

# Teacher

Magazine of the  
BC Teachers' Federation

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## **BCTF 100** *Celebrating a century of public school teachers*



A commemorative  
retrospective of people,  
places, and the profession  
from 1917 to the present.



## 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](mailto:teachermag@bctf.ca).

For more information about magazine themes or to submit an article, contact [teachermag@bctf.ca](mailto:teachermag@bctf.ca).

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### Notice of AGM 2017

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2017 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 101st Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Vancouver, BC beginning on Saturday, March 18, 2017 and continuing to Tuesday, March 21, 2017.

### BCTF financial statements

The audited financial statements of the BC Teachers' Federation are available online in the member portal: [bit.ly/1K0bfxl](http://bit.ly/1K0bfxl)

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Left: BCTF members and leaders past and present at the Supreme Court.  
Middle: BCTF President Glen Hansman in front of the Peace Tower.

# Celebrating a PROUD COLLECTIVE HISTORY

**WELCOME TO this very special edition of *Teacher*.**

At the BCTF, we have been making history for 100 years with many milestones along the way. As you read through this edition, you will discover many examples of BC teachers and our Federation pushing for social justice, fairness, and improvements in public education. In some cases, you'll get a sense of "the more things change, the more they stay the same," but in many others you'll be struck by the pivotal role the BC Teachers' Federation has played in our province's history.

What makes the BCTF such a strong and unique organization in British Columbia? We are a union of professionals. We blend traditional trade unionism with a deep commitment to professional development, teacher autonomy, and ensuring the voice of teachers is heard in shaping education policy.

While collective bargaining, grievances, arbitrations, and other labour relations work is core to our efforts, there is no shortage of professional development opportunities within the Federation.

We also work hard to promote and enhance member wellness, social justice, and the quality of our education system through our public campaigns. We have taken on racism and misogyny in our communities and schools. And, of course, we have fought for improved supports for children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

Over the last few years, we have pushed the government to improve Aboriginal education and adopt the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. It has also been BCTF members who have led the drive in their locals across the province to get districts to adopt anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies.

Through all of this, we have joined together with other labour organizations in BC, Canada, and internationally to defend public services and the rights of all workers. This includes our amazing win at the Supreme Court of Canada on November 10, 2016, from which the above photographs originate.

**Thank you for engaging with your union and our collective history. Enjoy this look back in time!**



Above: BCTF legal team (L to R: John Rogers, Diane MacDonald, Michael Sobkin, Steven Rogers) celebrate their win at the Supreme Court.

# Célébrons une HISTOIRE DE FIERTÉ COLLECTIVE BIENVENUE

**dans cette édition très spéciale de *Teacher***

Depuis 100 ans, la FECB écrit une histoire pleine de nombreux jalons. Au fur et à mesure de cette édition, vous découvrirez de nombreux exemples d'enseignants de la C.-B. et de notre Fédération réclamant la justice sociale, l'équité et l'amélioration de l'enseignement public. Dans certains cas, vous aurez l'impression que « plus les choses changent, plus elles restent les mêmes », mais dans bien d'autres instances, vous serez frappé par le rôle majeur tenu par la FECB dans l'histoire de notre province.

Pourquoi la FECB est-elle une organisation si forte et si unique en Colombie-Britannique? Nous sommes un syndicat de professionnels. Nous associons le syndicalisme traditionnel à un profond engagement en faveur du perfectionnement professionnel, de l'autonomie des enseignants et nous réclamons que la voix des enseignants soit entendue lors de l'élaboration de la politique en éducation.

Bien que la négociation collective, les griefs, les arbitrages et les autres relations de travail soient au cœur de nos efforts, il n'y a pas de pénurie de possibilités de perfectionnement professionnel au sein de la Fédération.

Nous nous efforçons également de promouvoir et d'améliorer le bien-être des membres, la justice sociale et la qualité de notre système éducatif grâce à nos campagnes publiques. Nous avons attaqué le racisme et la misogynie dans nos communautés et nos écoles. Et, bien sûr, nous nous sommes battus pour améliorer le soutien aux enfants, aux jeunes et aux adultes ayant des besoins particuliers.

Au cours des dernières années, nous avons poussé le gouvernement à améliorer l'éducation des Autochtones et à adopter les appels à l'action de la Commission de vérité et de réconciliation. Ce sont aussi les membres de la FECB qui ont mené la campagne, dans leurs sections locales, à travers la province, qui a amené les conseils scolaires à adopter des politiques anti-homophobes et anti-transphobes.

Grâce à tout cela, nous avons travaillé avec d'autres organisations syndicales en C.-B., au Canada et à l'étranger pour défendre les services publics et les droits de tous les travailleurs. Notre étonnante victoire à la Cour suprême du Canada le 10 novembre 2016, d'où proviennent les photographies ci-dessus, en est un exemple.

**Nous vous remercions de votre participation à votre syndicat et à notre histoire collective. Profitez de ce regard en arrière dans le temps!**



## Back to school issue

I AM JUST WRITING a quick note to say that this is a fantastic issue of the *Teacher* magazine. I am especially enjoying the articles about the revised curriculum, ideas which I am considering in relation to my own teaching practice. The infographic about teacher mentorship is exceptional. This format is an invitation to revisit a topic I have not thought about in a while. Best wishes. Bonne continuation!

—Ingrid Veilleux, Richmond teacher

## End tax payer support of private schools

I READ in the *Vancouver Sun* recently that \$341 million tax dollars are given to private schools in this province every year. This MUST end. This money should be spent on reducing our classroom size, as recently mandated by the courts. I do not have children but do pay a lot of income tax, and I don't want my taxes spent supporting rich kids in private schools. I want to support public schools. Please do what you can to make this issue an election issue in 2017.

—Kathleen Collin, Vancouver

## Years of mismanagement tossed out in 20 minutes

AFTER A LONG and bitter battle, the intransigent and inept BC Liberals have been forced by the highest court in the land to provide massive relief to BC's beleaguered classrooms in our K-12 public school system.

The Supreme Court of Canada supported the idea that the province had failed to preserve the underpinnings of collective bargaining and consultation. This was a clear victory for teachers' constitutional rights.

The damage done to our public system as our elementary and secondary schools tried, in vain, over the years, to cobble together local services and supports to compensate for the loss of a wide range of skilled and experienced staff (estimated at 3,000) in instructionally unsustainable situations.

The real tragedy of the province's mismanagement resulted in depriving an entire generation of special needs kids and their distressed families, the most vulnerable in our system, of the help they so desperately needed.

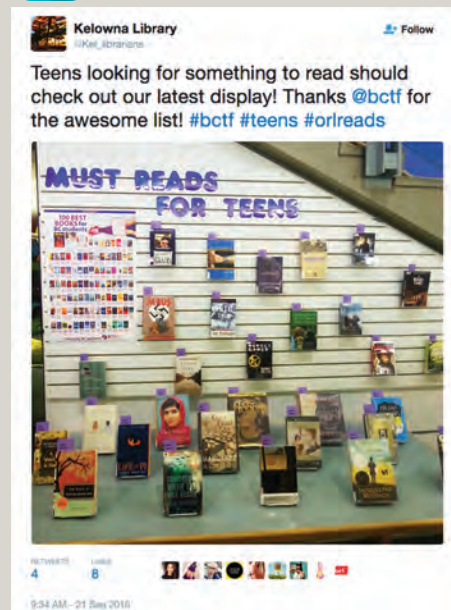
Christy Clark and her seven highly partisan and untrustworthy Education Ministers since 2002 should hang their heads in shame at the damage they have wrought on our public schools.

—Noel Herron, former Vancouver School Board trustee

## BCTF 100 best books lists well received



### Tweets



*Libraries and bookstores throughout the province put the lists to good use.*

**Chris Kennedy @chrkennedy**

Love the 100 Best Books Lists from BC teachers for elementary and secondary students (via @bctf) #bcd #westvaned

**Rod Mickleburgh @rodmickleburgh**

This is great, by #BCTF. A list of 100 best books for elementary, secondary school students. Available here: [www.bctf.ca/100bestbooks](http://www.bctf.ca/100bestbooks) #bcd

**Jen Stewart @fixbcd@rodmickleburgh**

100 great books for any age, not just kids!

**VanIntChildFest @vicf**

100 Best Books for BC Students: Great Book list by @bctf <http://bit.ly/2cpyadf> Happy 100th btw! #bctfbestbooks

**Fiona Morrow @fionamorrow**

My kid is going to love ticking these off.

**Georgette Walker @rapunzel543**

Loving the new posters for #BCTFbestbooks! Great choices for kids, families and teachers! #bcd #bctf2016 #kidlit

**Sue Stroud @suestroud@rapunzel543 @**

BCTF is there a book about unions, we need children's books about unions and union history?

**HaHaisla Nation @Haisla\_Nation**

In the list for secondary school, at number 17 is Haisla author Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*!

**Jessica Bonin @jess\_bonin**

#bctfbestbooks, and I've got almost all of them in our collection [bctf.ca/best100books](http://bctf.ca/best100books)

**Renuka @RenukaSenaratne**

So many of my favourite titles on this list of #100bestbooks for BC students. #readaloud #bctfbestbooks

**Claire Thompson @clthompson**

100 Best Books for Elementary Students and 100 Best Books for Secondary Students. Good stuff!

**Shawn McKean @shawnmckean**

I have loved sharing so many of these #bctfbestbooks with students over the years. Dig in!





BCTF General Secretary  
Charles Ovans

# BCTF leader drafted INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS CHARTER for teachers

IN CANADA, it is hardly news that teachers have rights. But it wasn't always so, nor is it the case in every country even today.

In the last half of the 20th Century, the international community agreed on certain fundamental rights that should be recognized by all countries. The cornerstone, of course, was the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Other international laws have followed including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and, most recently, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

It is widely known that Canadian lawyer John Humphrey wrote the first draft of the *Universal Declaration*, but it is less well known that a Canadian teacher was a lead drafter of the *ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*, the international law regarding the rights and responsibilities of the teaching profession.

"It's a charter of immense significance," according to the late Norm Goble, former General Secretary of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP).

In a 2006 interview, Goble said that the WCOTP lobbied UNESCO for years to create "a charter of teachers' rights and responsibilities." Eventually UNESCO agreed, and formally asked the WCOTP to prepare a working document for such a charter.

That's when Charlie Ovans was seconded to the International Labour Organization in Geneva to work on the Recommendation. Ovans served as BCTF General Secretary from 1944 until his retirement in 1973.

"Ovans was a giant of the formative years of teacher unionism in Canada," said Goble. "He was a great man, a great thinker."

The first of the Recommendation's Guiding Principles reflect the brilliant mind and open heart that people often ascribed to Ovans:

*Education from the earliest school years should be directed to the all-round development of the human personality*

*and to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community, as well as to the inculcation of deep respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; within the framework of these values the utmost importance should be attached to the contribution to be made by education to peace and to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups.*

Ovans's work went through many drafts and was subjected to lengthy discussions in many arenas, but finally the document was indeed passed on October 5, 1966, at a Special Intergovernmental Conference in Paris.

Goble believed the Recommendation was so important that it ought to be commemorated annually. "I was very much in favour of giving it the maximum exposure and promotion." He took the idea of an annual event to the WCOTP Executive Board, which wholeheartedly passed a recommendation to go forward to UNESCO.

In 1993, at the founding Congress of Education International in Stockholm, UNESCO announced the official designation of World Teachers' Day as October 5, the anniversary of the Recommendation's signing.

The 50th Anniversary of the Recommendation was celebrated by Education International (EI), along with the heads of UNESCO and the ILO, at a ceremony at the United Nations headquarters in New York City in September 2016. EI's report noted that: "The Recommendation creates no divisions between 'trade union' questions and 'professional' ones. Both are related to the status of teachers, depend on teachers having recognition and representation, and largely determine the quality of learning."

The section on "Professional freedom" was relevant in 1966 and continues to be relevant today, as teachers participate in

revising the entire BC curriculum and exercise their autonomy in the pedagogy that brings that curriculum to life. It reads:

61. *The teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties. Since teachers are particularly qualified to judge the teaching aids and methods most suitable for their pupils, they should be given the essential role in the choice and the adaptation of teaching material, the selection of textbooks and the application of teaching methods, within the framework of approved programmes, and with the assistance of the educational authorities.*

62. *Teachers and their organizations should participate in the development of new courses, textbooks, and teaching aids.* ■

The full Recommendation can be found at <http://bit.ly/2cO90mV>.

BCTF General Secretary Charlie Ovans made a long journey from teaching in an isolated rural school in BC in 1933 to helping prepare a teachers' status manifesto for ILO and UNESCO in Geneva in 1965. He continued to serve the teaching profession until his retirement in 1973.



1917

# What were students reading?

By Catherine Quanstrom,  
Smithers teacher

**IN THE** nickel-mining town of Thompson, Manitoba, in the early 1960s, my winters were punctuated by the monthly arrival of a fat, brown parcel from the provincial outreach library in Winnipeg.

Out would come the scissors and, with my mother cautioning me to "be careful and watch the dust jackets," I'd snip open the package to reveal the trove of books we had chosen a few weeks earlier from the library's mail-order catalogue.

The stories of Thornton W. Burgess were my early favorites, particularly *Old Mother West Wind* with its tales of Reddy Fox, Jimmy Skunk, and all the other inhabitants of the Green Forest.

Interestingly, many of the stories I enjoyed 50 years ago had already been around for five decades or more. A list compiled by BCTF librarian Emily O'Neill shows that in 1917 children were enjoying many titles that would later prove to be classics, including *Anne of Green Gables* and the other splendid "Anne" books by L.M. Montgomery. L. Frank Baum's tales of Oz were a favourite too.

*The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, tales by Jack London that were set during the Klondike Gold Rush, weren't necessarily

written for a youth audience. Initially serialized in popular magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and later published in



**A senior third reader class at Tolmie School, 1916.**

Image used courtesy of Saanich Archives; accession number 2013-009-005.

Children were enjoying many titles that would later prove to be classics.

baby is raised by the dead residents of a cemetery.

Some titles popular in 1917 have melted into obscurity. Lucy Fitch Perkins's "Twins" series (*The Dutch Twins*, *The Japanese Twins*, *The Irish Twins*, and so on) were written for very young children, and offer glimpses of life in various countries 100 years ago. Unfortunately, the books also contain antiquated views of gender roles, even though the author herself wrote and illustrated in order to support her family following a financial setback.

The *Bobbsey Twins* series, about two sets of sleuthing boy-girl twins and their friends, has also disappeared from popular reading lists. I'm in favour of that deletion, since even I, an uncritical and omnivorous young reader in the 1960s, found the stories clogged with implausible plots and syrupy dialogue.

In thinking about the changes the world has seen since 1917, I'm heartened that many stories popular then still have currency today. I think it's time to peruse the list and reread some old favorites. After all, a good story is a good story. *Romeo and Juliet*, anyone? ■

47 languages, the novels feature animal protagonists navigating harsh and puzzling mileux within the world of men. In addition to London's beautifully detailed and descriptive prose, the perennial appeal of these narratives, and their popularity in 1917, may lie in the way children and youth are more able than adults to identify with the canine heroes and their struggles against overwhelming odds.

As a secondary school English teacher, I know that many teens prefer stories with an element of overt challenge and struggle. Most of today's youth will have encountered Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* either through Disney's 1967 animation, or by the 2016 live action/CGI production. In 1917, however, Kipling had a considerable readership for his tales set in the jungles of colonial India. Then as now, young readers would have related to a protagonist having to negotiate the rules of an alien environment, much as they found themselves trying to understand the protocols of the adult world.

A span of over 100 years offers many opportunities for adaptations and critiques of the imperialist assumptions of the era. *The Jungle Book* has inspired several films, a play, audiobook versions, comic books, and manga. Author Neil Gaiman put his own spin on the story in *The Graveyard Book*; rather than being raised by jungle creatures, an orphaned



**Sources:** *Bobbsey Twins in a Great City*: 1917; public domain.

*The Call of the Wild*: 1903; public domain.







A log schoolhouse in  
Salmon Arm, BC.

Source: Library and Archives  
Canada/PA-017881

## Rules for teachers

1. You will not marry during the term of your contract.
2. You are not to keep company with men.
3. You must be home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless at a school function.
4. You may not loiter downtown in any of the ice cream stores.
5. You may not travel beyond the city limits unless you have permission of the chairman of the school board.
6. You may not ride in carriages or automobiles with any man except your father or brother.
7. You may not smoke cigarettes.
8. You may not dress in bright colours.
9. You may under no circumstances dye your hair.
10. You must wear at least two petticoats.
11. Your dresses may not be any shorter than two inches above the ankles.
12. To keep the classroom neat and clean you must sweep the floor once a day, scrub the floor with hot soapy water once a week, clean the blackboards once a day and start the fire at 7 a.m. to have the school warm by 8 a.m. when the scholars arrive.

Whether or not these "rules" are authentic is up for debate—their source remains unknown. However, we are sure you'll find them authentically entertaining!

1918

Mildred



## A day in the life

MILDRED'S first teaching post was on Denman Island, one of the shaggy evergreen islands between Victoria and the B.C. mainland. On the morning of September 4, 1918, she rang the bell outside the one-room school house and welcomed her first class—nine children at five different grade levels.

"Say, it is some stunt," she wrote. "Talk about hard work! It sure keeps you going.... Have some of the craziest kids at school. Leo lisps and says plethant for present. Gilbert looks cross-eyed but never ventures a word."<sup>7</sup>

One fall day Mildred was awaiting a visit from the school inspector, when she heard heavy footsteps outside the school house. She shushed the children, patted down her hair and opened the door, smiling nervously. Instead of the inspector, however, she found a large angry ram which charged into the classroom. Everyone shrieked! The children clambered over desks and tumbled out the windows. Mildred seized a broom and shooed the ram out the door, but he came back the next day, and the next. "It's some ram," she concluded.

Excerpt from *No Plaster Saint: The Life of Mildred Osterhout Fabrni*, by Nancy Knickerbocker  
Talon Books: [talonbooks.com/books/no-plaster-saint](http://talonbooks.com/books/no-plaster-saint)







Stuart Thomson/City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 99-5228/Public domain

Above: 1923 BCTF Annual General Meeting, Vancouver.

# 1922

## You can't eat a rose

### The BCTF quest for pension security

By Linda Watson, Vice-Chair, Teachers' Pension Board, retired teacher

ELOISE JOHNSON smiled, fondly surveying her one-room schoolhouse on her last day on the job. After 43 years of service to her small, rural community, Eloise was retiring. She loved teaching, but at her age it was getting harder to get through the day. Eloise headed out to the tea being held in her honour in the garden of the chair of the town's school board.

Walking back to her rooming house with her lovely bouquet of flowers, she was quite excited. After all, this was June of 1922. Eloise knew that in 1921, the *Civil Servants' Pension Act* had been amended to allow school boards to offer pensions to their retiring employees. With the consent of the local town council, a pension would be granted. The town council requirement was a last-minute amendment to the legislation while it was in the House. This worried Eloise a bit, but surely her many years of service would be rewarded.

Eagerly, Eloise awaited news of her pension being granted. Alas, the school board and the municipal council took no action, and no motion was passed for a pension. Eloise's experience was repeated around the province. Not a single teacher received a pension under the legislation of 1921.



### The BCTF path to pensions

**1919** BCTF officially began its quest for pensions with a Special General Meeting motion asking the provincial government to introduce a Superannuation Fund for teachers.

**1921** *Civil Servants' Pension Act* was amended allowing school boards to offer pensions to retiring employees. Boards had to match teachers' contributions themselves, with no financial help from the province.

**1923** A *B.C. Teacher* letter lamented, "It is indeed a sorry reflection on the vaunted educational process of the province that the few pioneers that will stay with the teaching profession are destined to end their lives in penury."

**1924** Teachers were expected to work as long as they could. Once they became ill, they had to rely on their savings, which

Not a single teacher received a pension under the legislation of 1921.

given the low salaries were virtually impossible to accumulate, then their family members, then charities in the community like the Salvation Army or the church. The following illustrates why the BCTF advocated for retirement security: *Taken ill in the middle of her 37th year of teaching, this teacher could not finish the school year. There was no sick leave, so she received no salary. Her meagre savings were quickly depleted with medical expenses. That June, she appealed to the school board for "some small annual gratuity." The school board refused, so she approached the provincial government. It, too, refused her request, saying that pensions were a local matter. That year the Education Department records listed eleven similar cases.*

**1927** BC Legislature approved a \$6,000 fund to provide a retiring allowance to teachers who were unable to continue in the classroom. A few older teachers received modest allowances from this fund. BCTF efforts in this era were supported by the provincial Labour party and by the Trades and Labour Congress, with which the BCTF was affiliated.



## Pensions were reduced by about one-third during the war years.

**1929** *B.C. Teachers' Pension Act* passed. Teachers contributed 4% of their salary. They could receive a pension of \$25 per year for each year of service, to a maximum pension of \$750 a year. A small annuity was added from the teacher's own contributions.

**1940** The Plan failed because of underfunding—pensions were reduced by about one-third during the war years.

**1941** A new *Teachers' Pension Act* set contributions at 3% of salary up to \$100 a month, and 4% on salary over that amount. The teachers contributed twice as much as government.

**1961** Significant changes to the pension formula were made, basing the pension on years of service, age at retirement, and final average salary—features that continue to this day.

**1966** Canada Pension Plan established. The Teachers' Pension Plan was integrated with it.

**1969** BCTF lobbied government in 1969 and 1970, asking for significant changes, including increases to the pensions of retired teachers.

**1971** Government increased pension benefits for active teachers, changing the average salary calculation from 10 years to 7 years, and approving a "90" factor if age 60 or more to reduce the penalty for early retirement. They increased government contributions by 10% to \$548 per teacher annually.

However, only a very small increase was provided for retired teachers. This prompted the first province-wide teacher strike in BC history, a one-day strike on March 19, 1971, to support retirees. The strike did not result in immediate improvements for retired teachers, but it demonstrated the resolve and unity of

the BCTF, and it laid the groundwork for the pension changes implemented after a change in government.

**1974** NDP government agreed to match teachers' contributions to the plan for the first time. Government and BCTF increased contributions by 1% to provide for indexing and a one-time adjustment to existing pensions.

**1975** Indexing was guaranteed and applied quarterly based on the change in the Consumer Price Index.

**1980** Government Inflation Adjustment Account made indexing as a contingent benefit—cost-of-living increases would be provided annually if there was sufficient money.

**1981** Superannuation Commission established an Investment Committee that included BCTF representation.

**1992** The pension eligibility or "vesting" was reduced from 10-years service to 5 years. (Note: immediate vesting is now in effect.)

**1993** Member contributions terminated after 35 years of pensionable service.

**1994** TPP began providing subsidies for retiree health benefits based on years of pensionable service. The plan paid 100% of premiums for MSP, extended health, and dental (1995) plans for retirees with 10+ years of service. Pension Advisory Board was established with three reps each from BCTF and government but Cabinet made the appointments and controlled the rules.

**1996** Plan allowed up to five years of child rearing credit for contributory service, and expanded the right of teachers to purchase service for leaves of absence.

**2000** The NDP government negotiated to move the four public sector pension plans (Teachers', College, Municipal, and Public Service) from statutory plans to Joint Trusteeship. In a referendum, BCTF members voted 87%, BCRTA voted 100%, BCPVPA voted 92%, and the BCSSA voted 96%, all in favour.

**2001** The Joint Trust began with decision-making authority equally shared between government and the BCTF. Purchase of service rules were simplified and pensionable service calculations became more flexible. Members benefitted from a more direct appeal process. The Pension Board advocated for responsible investment practices.

**2005** Membership in the pension plan became mandatory for all employees, ensuring that everyone earns pension credit from day one of employment.

**2010** Since cost-of-living increases remain a contingent benefit, the Pension Board moved to protect the Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA) by ending the subsidies for health benefits, directing that money into the inflation account. AGM voted to have active members pay an additional 1% into the IAA. Retirees have access to health benefits but must pay 100% costs.

**2015** A province-wide consultation of plan members was undertaken by the BCTF.

**2016** The AGM approved changes that will come into effect on January 1, 2018, modernizing the plan, improving equity, and delinking it from CPP, protecting members from future changes in the Canada Pension Plan. With these design reforms and the power of the Joint Trust, your pension plan and the BCTF are poised to safeguard retirement income security for BC's teachers for another 100 years.

One of the finest achievements of the BCTF over its history has been its advocacy and stewardship of pensions for BC teachers. Your teacher pension is likely to be your biggest financial asset. It will keep you out of poverty in your senior years. Your employer is required to contribute at least as much as you do in support of your pension. Since 2001, your defined benefit pension plan is jointly controlled by teachers and government, a rarity in Canada, and is required to be fully funded. ■



BCTF President Hilda Cryderman.  
BCTF file photo.



The Vernon girls' baseball team, 1926. A young Hilda Cryderman is highlighted in purple.  
Photo credit: F&M Salt/Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

1954

# A REDOUBTABLE WOMAN of wit and will

BCTF's first woman President Hilda Cryderman

By **Marian Dodds**, Vancouver author and retired teacher

**BY ALL ACCOUNTS** an impressive speaker, Hilda Cryderman was known for being in the BC vanguard in the fight for equal pay for equal work when she became the BCTF's first female president in 1954. An exceptional teacher, administrator, and education activist, Hilda was also an accomplished athlete and a gold medalist contralto who, according to a 1955 profile in the *Vancouver Sun*, was also "completely feminine and just loved hats." The way she presided over the 1955 AGM was described as "smooth as silk".

*Miss Cryderman the king pin, happy, poised, capable, confident, with a great sense of humour, presided in one of her perky hats. Her brain was clear to unravel unexpected problems; swift to make decisions; experienced in keeping order. These things made the yearly parley a memorable parliament of teachers. Her year as head of BC teachers has been a period of bountiful harvest. And has increased the stature of women in public life.*

— The Vancouver Sun, 1955.

Born to a pioneer family in Vernon in 1904, Hilda's happy childhood was spent captaining sports teams, playing lead roles in musicals, singing solos in church, and working as a youth counsellor. After attending Normal School in Victoria, she began her teaching career at Coldstream Elementary in the Okanagan where she soon became one of the first woman principals in BC.

**“But don't forget, most of all I'm a teacher.**

When Hilda applied to be a principal she reported they wanted a man, for discipline purposes. "The trustees were dubious...they scratched their heads, mumbled in their beards... we really would prefer a man." Her response: "I can do just as good a job as a man." Her secret to success? "I bought them a soccer ball and one day I gave it a mighty kick to the end of the field and from that day on I had no problems." No wonder she was called redoubtable!

Determined to gain equal pay for rural teachers and for women teachers, Hilda became the first woman president of the Okanagan Valley Teachers' Association in 1936. She chaired the negotiating committee that won equal pay for women teachers. She also found time to pioneer the

CBC *School of the Air* broadcasts, meant to advance school music programs.

While working as a principal between 1924–37 Hilda found time to attain a UBC degree in economics and history. In 1939 she moved to Vernon Senior High School, pioneering counselling in BC schools as one of the first girls' counsellors in addition to teaching business law, international studies, and social studies.

In 1942 Hilda was recruited by the BC Department of Labour to organize 100 secondary school students to "save the berry crop" in the Fraser Valley after the Japanese-Canadian farmers were interned. These berries were processed and shipped to Britain for jam for the armed services. From 1943–45 she served the Canadian Legion Educational Services as educational counsellor for the Women's Forces of the Pacific Command. There she focused on aiding service women to extend their education, counselling them into university and vocational courses, to prepare them to advance within the forces, or to successfully return to civilian life.

After the war Hilda resumed her secondary school teaching and continued her



involvement in the local association, chairing the Okanagan Valley Teachers' Association arbitration committee, where she had won equal pay for women teachers in the Okanagan Valley in 1946—a Canadian first. In 1953 she chaired the equal pay committee that successfully petitioned to enact the *Equal Pay Act* in BC using the slogan "Pay for the job." Active and well respected in her local association and beyond, Hilda explained that she got a phone call from a woman she didn't even know who said "We women think it's time for a woman president. We want to nominate you as Second Vice-President and help you up the ladder to the Presidency." In 1954 she became the BCTF's first woman president. She paid it forward too, mentoring Mollie Cottingham to lead the BCTF two years later, saying, "You have to be careful to make it possible for another woman to follow you."

In her president's report published in *The B.C. Teacher* she highlighted the great surge in professional interests and suggested: "It may well be that the time has come for the Federation to assist and promote in-service training—by the profession for the profession." During her tenure she also championed Future Teacher Clubs in 80 secondary schools, meant to encourage "quality as well as quantity" in the teaching force. She also thanked her substitute teacher and the Vernon School Board for granting her a half-time leave to be president!

From 1967–75 Hilda worked in Ottawa as Federal Commissioner to the Public Service Staff Relations Board with a mandate to certify units of the public service for bargaining rights. In a 1967 *Ottawa Citizen* profile she commented, "Women weren't getting opportunities to be principals as they once were," adding that "This is largely due to equal pay and the fact that better salaries are drawing more men into teaching."

During International Women's Year in 1975 Hilda travelled extensively across Canada and the United States speaking on women's rights and human rights. The BCTF Ferguson award was given to her in 1971, in 1977 she was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, and in 1985 she received the Order of Canada. The BCTF honoured Hilda as a recipient of the Order of Canada. In his report, Executive Director R.M. Buzza wrote: "In her absence, I presented a BCTF pin for Ms. Cryderman to her long-time companion Mrs. Nancy Jermyn."

At age 75 Hilda was invited to address the 1979 BCTF Status of Women conference. The October 18, 1979, *Teacher* reported highlights

## Women who have also served as BCTF President

of her speech: "The most important thing for a pioneer in any situation is to make it possible for another woman to follow you."

She spoke of her time as a counsellor encouraging girls who wanted to drop classes where they were made to feel unwelcome by the male teacher. In one instance Hilda explained how she selected five of the smartest girls in Grade 11 and said: "I have a proposition for you. Now Mr. X doesn't think girls should do physics so I want you to go in there and prove to him. I want you to lick the pants off every boy in that class." Three weeks later Mr. X told her "My, you have given me some wonderful girls in that class."

Throughout her life Hilda held leadership positions on numerous boards that reflected her interest in human rights and women's equality and led business and professional women's organizations. She occupied her spare time with public speaking, playing sports (soccer, basketball, and hockey), music festivals, singing in the United Church choir, and performing contralto in operas. Running unsuccessfully for the federal Liberal party three times in the Okanagan-Revelstoke riding, she was reported to have said without rancour, "My flurry into politics (in 1957) was fun. I happened to choose the wrong election." A woman of strong opinions, she said "Big business takeovers are bad for democracy. It means a concentration of pricing and services that's determined by businessmen, not the government." She also wasn't afraid to criticize her own party. "Decisions of today seem to be made by the Prime Minister and five of his top deputy ministers. I call it the Family Compact."

Describing herself as a "tomboy" in a 1979 interview with the *Vernon Daily News* she attributed this to her "excellent reputation as an athlete." A confident and capable woman who was a role model and mentor for many, she said: "I had to make a choice between marriage and a career because if you got married you had to resign. It didn't take me five seconds to make that choice." In an interview later in life where her many accomplishments were being praised she said: "But don't forget, most of all I'm a teacher."

The redoubtable and multi-talented Hilda Cryderman died in Vernon in 1985. ■



### Mollie E. Cottingham 1957–1958

- After an unprecedented struggle over teacher salaries, she resolved the impasse with tact.



### Isobel Cull 1964–1965

- Involved in BCTF workshops and curriculum development.
- Sat on the Canadian Teachers' Federation Board.



### Elsie McMurphy 1986–1989

- Led the BCTF during vote for unionization and gained full collective bargaining rights for teachers.



### Alice McQuade 1994–1997

- A passionate advocate for public education.
- A significant achievement was the first collective agreement that preserved all the provisions in local contracts.



### Jinny Sims 2004–2007

- A strong advocate for social justice.
- "The very act of teaching is political."



### Irene Lanzinger 2007–2010

- First female President of the BC Federation of Labour.
- "At the heart of our work is the knowledge that public education is the foundation of a democratic society."



### Susan Lambert 2010–2013

- Tireless fighter for social justice and staunch lobbyist for the independence of the teaching profession.

# From post-war Scotland to a log schoolhouse in the BC wilderness

**TEACHING was in the blood** *By Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Director*

**MORAG MHARI MCDUGALL** was a born teacher. Her mother Annie McDougall was a teacher, and so was her grandmother Mary McGuire before her. Her husband John was a teacher, and her firstborn daughter Jenny was also a teacher.

In 1951, at 20 years of age, Morag met John Cuthbertson at a dance at Glasgow's Jordanhill Teacher Training College.

Hailing from a long line of Ayrshire farmers, John was the first member of his family ever to graduate from university. Morag and he had high hopes for their future together but were dismayed by the gloomy post-war atmosphere, the endless rationing, and the demoralized public education system.

"Britain was a disaster zone," Morag recalls. "It was ghastly. I taught a class of 45 five-year olds. They were using the strap in primary school. I told them I had never seen a strap and had no intention of using one. I was ostracized in the staff room for staying after school doing my prep. Everybody was striking for cups of tea. John and I were terribly disappointed."

In 1955, Morag and John decided to heed the call of adventure and emigrate to Canada. They took a deep breath and bought passage to the port of Montreal. Morag and many other passengers suffered hideous seasickness throughout the crossing while John was the only one unaffected. He became used to eating solo in the ship's dining hall.

Next they travelled from Montreal to Kamloops by rail: "A most extraordinary journey.... Close to Kamloops, the train stopped in the middle of nowhere. There was no station, nothing.

Reaching the edge of town I thought we'd walked onto a movie set, with cowboys and Indians and horses tethered in the street."

Needing to earn their keep before the school year started, Morag and John worked picking apricots at a farm on the hill above Kalamalka Lake. Piling off the back of the big truck transporting workers, they encountered another first, the sight of a rattlesnake, dead but still writhing at the farm door.

John and Morag's first year teaching was in Lytton. The school district was so enormous Morag figured it was "equal to all of Scotland and half of England."

She found that becoming a member of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation brought some welcome surprises. "I got equal pay with the men! That was in 1955. It was the first time I got really thrilled with the BCTF."

Morag landed a split Grade 2-3 class. "They were literally climbing the walls," she laughed to recall. "I worked my butt off with them and I adored those kids." Of course the kids loved her back. They would constantly bring her treasures they found in the local hills: "endless arrowheads and natural things they knew I would love. These I left at the school, of course."

At the end of the year, the school inspector came to observe her class and gave Morag a glowing report. Then he told the principal to inform her she had to give up her job

because students might "think things" when they realized their teacher was pregnant.

Morag protested, challenging her principal with questions about what could possibly be seen as wrong when a young couple who have planned for and want children actually do get pregnant. "I said: 'Use me as your guinea pig to teach about healthy families.'" John offered to show their marriage certificate, to no avail.

A young colleague expressed the community's view when she told Morag: "We think pregnant women shouldn't be seen in the streets."

At home, Morag cried her eyes out. "To say I was upset doesn't nearly describe it." For the first and only time, she regretted coming to Canada and just wanted to go back home to Scotland where pregnancy was not shamed and mothers were appreciated and respected.

"I looked in my contract and technically he couldn't make me leave but I compromised and left at the end of May."

They decided to move to Vancouver Island and their daughter Jenny was duly born in Comox. Jenny later carried on her maternal lineage by going into primary teaching too, first in Vancouver, later in the Yukon, and eventually finishing her career in Calgary. Morag and John taught briefly in Cumberland on the East Coast of Vancouver Island, but the small community at that time was struggling, and it soon became time to move on again.

In the fall of 1957, the Cuthbertson family headed out to their next teaching post at a two-room log schoolhouse in Dunster, 545 km northeast of Lytton. As John drove hour after hour ever deeper into the forest, Morag began to feel increasingly nervous. "I wondered where in God's name he was taking us."

Finally the landscape opened up into a gorgeous wide valley and they had arrived in their new home, a humble teacherage. (That's like a parsonage, but for teachers.) It had a kitchen, one bedroom, an outdoor privy, and neither power nor water. "Illumination was by gas and paraffin lamps, which provided a mellow light. To this day, I still get a thrill opening a tap or turning on a light!"

*Morag and John today.*





In those days Dunster consisted of a train whistle stop, the school and teacherage, and a house or two. One of the homes sold food essentials out of the front room. Morag taught Grades 1–4 and John taught Grades 5–10. They found their students to be “lovely kids,” part of a strong farming community that highly valued education. The children grew up doing chores and “knew how to pitch in, the big boys fetching water for the school while I did that for the home. This entailed traversing the little meadow surrounding the buildings, crossing the graded road, and clambering down to the river.”

**“The school district was so enormous Morag figured it was “equal to all of Scotland and half of England.”**

By Christmas, Morag had also organized a Kindergarten class, based on her intense interest in early childhood learning. She developed a charting method to help her keep track of what she had covered with each student, since the range of abilities was so wide across the many grades in her classroom. It was a system that served her well throughout her career. “Professionally and personally it was an amazing experience.”

Come spring, the gumbo-like mud on the local roads was so deep that a friendly farmer from the pioneering McNaughton family had to hitch a sleigh to his tractor to transport neighbourhood kids to school. Indeed, on one of her missions to fetch water, Morag stepped off their doorstep and lost one of her deluxe Scottish suede winter boots forever in the thick mud of their garden.

Morag and John followed the teaching opportunities from Lytton to Cumberland

*The Dunster log schoolhouse was built in 1932 and served the community until it burned down in 1963. It was replaced by another two-room building, which operated in SD57 until funding shortages forced its closure in 2010.*

to Dunster, then onto Bamfield and later Cranbrook. Their arrival in Bamfield was dramatically inauspicious as Morag, heavy with her second child, stepped off the school board chair’s fishing boat onto the teacherage pier, and fell through the rotting wood with one leg! Over the years their family grew to embrace four daughters: Jenny, Karen, Moira, and Annie.

Both Morag and John were “devoted members” of the BCTF, and he became more active in the Federation while in Cranbrook. When the 1964–65 round of local bargaining came around, he was the salary negotiating chair. As a math teacher, he was a real asset at the bargaining table.

“John is super-serious and his concentration is awesome,” Morag said. Despite his serious ways, people were often disarmed. They told me, “He’d smile, and it would be like the moon coming over the mountain.”

“He got us a 6% pay rise. It was a super contract—not just for teachers, but for everybody,” she said. “On those occasions I realized we had something special with the BCTF.”

For the final phase of their careers, they were teaching in West Vancouver. Morag had a heavy load. “I was keeping house for the six of us and teaching full time. I had a student teacher and a difficult

superintendent. I was studying Spanish to travel with John, and trying to learn the cello for my own satisfaction.” Because of her extensive background in music, Morag was offered a job in a music school where she had the opportunity to develop programs and grow as a professional.

“From my first year in a Glasgow dockside school with 45 in my class, then to an Ayrshire mining village, followed by a move to remote locations in Canada, winding up in salubrious West Vancouver, eventually switching to teaching music and finally adults at the college level, it has been a great ride! Looking back, I can’t believe how lucky I was. Teaching was the perfect job for me. I loved it passionately.” ■

*Below: John looks on as the 1965 Cranbrook teachers’ agreement is signed.*



Smug looks are justified in a history-making agreement at Cranbrook. Signing for teachers, at left, Rod Joyce, CTA president, and for the school board, Ben Dale. Standing, left to right, are Morley Oben, Board Secretary-Treasurer, and Agreements Committee Jack Sandberg, John Cuthbertson (chairman) and Gary Mitchell.

—BCTF Newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1965



*Left: A tractor-borne sleigh served as a schoolbus in the spring and fall, operated by the McNaughton family.*

*Right: John and Morag in their Dunster teaching days, with baby Jenny, herself a future teacher.*





# Activists got talent



Teacher singers at rallies, demonstrations, and other teacher events have been a long and proud tradition. A video sampling of songs from the 1970s to the present will be available for viewing soon. Top songs from the BCTF's rally singers' greatest hits include:

- The-I-Can't-Help-Feeling-Like-I'm-Not-a-Real-Teacher-'Cuz-I'm-Only-on-Temporary-Blues
- Full Pension Indexing Song
- The Teacher Stress Song
- No one Voted For That
- Lament for Education
- As Long as It Takes and more!

The performance, taped at the November 2016 Federation Leadership Institute, features More Than Just Pay, a teacher group led by Geoff Peters, retired Director of Communications and Campaigns Division, who have been performing at teacher events for decades.

## BCTF activism though song

**COMING SOON to the BCTF online museum! To honour the BCTF's 100th anniversary, a vital part of BCTF history will soon debut in our online museum at [bctf.ca/history/](http://bctf.ca/history/).**

## Check out this book!

### Creating a living library



When leaders retire, what happens to their collective knowledge and skills? Instead of losing that stored wisdom, it can be shared through the process of creating a living library. That is what happened at the 2016 Fall Representative Assembly. The human repositories of amazing experiences were loaned out for periods of time to the "readers" attending the Representative Assembly who wanted to hear their stories. Luckily, all the borrowers returned their books on time so no one was charged with kidnapping! The following "living books" kindly and generously agreed to be our first, but probably not our last, titles in our living library collection. To listen to some of their stories visit the BCTF online museum at [bctf.ca/history/](http://bctf.ca/history/).



### Ken Novakowski

Langley social studies teacher, local union president, bargaining staff member at the BCTF, president of the BCTF, executive director of the BCTF, co-ordinator and contributor to the Labour History Project. Either Ken is one of the most knowledgeable teacher activists ever or he simply cannot hold down a job. Either way, he makes for a very interesting read.



### David Chudnovsky

Surrey English teacher, local union president, BCTF president at the time of the infamous and unconstitutional stripping of our collective agreements, David developed a strong relationship between the first multi-racial teachers' union, SADTU, in South Africa and the teachers of BC. David is currently a Steven Spielberg wannabe (and look-a-like) as he is one of the co-producers of Vancouver's annual South African Film Festival.



### Merle Williams

Haida teacher, activist and wise woman, Merle taught in Delta for decades. Merle wanted to give back to her union so she volunteered to be on the Aboriginal Education Task Force, formed in 1998. She became the first staff person for the Aboriginal Education Program at the BCTF. The first time she got the job it was only for a six-month position. However, the executive of the BCTF knew they had a good thing going with Merle. They hired her again for another four years to do more ground-breaking work in Aboriginal Education.



### Carol Johns

Carol has taught primary children for over forty years. She was a teacher leader for the Primary Program and helped shepherd full-day Kindergarten successfully into the school system. She brought Teacher Inquiry to Cranbrook, helping countless teachers examine their practice through the inquiry process. Carol is not only a wonderful addition to any library collection to learn more about the professional life of a teacher, but she can share the best kids' games ever!



### Patricia Clough

Mom, grandma, teacher, activist, all of those are apt descriptions for Patricia. Currently the president of the Retired Teachers' Association, Patricia has been president of the North Okanagan Shuswap Teachers' Association, Provincial Specialist Association council chair and on the executive of the BCTF. Patricia is a lifetime member of her local and the BCTF, an honour only given to the most prolific and interesting "books."



# Cold War paranoia

FROM 1959 through the mid 1980s, the RCMP Security Service conducted surveillance on the BCTF and other unions. Activities such as a BCTF AGM motion to hear speakers from the Peace Education Institute, a motion to oppose the testing of nuclear weapons, and the creation of a strike fund were highlighted in an RCMP folder of 1,746 pages on suspected communist influence in the BCTF.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE											
DIVISION FILE NO. _____		CODE No. 0900									
DIVISION "E"	SUB-DIVISION S.I.B.	DETACHMENT Vancouver									
PROVINCE British Columbia		DATE 18-5-62									
RE: TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF B. C. (Communist Activities Wing) - British Columbia											
<div style="float: right; text-align: right;">           603            D. S. I.            MAY - 1962            P.C.M.         </div> <div style="float: right; text-align: right;">SECRET</div> <div style="float: right; text-align: right;">PY</div>											
<div style="float: left; width: 25%;">           FILE REFS.            HEADQUARTERS            SUB-DIVISION            DETACHMENT            P.C.R.            Cof. &amp; A.            completed and            A.R.V. No.            out &amp; Div. copies made.            19-7-72            REVIEWED            S.I. FILES-NO. 1 SEQ            DIARY DA            DATE 24-8-62            1-6-62         </div> <div style="float: right; width: 75%;"> <p><b>INFORMATION</b></p> <p>1. the 1962 B.C. TEACHERS' FEDERATION Annual Convention held from 23-4-62 to 26-4-62 at the Vancouver Hotel, Vancouver, B. C. the following topics which could be considered as of a political nature were raised:</p> <p>2. On Monday 23-4-62 from the Vancouver Secondary School Teachers' Association moved that the Convention body be given ten to fifteen minutes of their time to hear speakers from the <u>Peace Research Institute</u>. was very forceful for time to be allotted for these speakers. The motion was seconded by A wanted a definite time limit set for the speakers and a spoke against the motion, stating it was not convention business. A vote was taken and the motion was defeated.</p> <p>3. on 26-4-62 the following were elected to the Executive of the B.C. Teachers' Federation</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>President:</td> <td>Mr. H.M. PALSSON</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Vice-President:</td> <td>Mr. F.J. CAIRNIE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second Vice-President:</td> <td>Mr. D.J.S. SMITH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sec. Treasurer:</td> <td>Mr. I.A. CULL</td> </tr> </table> <p>4. during discussion of new business on 26-4-62 approximately one-half hour prior to the conclusion of the Convention, it was decided that the B. C. TEACHERS' FEDERATION raise a \$500,000 sinking fund to bolster the B.C. TEACHERS' FEDERATION's position in regard to future salary negotiations. It was inferred that this fund could be used to pay teachers' salaries in the event of a strike.</p> <p>5. Also, during discussion of new business and immediately prior to the conclusion of the Convention, of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association Salary Committee moved that the B.C.T.F. go on record as opposing the testing of nuclear weapons.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">....2....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">18-5-62</p> </div>				President:	Mr. H.M. PALSSON	First Vice-President:	Mr. F.J. CAIRNIE	Second Vice-President:	Mr. D.J.S. SMITH	Sec. Treasurer:	Mr. I.A. CULL
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Sec. Treasurer:	Mr. I.A. CULL										

Editor's note:  
"Mr." Cull is really Isobel Cull, BCTF President 1964-65.

1967

# It's been NICE KNOWING you

## Memories of almost five decades at the BCTF

By Kathy Powell, retired BCTF staff

**WHEN I STARTED** working at the BCTF in 1967 I was the youngest person on staff... a shy, not-so-confident 17-year-old, wearing a turquoise and white sleeveless dress with an empire waist. Yes, I remember what I wore on that hot August day as I nervously set foot into the BCTF building at 2235 Burrard Street.

Now that I am leaving the BCTF at 550 West 6th Avenue, I believe I am the oldest person on staff... a not-so-shy, confident 65-year-old wearing jeans.

**What happened to the time? And what happened to the "good old days" at the BCTF? Days when:**

- Women couldn't wear pants to work... unless they were part of a co-ordinated, polyester pantsuit.
- The cover for your typewriter could not be put in place one second before 5:00 p.m.
- Non-smokers had no rights, and the ashtray on my desk overflowed.
- I took shorthand, dictated to me by the personnel office manager. Later, my turquoise and white dress became sweat stained as I attempted to translate my scribbles into a perfectly formatted BCTF letter.
- There were no staff collective agreements.
- The staff spring tea went on late into the evening. It ended when there was not a drop of liquor remaining.
- The staff Christmas party was held in the BCTF Auditorium. It ended when there was not a drop of liquor remaining.

- Driving to work was traffic jam free, and you wore no seatbelt. There was no Transportation Alternatives Committee and you would have been considered an oddball if you rode a bike.
- The "no pants rule for women" was done away with and hot pants became acceptable. Mine were lavender.
- Not only was there a selection of juices but there were cookies on every table at every coffee break in the staffroom. My favourites were ginger swirls.
- Communications were by phone, through the postal system or, my favorite, in person.
- Modified work weeks did not exist.
- Your calendar was made of paper and you used a pen to record your appointments.
- Gambling on lunch break was condoned with money openly exchanging hands. The records I kept in my daytimer revealed that I won more than I lost.
- You corrected your typos with a typewriter eraser that ate through the onionskin paper that you threw into a

**Non-smokers had no rights, and the ashtray on my desk overflowed.**

wastebasket along with everything else that went into the landfill.

- Perfume and after shave wafted through the halls.
- The average age of staff was much younger and, at any given time, there were several pregnancies. I think the record was six. Kathleen Smith and I were pregnant together with our firstborns. Now we bring our grandchildren to the children's Christmas party.
- Purchasing was responsible for storing, under lock and key, the liquor inventory for Executive Committee meetings.
- The staff barbecues were held in a field next to the outdoor parking lot where bunnies hopped freely. We didn't pollute the outside air with our cigarette smoke—we would return to the building and smoke in any given area with the exception of the area surrounding the printing presses in production, where highly flammable products were present. It wasn't always the case that this area was off-limits to smokers. It became the case after a fire department inspection.
- The only elevator was the dumb waiter, which was not for human use but some were dumb enough to use it on a dare when the personnel office manager was not on-site.
- A BCTF "uniform" for female staff became all the rage. This was initiated by a group of us who thought it ridiculous to spend so much of our \$250 a month paycheque on work clothes. I was on the committee to choose the fabric and colour. It was a challenge but, by consensus, we chose periwinkle blue polyester. I was also on the sub-committee to select the pieces. We decided on full-length pants, dress (mini), vest, skirt (mini), and hot pants. Most of us ordered all five and wore them religiously until we became sick and tired of looking at each other in the same clothes.

Those are a few of my many memories, but by far my fondest, are the people I have enjoyed working with over my entire adult life and some of my childhood.

My work years have been my education years, learning from the best....

- The union sisters who mentored me to take on challenges and contribute in ways I never thought possible.
- My BCTF colleagues who I respect and admire. I wish I could name you but, in doing so, I would surely miss some. ■



BCTF staff Kathy Powell, Shirley Cox, and Terry Watson at the 1976 BCTF AGM.



# BCTF taught me social justice

By Donna Coulombe, BCTF Executive Offices Director

**I STARTED WORKING** at the BCTF in 1976 at the age of 22. My prior work experience had been in the private sector corporate world with a short stint in a government.

My first BCTF job was working in the Professional Development (PD) Division (now Professional and Social Issues Division), specifically the Learning Conditions program.

I had stepped into a world that I had not experienced before. I had been totally unaware, as a student in the public school system, that my teachers had this whole rich “other life” of professional development and activism.

In my prior jobs the “bosses” had all been male and I had witnessed capable women passed over for promotion in favour of younger men strictly because of their gender.

The BCTF was quite different. I saw that women held positions of authority, women’s issues were discussed, women made decisions that affected the direction of the organization, women supported, trained, and nurtured one another not only in the BCTF workplace but in their activist roles. I thought it had always been this way at the BCTF. I was not aware of the battle that was being waged by the brave BCTF women activists who were fighting to be heard in their organization. The Status of Women staff position and the Status of Women Committee were still fairly new to the Federation. The work these women were doing astounded me and informed my own developing sense of what was right and how society should be.

The other, much welcomed, difference at my new workplace was the absence of any form of sexual harassment or hint of it. In my previous workplaces, sexual and provocative comments toward women were commonplace and accepted as the norm. I found myself smiling as I went to work at the BCTF, knowing that there would not be those uncomfortable comments and innuendos to contend with.

The PD Division housed the Program Against Racism. I grew up in Vancouver’s East End and attended public schools so the concept of racism was not new to me. I had never experienced working with people who were committed to breaking down the barriers caused by racism. Today the BCTF still works

**“In my previous workplaces sexual and provocative comments towards women were commonplace and accepted as the norm.**

toward an organization and a society that is inclusive and that values diversity. In the 1970s the BCTF was leading in this work and it was reflected in the practices in the workplace.

In the 1990s the issues of homophobia and heterosexism were starting to emerge. I was working in the Executive Offices and witnessed first-hand the public backlash against the BCTF leaders and the work the organization was doing on behalf of people who were marginalized both in the organization and society. The uproar was quite shocking and the BCTF received hundreds of angry phone calls denouncing the BCTF for its progressive work on these very real issues.

Working at the BCTF has influenced the development of my own beliefs about what a just and inclusive society could and should be. I carry these beliefs with me wherever I go. They inform my discussions with family and friends. My children also benefitted by what I learned while working at the BCTF. The values that the Federation instilled in me were carried forward into my parenting. It is the classic pebble in the pond scenario. Even if my family and friends do not agree with me about the positions I take on social justice issues I hope that our discussions, and sometimes arguments, over these important concepts have planted a seed of awareness.

As I near the end of my career at the BCTF I want to thank BCTF members and staff for your courage in fighting so hard to make changes in the public school system and in our society and world. You have taught me to always speak up in the face of injustice.

**Congratulations on your 100th. I will be cheering you on every step of the way. ■**





# Smacked into submission

Corporal punishment meant fear-based classrooms

By Susan Telfer, Sunshine Coast author and teacher

**I DON'T REMEMBER** if it was a strap or a ruler, but what I remember clearly is being alone with the principal in his office, the sun streaming through the window, and the thwack on my hand. He was a man I had rarely seen, did not know, and he hit me without censure, because parents didn't question schools in 1973. I remember hating that man with childhood intensity before I knew concepts such as justice or violation.

I was in Grade 1 in a split class in a rural two-room annex school. Every morning we said the Lord's Prayer; there were weekly spelling tests; around the piano we sang "O Susanna" and "Clementine" while Miss Mackenzie played. All adults were Mr. or Mrs. or Miss, except for maybe the hippies up the inlet who talked to my mother in the Laundromat.

I remember chasing a red-haired girl around the field with many children following. I don't know if she had slighted me, or if I pursued her for some other reason. I don't remember if we caught her, or if I had wanted to. But I remember the sting as the principal struck my hand, and the terror.

I didn't know that I would have been one of the last children in the province to receive corporal punishment at school. By incremental steps, the world was changing beyond my home and playground in ways I could not see. Up the road the residential school was about to close. Across the province, the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Labour Relations Board began, and on February 14, 1973, the BC School Act was amended to ban violence against children. It may have taken a while for the news to reach our rural schoolhouse, for I was hit after the Valentine's Day that law was changed. Within a few years, however, we'd be making macramé plant holders and learning folk dances from our teachers at lunchtime.

Tyranny of adults in schools, ruling by fear of humiliation—these old ways did not disappear overnight in my primary years, but were present here and there throughout my schooling. It was only when I entered Simon Fraser's Professional Development Program that I learned a different way of communicating with children and teens. I studied Rudolf Dreikurs's theory of mutual respect and William Glasser's theory of

offering choices. Later, I read Alfie Kohn's critique of praise as a motivator. It took years of practice to unlearn the manipulative ways I had internalized as a child.

Recently I was reading Alice Munro's "Red Dress—1946" with my English 11 class. We read the part where the narrator describes her English teacher being tormented by boys in the back while she read Wordsworth.

"Sometimes she would burst into tears, there was no help for it, she had to run into the hall. Then the boys made loud mooing noises..."

A student asked me at this point if a class had ever turned on me. I thought for a moment and said, "No."

"That's because you're so nice," offered one student.

"No," another replied, "It's because you don't take crap."

I stopped to reflect how classrooms ceased to be ruled by fear of violence. The only adults called Mr. or Ms. now are teachers, and sometimes not even then. Children are no longer taught to respect all adults equally without question. How are students courteous to teachers in this day of 30 kids of varying needs in each class? Now we do the hard work of developing trusting relationships with each student based on common respect. This is what parents have come to expect for their children, the kinds of classrooms that are transforming society into a more just one.

When I think of Grade 1, I see my orange and red dress and crepe paper crafts on the wall, and smell warm mimeograph paper. I remember a *Paddle to the Sea* movie and learning to read and spelling bees. And most vividly of all, I remember the way the principal's brown mustache moved as he told me how bad I was, and how I wanted my mother, and then the pain. ■



Top photo: Susan Telfer in Grade 1—the year she received the strap.

Below: A strap and log book in service from 1958–73 at Burnaby's Lakeview Elementary. In Canada, most school straps were made of rubber and canvas.

Telfer family photo

Photo courtesy of the Burnaby NOW



1978

# “There is no sex descrimination [sic] IN THIS DISTRICT

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES  
*School District No. [REDACTED]*  
 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Telephone: [REDACTED]

September 27, 1978

Mr. Robert M. Buzza, General Secretary,  
 B.C. Teachers' Federation,  
 105-2235 Burrard St.,  
 Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3H9

Dear Mr. Buzza:

Thank you for your letter of September 20, 1978 concerning the "Status of Women" Provincial meeting.

This item and the leave of Ms. [REDACTED] were rediscussed by the Board at their meeting of September 25, 1978.

The Board did grant the leave in accordance with Section 56 of the Public Schools Act Regulations, but did so under protest. Your original request for leave stated "Reason: to attend the Annual Status of Women Contacts' conference, Vancouver, B.C. The purpose of the conference is to provide information and develop skills that will assist teachers in organizing a local status of women program. The prime objective of the status of women program is to eliminate sex descrimination in education." The Board believes there is no sex descrimination in this district and thus, if they approved the leave, they would be acquiescing to a theory in violation to their philosophy. They believe this to be a political issue, and therefore not one to consume valuable teacher school time.

A copy of this letter is to be sent to the B.C.S.T.A. and to the Minister of Education.

Yours very truly,  
 BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

[REDACTED]  
 Secretary-Treasurer.

cc: B.C.S.T.A.  
 Minister of Education

*Editor's note: The BCTF does not have an unredacted copy of this letter.*

**Twenty years later** a group of women teachers protest cuts to the BCTF Status of Women Committee budget at the 1998 October Representative Assembly by holding a bake sale.



L to R: Gale Tyler (North Vancouver), Grace Hoover (Burnaby), Gail Kuhlman (Coquitlam), Jill Wight (Langley), Linda Shuto (Burnaby), Julia Goulden (Burnaby), Nora Grove (VESTA), Barb Parrott (VESTA), Lorraine Walsh (Surrey).

Ten years  
that  
changed  
it all

1981

# From a cross burning to class size in contract

By Ken Novakowski, retired BCTF President

LATE OCTOBER, 1981 at 2:30 a.m., the phone rang loudly, waking me from a deep sleep. Rattled by the call, I was horrified to see a huge wooden cross burning on our front lawn. The police arrived an hour later; their subsequent investigation turned up no answers.

Why me? I was President of the Langley Teachers' Association (LTA) and in the middle of negotiations for a new agreement. Unlike teachers in the rest of Canada and other employee groups in BC, our employer was only required to negotiate salaries and bonuses with teachers. BCTF locals across the province wanted to change that and we were running a high-profile public campaign to expand teacher bargaining rights. Some in our community didn't like this. Was that the reason for the cross burning? A scary start to my teacher activism.

In our efforts to get the board to negotiate duty-free lunch breaks for teachers, the LTA staged a series of "chilli lunches" in several venues, inviting teachers to leave school and come for lunch. Principals and vice-principals, then members of the association, took over supervising students. Our slogan "Even Teachers Deserve a Lunch Break" caught on. This demonstration of teacher support and resolve resulted in a duty-free lunch hour provision in our agreement.

In July of 1983, the provincial government launched a massive legislative assault on public services including public education, human labour, and women's and tenant's rights, turning the clock back on decades of social progress for British Columbians. The response was swift—tens of thousands of people rose in protest. Operation Solidarity included all BC unions and the Solidarity Coalition united community rights and environmental groups. More than 25,000 people rallied in Victoria in July, 50,000 at Empire Stadium in August and 80,000 took to the streets of Vancouver in October. Teachers from summer conference flooded downtown Vancouver, educating citizens at "Street Corner Schoolhouses" about the harm of the cutbacks to public education. Support was everywhere.

With government ignoring the protests, Operation Solidarity staged a series of strikes by unions. The BCTF became an early part of this action, despite the fact teachers had voted against asking for the right to strike only two years earlier.

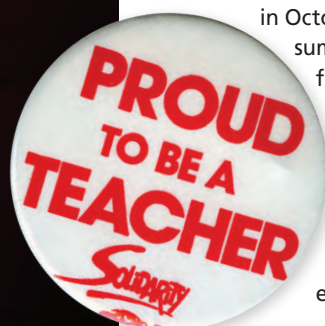
I was on the BCTF Bargaining Division staff at this time and experienced the inside workings of the BCTF, marvelling at the tremendous courage of our President Larry Kuehn. He led teachers out for three days in early November as the Operation Solidarity strike escalated. Many people, including many teachers, were unhappy when an abrupt end to the action was reached with Premier Bill Bennett over the Remembrance Day long weekend. But gains had been made; teachers facing arbitrary layoffs because of cut backs now had the legal right to negotiate seniority, layoff, and severance provisions. At the 1984 BCTF AGM, teachers voted to honour all picket lines; the existing practice of crossing the picket lines of support staff co-workers when they were on strike was stopped.

In April, 1987, I was back teaching in Langley and newly elected to the BCTF executive when the provincial government introduced **Bills 19 and 20** into the legislature and into the lives of teachers. The legislation was loaded with both challenges and opportunities for teachers and the BCTF. In summary, it:

- ended statutory BCTF membership for teachers.
- offered an option for teacher locals: the union model with full scope of bargaining and the right to strike/lockout or the association model with limited scope and an arbitration process.
- removed principals and vice-principals from the bargaining unit.
- established a mandatory College of Teachers to be paid for by teachers.
- established an employer-friendly Industrial Relations Council to replace the Labour Relations Board.



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“Taken together, these actions were the remaking of the BCTF. Every local chose the union model and over 99% of the teachers in BC signed up to BCTF membership.

The BCTF quickly organized a day of protest on April 28. BCTF President Elsie McMurphy led us out, despite being served with an order threatening charges of sedition. Teachers followed. On June 1, they also joined a one-day general strike called by the BC Federation of Labour. Ignoring the protests, the government passed the bills into law.

“BCTF—Now More Than Ever” became the teachers’ rallying cry that fall as the Federation co-ordinated a campaign to sign up every teacher in the province into the BCTF. Simultaneously, locals were to choose either the union or association model through member votes in each local. Taken together these actions were the remaking of the BCTF. Every local chose the union model and over 99% of the teachers in BC signed up to BCTF membership. BCTF-endorsed candidates in every region were elected to the new College of Teachers Board. This was a powerful demonstration of teacher solidarity and teacher support for the strong leadership of the BCTF.

In the fall of 1987, I was president of the Langley Teachers’ Association, getting ready for our first round of full collective bargaining as a union; virtually all terms and conditions of employment were now on the table and we had the right to strike. I spent the first half of 1988 at the Langley bargaining table. After years of collective begging with our employer, we were now equals at the bargaining table. We tabled a whole range of items over which teachers previously had little or no say. Having the right to strike was a powerful inducement for boards to bargain.

My role changed that year when I was elected BCTF First Vice-President. I was now travelling the province providing BCTF support to locals as they sought their first contracts. Locals were negotiating duty-free lunch breaks, preparation time, posting and filling,

teacher evaluation, union membership, and much more. And yes, there were some strikes.

I will never forget the experience, as Vice-President and then as President, of attending local meetings with member turnout in the range of 90%. Teachers attended because a lot was at stake and, for the first time ever, they could participate in decisions that would have an ongoing impact on their teaching conditions and rights as employees.

After two rounds of historical local bargaining were complete, I left my leadership role at the Federation for the classroom. The wait for full collective bargaining rights had been long but now we teachers could influence our work lives and use collective bargaining to help build a strong and healthy quality public education system in BC. It had been an exciting, even heady, decade. Indeed! ■

## Gaining bargaining rights



1919	Victoria strike
1921	New Westminster strike
1939	Langley affair
1967	Over 40 Campaign
1969	Working and learning conditions contracts
1971	Walkout for pensions
1974	Surrey walkout to protest larger classes
1981	Terrace six-day strike
1983	Three-day solidarity strike for seniority rights
1987	Bills 19 and 20
1988	Full scope local bargaining
1994	Provincial bargaining round one
2002	Contract stripping
2005	10-Day illegal strike
2006	Negotiated collective agreement
2012	Three-day strike for a negotiated agreement
2014	Strike and lockout

## Ten years that changed teaching, teachers, and the BCTF

1981–82	1991–92
Teachers crossed co-worker picket lines	Teachers honour co-worker picket lines
Teachers limited to negotiate salaries and bonuses	Teachers bargain virtually all terms and conditions of employment
Teachers turn down asking government for right to strike	Teachers have the right to strike
BCTF membership is required by statute for all BC teachers	BCTF membership is provided for in collective agreements
Principals and vice-principals are members of the BCTF/locals	Principals and vice-principals no longer members of the BCTF/locals



Above: Image MSC160-871\_20 courtesy of the Pacific Tribune Photograph Collection, a digital initiative of Simon Fraser University Library.  
<http://digital.lib.sfu.ca/pt-2653/operation-solidarity-rally-empire-stadium>



**BCTF**  
international  
solidarity **1985**



## LOOKING BACK FROM Central America

*By Larry Kuehn, Director, BCTF Research*

**SAN SALVADOR**—Sitting in a plane on the tarmac in 2016, I thought back to the last time I was here, in October 1985. Things have changed a great deal in 30 years.

In 1985 we visited four countries in Central America, two of them under military dictatorships and the other two in the midst of civil wars. I was on a delegation put together by CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev), a newly founded organization with a mandate to link Canadian union members in solidarity with their Latin American counterparts. CoDev contributed bilingual staff and access to Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funds to match international solidarity grants from the BCTF. The delegation included teacher union leaders from Ontario and Quebec, as well as the BCTF.

I was bringing funds that could not be transferred through conventional banking services for two of the unions.

**I still think of El Salvador whenever I hear a helicopter up close.**

The Honduran union had been expelled from its offices and a puppet executive had been appointed by the military government. The authentic executive was determined to continue to operate with the intention of being restored to office, but all resources that would allow it to survive had been cut off. International teacher organizations provided moral support for the authentic union, and we were able to take funds to make that a reality.

After a new Honduran government replaced the military, the elected union executive was restored. Twenty years later visiting BCTF members attending a workshop saw the building that the BCTF contribution had made possible to enable them to regain their legitimate union.

In Nicaragua the leftist Sandinista government was fighting off US-backed right-wing “contra” guerillas trying to overthrow them. Education was a central part of the Sandinista program and the BCTF had provided \$50,000 in 1981 to support a “literacy crusade” that brought reading to the majority of Nicaraguans who had been illiterate.

This time we were bringing funds for FOMCA, Central America’s regional teacher union organization. It was operating out of the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, providing support to teacher union leaders from El Salvador and Guatemala who had to flee into exile because they were targeted by death squads.

Honduras and Nicaragua were the easy destinations. El Salvador and Guatemala were next on our agenda: much more perilous places for teachers and trade unionists. It was my first, and only life experience of being in the middle of a war.

In San Salvador, military helicopters were constantly going overhead. I still think of El Salvador whenever I hear a helicopter up close. One night the electricity at our hotel went off—the guerillas had blown up power lines. It was World Series time and people throughout Central America are baseball fanatics; the cut in power was timed to blackout the World Series for those folks sitting in a safe place somewhere watching the game.



Nancy Knickerbocker photo





Nancy Knickerbocker photos

*Opposite page: a military helicopter hovers over a protest march in San Salvador, 1988. Left: a mother of the disappeared at a San Salvador march to commemorate Monsignor Romero. Above centre: rebuilding a San Salvador union hall bombed by paramilitary, 1988. Above right, little girls at their barrio, San Salvador.*

## “It specifically insured teachers, many of whom were ‘disappeared.’

We didn’t bring any funds to El Salvador—our purpose was to show solidarity with the teachers who were under tremendous pressure from the government because they were seen as sympathetic to the FMLN, the opposition guerilla movement. Even though it was implicated in massive human rights abuses, the Salvadoran government was supported economically and militarily by the government of US President Ronald Reagan.

To meet with the union executive, we were taken on a circuitous route aimed at ensuring we would not be followed. First we took a taxi from our hotel to a large market. We were silent throughout the ride, as we had been cautioned that taxi drivers were part of the government’s surveillance system. We walked through the market in two different groups and took separate taxis to a restaurant high in the mountains overlooking San Salvador, where the union executive members were waiting to meet with us.

We went on to Guatemala, where unions were illegal under the military dictatorship. We met with some folks from a life insurance company though. It specifically insured teachers, many of whom were “disappeared”—the Latin American term for people abducted, incarcerated, tortured, and killed, often with no body found. A legitimate goal of any insurance company is to verify that an insured person is dead. This provided a

pretext for investigating what had happened to the disappeared and thus served as an underground network for communication.

Needless to say, this trip to Central America was a dramatic introduction to teacher union international solidarity. It has fuelled my commitment to the work of our colleagues globally, as they resist attacks on themselves and their unions, as well as our work to provide positive professional experiences that build public education.

Looking back from the tarmac in San Salvador over projects supported by BC teachers in the International Solidarity Program over the past 30 years, I can see some positive changes and rich experiences that BC teachers have supported, as well as learned from.

In El Salvador, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a former activist in the teachers’ union and FMLN leader, is now the president of the country. The Ministry of Education works with the union, ANDES, in supporting a diploma in Non-sexist Pedagogy, a program supported with BCTF funding. The union barely survived crises before the current government was elected, but some funds from the BCTF helped it through that troubled period.

In Guatemala, there has been an uneasy truce in the repression of Indigenous peoples, and unions are now legal.

In Honduras, although unions operate legally, the human rights climate is extremely difficult for teachers. Since a coup in 2009, teachers have again been key opponents of an oligarchy, and some have been killed. The President of the union we work with has been recently fired from his teaching job. Despite this, the unions carry on, expanding the non-sexist pedagogy workshops. One of the active leaders in that program came to Canada in May to facilitate a retreat with 30 BC teachers.

The tarmac in San Salvador this time was a stopover from Managua. I had been there for a workshop on education technology, rather than to provide support for exiled union leaders. The regional union organization, FOMCA, had carried out a three-year project in four countries developing policy on technology in education. I had been invited to talk about the political economy of education technology (edtech)—in whose interests and who is making the money from edtech.

Different contexts, but common issues: that is the reality of international solidarity these days. ■

## Non-sexist and inclusive pedagogy (NSIP) in Latin America

An analysis of the reality on the ground resulted in a request by Costa Rican teachers for a liberating, democratic, and inclusive non-sexist teaching practice. Since then, teachers in Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Canada have attended participatory NSIP trainings, thanks to support from the BCTF. A model for reciprocity, BCTF and Costa Rican facilitators have collaborated on workshops, the BCTF WOW (*Workshop on Workshops*) manual has been translated to Spanish and an NSIP document has been translated into English. A testament to their effectiveness is that several ministries of education have officially endorsed NSIP curricula, teaching resources, and textbooks.

Learn more at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFGyyXtpA4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFGyyXtpA4U) and on their website at [pedagogianosexista.com/](http://pedagogianosexista.com/). It is in Spanish with some English translation.



1989

# WHOSE BLOOD waters our freedom?

By Don Reader, retired VESTA member

**NAMIBIA** is a hauntingly beautiful land of deserts, savannahs, borderland rivers, the highest sand dunes, Atlantic ocean beaches and protected wild animal parks. This great cattle country is also blessed with valuable minerals including diamonds and uranium. One of the few African countries that is not over-populated, most of its people still live on the land supporting themselves with subsistence farming. The capital city, Windhoek, is about the size of Victoria.

© Artush/iStock

*Above: happy school children in Kavango, Namibia, wait for a lesson, October, 2014.*

Namibia's recent history has been scarred by colonial powers. Under German rule until South Africa was given it as a protectorate post World War I, Namibians increasingly resisted this forced situation when apartheid reared its ugly head in South Africa and spilled over to their country. Thus were born resistance movements, the strongest being the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO). SWAPO eventually defeated the South African forces and achieved independence for Namibia under a United Nations supervised peace accord in 1990. A line in the Namibian national anthem typifies this struggle, "Whose blood waters our freedom."

The BCTF International Solidarity Committee and Larry Kuehn in particular became involved with Namibian teachers in the late 1980s and when the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU) was formed in 1989, the year before independence, NANTU requested BCTF assistance to train members in union membership and leadership skills. In 1994 I was fortunate to be selected, along with Susan Lambert, to go during summer break to begin developing NANTU workshops. Initially Oxfam Canada contributed money, supplies, a vehicle, and a working space for us in Windhoek. At that time Nantu was working out of a house with little room. The project was initially proposed as three years but the BCTF relationship with Namibia continues to this day. Highlights over the years have been supporting our Namibian colleagues in learning English. No one in the country has English as their first language as South-West Africa had been under German and then Afrikaner domination. Most Indigenous

Namibians speak several local languages. At independence the Namibian government declared the language of government and education would be English. Naturally this caused major problems for teachers in particular and still does today. The BCTF and Canadian Teachers' Federation have sent several teams over the years to assist with English language training, and despite improvements it remains a concern.

The BCTF has also sent teams to Namibia to train facilitators and develop union leadership workshops relevant to the needs of Nantu. Currently more than 15 workshops are offered to Nantu's membership. This past summer Nantu's Director of Professional Development, Naftal Shigewada, took part in the BCTF Summer Leadership Conference in Kamloops, returning to Namibia with vigour and new ideas to service NANTU's teachers. Over the years the BCTF has brought approximately 30 NANTU leaders to British Columbia for further union training. This has been education they could not receive in Namibia. We have used the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Winter School, our Summer Leadership Conference, and the Justice Institute. Four NANTU members with Certificates in Conflict Resolution from the Justice Institute have taken leadership roles in school administration and within their union.

Several NANTU leaders are now in government leadership positions. In fact the present Minister of Education was trained in negotiation skills by Sheila Pither and myself several years ago when she was a NANTU leader.

In the 1990s, discovering that one of our trained facilitators was actually teaching under

a tree in a rural area, we became personally involved. In partnership with Oxfam Canada, we raised funds to build a two-room school with water and toilet facilities in the Onesi area. In the 2000s we saw the need for an orphanage in the rural town of Nkurenkuru. The scourge of AIDS has decimated families and left so many orphans and vulnerable children. The Ufenkenda Orphanage in Nkurenkuru was officially opened a year ago. Several Vancouver schools financially contributed to this project plus my local, the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association. VESTA in fact is twinned with the Kavango Region in Namibia.

NANTU continues to progress. This October they successfully carried out a two-day national strike. Their 95% strike vote especially shocked the government as they do not enjoy compulsory membership as we do. This got the government back to the negotiating table, NANTU became creative and ultimately achieved a successful resolution. With no strike fund this was a huge victory for them and public education in Namibia.

The BCTF legacy of strong and long-lasting ties with the Namibian National Teachers' Union is an example of BC teachers' commitment to international solidarity. I have always found that I learned as much from our Namibian colleagues as we ever gave to them. We shared our cultural strengths. They are so patient and forgiving of our past colonial wrongs. I am very proud to have been involved with the International Solidarity Program since 1994. ■



1993

# Not at all a ONE-WAY STREET

By David Chudnovsky, retired BCTF President

**IN THE SPRING of 1994 Nelson Mandela, after 27 years in jail and a lifetime of struggle against the racist system of apartheid, became the first democratically elected president of South Africa. Three months later, a team of BCTF trainers—workshop leaders—checked into a cold and shabby hotel in Johannesburg to work intensively for two weeks with activists from the South African Democratic Teachers' Union.**



© epicurean/iStock

*Above: a South African teacher hands out books in her classroom.*

How in the world did that happen?

The explanation lies in the years of support the BCTF International Solidarity Program had been providing to teachers in South Africa.

During apartheid—legalized and institutional racism—teachers, and all workers, were permitted to join “unions” that were organized by racial groupings. There was a union for “Indian” teachers in Natal, one for so-called “coloured” teachers in the Cape, unions for “African” teachers, several for English and Afrikaans-speaking “white” teachers.

As massive internal organizing campaigns, international solidarity, armed struggle, and a world-wide boycott started to shake the foundations of apartheid, the teachers’ unions began to discuss the future—a united future. And the BCTF was there to support those discussions with expertise and resources.

The result was the formation of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union, which brought together about two-thirds of the formerly ethnic-based organizations.

The year before, in 1993, the BCTF International Solidarity Program brought a leader of SADTU, Thulas Nxesi (who is now a South African Cabinet Minister) to BC and organized for him to attend the Capilano College Labour Studies Program. While he

was here Nxesi attended a number of BCTF events—for example staff rep training in a couple of our locals. He was impressed.

One day while a couple of us were having lunch with him, Thulas said, “Wouldn’t it be great if you could send some people to South Africa to help us develop our own staff rep training program?” And that’s how it came to be that I, together with Christina Schutt and Carroll Whitwell, ended up in that drafty hotel in Johannesburg in August 1994.

It’s important to understand why SADTU, loaded with experienced activists who had just helped overthrow perhaps the world’s most solidly entrenched authoritarian, racist regime, would ask for help from our little union from across the world. For a generation the most important function of their former unions had been organizing to defeat apartheid—not doing the day-to-day collective bargaining, staffing, grievance handling, and professional development work we’re accustomed to. We were able to help with that.

And why BCTF? Because our support in the past had led them to trust us, and our model of social justice unionism was one they admired.

BCTF members and staff returned to South Africa to work with SADTU many times after 1994—to do more staff rep training, to consult on tech issues, to work on professional development plans. We were one of the unions they invited to help celebrate with them their tenth anniversary in 2001.

I’ve been asked many times whether this international solidarity work is worth it. Isn’t it expensive? How do BCTF members benefit from this kind of initiative? There are

many ways to answer. First, through a random accident of history, we live in a peaceful and relatively privileged part of the world. Surely we can use a tiny fraction of our resources to help teachers and kids from less wealthy and privileged countries.

Second, we learned so much from our sisters and brothers in SADTU. It’s not at all a one-way street. To give just one example—in 1998 when I was in South Africa doing some workshops, SADTU was holding a series of what they called “teacher forums.” Members of their National Executive visited every local across the country and just listened to the membership. They didn’t make speeches or announce plans or initiate campaigns. They just listened. It was a brilliant strategy, and I got to see it first hand.

Later that year when we were preparing for the bargaining round that would end with Bills 27 and 28, the stripping of our collective agreements and all that led to, we organized “bargaining forums” in every local. We stole the idea completely from SADTU. I believe those forums contributed to the enormous resilience that our members exhibited in the extremely difficult years that followed. SADTU helped us to see how important it is to listen to the members and to organize ourselves to do that listening.

Finally, when we help strengthen teachers’ organizations (or any unions) anywhere, we contribute to public education and justice everywhere. The international corporate class and their governments have spent enormous resources creating a globalized world system that serves their interests. We can respond to that challenge with our own kind of globalization: international solidarity. ■

“SADTU helped us to see how important it is to listen to the members and to organize ourselves to do that listening.

1987

# My personal and professional TEACHING JOURNEY

By Teri Mooring, BCTF First Vice-President

BCTF; :sjenner13/iStock

AS A YOUNG MOTHER of two children in a precarious work situation as a new TTOC, I was nervous and excited at my first BCTF study session in the dingy legion hall in Quesnel that spring of 1987. Packed with 350 teachers discussing Bills 19 and 20, which gave the BCTF the option of continuing as an association or becoming a union, members' anger at government and fear for the BCTF's future was palpable. This forced choice of unionization or association also removed administrators from the bargaining unit and eliminated mandatory membership in the BCTF. BCTF President Elsie McMurphy told the AGM: "The government is determined. They set out to kill our organization; they set out to render it impotent. We mustn't let them do it—we mustn't let them get away with that." When the vote was held, all 76 locals chose to unionize.

The following year I was a part-time Grade 6 teacher at a small rural school and our newly unionized Quesnel District Teachers' Association (QDTA) was negotiating our first collective agreement. As staff representative I found it daunting to ask colleagues, some of whom were not thrilled we had decided to unionize provincially, to sign up for picket duty. Unlike some locals, we settled our first contract without a strike. Our bargaining team members were treated like rock stars. Facing a hired negotiator, but well trained and supported by BCTF staff, they regularly bargained all night. The famous "whip-saw" technique provided momentum as chants of "Why not here?" became a province-wide mantra. Standing room only general meetings were extraordinarily exciting, possibilities seemed endless, and teachers felt incredibly empowered.

I had my third child during my second year teaching and while I could access pregnancy

leave, it was unpaid for part-time temporary teachers. Historically, pregnant women were fired or expected to resign, often pulling their pension contributions to survive. In 1989, Federal Government Supplemental Unemployment Benefits allowed employers to top up maternity leaves, paid through Unemployment Insurance. That year a number of locals (Victoria, Maple Ridge, Windermere, and Prince Rupert) negotiated top up into their collective agreements. We had come a long way.

Advocacy for equality was not new to the BCTF. At the 1919 AGM Mrs. Templar, a widow and one of the few women in attendance rose to advocate for "equal pay for equal work with equal privileges for women." The minutes report "an interesting debate followed" with President Charlesworth declaring the "question was unanswerable under the constitution."

The 1920 BCTF AGM heard from UBC's Dr. Sedgewick on economic and social equality: "Women are now admitted on the same plane, and their working equality in the profession is taken for granted by all reasonable people, but their economic equality has not kept pace." He went on to show that professions where women had entered invariably had been lowered in public opinion because the old idea of women's inferiority had become a habit not easily eradicated from the public mind.

"If teachers of this province will get behind the movement for equalizing economic conditions of sexes, they will have performed a great work for their own profession. It is sheer goatsense, if teachers do not stand up for equal pay for equal work. By getting behind that movement you will do much to raise the status of your own profession."

Well the "goatsense" continued and the 1973 Status of Women Task Force stated, "Although over 53% of the BCTF membership is female, we see reluctance on the part of female teachers to strive for higher positions and to demonstrate a willingness to accept responsibility for the government of the Federation. Our organization is the weaker because the majority of our membership is female, passively accepting a non-decision-making role. As we are able to encourage this group



“The old idea of women’s inferiority had become a habit not easily eradicated from the public mind.

to participate fully in the democratic process of our profession we will gain in strength.”

The task force recommended deletion of contractual clauses that didn’t allow women to work until the full term of their pregnancies.

- ending the requirement for female teachers to produce marriage certificates
- passing policies and practices to ensure equal opportunity for appointment, regardless of sex, marital status, or dependents
- using both pronouns in publications and eliminating the practice of separate classrooms for men and women.

I saw the inequality in Quesnel in that era when male teachers were typically hired over the phone to continuing contracts while the Local President had to make the case for a woman to get a continuing contract, often after working four years on a temporary contract.

In the 1980s we were fighting for reproductive choices. By 1989 a groundbreaking family life program had been instituted. We were bargaining clauses for protection from sexual harassment, paid maternity leave, parenthood leave, and educational leave. The BCTF’s submission

to the Royal Commission on Education resulted in government adopting four gender-equity recommendations.

In 1997, having taught eight years part-time to balance my work and family life, I was not yet on full salary. My attendance at the 1997 AGM had a profound effect on me, personally and professionally, as I watched demonstrators in the streets, opposing “teaching homosexuality to their children” and gay students leafleting delegates to fight homophobia and heterosexism. Under President Alice McQuade, I was proud we overwhelmingly carried recommendations to ensure schools were inclusive of everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

Our choice in the late 1980s to unionize allowed us to make important improvements in the working lives of teachers. First, through negotiating contractual provisions that increased the rights and choices for women and other equity-seeking groups and now through our work on the Equity Audit and resulting recommendations. After the audit, one of the first actions of the executive was to endorse WIN, to promote women in negotiations; while the BCTF is 73% women we know women are under-represented in the bargaining process. While we have had only eight women presidents in our 100 years, they, along with other strong women leaders have been influential during some of our most pivotal times as a union. We have come a long way as a union but we must also recognize how much more work there is to do! ■

## WIN Women in Negotiations

By Marian Dodds, with input from Jody Polukoshko

To increase participation by women in bargaining and grievance work over the next three years the BCTF is taking leadership by recommitting to a new Women in Negotiations (WIN) initiative. This need arises in the context of a continually increasing female membership and a disproportionately low number of women who do collective agreement work.

Barriers to women’s participation in bargaining, identified during a focus group at the 2016 AGM, include:

- workload at school and at home
- perceptions about bargaining
- a lack of role models
- experiences with marginalization in their schools, communities, and unions.

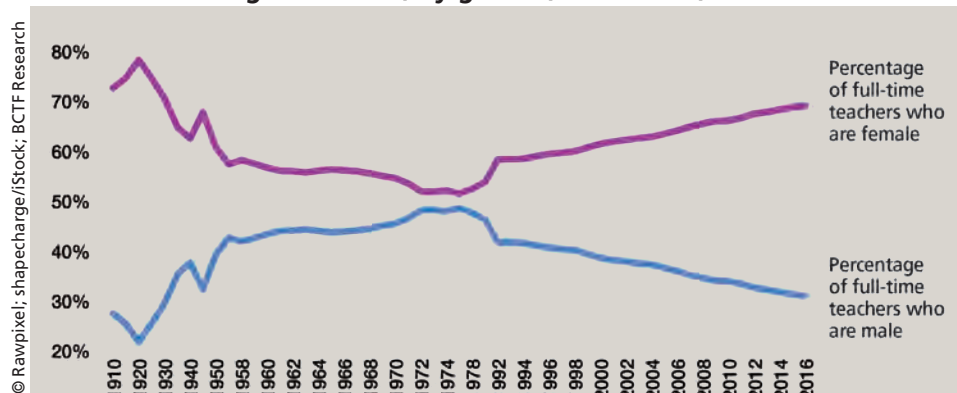
Twenty-five women members from across the province are engaged in extensive training on collective agreement negotiations, implementation, and enforcement. They will facilitate School Union Rep Training workshops to provide training and skills so women members can increase their participation in bargaining and in leadership overall.

### Flashback

New challenges present themselves to our organizing efforts with regularity and urgency, while other challenges require ongoing commitment, persistence, and renewed focus over time. The role of women in negotiations occupies both of these positions.

Back in the mid 1980s the BCTF Status of Women Committee identified the assumptions and prejudices among our structures and membership that created disincentives for women to participate in formal bargaining processes. In 1985, a subcommittee was formed between the Status of Women and the Bargaining Committees with a mandate to increase the number of women participating in the bargaining process. Recognizing that women’s priorities and the values of the Federation could not be realized without equal and proportionate representation of women in all stages of the bargaining process, all locals were encouraged to have a status of women representative on their bargaining committees. Bargaining for Equality workshops were offered across BC through the Status of Women contacts network. ■

Full-time teaching workforce, by gender, 1915–2015, British Columbia





© FatCamera/iStock

# 100 years of PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT in the BC Teachers' Federation

By Jane Turner, Burnaby teacher

**CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY**—for over a century teachers across this province have struggled with the what, the how, and the why of teaching. Lofty questions and ambitions have been a central part of our professional lives, with teachers being consistently consumed with how to transmit knowledge into students' heads. We have wrestled with the most effective ways to get students to apply their learning, to construct knowledge by transacting their existing experience and understanding with new information in order to create new and meaningful knowledge. Teachers have grappled with the methodologies that would transform students, holistically, as they learned. How can learning be the catalyst to students' discovery of their full selves, as learners, citizens, and human beings? How can learning be transformative?

BC teachers' professional journals have reported on the myriad of ways to engage in the what, the how, and the why of teaching. The following are excerpts from *The Educator of Canada*, as it was named in 1919, *The B.C. Teacher* from November 1921 to November 1987 or as it currently is named, *Teacher*. No matter what the name, the contents provide a fascinating window into the professional development of teachers in our province.

In case we thought grappling with technology was a modern phenomenon,

the lead article of *The Educator of Canada*, from June 1919 was "Increasing Need for Technical Education," by J.G. Lister. Lister was contrasting technical education to academic or commercial education. It seemed there were three ways to be educated and the need for a "technical education is distinguished from other learning in that it is acquired by 'doing' rather than by 'hearing,' and reading."

By November 1966, *The B.C. Teacher* is reporting on "Computers in the Classroom" in an article by teachers C.B. Kotak and W.P. Goddard. "It is now possible to have a

“What is the purpose of schools? That is a question frequently asked throughout our hundred years' history.

computer, the size of a teacher's desk, which can be rolled from room to room, which plugs into any standard electrical outlet, and which requires no air conditioning or other auxiliary equipment," the authors write.

Fifty years later we are still debating tech issues, but now it is whether to embrace or limit students' use of their own devices in the classroom—devices that are certainly smaller than the teacher's desk!

In the September 1922 issue of *The B.C. Teacher*, the President of the National Union of Teachers of England and Wales wrote: "It is the purpose of the school to restore to us the correct content of value. It is our task to make society see the truest economy in happy childhood, growing life, and creative



play—and work. I do not bemoan the fact that modern civilization is based upon machine production. I have no regrets about the application of science to the provision of man's material needs. What I do object to is the mechanizing of human life and the material; appraisalment of human 'personality.'"

What is the purpose of schools? That is a question frequently asked throughout our hundred years' history. In May, 1932, F.J. Nicolson bemoans the teaching of literature through memorization and adherence to what the teacher or the text thinks is important. The way forward is to "... substitute experience for analysis and discovery for memorization."

In 1940, the Enterprise Education model that was born in Alberta believed, "The task of modern education is, therefore, threefold. It must provide for the development of the individual's gifts, his training in social behavior, and his acquirement of the necessary skill and information." (*The B.C. Teacher*, Sept 1940, p.18.) "Therefore, the enterprise school presents to its pupils not a list of facts to be learned but a series of social situations to be dealt with." (*The B.C. Teacher*, Sept 1940, p.19.)

The 1940s was not only a decade of lofty pedagogies, but also a time when the call for curricular specialties was at the fore, if these headlines of *The B.C. Teacher* are a good indication:

- "We need to teach agriculture in the rural schools" said Frank Wilson in the September 1940 edition.
- Phonic Fun—A new workbook for Grade 1 was advertised in the November 1943 *The B.C. Teacher*.
- Lesson Aids (yes, Lesson Aids began in the 1930s) for reasoning processes in arithmetic for Grade 3 students were advertised.
- "Why we should teach navigation and weather as part of the curriculum?" was an article in April, 1944. "After all, we are a maritime province and all students should know this," exclaimed Donald Cochrane of Ocean Falls, BC.
- In September, 1949, *The B.C. Teacher* encouraged us to teach primary music through use of a specific radio program.

The 1950s saw teachers making the case for subject specialties. "The Case for Geography in the Social Studies" was argued in the January, 1954 edition. By 1957, the first

**We Are Pleased to Announce publication of**

## **PHONIC FUN**

**A New Work Book for Grade I**  
By EDWARDS, BOWRA and CHOWEN

This book presents in skillfully devised form the phonic elements which should be taught in Grade I.

The order of presentation has been worked out carefully from available research and from actual classroom experience.

Only the most essential single sounds and phonograms are included at this level and in words that have meaning for the child.

Words are presented as word wholes and in context. At frequent intervals composite stories are included to combine phonic practice with reading interest.

Vocabulary difficulties have been reduced to a minimum through a careful analysis of word frequencies as found in the sets of basic readers in use in Canada and the United States of America.

Clever illustration provides visual assistance and interesting motivation.

**PRICE: 38 CENTS NET PER COPY**

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[Ad, \*The B.C. Teacher\*, November 1943.](#)

provincial specialist association (PSA) was formed, the Primary PSA. An article in the 1958, Sept/Oct edition of *The B.C. Teacher* made reference to the Constitution of the BCTF making provision for the formation of PSAs.

In October of 1971, the first meeting of the PSA Council was held. PSAs had been part of the Federation since 1957, but it wasn't until May of 1971 that they came together to form a council that would work together, give advice, and oversee the activities of the individual PSAs. In the fall of 2017, the PSAs plan to hold a super conference at the Vancouver Convention Centre: Challenge, Change, Opportunity: BC Teachers Sharing Success, Shaping Futures.

In the 1960s and 1970s, despite the implementation of a Professional Development Division at the BCTF, much of the professional development offered to teachers was provided and funded by the Ministry of Education and local school boards. Principals regularly chose the topics for teachers' Pro-D days, focussing on topics that they thought were important to teachers' learning and school-based needs. It was not uncommon for teachers to be released for days on end to learn some of the latest educational methods to use in their classrooms. All of this was paid for by the sponsoring agency, either the Ministry or the school district. Back then, we called it in-service.

It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that a seismic shift occurred in the professional lives of teachers. The BCTF Professional Development Division wanted to go beyond the one-shot workshop and develop models for professional learning that met the needs of teachers in a truly transformative way. The Experiential Learning Cycle became the backbone of the work done by the BCTF.

It was this model that informed the work of teachers actively involved in professional development, called PD Associates. Workshops weren't going to be facilitated by outside "experts." It was time to recognize teachers as the true experts. The "teachers teaching teachers" model was initiated and is still in practice today in the professional development lives of teachers.

"PD is more than just workshops... If we can only provide follow-up... Teachers must have more control over the use of PD days" wrote Tony Flanders in the March/April 1981 issue of *Teacher*. This call was adopted by the PD Associate cadre. Instead of a one-shot workshop, teachers were offered "first look" workshops that could be followed up by more in-depth learning on another professional day.

The School Union Representative Training (SURT) program was born in the early 1980s. The bargaining division of BCTF began to use professional development approaches to teachers' learning about negotiations and bargaining. A network of union representatives would have the opportunity to come together up to four times a year to learn in a workshop setting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to carry out their union roles. Workshops would provide stepping stones to deeper knowledge and skills to be used in school union business.

The last twenty years of professional development have brought more changes in the delivery of Pro-D. Teachers are forming teacher-led inquiry groups, action research cohorts, and school-based teams. But though the methods of how professional learning are carried out vary, the reasons for learning remains the same.

**What should we be teaching? How can we reach all of our students? Why is it important to teach this? The what, the how, and the why: questions that have driven and I suspect will continue to drive teachers' professional development for another hundred years. ■**

# Defending bargaining rights at the table,

2001

## March 5, 2001

Provincial bargaining between BCTF and BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) begins prior to the expiry of the 1998-01 collective agreement.

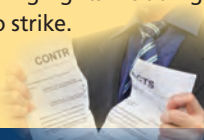
## May 16, 2001

BC Liberal government is elected. Campaign included promise to make public education an essential service.

## August 16, 2001

### Bill 18

BC Liberals pass essential service legislation, reducing teachers' full and free collective bargaining rights including the right to strike.



## January 25, 2002

### "Black Friday"

BC Liberals table Bills 27 and 28 (enacting them only two days later), imposing a three-year collective agreement (2001-04) that strips provisions and forbids negotiations on:

- class-size and teacher-workload provisions
- specialist-teacher ratios
- guaranteed support for students with special needs.

The legislation also vaporizes 10 collective agreements in amalgamated school districts.

- Bill 29 is also tabled, stripping many provisions from health care workers' collective agreements.



## January 22, 2004

BC Supreme Court rules that the process used by BC Liberals to strip provisions via Bills 27 and 28 was invalid.

## March 2004

Provincial bargaining begins for the 2004-06 collective agreement. Negotiations drag on for the next 15 months with very little progress.

## April 22, 2004

### Bill 19

BC Liberals pass legislation that removes all collective agreement provisions involving class-size limits, services to students with special needs, and support from specialist teachers.



## April 2006

Bargaining resumes between BCTF and BCPSEA using the framework recommended in the Ready report.

## June 9, 2006

Teachers vote 85% "Yes" in a province-wide strike vote in order to back their demand for a fair and competitive salary increase.

## June 30, 2006

A five-year agreement is reached (2006-11) that includes up to 17% salary increase, grid harmonization, and a \$4,000 signing bonus.

2000

2002

2004

2006

2008

2001

2003

2005

2007

## October 2001

Teachers participate in first ever province-wide strike vote with 91.4% voting "Yes." Teachers begin limited job action in November.

## January 28, 2002

Teachers around the province walk out in a day of political protest over Bills 27 and 28, then reluctantly return to work.

## May 2002

### Court Challenge

BCTF files a legal challenge in BC Supreme Court alleging Bills 27 and 28 violated teachers' charter rights to free collective bargaining.

## September 23, 2005

Teachers vote 88.4% in favour of starting Phase 1 of job action.

## October 3, 2005

### Bill 12

BC Liberals impose a collective agreement to end teachers' job action and roll over all existing contract provisions into the 2004-06 collective agreement.

## October 7, 2005

Teachers vote 90.5% in favour of province-wide strike and defy subsequent return to work order. Strike fund is frozen by court order and no strike pay is issued. Vince Ready is brought in to mediate an end to the dispute.

## October 24, 2005

Members reluctantly accept Ready's interim recommendations with 77% approving a return to work.

## February 2007

Ready's "Final Report for Collective Bargaining Options" is released but options are not implemented. BCTF's legal challenge of Bills 27 and 28 at the Supreme Court of BC is held in abeyance pending the outcome of the health care unions' challenge to Bill 29.

## June 8, 2007

### Supreme Court of Canada

Supreme Court of Canada rules in favour of the health care unions: that BC Liberals did not have the right to strip provisions from their collective agreements via Bill 29 in 2002. As a result, BCTF proceeds with its legal action on Bills 27 and 28.

It's  
about  
time...





# in the streets, and in the courts

## November 2010

BCTF presents its legal challenge to Bills 27 and 28 in BC Supreme Court.

## March 2011

BCTF and BCPSEA begin next round of negotiations. Little progress is made due to "net-zero" mandate of BC Liberals.

## April 13, 2011

Supreme Court of BC's Justice Griffin finds Bills 27 and 28 unconstitutional and gives BC Liberals one year to fix. BC Liberals choose not to appeal the decision.

## June 26, 2012

A retroactive deal for 2011–13 is reached despite the "net-zero" mandate. It includes improvements to leaves of absence and a provincial extended health plan. Twenty locals successfully negotiate local provisions.

## December 2012

BCTF submits brief to BC Liberals outlining potential changes to bargaining structures.

**Kids matter  
Teachers care**

## June 2013

BC Liberals appoint negotiator Peter Cameron and subsequently dismiss BCPSEA board. Teachers take a province-wide vote to oppose BC Liberals' interference in bargaining.

## January 27, 2014

Justice Griffin rules that BC Liberals failed to fix constitutional violations in Bills 27 and 28. Griffin also rules that Bill 22 is unconstitutional. Documents reveal BC Liberals had an intentional strategy to interfere in 2011–13 round of bargaining. BC Liberals appeal this decision to BC Court of Appeal.

## September 16, 2014

A six-year deal is reached for 2013–19 that includes a 7.25% salary increase plus "economic stability dividend" increases, as well as improvements to extended health/dental benefits, elementary prep time, TTOC pay, and the Education Fund. It also includes a \$105 million settlement to compensate teachers for class-size and composition grievances.

## April 30, 2015

BC Court of Appeal sides with BC Liberals and overturns Justice Griffin's decision. BCTF later appeals decision to Supreme Court of Canada. Appeal is granted on January 14, 2016.

BETTER SUPPORT FOR KIDS

## March 2012

After a year of negotiations, including more than 70 bargaining sessions and months of limited job action, 89% of teachers vote "Yes" in a province-wide strike vote and strike for three days.

## March 2012

### Bill 22

BC Liberals repeal and reintroduce the parts of Bills 27 and 28 that were ruled unconstitutional in 2011, impose two-year wage freeze and appoint mediator, Dr. Charles Jago.

## January 26, 2013

Agreement on bargaining structures is reached to facilitate next round of bargaining. It includes: model timeline, process facilitator Mark Brown, media blackout, shared data resources, and additions to the list of matters that will be bargained locally (post and fill, layoff and recall).

## February 2013

Provincial bargaining begins. Locals prepare to begin bargaining local matters.

## March 2014

After a year of bargaining with little progress, a province-wide strike vote is taken. Teachers vote 89% in favour of taking strike action.

## May 2014

Province-wide rotating strikes begin. BCPSEA initiates partial lock-out of teachers.

## June 2014

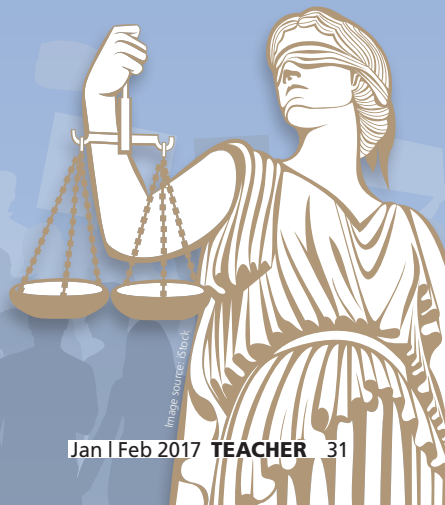
Teachers vote 86% to begin full-scale province-wide strike, and BCPSEA imposes full-scale lockout. This lasts 26 working days and continues into September.

## November 10, 2016

In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of Canada upholds Justice Griffin's 2011 ruling, that BC Liberals repeatedly violated teachers' charter rights when they passed unconstitutional legislation that stripped provisions on class size, class composition, specialist-teacher ratios, and guaranteed support for students with special needs.



CANADIAN  
CHARTER OF RIGHTS  
AND FREEDOMS



# Still a long way to go

By Glen Hansman, BCTF President

OVER TIME, our union has developed an extensive Aboriginal Education Program, and an active Aboriginal educator network around the province. Members should be proud of the work within our own union, and of the collaboration between the BCTF and the various education partner groups aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

Having a look back through the BCTF's *Teacher* archives is helpful at gauging just how far things have come—acknowledging that there still remains much to do.

Early publications of the BCTF contain some exceedingly problematic statements about Aboriginal people. These statements reflect the colonial attitudes of the dominant settler culture throughout Canadian society at the time, including overt odes to British imperialism, and are not in any way excusable.

Wilful ignorance of the realities of Aboriginal peoples also played itself out in early issues of *Teacher*. Early complimentary references to residential schools are indicative of this. For example, in the February 1942 issue of *The B.C. Teacher*, it is concluded that the high percentage of students attending these schools "indicat[es] the favourable manner in which the Indians are responding to the efforts being made to advance them to a position of independence and self-support." Shamefully, well into the 1960s, the Federation also ran an ad for teaching positions in residential schools.

By the late 1960s and early 70s, some different perspectives started to come to the fore, and the Federation itself began to acknowledge members' positive work in this area. At the 1973 AGM, for instance, the BCTF's highest honour, the G.A. Fergusson Award was given to James Inkster, in part for his work in supporting Aboriginal students. In fact, in 1969, he was made an honorary chief of the Squamish Indian Band at a ceremony presided over by Chief Dan George.

Systemic racism as it manifested itself in conditions in remote public schools with mostly First Nation student populations also began to get attention in BCTF publications in the early 1970s. In the June 1974 *BCTF Newsletter*, a parallel publication to *The B.C. Teacher*, BCTF President Jim MacFarlan registers concerns with the Minister of Education over what he calls "shocking conditions" at Telegraph Creek Elementary School. He calls for the school to be closed due to the lack of sanitation in the school, and argues that the closure would have happened long ago had the population of the

school not been mostly First Nations students. The school was replaced soon after.

Similarly, in an April 1974 *The B.C. Teacher* article summarizing MacFarlan's address to that year's AGM, he is quoted as follows: "Another problem to which the Federation has only very timidly begun to address itself is the matter of the shocking situation with regard to the education of native Indian students in this province." He openly challenges racism in the teaching profession, and then makes an early call for employment equity, stating: "Perhaps just one more statistic will help to shock you out of your lethargy. Do you know that there are fewer than 50 certificated native Indian teachers in this province? And do you know that if Indian people were represented in the teaching profession in the same proportion that they are in population, there ought to be some 1,200 Indian teachers?"

The Nov/Dec 1976 issue of *The B.C. Teacher* continued with this bluntness. In a piece entitled "Schools have treated Indian students shamefully," BCTF member Don Sawyer writes: "Only recently has there been any serious attempt to see the Indian situation as the product of a system that was designed to eradicate the Indian, either physically or culturally. Only recently, too, has there been much willingness on the part of educators to view the schools as an unconscious extension of this policy." Such comments did not go unchallenged, though, and *The B.C. Teacher* published rebuttals from other BCTF members defending the status quo and using terms that the Federation would never publish today.

In a companion article in the same issue, Richard Atleo, Hereditary Chief of the Ahousaht First Nation and the first Aboriginal person in British Columbia to earn a doctoral degree, states: "[T]he unblushing aim of early Indian education was absolute cultural genocide. This attempt at cultural genocide even found expression in a law that forbade potlatches on the coast of B.C. in the early part of this century. Another expression was practised in the Indian residential schools, where native students were strictly forbidden on pain of punishment to speak their native tongues." Cultural genocide is the same description that, years later, the Truth



**CATHOLIC TEACHERS WANTED**  
Applications are invited for the following positions commencing September 3rd, 1963:

i — Lejac Indian Residential School  
One hundred miles west of Prince George—on Highway 16.  
2 teachers—Primary 1 teacher—Intermediate

ii — One-room Indian schools—in Central and Northern British Columbia. Good living quarters provided.  
Beginning salaries:  
Senior Matric plus: one year teacher training — \$3,100.00  
two years teacher training — 3,400.00  
three years teacher training — 3,800.00  
four years teacher training — 4,200.00

Increments granted for up to six years teaching experience. Isolation bonus paid up to \$900.00 single, and \$1,500.00 married in one-room schools depending on isolation category.  
Apply To: J. E. INGOT, District Superintendent Indian Schools, P.O. Box 912, Prince George, B.C.

Above: "We've treated Indian students shamefully"—*The B.C. Teacher*, December 1963. Image: Provincial Educational Media Centre.

Below: Ad run in *The B.C. Teacher* for teaching positions (non-members) for residential schools.

and Reconciliation Commission of Canada would use in its report on the residential school system.

By the early 1980s, the Federation began publishing stories outlining progress that was being made. For example, a somewhat overly-rosy article in the January 23, 1980 *BCTF Newsletter* details results of a program for First Nations students in North Vancouver. In it, Gloria Joe and Leona Nahanee from the Squamish Nation give a lot of credit to North Vancouver teachers in the article, stating that they have come a long way. But, as Joe says: "I think they have to come a long ways yet."

Thirty-six years later, there remains a long way to go still. Certainly, there remains a gap in graduation rates and other measures of success for Aboriginal learners when compared to non-Aboriginal peers. This is not a fault of the learners, but a systemic failure—including a failure to address what BC's auditor general referred to last year as racism of low expectations.

The BCTF is fully committed to playing its part in seeing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada implemented, and in supporting members in their teaching and their own professional learning as it relates to Aboriginal content, knowledge, and understandings. ■



# Courageous First Nations Task Force continues to inspire

By Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Director

EACH CHILD has a gift. Look for that gift and how to help nurture it. Strengthen the spirit of the children and help them to find balance and ways of being that are rooted in land, community and culture....

This is part of the vision articulated by the BCTF's landmark Task Force on First Nations Education. Their report and sweeping recommendations to the 1999 AGM have inspired the Federation's work for the past 18 years and will do so long into the future. In the April 1999 *Teacher*, then-BCTF President Kit Krieger wrote:

"The interim report of the First Nations Task Force, powerfully presented by co-chairs Frank Conibear (Victoria) and Debbie Jeffrey (Prince Rupert), challenges teachers to acknowledge that the BC public schools have not been welcoming places for the vast majority of First Nations students. Making schools better for Aboriginal students will be a tremendous challenge as we work to undo the legacies of residential schools, poverty, assimilation and racism."

Task Force members spent the previous year talking to teachers in urban and remote communities, and exploring ways to do better by their First Nations and Métis students, among whom only 31 percent graduated.

"We were shocked by how outspoken some teachers were against the work we were doing," Task Force member Merle Williams recalled. "We met with things we weren't prepared for—the racism, the hardships in communities, students' needs. It was an

eye-opening experience that took a lot of emotional work because we were faced with the reality of what BC was going through."

It was a daunting task to take those experiences and weave them into the report and recommendations to the AGM. They began by educating their colleagues about their cultures.

"When Frank Conibear came to the microphone to speak.... a quiet fell over the room of 700 plus people," said Jane Turner, a Burnaby delegate. "He began by introducing himself in his language [Hul'q'umi'num]. That may have been the first time many of us had ever listened to an Aboriginal person speaking in their own language. It was both bewildering and moving: bewildering because I had no clue what the words meant, moving because I knew exactly why he was saying it that way."

But when the First Nations recommendations hit the AGM floor many delegates responded defensively. "Don't tell me I'm a racist!" they cried.

Surrey delegate David Chudnovsky (later BCTF President) said: "I was very upset and deflated that this was the response of my colleagues to this monumental work."

Despite the backlash, the recommendations ultimately passed to thunderous applause,

with many delegates openly weeping. That historic vote had a profound impact not only on the work of the BCTF but across the education community, including post-secondary. "All the other education partners were looking at what we were doing," Conibear said. He expressed pride that the resolutions are still valid today, and many have been fulfilled.

- The BCTF has had a full-time Aboriginal Education coordinator on staff since 2000, and the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee helps shape policy and programs.
- New courses such as First Nations 12 and English First Peoples 12 are raising awareness.
- Students in education faculties must take at least one course on Indigenous history and culture.
- The BCTF's many workshops on Aboriginal history, culture, and education are in very high demand across the province.
- The BCTF is collaborating with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in highlighting the 94 Calls to Action.
- More than 12,000 copies of the BCTF's *Project of Heart: The Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools* have been distributed across BC and across the country.
- BC's revised curriculum calls for infusion of Indigenous content across all subject areas.

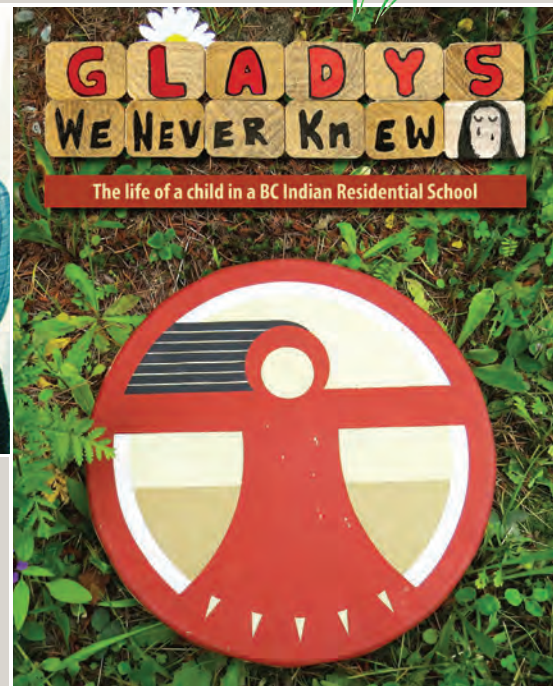
"As a First Nations person and educator, that's really gratifying. The teaching force is far better prepared to accept it today, and it goes along with the need for reconciliation," Conibear said. "My challenge to non-Aboriginal teachers is this: You need to take this up. Together we can make a difference." ■

*Right: The hands and face of a goddess form butterfly wings in artwork by Carl Stromquist.*



Task Force members: (Back row) Larry Kuehn (BCTF staff), Alice Gro, Merle Williams, Debbie Jeffrey, Frank Conibear. (Front row) Carol McCauley, Lexi Charlie, Geraldine Bob.

*Right: The BCTF is currently piloting a 10-lesson teaching resource centred on the life and death of one little girl in a BC residential school.*



# No excuses! We CAN deliver Aboriginal content!

By Lael Sleep,  
Vancouver teacher



## WHAT IS THE correct terminology? First Nations? Is it okay to say Native?

You don't want to do the territorial acknowledgment because you always mispronounce that one nation—Tsleil-Waututh. Saway-la-tooth? Is that right?

Is this art lesson tokenistic? Better skip it.

Look, I get it. We don't want to get it wrong. And we don't want to make it worse so we don't teach about it. But we can do better. What's more, we need to do better.

What we know and what we don't know about Aboriginal people and culture is complex. There are reasons for this. It has to do with colonization and it also has to do with racism. It wasn't until I started to unpack this complexity, that I was able to confront the stereotypes and assumptions I had about Aboriginal people and culture. As a white teacher who was nervous about engaging with Aboriginal content, it has been useful to start with myself.

It begins with re-educating ourselves. What if most of what we learned about Aboriginal people was wrong? Can you remember what you learned about Aboriginal people? If you are like me, a white kid who went to school in British Columbia, it's likely you crafted a totem pole from a toilet paper roll, watched a video about the Inuit and cringed at the

“As a white teacher who was nervous about engaging with Aboriginal content, it has been useful to start with myself.

bloodied baby seal, and somewhere in your parent's basement is the diorama you made of an “Indian” village. Sometimes it has been really uncomfortable. These shifts in understanding are part of a continual process. I have made mistakes and I am not an expert. But it doesn't matter, what matters is that I am trying.

We need to take seriously the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Education plays an important role in reconciling the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Like Justice Murray Sinclair has said: “Education is what got us into this mess, and education will get us out.”

So how can we start?

We have a wealth of authentic resources vetted and created by Aboriginal educators—books, teacher's guides, lesson plans. We have permission to use them. There are some things that are sacred and not available to us. If unsure, just ask. Building relationships with district Aboriginal staff is invaluable. With their guidance, I've moved past stumbling blocks and kept going—understanding that it is my responsibility to start, and not theirs. Reach out to the local nations in your area and learn about them. Invite a community member into your school to speak and remunerate them for sharing their knowledge. Take every opportunity to acknowledge the territory on which you live and learn.

There is a growing network of non-Aboriginal teachers who are doing this good work. I also turn to them for ideas and inspiration. If your passion is literacy, start with one Aboriginal-authored story. Read it and make meaning from it. Share it with your students.

“What if most of what we learned about Aboriginal people was wrong?

With the revised curriculum we have an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past, whether we have Aboriginal students in our class or not. Integrating Aboriginal content and values into classrooms benefits all learners. It teaches us about different perspectives, values, and experiences. This knowledge expands all minds and creates communities based on mutual respect and understanding.

Hey teachers! The time to start is now. Let's do the right thing and get going.

## Looking for resources?

### Terminology

<http://bit.ly/2f5xJpi>

### First Nations Educations Steering Committee

[www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)

### Aboriginal Kids Books

[www.strongnations.com](http://www.strongnations.com)

### Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

[www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)

### Ministry of Education:

#### Aboriginal Education Resources

<http://bit.ly/1RiaLVz>

#### BCTF: Aboriginal Education

<http://bit.ly/2e5YBTU>

*Lael Sleep lives and works on Coast Salish territory and is the Inclusion Teacher at Captain Cook Elementary School. She has a Masters in Education from UBC in Administration, Leadership, Social Justice, and Indigenous Education. ■*



# BCTF SOCIAL JUSTICE

FOR MORE THAN half a century the BCTF has been a leader in social justice activism, responding to concerns and needs of members, offering support, resources and training, and engaging in local, provincial, national and international solidarity. It is likely that every single member has either been directly involved or has benefitted from this work. Imagine the ripple effect this has had in our locals, schools, and communities!

# timeline

- 1980** Task Force on Racism replaced by the BCTF's Anti-Racism Committee
  - Committee on the Rights of Children established, ended in 1999
- 1981** Environmental Educators PSA established
- 1982** W.R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund Committee established
- 1983** The W.R. Long Memorial International Assistance Fund becomes W.R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund
- 1983–88** Unemployed Teachers Action Centre operated at BCTF. The Teachers Tutoring Service (TTS) arose from UTAC and continues to this day.
- 1985** BC Teachers for Peace and Global Education (PAGE) PSA established
  - BCTF solidarity work begins in South Africa and Latin America
- 1989** Namibia solidarity work begins
- 1989–95** CIDA funded Global Education coordinator placed at BCTF
- 2002** Global Classroom Initiative grant from CIDA; provided again in 2005 and 2007
- 2004** Four action groups formed—Status of Women, Antiracism, LGBTQ, and Antipoverty with one FTE staff support
- 2005** Regional Social Justice Conference Fund established
  - BCTF participates in Make Poverty History campaign
- 2006** BCTF first Global Education Symposium
  - BCTF helps coordinate World Peace Forum
- 2007** Committee for Action on Social Justice replaces SJAC
  - Peace and Global Education Action Group added to Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ)
  - BCTF Social Justice Lens launched
- 2008** Peru Project begins
  - BCTF second Global Education Symposium
  - BCTF staff increased to 2 FTE in social justice

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

- 1961** International Assistance Fund created based on \$1 per member per year
- 1963** Five BC teachers joined the CTF delegation to Project Overseas. Until 2008 when BCTF left CTF, 314 BC teachers had been on Project Overseas. Imagine the ripple effect around the globe!
- 1970** Task Force on the Status of Women
- 1971** BCTF International Assistance Fund becomes William R. Long Memorial International Assistance Fund
- 1973** Status of Women Program began with committee and staff person
- 1975** Task Force on Racism
  - Program Against Racism began with staff person

*I don't believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person. I have a lot to learn from other people.*

—Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking Glass World*.

- 1994** The Ed May Social Responsibility Education Fund initiated, offering project grants to teachers
- 1996** BCTF negotiated a new provincial article on sexual harassment/harassment
- 1997** Cuba Project begins
  - Ad hoc committee formed on homophobia and heterosexism in public schools
- 1999** Status of Women Program and Program against Racism are disbanded and replaced with the Social Justice Advisory Committee (SJAC) with one FTE staff support
  - Social Justice Committee members and local contacts attend zone meetings
  - Educators Against Racism PSA formed, delisted in 2015
- 1999/00** Social Justice grants established

- 2010** Environmental Justice action group added to CASJ
- 2012** Bob Rosen Social Justice Award established
- 2015/16** BCTF undertakes an equity audit
- 2016** Gender identity and gender expression added to the BC Human Rights Code





# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT then and now

Connecting the Year 2000 Program with the 2016 Curriculum Revision

By Carol Johns, Kindergarten, primary, student service teacher, literacy support teacher

© Christopher Futcher/iStock

IN THE LATE 1990s I represented the Primary PSA in development and implementation of the “Year 2000” and co-chaired the Provincial Steering Committee for the Primary, Intermediate, and Graduation Programs. While the majority of us were practicing teachers, we were backed by an extensive stakeholder support team including the BCTF, principals and superintendents, the Ministry of Education, BC School Trustees Association, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils and academics. SFU professor Milt McClaren, often said “This is our opportunity, we won’t see this kind of support or money for education and implementation again.” Teachers were provided with additional resources and support to implement that program. That was then.

Primary teachers and their students were the biggest beneficiaries of the new “Primary Program” that validated what teachers had been doing in their classrooms. Sixteen years on, this research-based, integrated, and holistic curriculum still passes the test of time.

Many aspects of the Intermediate Program are familiar again today—no letter grades, project-based learning, and individualized learning. In the year 2000 this presented a major challenge, not being common practice in many intermediate classrooms. Complicating matters, the Ministry was developing the Core Curriculum, and emphasizing content.

The Graduation Program faced similar challenges. “Reference Sets” and the

“Performance Standards” were being developed with a major emphasis on curriculum content in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and social responsibility.

The Provincial Steering Committee was an asset that enabled us to make recommendations to support teachers across the province, gaining two extra days for Implementation. Locals had teacher majority implementation committees to provide resources, workshops, support and time for teachers in implementation. Even the business representatives on the Steering Committee came to see the value of implementation time for teachers and conference time for parents with their teachers and students.

So what is the difference now in 2016?

This revised curriculum impacts the whole system. Having taught both Kindergarten and University of Victoria teacher education students, I see positive aspects in attempts to match the assessment and reporting. The emphasis on parents as part of this process but with teachers at the centre is also

positive. This should become more what we do, rather than simply reporting events that take us away from our focus on teaching. But we must work diligently to avoid cumbersome processes that prevent better communication between the teacher, our students, and their parents. With an emphasis on student self-assessment at all levels and the focus on inquiry and big ideas rather than detailed curricular content, this new model has the potential to better engage our students.

However, one glaring difference between then and now is the money devoted to implementation and for resources to support the new focus. It simply isn’t there! We do have impressive technology but in my school our Parent Advisory Committee has provided most of it. I worry that this is creating have and have-not schools, especially in the inner city or rural areas hard hit by BC’s underfunded public education system. Before we make use of E-portfolios or any other technology supported system we need a level playing field for both students and their teachers. Resources for “hands-on”, experiential and individual approaches are costly too. Place or site-based learning often requires busing to a location. In my school the money for busing for curricular field trips comes from limited funds raised by our PAC.

While the positive energy generated around being better able to meet the needs of our students is exciting, the reality is we have less financial support for our students with special needs and larger classes with fewer specialists such as teacher-librarians, music specialists,

“I cannot over emphasize the importance of teacher led Professional Development.



literacy specialists, learning assistants, and curriculum specialists to support classroom teachers.

When I became a teacher, the BCTF slogan was “No class over 40”! Yes, we have made many gains—I have gone from two classes of Kindergarten with 31 and 32 students (that meant 63 home visits at the beginning of the year) to class-size language, locally bargained, of 20 students. (Current provincial language is 22 for Kindergarten).

In the early years, class sizes of over 30 five-year olds inspired me to become involved in the BCTF, my local union, and my PSA. The current Liberal government has been drastically underfunding the public system for the past 10 years and has dramatically increased funding for the private system.

I cannot over emphasize the importance of teacher-led professional development. The BCTF has a proud history of supporting implementation of inspiring practices through initiatives which dovetail perfectly with the revised program. Program for Quality Teaching, Teacher Inquiry initiatives, and BCTF support for Changing Results for Young Readers are all examples of collaboration utilizing an inquiry approach that honours the need for teachers to have time and support to improve their practice. Lately we keep hearing the phrase “we have the gift of time” for this implementation. Well, we had three days last year and will have two days in each of the next two years. However, as a colleague rightly stated, “it is the required time we need but without the required resources to back it up—it is just a beginning step for an implementation of this magnitude.”

As a parent of two graduates of our public system, I want all students to have the best support we can offer to thrive in a quickly changing and unknown world, enabling them to be creative problem solvers and life-long learners. Our challenge is to advocate for implementation that supports real change so that parents, teachers, and all education stakeholders can work together in a supportive environment with appropriate resources. During the implementation of the Primary Program we used the motto “Hurry Slowly” in our workshops. Now I would say “Hurry Slowly and Thoughtfully.” Use your professional autonomy to determine what works best for your students and for you as a teacher taking into consideration the conditions under which you are teaching. ■

# What's OLD IS NEW and what's NEW IS OLD

*By Pamela Proctor, author, retired teacher*

**MY STUDENT EXPERIENCES** in BC were dominated by the teacher, who used the strap on unco-operative pupils. Trained at 17 at UBC as a primary teacher, I replicated the teacher-centered methods I had been taught in my own Vancouver classroom. In 1964 after five years teaching in the front of my silent classroom, I went on exchange to Britain and I was shocked! The children were noisy and as far as I could see, no one was teaching. Mentored by a colleague, I came to see the benefits of these new methods and my teaching changed. In 1971, inspired by the philosophy of the British Infant (Primary) School, our five-person team at Charles Dickens Annex initiated a similar program. Rows of desks gave way to tables and chairs. The strong focus on the three Rs gave way to the full inclusion of the arts and physical education. Group lessons and seatwork gave way to play-based programs with children choosing manipulative materials, actively learning in co-operation with others. There was greater parent involvement and many volunteered to help and we were well supported by board officials. Talking together, observing the children's positive response and noting their progress helped us shed our old rigid methods.

When the “The Year 2000” arrived I found many similarities to our program at Dickens Annex. Sadly, soon after it was introduced, government prescribed learning outcomes and standardized testing was imposed, forcing a return to more traditional methods. History yet again was being repeated.

This year's talk of “new” more open approaches to teaching has led me, after seven decades as both student and teacher to question—what's old and what's new? Recently my former Dickens student, Dan, age 50, sent me this email:

“You played a very crucial role in my life in many ways emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Probably the thing I'm most grateful for is you instilling experiential learning in me at a very young age.

John Amos Comenius (1618–48), considered by many to be the father of modern education, influenced Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), who gave birth to the Kindergarten and who also knew the work of Swiss educator, Johann Pestalozzi (1746–1827). John Dewey (1859–1952) emphasized learning by doing, and A.S. Neill (1883–1973) started an open outdoor program with an emphasis on play at Summerhill, asserting that “forced education” was futile. Maria Montessori stressed the development of a child's own initiative and natural abilities, especially through practical play, and Loris

Malaguzzi started preschool programs after World War II based on children learning through a self-guided curriculum in Reggio Emilia.

These early educators valued child-centered approaches and learning by doing, recognizing that each child is unique, play is central to learning, and encouragement works better than punishment. ■



*A class of 35 young children in the 1950s, taught by a friend of the writer.*



*Pamela signing her books at Gibsons Public Art gallery*

# Fear, pride and success

## The BCTF struggle against homophobia and heterosexism

By Joan Merrifield, retired teacher, SJ committee NDTA, BCTF workshop facilitator

MY PRINCIPAL called me into his office to tell me one of my students had “outed” me on the playground. I was terrified I’d be fired! It was humiliating to face my principal on this very private and personal matter of my sexual orientation. He assured me he had “homosexual friends” and the issue was resolved. Later a Grade 7 boy was called homophobic names and, despite all our classroom work on name calling and bullying, he was physically assaulted on the playground by other boys. My principal called the police. This was a pivotal moment for me. I recognized that systematic oppression needed to be challenged and I needed allies. It was 1992 and my first teaching job.

Luckily, I found the Gay and Lesbian Educators (GALE BC) group. In 1995 the BCTF distributed their booklet *Counselling Lesbian and Gay Youth* to locals. We were invited to speak to counsellors and university teacher education programs. Hostile and fearful student teachers were often resistant, accusing us of having a “gay agenda” and their professors faced harassment from colleagues and students. It was a scary time to be an out gay or lesbian teacher.

A 1992 article in *Teacher* about homophobia in schools by a Richmond TTOC moved the 1993 AGM to pass a motion that BCTF condemn homophobic acts. Motions to create a discrete homophobia and heterosexism program followed in 1997 with an AGM feasibility motion to study the need for a program. In 1998 five locals and the Executive Committee presented a motion: *That the BCTF undertake a specific initiative with designated funding to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism within the BC public-school system and to make schools safe and inclusive for sexual-minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered) staff, students, and families.* Those of us supporting the motion lined up at the microphones at 6 a.m. alongside those opposing it. Many of us were first time delegates to the BCTF AGM and first time speakers.

It was a tense time. Outside the Hyatt the *Vancouver Sun* was covering fundamentalist Christian protesters demonstrating against the motions. Hundreds of LGBTQ youth appeared with supportive placards.

“It was one of the proudest moments I have had as a member of the BCTF, and as a teacher.



LGBTQ youth protest outside the 1998 BCTF AGM.

Police had to separate the two volatile groups. Student postcards describing how they had been treated as LGBTQ youth in our public schools were given to delegates.

Despite some booing and homophobic comments during the debate, the motion passed by 95%. It was one of the proudest moments I have had as a member of the BCTF, and as a teacher. The Social Justice Advisory Committee began developing policies and resources and in 2004 the new Committee for Action on Social justice included an action group on LGBTQ rights. An AGM motion passed to actively support the formation of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools. We launched the BCTF workshop, Homophobia and Heterosexism 101. More resources and workshops for teachers followed—Breaking the Silence, That’s So Gay Is not Okay, and How to be an Ally to LGBTQ Students at the Secondary Level.

Backlash occurred from groups offering reparative therapy training to teachers to help LGBTQ people change. A Representative Assembly motion passed opposing these trainings and recommending students not be subjected to this therapy.

School districts were challenged; the Surrey book banning case and North Vancouver District 44 v. Jurban case headed to the BC Supreme Court, where the school districts lost. Victoria and Vancouver School Boards passed policies to protect both LGBTQ educators and students from discrimination and harassment and included action plans and enforceable consequences. Today all but 12 districts have policies. The BCTF offers Creating a Gender Inclusive School Culture workshops, supported by the *Gender Spectrum Handbook*. Most recently the LGBTQ action group has been developing resources on Trans\* issues, partnering with community groups including Out in Schools, Camp Out and Qmunity. The work continues.... ■

## Surrey BOOK BANNING case

“In 1997... three children’s books (*Belinda’s Bouquet*, *Asha’s Mums*, and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads*) were submitted to the Surrey School Board for approval for use in Kindergarten and Grade 1 as resources for the personal planning curriculum. The books feature children who have two moms or two dads. The board refused to allow the books to be used ...because parents complained that their religious beliefs would be offended.”

—Murray Corren, honorary lifetime member, in *Teacher* May/June 2002.

In the ensuing six-year battle, James Chamberlain, the teacher originally requesting board approval, along with Murray, his partner Peter Corren, Surrey parent Dianne Willcott, and lawyer Joe Arvey asserted that “the ban imposed by the board breached the *School Act*, which requires that public schools be conducted on “strictly secular” principles, precluding the board’s decision’s being “significantly influenced by religious considerations.” (Corren, 2002)

“Teacher-librarians and the BCTF proved to be outstanding allies in this fight against censorship over the years. BCTF locals and teachers gave generously to the fundraising campaign for us as the petitioners in this precedent setting case. Courageous Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers in different school districts read these books in their classrooms and were instrumental in filing affidavits in the courts that resulted in an eventual win by a decisive seven-to-two margin at the Supreme Court of Canada.”

—James Chamberlain



# BCTF Program Against Racism

*Jill Wight, retired teacher, former PAR Committee Chair*

I WAS A NEW TEACHER in 1980, finding my way. I remember three young brothers, recently arrived from India. They wore patkas, (the head covering worn by Sikh boys and young men), and spoke not one word of English. I can still recall their names and the shy smiles that lit up their faces as they sat, safely, in my ESL classroom. Within weeks, they became targets of (some) ridicule and (some) open hostility. Stories of what was happening to them in crowded hallways filtered back to me. The ridicule turned to open hostility when, during a gym class, one of the brothers became victim to a chorus of racist taunts. It was ugly and no translation was necessary. Within days, the brothers returned to school with new haircuts, patkas gone in an effort to ... feel safer? to ... fit it? Like many teachers both before and after me, I turned to the BCTF's Program Against Racism (PAR) in search of strategies to combat the racism being experienced by students in my school.

Inspired by the good work being done at the provincial level, I soon found myself a member of the PAR committee. The committee then was comprised of three women and four men, with four being people of colour, a fair representation of the community we were tasked to serve. We were inundated with requests for help from every corner of the province.

**How do I handle** that colleague who tells racist jokes in the staff room?

**Who should I talk to** about the Ku Klux Klan pamphlets dropped overnight in the school parking lot?

**How do I go about** creating a more welcoming school for all of my students?

While the staff coordinator worked with our committee to address these questions, classroom teachers took on the challenge to engage with whole communities to identify problems and seek out solutions in their own districts. The resulting powerful provincial network of like-minded people began to tackle larger questions such as representation of cultural communities on school boards, advocating for new programs, and funding for services. It was in local communities where the forces of real change began to take hold.

Meanwhile, the PAR continued to provide necessary tools to support teachers in the classroom. Teachers, singly and in groups, produced lesson aids to promote multicultural activities and to confront racism in schools. Workshops by trained facilitators motivated school staffs at Pro-D days and at teacher conferences. Sometimes the focus was to sensitize teachers to the ways their students experienced racism at school (how does a student of colour address that tired old question "where are you from?" when she's a third-generation Canadian?). We expanded upon notions of

self esteem to include 'cultural' self esteem. We supported school staffs to problem-solve with best practices to confront racism in effective, rather than confrontational ways. We began to join union, district and ministry committees to revise inaccurate and outdated curricula, subject by subject, grade by grade.

Meanwhile, the committee initiated a policy on affirmative action within the BCTF to update our own hiring practices, and, in so doing, expand a pool of diverse and talented teachers and support staff who continue to this day to advocate for our students and to provide relevant resources to teachers.

The work of PAR now falls under the purview of the antiracism action group of the BCTF Social Justice Committee. Continued curriculum work in areas such as reconciliation remains largely unfinished. The urgency with which we must respond to racist incidents that leave our students still vulnerable, like those three brothers so long ago, has, sadly, not changed. The power lies, as it always has, with teachers, in their classrooms and in their schools and locals, to challenge racism as they find it and to "be the change" on behalf of all our students. ■



## A ROCKY START for BCTF's Antiracism Program

*By Wes Knapp, retired BCTF staff*

RACIST TAUNTS, textbook bias, widespread neglect of First Nations students, and teachers ill-prepared to deal with the increasing diversity of the student population were the examples cited by Surrey teacher, Lloyd Edwards at the 1975 AGM. Delegates called upon the Federation to take action. We struck a task force to engage classroom teachers in finding solutions. I was assigned to work with this task force. Our first project was to create a visual presentation on racism in BC, which gave a stark picture of BC's shameful history. It called on teachers to join with students in finding a positive path forward.

Incredibly, the visual presentation was met with hostility by the Surrey School Board and the BC School Trustees Association. In fact, the Surrey School Board banned its use in schools, arguing that "to talk about racism creates racist practices." Ironically this led to widespread support for the presentation and its message. In fact, the Federation couldn't keep up with requests for its showing. The media in BC and across the country had a field day with the issue. We probably couldn't have orchestrated a better beginning for the Antiracism Program.

In reflecting on the Antiracism Program within the BCTF, I have tremendous admiration for teachers' determination to make our schools better places for all students. Teachers are undoubtedly proud of their efforts and for the opportunity the Federation has given them to speak out about a problem of immense significance. Imagine what it would be like to work in an environment that turns a blind eye to racist practices. Of course, we didn't always win the day with our Antiracism Programs but we didn't give up either.

When the BCTF launched a program to combat racism in our public schools, it was moving into new territory for a teachers' organization. Looking back some 40 years to the start of the Antiracism Program, we have set in motion many positive attitudes and strategies to tackle racism when it surfaces. Clearly our job is far from over but I'm very optimistic that the strategies now in place will help us reduce the devastating effects of racism. ■

# Half a century of POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

By Glen Hansman, BCTF President

**"FROM TIME to time, teachers and the public express a wistful desire that education be above politics. A glance at our concerns shows this desire to be unrealistic." So wrote Tom Hutchinson, who led as BCTF president in 1968–69, in his essay published in *Teacher* in 1984. That issue featured a series of essays by BCTF presidents who served from the late 1960s through until the early 1980s. Common themes during those years centered on tensions with government and the BCTF's increased political activities.**

With the May 2017 election on the horizon it is timely to remind ourselves that the Federation has long been recognized for our role in informing public policy, advocating for students, public education, and the teaching profession. While the past five decades have seen the Federation actively involved in advancing the concerns of members during the lead up to provincial elections, this wasn't the case for the BCTF's first fifty year when a more hands-off approach was taken to provincial elections.

Things changed significantly in 1969 with the BCTF's "Apple Campaign." Stemming from a 1968 AGM decision to "go political," according to incumbent President Tom Hutchinson, this marked a change in approach for the Federation. Teachers were competing for resources and the power to be involved in decisions and he noted "resources for education do not fall like ripe apples from the tree." Thus began the apple campaign for the summer election of 1969, where the Federation put politicians on the record on education issues by granting an apple designation to education-friendly candidates and teachers were supported to become actively involved in getting the message to the public.

The year 1972 marked a significant turning point for teachers in response to a horrendous piece of legislation that the Social Credit government brought in during the spring session of the legislature. Adam Robertson,

BCTF President at the time, later wrote that members' reaction to that legislation "was immediate and very clear." Robertson went on: "We said that we would not live with it. We followed the customary approaches to influence government to alter its position, but to no avail. Not in desperation, but with a clear realization that our difficulties with government could be resolved only in the political arena, we moved into that sphere determined to effect a change of government."

Members strongly supported the Federation's move to influence that election, and were active in the campaigns of opposition parties, supporting any candidate who had a chance of defeating a Social Credit candidate. Due to the efforts of many individuals and organizations across BC, including the Federation, the NDP won in that election.

Over all the subsequent provincial elections the BCTF has advocated strongly for a well-funded public education system with fair working and learning conditions. Clearly our messages have resonated with the public since public support for teachers and public education has remained high over the decades.

This BCTF legacy of political engagement was supported most recently at our 2016 AGM when delegates adopted a position that reflects what is now our union's continued commitment to mobilize energies and support members' efforts in provincial elections. As May 9, 2017 approaches we find ourselves preparing to secure public support for a stronger, better-funded, and more inclusive public education system, and for the election of a government that makes support and funding for public education, respect for teachers and strong and stable public services a priority. An AGM recommendation tasked the Federation with working with the BC Federation of Labour, other unions, parents,

and community organizations to ensure that the result of the election is a government that has a clear priority to provide the necessary education funding, meet the needs of students, address child poverty, and improve the learning and working conditions in BC's public schools.

With regard to nonpartisanship, the BCTF is not a member of any political party, nor do we donate to any political party. Both of these are by practice, though, not because of any By-law or policy enacted by the AGM. In fact, the BCTF constitution provides for "the attainment of the purposes of the Federation by participation in educational, social, co-operative, electoral, political, economic, bargaining, or other activity authorized pursuant to the By-laws of the Federation." Although BCTF By-law 4.3 prohibits the use of a levy "to finance political parties or their campaigns," it otherwise does not prevent the BCTF from endorsing a political party, formally affiliating with a political party, or donating to a political party.

Still, successive generations of leaders and members of the BCTF have chosen to maintain our union's practice of nonpartisanship, and our efforts this school year in no way depart from that practice. That being said, there are only two possible outcomes this May. The question members have to ask themselves is: which of those two outcomes will be better for themselves as teachers, better for our students, and better for public education in British Columbia?

Campaigns are won or lost due to the direct work done in campaign offices, and significant participation by members directly in candidates' campaigns can make a difference. While the Federation will be conducting a modest amount of advertising related to the election, members are strongly encouraged to be involved in election-related activities of their locals and to get directly involved in the campaigns of candidates running in all ridings in BC. No riding should be taken for granted, and teachers' participation is tremendously important to help ensure that our concerns are addressed for the betterment of teachers and students in BC schools.

*Glen would like to acknowledge former Presidents Adam Robertson and Tom Hutchinson for their essays in the January-February 1984 issue of this magazine, and the work of former Teacher editor Ken Aitchison in putting that issue together. ■*

Which of those two outcomes will be better for themselves as teachers, better for our students, and better for public education in British Columbia?



# Campbell and Clark's contract stripping SPARKS PROTESTS

By Susan Croll, Editor, Teacher

**MAY 2001:** The BC Liberal government swept into power, taking 77 of 79 seats in the provincial legislature. Only two New Democrat MLAs, Joy McPhail and Jenny Kwan, formed the Opposition. At once, Premier Gordon Campbell and Education Minister Christy Clark began a systematic and sustained campaign against teachers and their union.

Their motives were both ideological and economic. Campbell and Clark both had a personal antipathy towards the BCTF and labour. As well, they needed to make massive cuts to public spending to pay for their 25% tax cut—something the business community called “Christmas in July.” Class size limits, class-composition language, specialist-teacher ratios, caseload limits were all expensive provisions that would have to be eliminated.

On January 25, 2002, the government passed Bills 27 and 28 which removed teaching conditions from the scope of what could be bargained, deleted any language that had previously been negotiated relating to teaching conditions, and vaporized several local agreements in their entirety. With the stroke of a pen, a host of contract provisions for which teachers had struggled and sacrificed were simply gutted from collective agreements throughout the province.

David Chudnovsky, an outspoken and articulate secondary English teacher from Surrey, served as BCTF President during this turbulent time. When I asked him if he has any vivid memories from 2002, he didn't skip a beat. His recollections were as passionate and clear as if the events happened yesterday.

“We knew we had to respond to Bills 27 and 28 and quickly planned, along with locals,

a provincial day of action for January 28. We had to go in front of the Labour Relations Board to see if our action would be deemed legal or not. I remember spending the whole day at the LRB while BCTF and government lawyers made their cases. As the clock ticked and the evening became night, I knew I had to go home. Teachers throughout the province were preparing to walk out and a meeting at the Pacific Coliseum had been organized for Lower Mainland teachers. Tomorrow was an important day for us.”

As David walked through the front door, his partner Ruth asked how things had gone at the board. He broke down and began weeping. “Being at the Board all day was like facing the full strength of the state. I felt as if the world was against teachers because we wanted better learning conditions for kids.” Retelling his story it's as if he is reliving the full force of 15 years ago, and the tears begin to well again.

“It snowed the night of January 27 and when I woke up the sky was that pristine blue and the city was covered in white. Ruth, our son

Ben, and I drove to the Pacific Coliseum. We parked the car and saw maybe a few dozen people walking towards the Coliseum. It was a beautiful morning, but I couldn't help wondering, “Where are the teachers?””

They entered the Coliseum to find it nearly empty. “Twenty minutes later we were about to begin the proceedings and there were only maybe a thousand people present. I turned to Ruth and said, ‘Is this what it's like if you a throw a party and no one comes?’ Just at that moment, a teacher rushes up and tells me we can't start yet because there is massive gridlock around the PNE.”

They delayed the meeting for another 45 minutes and watched in growing amazement and pride as throngs of people filled the seats. In all, about 15,000 teachers, parents, students, and other trade unionists turned out to protest Campbell and Clark's attacks on teachers' rights and students' learning conditions.

Lower Mainland teachers weren't the only ones to organize protests. “Victoria teachers held a rally on the lawn of the Legislature with 7,500 teachers attending. In all more than 80% of our members participated in demonstrations and rallies around the province,” he said.

“Did we defeat Bills 27 and 28 on that day? No. But we are still strong 15 years later. Having the will to stand up for ourselves and our students is a proud tradition that I am happy I was part of.” ■

On January 25, 2002, the provincial government also tabled Bill 29, stripping many provisions from health care workers' collective agreements. Health care unions challenged the constitutionality of Bill 29 and in June 2007 won a landmark decision in the Supreme Court of Canada upholding the right to collective bargaining.



# A LEARNING and teaching lesson from “The Oregon Trail Generation”

By Rich Overgaard, BCTF Campaigns and Communications Division

IN A 2015 *SocialMediaWeek.org* article (<http://bit.ly/1Hgqgh5>), author and social media maven Anna Garvey outlines her belief that those of us born in the late 1970s and early 1980s are not members of Generation X, nor are we Millennials. Garvey calls us (herself included) “The Oregon Trail Generation.”

Garvey describes this cohort as one with “a healthy portion of Gen X grunge cynicism, and a dash of the unbridled optimism of Millennials.” She goes on to say that today’s mid to late 30-somethings have a unique relationship with technology and the Internet. And, she argues, it all started with a computer game called *The Oregon Trail* that we played in our school libraries during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of our pixelated selves even died of dysentery along the way!

## “What was it like growing up, going to school, and becoming a teacher on the trend line of technological change?”

But why does this game stand in as a symbol for a whole generational subset? Garvey says it’s about timing. For us, we were the first to really have a full education with computers in our schools, and then increasingly in our homes (for those of certain privilege, which is a level of analysis Garvey doesn’t quite get to). We made mixed tapes like our older siblings, but then were the first to start downloading songs from Napster. We messaged our friends on ICQ, (a program that notifies you when your friends are online) but still had their home phone numbers memorized. We used card catalogues in the library, but also searched on the very first version of Internet Explorer to the sounds of a screeching dial-up connection.

We weren’t always the first on everything though—and that’s where Garvey separates us from Millennials. We made it through our college years without social media.

No Facebook, no Twitter, No Snapchat. Remember MySpace?

According to Garvey, “we late 70s and early 80s babies were on the cusp of changes that essentially transformed modern life and, for better or worse, it’s shaped who we are and how we relate to the world.” We remember analog, but enthusiastically embrace digital.

And so I reached out to teachers, on Facebook of course, to see what about *The Oregon Trail* Generation concept resonated with them. What was it like growing up, going to school, and becoming a teacher on the trend line of technological change? What tech or social media do you wish you had “back then” as a K–12 or post-secondary student? Which ones are you grateful didn’t exist at all? What role is tech now playing in your professional life compared to how you remember things way back when?

### Kim Friesen, Vernon

“TECH IS PLAYING a huge role in my professional life compared to how I remember it as a student. As a student I remember going to the computer lab once, maybe twice a week if we were really lucky, to play games and maybe work on a typing program. It felt like there was very little educational thought given to the game development. Now, as a school-based resource teacher, I use technology frequently with my students. There are programs that allow my students with learning disabilities to increase written output through prediction software and digital brainstorming software, for example. Students with reading disabilities can access higher level reading materials through read-aloud software and work on certain skills using high-interest games. Students who are non-verbal can use augmentative and alternative communication programs and interact with their world in a way not previously available to them.”



### Jeff Lynch, Vancouver

“I WAS THE KID who chose ‘computers’ as free time Friday afternoons in Grade 4 to go and get dysentery on *The Oregon Trail* (it took me the whole year to figure out the algorithm that picking the most money to start would always come with a drowning or something like it).

“Becoming a teacher in this age has been tough. All my lessons were paper and pencil focused, and within the first few years, I was supposed to be using Smartboards, but wasn’t given the professional development needed to use them to their best ability. And when I did get used to one, when I changed schools (or even to a different room in the same school), there wouldn’t be the same available technology, so it would be all for naught.

“Most recently tablets have come in vogue, and my school has an iPad cart. They’re okay, but recent research has shown that unless teachers have the right apps, the right training, and clear goals, they end up more like toys instead of tools, and—ironically—a computer is better for what most students need.” ■





What if we could transform our schools to make them even better? Anna, a Vancouver elementary teacher, and Alison, a Burnaby secondary teacher, imagined what our work could look like in the future. With a deep investment in education and support for teachers, it could be a reality.



Above left to right: teachers and mothers Anna Chudnovsky and Alison Atkinson.

# We can DREAM...

By Anna Chudnovsky, and Alison Atkinson, teachers

## Anna Chudnovsky

COMING TO WORK, I drop my one-year-old off at the in-school childcare centre. Some kids, whose parents work shifts, have been there awhile.

We start the day reading to the little ones, and then we move on to swimming lessons at our school pool.

In my classroom, I glance out at the container garden. We'll spend time later today harvesting and preparing food from it and the larger school garden as we'll be hosting a community dinner tonight for families. My students have taken FoodSafe and are well-versed in knife skills and nutrition.

Throughout the day, I make sure to check in with each of my 18 Grade 6/7 students, greeting them in the different languages we're learning, including Halkomelem (a local indigenous language), French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, and Italian. Community leaders help us converse in their chosen languages.

Our day of learning is busy, balancing group work and one-on-one time with my students. The kids work at stand-up desks while they ponder the growing conditions of our garden plants, or at sit-down desks while they do their narrative writing. They collaborate with one another and make the most of their time during the day. There is no high-stakes testing. I use my 250 minutes of weekly prep time to assess portfolios, presentations, self-assessment, group feedback, and written assignments.

Our work is cross-curricular and values process above product. The kids have become experts at planning and engaging with their learning. Kids with special needs are a part of our class community, supported by our wonderful, well-paid and educated support staff workers.

The kind of work we do in school is about the kind of community and world we want. My students have chances to have new cultural experiences. We've travelled to Haida Gwaii many times, collaboratively inquiring with our Indigenous partner school. These partnerships were initiated through the BCTF and have become an important part of our learning. Our PAC has built a close relationship with the Haida Gwaii school PAC, often cohosting cyber-speaker series based on shared interests and needs.

Our PACs don't need to fundraise. For anything. Ever. Oh, and we have wifi that works.

## Alison Atkinson

OUR SCHOOL is relatively new. Badly damaged in the big earthquake that brought down dozens of schools around the province, it was rebuilt. The earthquake was a wake-up call for the provincial government. Finally, we're close to ensuring that all schools and public buildings are safe.

Our school is welcoming and bright, designed to reflect a 21st century school with lots of flexible spaces. It is energy and water independent, and has a high-yield urban farm on the roof. Now that hardly anyone in the city drives anymore, an acre of pavement for parking just isn't necessary so we farm there too.

In the morning, all students take core academic courses: numeracy and mathematics, communication and culture, scientific inquiry, and social studies. Teachers have autonomy in how they build their courses, and they are supported in weaving in inquiry, critical thinking, collaboration, and interdisciplinary investigations.

The kind of work we do in school is about the kind of community and world we want.

The whole school breaks between morning classes for physical activity. Everyone—staff and students—participates in 30 minutes of exercise or play. There's a wide range of choices and it's a part of the day that everyone looks forward to.

Before lunch, students check in with their home pod for 15 or 20 minutes. Entering secondary school, students are connected with a pod led by a staff member who stays with them through their time at the school. Pod is a chance to say hello and chat about what's going on. Pod teachers are able to support students through conflicts, absences, and other problems, and collaborate with counsellors, administrators, and support workers.

In the afternoon, students head into Workshop. These are interdisciplinary, in-depth courses; the class meets every day for a full term. Topics range from beekeeping, to artificial intelligence programming, to studio art; the choices vary year to year, depending on the community experts available who offer their expertise and real-world connections while working alongside BCTF teachers. For example, in an architecture Workshop, numeracy and social studies teachers work with the architect to integrate mathematical skills and an understanding of the relationship architecture has to human culture. Workshop is often loud and messy; teachers work side by side with students. Whenever possible, the result of Workshop is something shared and real.

School today is challenging, but teachers are equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to make the world a more just and compassionate place for everyone. ■

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

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February 7, 2017, 5–6 p.m., SFU Surrey

February 9, 2017, 5–6 p.m., SFU Vancouver

These programs are designed for educators, leaders, service-providers, and decision-makers in public, community, and private settings. Attend an information session and learn more about Curriculum and Instruction: Contemplative Inquiry and Approaches in Education; Imaginative Education: Imaginative Teaching and Learning in the New BC Curriculum; Justice, Law, and Ethics in Education; Vygotsky and Cultural-Historical Theory (CHAT); and, Educational Leadership: Post-secondary Educational Leadership. Program starts: Fall 2017. Apply: November 1, 2016–February 15, 2017. Program location: SFU Surrey Campus. <http://bit.ly/2fbOtOH>. Info session RSVP: <http://bit.ly/2fuu6dJ>

### BC Alternate Education Association (BCAEA) 30th Annual Challenge and Change Conference

February 16–17, Vancouver

Will Richardson ([willrichardson.com](http://willrichardson.com)) will be the keynote speaker and workshops will feature well-known presenters like Dr. Gordon Neufeld. Over 35 sessions will be offered, covering several topics helping those who work with at-risk youth in alternate education learning environments.

Location: Vancouver Sheraton Wall Centre, 1088 Burrard Street, Vancouver  
[bcaea.com/conference.html](http://bcaea.com/conference.html)

### Save Your Sanity

February 21–22, 2017, Victoria

April 3–4, 2017, Prince George

April 6–7, 2017, Kelowna

April 10–11, Abbotsford

Colleen DeVeyrac will be presenting her one- or two-day workshop in Victoria, Prince George, Kelowna, and Abbotsford. Day 1—Behaviour Workshop: Proactive Strategies for Children with Challenging Behaviour. Day 2—The Art of De-escalation and Conflict Resolution. You can attend one or both days. To register visit [www.saveyoursanity.ca](http://www.saveyoursanity.ca) or call 250-572-4144.

### Teachers of Inclusive Education (TIE-BC) (formerly Special Education Association of British Columbia [SEA]) Annual Crosscurrents Conference

February 23–24, 2017, Richmond

Crosscurrents features keynote speaker Michelle Garcia Winner, as well as an impressive roster of speakers, including Faye Brownlie, Shelley Moore, Leyton Schnellert, Colleen Politano, Colleen DeVerak, Dawn Reithaug, and Maureen Dockendorf. Sessions cover a range of topics related to inclusive education, such as self-regulation, literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning, brain

research, ASD, FASD, ADHD, Indigenous approaches, behaviour, anxiety, and mental health issues. Program will be released mid-October. [www.seaofbc.ca](http://www.seaofbc.ca)

Location: Sheraton Richmond Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Highway, Richmond.

### Annual BC Teacher Education Roundtable May 11–12, 2017, Vancouver

The University of British Columbia's (UBC) Faculty of Education's annual BC Teacher Education Roundtable will be held at the UBC Point Grey campus in the beautiful new Ponderosa Common. This year's theme is Powering Up Practicum, and we look forward to exploring great current practices as well as possibilities for the future. Keynote speaker, Dr. Tony Clarke, will kick off the event on Thursday, May 11. More details will follow, but please mark this important event on your calendar. You won't want to miss it! ■

[bctf.ca/PDcalendar](http://bctf.ca/PDcalendar)

Changes/additions: [msteele@bctf.ca](mailto:msteele@bctf.ca)

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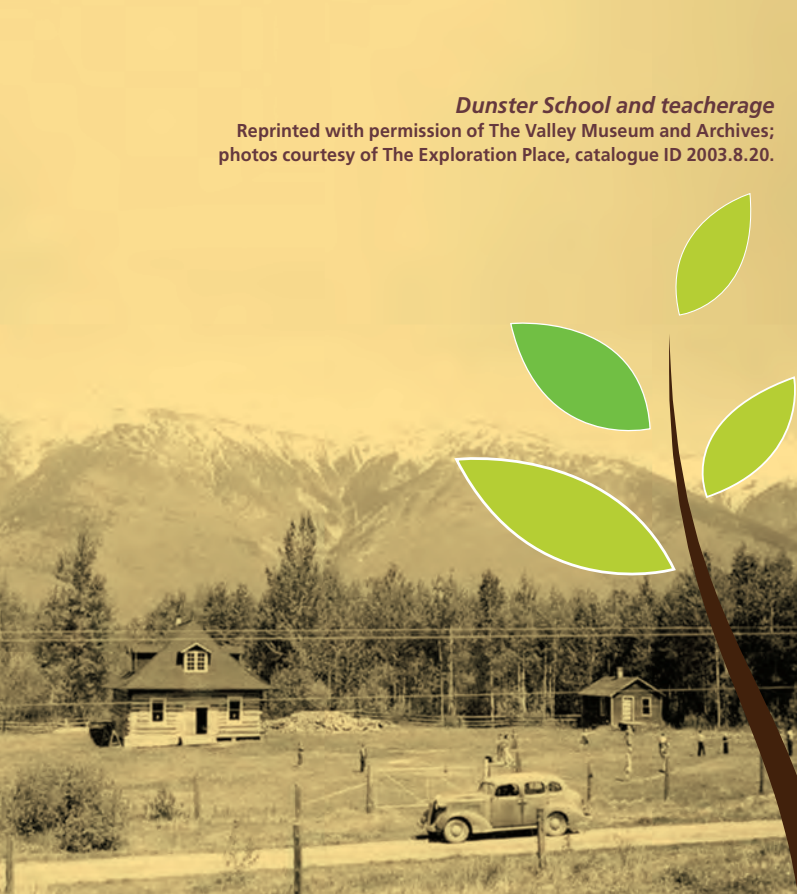
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*Dunster School and teacherage*

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*1957 BCTF AGM, BCTF President Mollie Cottingham centre.*



*1969 Powell River strike*



*Richard McBride School, New Westminster, burns in 1929 fire.  
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*BCTF delegates at the 2016 BC Federation of Labour Convention*

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