating consciousness
- loss of consciousness
- severe or increasing headache
- change in behaviour
- double vision.

Seek immediate medical attention if your student shows any red flag symptoms

assessed and adapted as needed. If a student is not demonstrating positive progress within 4-6 weeks, the parents or guardians should seek further medical advice. Delayed recovery can affect the student's mental health in terms of anxiety or depression. An academically focused student may become anxious if unable to keep up with schoolwork, or an athlete may become depressed without engagement in sports. If unable to engage socially with peers, the student may feel isolated.

If not recognized and treated, a concussed person is three times more likely to sustain a second concussion, leading to more severe symptoms and lengthening recovery time. If a second concurrent concussion is sustained, it is then nine times more likely that further significant brain damage could occur. Last November, the Minister of Health, Terry Lake, indicated that BC's approach to concussion in sport is to address it through education. (<http://bit.ly/1RUmuOL>) Concussion education for teachers, administrators, and support staff is instrumental in ensuring appropriate concussion management. Spearheaded by Dr. Shelina Babul at BC Children's Hospital, the Concussion Awareness Training tool will help you recognize, respond, and prepare for a student's return to school following a concussion and help support practice through strategies and policies within the school setting.

Implementing school concussion policies and procedures is an important step in creating a safe and supportive environment. Concussion education for teachers, administrators, and support staff is instrumental in ensuring appropriate concussion management.

To learn more about concussion, visit www.cattonline.com. ■



Examples of learning accommodations

Physical

Frequent rest breaks
Restrict physical activity including PE, team sports, recess, and lunch break
Allow student to wear sunglasses/hat, noise-reducing earplugs
Seat student away from windows or bright lighting
Preferential seating to reduce distractions
Allow for a modified timetable
Access to a quiet space for breaks
Restrict classes with noise and/or safety issues
Allow class transition before bell.

Cognitive

Reduce:
- amount of time at school
- academic expectations
- workload
Limit time focusing on school work
Prioritize essential school work
Avoid stimulating or noisy environments
Provide a quiet space for schoolwork
Provide class notes
Frequent rest breaks
Allow extra time to complete tasks
Allow access to the learning support teacher
Consider tutoring support.

Emotional

Provide opportunities for socialization
Allow student to remove themselves from situations they aren't tolerating well
Provide avenues for student to express themselves
Ensure access to school counsellor/psychologist
Provide supportive feedback/reassurance.

Symptoms of a concussion can be delayed for several hours or even days following an incident.

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Bilingualism and the Advantages for Children with Language Delay
June 2, 6:30, 9:00 p.m. Vancouver
Location: Hycroft, 1489 McRae Avenue, Vancouver, BC

Dr. Stefka Marinova-Todd is the Director of the Centre for Intercultural Language Studies and an Associate Professor at the School of Audiology and Speech Science at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on the language and cognitive development of bilingual children, both typically developing and children with Autism.

In this seminar, Dr. Marinova-Todd's presentation will include information on bilingual language development and how it relates to executive function, literacy, and academic achievement. She will also discuss the capacity of children with developmental delay and ASD to be bilingual and implications for their successful education.

Cost: \$45 (refreshments included)
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