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Teacher

Collective bargaining on the line in B.C.



Virtually all BCTF members in affected districts honoured the CUPE picket lines.

by David Chudnovsky

The recent CUPE strike was a demonstration of the strength of unity and solidarity. It was also a stark reminder of how easily a fundamental democratic right—the right to strike—can be taken away by the state.

Never before in B.C. has there been a strike in public schools on the magnitude of the CUPE action. In 29 school districts enrolling close to 350,000 students, schools were closed for a week. It was a feat of effective union organization to co-ordinate the strike votes and actions of CUPE locals in so many districts, and it was a remark-

We worked and acted together and we fought hard for what we gained.

able illustration of solidarity that virtually all BCTF members in affected districts honoured the CUPE picket lines.

Many of our members remember the heady days of local bargaining between 1988

and 1993 when we achieved significant improvements in working and learning conditions and basic employment and professional rights. We worked and acted together and we fought hard for what we gained. And when we had

The provincial government, in its haste to eliminate local bargaining for teachers, created a dysfunctional bargaining system.

to, we took strike action to conclude agreements. In three rounds of local bargaining, we had a total of 43 separate strikes by teacher locals in all parts of the province. And in every single one of those strikes, we had the full support of CUPE. From March 27 to 31 this year we returned that support to our non-teaching colleagues.

So what was the strike about? CUPE's bargaining objectives were substantial and clear—job security, a benefits accord, health and safety issues, support for

students with special needs and the list goes on. But the biggest problem confronting CUPE is the same problem that stared us in the face the last two times we went to the table to negotiate an agreement. The provincial government, in its haste to eliminate local bargaining for teachers, created a dysfunctional bargaining system. The key to the problem is a bargaining agent representing the employer that has developed a life of its own and is seemingly accountable to no one—BCPSEA, the B.C. Public School Employers' Association. BCPSEA was created in 1994 and in over six years of existence has not been able to reach an agreement with anyone.

The issue confronting CUPE now is also on our agenda. It is how to make real collective bargaining happen between teachers and support workers on the union side, and employers on the other. Both BCTF and CUPE are working hard to demand of government that they fix the problem they created.

Legislating union members back to work takes away the only leverage working people

have with intransigent employers. But most settlements occur without strike action. The mere threat of a strike is often enough to create a reasonable balance at the bargaining table. By removing the right of workers to withdraw their labour, government has tipped the scales heavily in favour of the employer.

As we prepare for our own bargaining next year, we'll need to be both principled and creative. We can't and won't accept the removal of our

By removing the right of workers to withdraw their labour, government has tipped

democratic right to strike if we need it, and more than ever we'll need to be flexible and creative in finding effective tactics to press for teachers legitimate bargaining interests.

David Chudnovsky is the BCTF's president.

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President's message



David Chudnovsky

During the last agonizing hours before they were legislated back to work, as CUPE negotiators searched desperately for a settlement (and for an employer to negotiate with), I had a ringside seat. One image that will remain with me is B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair, in quiet, intense conversation with our CUPE colleagues.

Sinclair's like that. He's not flashy. Instead he's sincere. He was a featured speaker at our Annual General Meeting in March, and he brought the 670 BCTF delegates to their feet with that high pitched voice of his—talking about values—the value of public education, the importance of solidarity, the centrality of our public medical-care system. We've had trade union leaders speak to the AGM before, but never one who connected so quickly or so viscerally with teachers.

Since he was elected B.C.'s senior union leader last year, Jim has made a point of consulting with our BCTF. And consultation for Sinclair means just that—sharing ideas, discussing honestly, listening respectfully. So it's no surprise we've begun to work more closely with the B.C. Federation of Labour.

The AGM overwhelmingly passed a motion calling on the BCTF to begin a process that would lead to affiliation with the BC Fed and the Canadian Labour Congress. Teachers from around the province argued for the necessity of a formal alliance with those who have similar interests to ours.

Thousands of BCTF members are comfortable, even enthusiastic, about the idea, but for many teachers it's a prospect that causes anxiety. That's why it's important that the delegates called for discussion and debate. That's why it's so vital to make that debate open and collegial and to listen respectfully to everyone's contribution. That's why in the end, the decision will be made by a vote of the entire BCTF membership.

As you consider your own view of the matter, I invite you to take a good hard look at the new leader of the B.C. Federation of Labour, Jim Sinclair. I think you'll like what you see.

David

Keep schools commercial free

Just a note to say how much I appreciated the letter from J. Bouvier and T. Kuntz on the Terry Fox School in Coquitlam. It disturbs me that my children would not be away from the hype of a company like Nike even when they are in a public school. Nike is about profit first and foremost, and they have already done a very good job convincing children that they "need" Nike clothing. The fact that this clothing is made overseas in suspect factories and yet costs an arm and a leg also concerns me. Someone is getting rich, and it is not the worker overseas. Let's keep the school a no-hype place for learning, where it doesn't matter what label you wear.

Kenneth Ambrose
Abbotsford

Consider province-wide seniority for hiring

I believe there are major flaws with the hiring practices, seniority systems, and sick day banking used throughout the province.

A teacher with many years experience will often have difficulty getting a job in another district even if he/she has received excellent reports. Also, when a teacher moves to another district their sick days and seniority are usually not transferrable so they start from scratch. This means that they are at high risk of layoff if their new school district is experiencing declining enrollment. The possible problems resulting from having no sick days are obvious.

I don't have all of the answers but suggest the following:

1. Teachers should have province-wide seniority which may be used when bidding for a job. This "bidding" seniority would reach a maximum after 10 years experience so that, for example, a teacher with 20 years experience would be equal in seniority to one with 12 years. Note: Many salary grids throughout the province work on a similar principle.

2. If there was a job opening it would be posted first within the district. The most senior qualified applicant within the district would get it. TOCs would be eligible for these jobs too.

3. If the job could not be filled from within the district it would be posted province-wide. Again, the most senior qualified applicant would get the job. If there was more than one applicant tied for the most "bidding" seniority (and remember, any person having more than 10 years experience would be tied) the hiring district would have to look at resumes and do interviews much as they do at present.

4. A person could not be bumped from a job unless the district was laying off due to declining enrollment, etc. otherwise there would be constant chaos in the system. The above guidelines are intended only for filling vacancies.

5. Sick days would be transferrable to any district within the province.

These are my suggestions but they need refining and criticism, which I invite. The solutions may not be obvious but I believe the problems are. I have seen good teachers "stuck" in a district because they have too much seniority. The only way they could get to a preferred district is by taking a leave and going on the TOC list in the desired district. Some districts, however, rarely hire from the TOC list so this isn't always the solution. If they did get hired they'd have few sick days and low seniority. I do not want readers to think that I have a vested interest in these suggested changes. I enjoy my job teaching full time in a district I have no desire to leave. Any thoughts?

Gordon Robinson
Revelstoke

Accreditation is not positive

The Parents Advisory Council and the Canadian Parents for French from Alberni Elementary School feel that the accreditation process going on at our school is not a positive thing for our school.

We feel that our teachers and administrators should not be put through such a trying process. How can we expect our teachers to begin and end their week working on documentation and other accreditation related items, then spend their weekends trying to catch up on the class preparation that didn't get done due to accreditation? On top of all this we want them to give 100% in the classroom. This just isn't possible. We want to see our teachers in the classroom giving their time to our children and not to a document. When it comes to professional and other related days we want our teachers to spend their time doing things that will benefit themselves and our children, not working on a document.

The areas that have been identified in our schools in need of work by the accreditation process are areas that we were aware of. A survey and parent meeting or two could have well been all that was needed to get these identified areas looked into and school-wide initiatives put into effect.

The long and short of it is that we the parents feel this accreditation process should be abolished.

Dawn Onyschtschuk
Cathy Hobbs
Alberni Elementary School

Resent College of Teachers fighting TWU

Thank heavens some people take the time to write to our magazine. It is not something that I have done before. I refer to the letter in the March issue regarding the B.C. College of Teachers and the Trinity Western University. I feel very strongly that the college is denying our right to choose the educational facility of our choice. The one that hopefully gives the best education possible. Is it any concern of the college whether it is a Christian facility or not? Maybe our world would be a better place if we had a bit more Christianity and less of other types of behavior! Thanks to Ruth Bard of Nanaimo for writing her opinion. I really resent the amount of money that the college is spending for us! With thanks.

Joanne Farmer
Nanaimo

I am writing in response to Ruth Bard's letter in the March issue of *Teacher* newsmagazine. I completely agree with everything she says in her letter about the college versus Trinity Western University. It is absolutely criminal that members' fees are being used to pursue this issue in court. It has always fascinated me that every other minority group gets its place in our school system, except Christians. Woe betide the teacher who even suggests that Christianity is the basis for Christmas, or Easter, or even that it is a perfectly acceptable belief, equal to all others and deserving the same respect. Way to go Ruth!

David Weir
Coquitlam

"Faggot Lover" slurs hateful

Twenty years ago, I attended high school in Abbotsford where the term "faggot" was the most common slur hurled my way. Nowadays, I teach in Surrey where three high schools were picketed in early March by a handful of anti-gay protesters who resorted to calling students "faggot lovers." These hateful adults were the same kind of people I went to school with. No one ever challenged their anti-gay attitudes and told them that they were wrong in school.

As a teacher, I'd like to think we've come a long way in educating students about homophobia. The reality is we haven't. Anti-gay actions outside of our schools should send a strong message to every fair minded citizen and parent. There is a desperate need for Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) groups in our schools, otherwise the attitudes of bigotry and hatred will continue to prevail.

There are over 700 GSA groups in middle and high schools throughout the USA. The question is not whether these groups should start, but when. It's no longer a question of whether or not gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students have rights, but when their rights will be recognized. When will our schools stand firm against anti-gay pressure and opt for programs and policies that serve all youth regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity? When will our trustees and principals have the nerve to protect students from anti-gay slurs and harassment and change the current student code of conduct policies in every school district?

As a caring community we can move forward into the 21st century or continue to repeat the mistakes of the past and let anti-gay bigotry prevail. If we remain silent, as so many have done before us, we ultimately side with the hateful minority who shout "faggot lover" at our children. Homophobia affects all students in our schools; it doesn't discriminate. Who knows, your child could be the next target.

James Chamberlain
Surrey

GSAs positive

I have been following, with great concern, the debate over the resolution supporting the establishment of Gay/Straight Alliances in British Columbia schools. I am pleased that the delegates overwhelmingly adopted this resolution. The teachers support of Gay/Straight Alliances is one of the most progressive, positive moves that can occur in our schools, not only for the gay teenagers who are faced with daily hatred and discrimination, but also as an opportunity to educate people. This is, by definition, our ultimate purpose.

I am a teacher, a father, and a gay male who remembers very clearly how hard it is to be a gay teenager. Thank you for doing the right thing.

Rick Mulholland
Mission

BCTF support appreciated

This letter is to express my sincere gratitude for the assistance with the WCB provided me by the BCTF. There are no words to tell you how relieved I was, when I recently got a letter disavowing my claim, to be able to hand it over to David Bradshaw and Lynne Sinclair for an appeal.

Since my accident at school on November 18, 1998, when I fell and broke my ribs, injured my left hip and leg, and twice hit my head, sustaining a concussion that has caused ongoing headaches, Bradshaw and Sinclair have been wonderful in their

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encouragement, support, and assistance. I don't know what I would have done, or would do now, without them and I think you need to hear how vitally important this BCTF service is and what an excellent job these individuals are doing for the membership.

Fifteen years ago, I was injured at school and I had to fight with the WCB for almost 11 years on my own. It was sheer agony. At last, I called the BCTF and talked to Karen Harper. With her help, I was finally heard. I know additional service has been laid on since that time, and you need to know it is very much needed and appreciated.

Obviously, we would all prefer never to have any problems like this, but when we do, it is a great relief to know we can count on our union to support and assist us. Thank you. Thank you. And, again, thank you!

Marilyn Turkel
Williams Lake

An open Letter to my immersion and programme cadre colleagues

I am writing this letter on behalf of my Vancouver colleagues to ask you to encourage your Grade 12 students to write only the français langue exam.

As you know, there are two provincial exams offered in French. The French 12 exam is targeted for Core French. It is based on reading comprehension and writing competence. The Français Langue exam is targeted for students who have completed 12 years of

French Immersion and for Programme Cadre students who are native speakers of French. This exam is far more challenging and includes an oral interview and challenging authentic communication and comprehension. Its object is to assess functional bilingualism.

At present, many French Immersion students and even some Programme Cadre students are choosing to write the Core French Exam as well as the français langue exam. They use the higher mark for their provincial average. Since French 12 is a far easier exam, this mark boosts their provincial exam average for university entrance.

For years, the Core French teachers have petitioned the provincial government to insist that the French Immersion and Programme Cadre students be forced to write the appropriate exam. The ministry officials have dismissed our concerns. They insist that our students are not penalized because the exam scores are not determined by a bell curve. Therefore, they claim, our students have just as much chance of achieving an "A" as the French Immersion students.

There are three compelling reasons why this is a spurious defense.

First, although the provincial exams are not marked on a bell curve, they are scaled either up or down depending on the results. This gives an advantage to the French Immersion and Programme Cadre students. Furthermore, this scaling radically influences the number of Core French students receiving provincial scholarships.

Second, three years ago the format of the French 12 exam was radically changed. It is now

very difficult to judge whether or not the exam is fair because the provincial results are skewed with the inclusion of French Immersion and Programme Cadre students' results. These students generally score in the 90s on the exam. Unless this changes, neither the government nor the teachers can determine whether this is a fair and valid exam.

Third, the publishing of test results in the papers and the push to make teachers accountable for their results puts Core French teachers in an untenable position. The provincial average for French is well above the average for other academic subjects; last year it was 76%. In comparison, English was 67%, Math was 66%, and Chemistry was 67%. The average is high because the results are skewed. If the French Immersion and Programme Cadre results were not considered in these statistics, Core French teachers and their communities would have a better idea where their schools stand.

Please encourage your students to write only the français langue exam at the end of Grade 12. The French 12 exam is inappropriate for your students and is surely not an accurate assessment of their ability.

Please take our request seriously.

Nancy Campbell
on behalf of the Modern Language Department Heads
Vancouver

LOOKING BACK

70 years

Forest depletion, both here and elsewhere, is one of the most pressing questions of today, and it will become more urgent with the world's increasing demands for lumber. In British Columbia this fact is recognized, and the government has inaugurated a reforestation program which will go a long way toward solving our particular problem. Every year forest areas are set aside for scientific management, where logging will be so controlled as to prevent the cuts exceeding the natural rate of growth.

The BC Teacher, May 1930.

50 years

"There are four common errors in education that the teacher must beware of. Some students try to learn too much or too many subjects, some learn too little or too few subjects, some learn things too easily and some are too easily discouraged. These four things show that individuals differ in their mental endowments, and only through a knowledge of the different mental endowments can the teacher correct their mistakes. A teacher is but a man who tried to bring out the good and remedy the weaknesses of his students.

"A good singer makes others follow his tune, and a good educator makes others follow his ideal. His words are concise but expressive, casual but full of hidden meaning, and he is good at drawing ingenious examples to make people understand him. In this way, he may be said to be a good man to make others follow his ideal."

The BC Teacher, March 1950.

30 years

Student rebellion, throughout secondary schools and universities, is essentially a normal response to the discrepancy between the intellectual objectives of those institutions and the student's awareness of what constitutes reality and meaningfulness to him.

Non-intellectualism is entirely compatible with the electronic age.

The majority of information the student receives comes through radio and television. Radio content is both voice and music/television adds a visual information source as well. These 'mosaic' information sources are what the adolescents are accustomed to.

Yet the printed word—that teachers expect the student to learn from—is uni-dimensional.

The BC Teacher, April 1970.

10 years

March 6 is a special day for Langley Teachers' Association president Peter Owens. It's his birthday. On his birthday last year, Owens watched several non-members perform the "Rand Rap" for the Langley School Board. It proved to be their swan song, for two-and-a-half weeks and one teacher strike later, the board signed a union-shop clause.

This year, Owens celebrated his birthday on the first day of a CUPE strike in Langley School District. "That's teaching in Langley," he shrugs.

Langley teachers solidly supported their CUPE colleagues. Most remembered CUPE's support during the teacher strike exactly a year ago. Many wryly call March "Strike Month" in Langley instead of the more popular "Education Month" celebrated elsewhere in B.C.

The bond between teachers and support workers in Langley has been created out of necessity, forged in the heat of battle. It's been tested more than once and always proven. This March, the bond strengthened as teachers wore picket signs for their striking colleagues.

Teacher, April 1990.

Top 10 BCTF lesson aids

1 Experimenting with Air.

Gordon R. Gore, 46p. ©1999. Student resource intended for students to experiment with the properties of air. Topics: Air Real Matter? Air Pressure (including Pascal's Law and its many uses), Moving Air (Bernoulli), Flight (kites, airplanes) and Other Ways to Fly (hot air balloons, dirigibles, parachutes). Illustrated with drawings, photos, and cartoons. Grades 4-7. LA 9547—\$11

2 Experimenting with Electricity.

Gordon R. Gore, 48p. ©1999. Student resource for experimenting with electricity and magnetism. Illustrated with drawings, photos, and cartoons. Topics include static electricity, current electricity, electromagnets and permanent magnets. Grades 4-7. LA 9546—\$11

3 Classroom Criteria from A to Z.

Terry Olson and Cathie Peters, 112p. ©2000, rev. edition, Student Centred Publications. "How to" teacher resource includes how to use criteria in the classroom, over 90 sample criteria sets and generic criteria sheets, usable for K-12 with any curricular area and are easily adaptable. Includes a new section for primary teachers. Suitable for K-12. LA 9962—\$22.95

4 Step Lively: Dances for Schools and Families.

Marian Rose, 40p. book and 60 min. CD, ©1998. A lively collection of 20 dances for classroom instruction (K-12) or for family-oriented events. Features illustrations and clear, explicit instructions so that a novice would have no trouble teaching the steps. Dance examples are varied and from numerous countries. Music teachers would also find this resource valuable. LA 9750—\$39.95

5 Great Canadian Political Cartoons: 1820 to 1914.

Charles and Cynthia Hou, 240p. 1997. Contains over 330 historical cartoons, tracing Canada's political, economic, and social evolution up to World War I. The cartoons provide revealing insights into present-day issues such as a national unity and international relations. Many deal with social issues such as labour, women's rights, prohibition, poverty, and racism. Grades 8-12. Teacher. LA 2013—\$39.95

6 The Art of Decoding Political Cartoons—A Teacher's Guide.

Charles and Cynthia Hou, 71p. ©1998. First half of the guide illustrates various features of political cartoons and devices

cartoonists use to deliver a message. The second half allows students to practice identifying and analyzing devices, detecting bias and interpreting historical and contemporary cartoons. Grades 8-12, Teacher. LA 2013A—\$14.95

7 Canada Map—Poster Size.

Sonja E. Schild, ©1997. The front is a political map showing capitals, cities, rivers, lakes, islands, mountains, gulfs, bays, adjoining states, flags, coats of arms, flowers and bird symbols, wildlife, ships of important explorers, and the kayak, Haida and Beothuk canoes of the First Nations. The reverse side has 3 sections: timeline of important events in history, geographic facts and world records, and Prime Ministers and Governors General since Confederation and information about the way Canada governs itself. Grades 3-7. LA 9297A—\$18.50

8 Canada Map—Binder Size.

Sonja E. Schild, ©1997. See LA 9297A for description; fits into binders and is laminated for durability. Grades 3-7. LA 9297B—\$3

9 Canada Workbook.

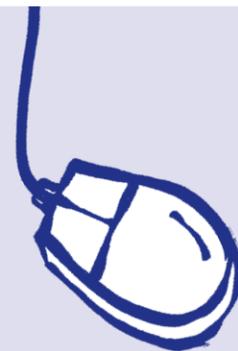
Sonja E. Schild, 46p. ©1997. Geography workbook based on the Canada Map, LA 9297A includes 40 worksheets, 25 maps, student projects, project evaluation form, three tests and an answer key. Each worksheet has a section called "Brainwork," which encourages research, creative thinking and problem solving. Can be used by social studies and ESL teachers, in inclusive classrooms and by parents. Reproducible for classroom use. LA 9297C—\$22

10 Bears, Bears, Bears: An Integrated Theme for Early Primary.

Joanne Matheson, Pat Corder, Karen Addie, Janice Crawford, Shelley Griffin, Judy Herridge. 22p. 1990. Includes a variety of integrated activities. LA 8540—\$4.25

For a complete listing of over 900 BCTF Lesson Aids, consult the catalogue in your school library or the Lesson Aids online catalogue, www.bctf.bc.ca/LessonAids

To order any of the above lesson aids, enclose a cheque payable to the BCTF or authorized purchase order to BCTF Lesson Aids Service, 100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2. GST and postage/handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail.



What's new on the web

Bookmark www.bctf.bc.ca/ISDept to access the BCTF's virtual library! The BCTF Information Services' Department web site features electronic journals, the latest search engines, including tips

for web research, and in-depth web profiles of educational issues, such as class size, and commercialism in schools. Members can also browse the New Videos page, search the videotape catalogue, and borrow videos by e-mail. Our virtual library delivers information services directly to BCTF members.

The 1999-2000 Teacher Awards, Grants, and Scholarships publication lists awards, grants, and scholarships that are open to all practicing, public school teachers, and that meet specific criteria for selection. The Provincial Specialist Associations' awards are included in the document.

www.bctf.bc.ca/about/TeacherAwards.html

— Diana Broome

Class size and achievement closely related

by Garry Litke

An analysis and synthesis of almost 200 empirical research studies have proved conclusively that reducing class size improves academic performance. This is not news for teachers, but only of late have governments in North America started to act on this knowledge. It is a trend that is socially, economically, and educationally sound and should be expanded.

Based on the overwhelming evidence, the Clinton administration spent \$1.2 billion in 1998 to reduce class sizes in America, giving grants to states ranging from \$5 million to over \$100 million. More than 30,000 new teachers were to be hired.

The research relied upon by the Clinton administration revealed that the positive effect on achievement is most noticeable:

- in primary grades
- in areas of lower socio-economic status
- where classes are reduced to fewer than 20 students
- where teachers are trained to deal with smaller groups.

Two years ago, the government of B.C. created a similar initiative when it reached an agreement with teachers to reduce class size in K-3. The three-year program was seen as a first step, with an understanding that future increments would include reductions at the intermediate and secondary level.

Just recently, the provincial government again conveyed its commitment to this concept in principle. At the BCTF Annual General Meeting held in March in Vancouver, Education Minister Penny Priddy expressed her enthusiastic support for early childhood intervention strategies, saying that they made educational and economic sense. She

...lower student/teacher ratios are positively related to higher mathematics achievement.

quoted a well-known statistic that says that for every dollar spent on early childhood intervention, society saves \$7 in later costs related to prisons and family support.

Assuming that the provincial government continues to understand education and economics in the same way that Clinton and Priddy do, primary teachers in B.C. should be looking forward to educating their students in groups of fewer than 20 in the near future, especially if they happen to be in a lower socio-economic area.

Class sizes at the intermediate and secondary levels also need redress. Teachers have expressed a great deal of frustration about the current inequities between primary and intermediate, and the need to reduce class sizes at

all levels. Research indicates that beyond doubt, class-size reductions at this level are also beneficial.

A meta-analysis of 77 studies published by Smith and Glass in 1978 found that small classes were associated with higher achievement at all grade levels. The major benefits of reduction occurred where the number of students in the class was fewer than 20. They concluded that small classes were superior in terms of students' reactions, teacher morale, and the quality of the instructional environment.

In Texas, Ronald Ferguson in 1991 analyzed data drawn from 800 districts involving 2.4 million students. He showed that for the first

...he also found greater achievement gains in districts where teachers' salaries were higher.

through seventh grades, district student achievement fell as the student/teacher ratio increased above 18:1.

In 1997, Harold Wenglinsky analyzed three national level databases. Based on data on fourth graders, he found that lower student/teacher ratios are positively related to higher mathematics achievement. At the eighth grade level he found similar effects, but for different reasons. At the eighth grade level, lower class sizes improve the school social environment, which in turn leads to higher achievement. Wenglinsky found that the largest positive effects on mathematics achievement occurred in districts where there were below average socio-economic students. Interestingly, he also found greater achievement gains in districts where teachers' salaries were higher.

An overall pattern found in the research indicates that if class size is reduced from substantially more than 20 students per class to below 20 students, the related increase in student achievement moves the average student from the 50th percentile up to somewhere above the 60th percentile.

For disadvantaged and minority students the effects are somewhat larger.

Smaller classes make a difference for a variety of reasons. Higher student achievement in smaller classes may result from alteration in the classroom environment. Teachers report that the classroom atmosphere is better, that students can receive more individualized attention, and that teachers have more flexibility to use different instructional approaches.

Teachers find themselves with more classroom space because they are using the same classrooms with fewer students. They also have more time to devote to working with students and parents outside the classroom.

The classroom situation changes when there are fewer students to distract each other. Each student gets more attention, including more time to speak while others listen. The noise level is reduced. In smaller classes, each student receives a larger portion of the educational resources represented by the teacher's time, and consequently, learns more.

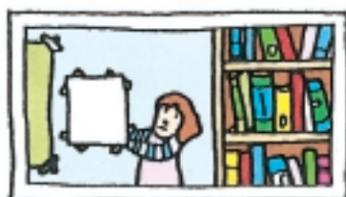
Research overwhelmingly supports that smaller class size has enormous benefits for students and teachers alike.

Researchers also suggest that smaller classes are more likely to foster positive relationships. The smaller the class, the harder it is to escape the positive influence of the classroom educational experience.

Research overwhelmingly supports that smaller class size has enormous benefits for students and teachers alike. Every penny spent on education saves seven cents tomorrow. There is no longer any valid reason that a reduction in class sizes at all grade levels cannot be endorsed.

Garry Litke is an assistant director in the BCTF's Bargaining Division.

Research conclusions: Why reduced class sizes make a difference



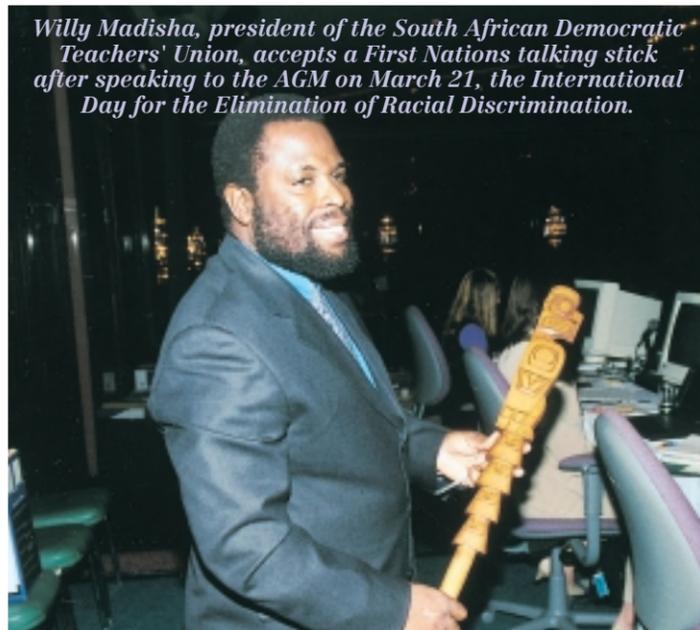
- more physical space for movement
- fewer discipline problems
- more time spent on instruction
- greater access to the teacher
- easier access to after hours consultation for both students and parents
- more individualized attention
- greater student share of overall education resources.

AGM awards

David Chudnovsky thanks Carole James after her final address to the AGM as president of the B.C. School Trustees Association.



Willy Madisha, president of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, accepts a First Nations talking stick after speaking to the AGM on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



Shirley Cox accepts an Honourary BCTF membership in recognition of her long and dedicated service to the Federation.



G.A. Fergusson Award winner Mike Zlotnik with wife Linda.



Last chance to improve pension

Why would teachers with 30 or more years of experience support a strike to get a decent salary increase when they are leaving the profession? Because both financially and morally, it just makes sense!

For some teachers, the next round of negotiations will be their last. They are looking forward to retiring with a

...the average of the best five years of earning is a driving factor in determining their pension level.

secure income. They also realize, however, that the size of their pension income will be affected by the size of the next salary increase because the average of the best five years of earning is a driving factor in determining their pension level.

As locals set bargaining priorities during the coming year, senior teachers will most probably be supporting a significant salary increase as a bargaining objective. They know that even with a strike, gains to pension income will most likely offset penalties in pensionable service.

Days spent on strike do not count as pensionable service, but the net effect on income is not significant. A teacher's pension statement will record a deduction of 0.05 months for every day on a picket line, so a loss of five days over a 35-year career, for example, would result in a teacher being credited with 349.75 months of pensionable service instead of 350. The cost of those five days to the pension income would be minimal. An increase of \$1,000 in the average salary level, however, will increase pension income by approximately \$50 to \$60 per month (depending on the number of years of service for the teacher).

The potential advantages outweigh the risks. Aside from the financial scenario, senior teachers should consider leaving a legacy of support for younger teachers who are struggling to pay off student loans, raise young families, and enjoy a decent standard of living while contributing to

A fair salary increase benefits those teachers beginning their career as well as those finishing.

this profession.

The next bargaining team will need the support of all teachers to negotiate a long overdue raise. A fair salary increase benefits those teachers beginning their career as well as those finishing.

— Garry Litke



AUSTAR EAGLE PHOTO

In 1987, the Social Credit government removed compulsory BCTF membership and gave teachers the option of belonging to associations or forming unions with full bargaining rights. The BCTF signed up 98% of teachers and all 76 locals voted to become unions.

Gaining full bargaining rights



by Ken Novakowski

It happened in 1987. B.C. teachers gained full collective bargaining rights. And the grantor was a most unlikely politician—Social Credit Premier Bill Vander Zalm.

The struggle for full collective bargaining rights by B.C. teachers was a long and arduous one, marked by large mobilizations of members in “expanded scope” campaigns, by legal and political actions like the Charter challenge and by momentous and even tumultuous events like the “Solidarity” strike of 1983. In 1987, we were the only sizable group of organized employees in B.C. and the only teacher body in the country that did not enjoy the statutory requirement that their employers bargain all terms and conditions of employment with them. And we did not possess, even with our limited scope, the right to strike.

All that changed in 1987, a watershed year in the history of the BCTF. On April 1 of that year, the government announced two major pieces of legislation—Bills 19 and 20. Bill 19 was a piece of legislation that restricted existing rights for trade unions while at the same time including teachers as employees entitled to those rights. Principals and vice-principals were removed from the teacher bargaining unit with a clear “management role” defined for them. Bill 20 created a College of Teachers that was intended to certify teachers and also to represent the professional interest of teachers. Coupled with the removal of statutory membership of all public school teachers in the BCTF,

this initiative was viewed as a government attempt to split the loyalty of teachers, creating a union “BCTF” and a professional organization “College of Teachers.” The labour movement was angry over Bill 19. And we were adamantly opposed to Bill 20.

The BCTF response was swift and united. Four weeks after the legislation was tabled, on April 28, after a province-wide vote, teachers in every local walked off the job and shut down every school in the province to protest the government legislation. Rallies were held in a number of communities while thousands of teachers jammed into the Agridome in Vancouver to hear their president, Elsie McMurphy, square off against the Vander Zalm government for its attack on the BCTF. A month later on June 1, teachers joined the rest of the labour movement in a one-day general strike to protest Bills 19 and 20.

When the dust settled and the legislation was turned into law, the BCTF faced a number of challenges. First, the legislation provided teacher locals with the option of choosing to be an “association” with limited scope and binding arbitration for resolving disputes or a “union” with full scope and the right to strike/lockout. As well, with the removal of statutory membership, we were faced with having to voluntarily sign up teachers into the local and the BCTF. And the new College of Teachers loomed as a potential rival for the loyalty of teachers.

In the most significant mobilization of BCTF resources toward a single objective, the BCTF organized and co-ordinated its 76 locals to sign up teachers into the BCTF and to opt for, in every

local, the “union” model for bargaining. Teachers signed up into the BCTF in the range of 98%. The campaign was successful beyond belief. And when elections for the College of Teachers were held, BCTF-endorsed candidates won all 15 of the elected spots on the 20 person board. Teachers were in charge of the college, and ensured that its mandate would remain limited to the certification, recertification, and decertification of teachers and that the realm of professional development would remain within the purview of the BCTF.

Faced with an outside threat to the profession and their organization, teachers re-shaped and reformed their “union of professionals” into a new organization that would continue to represent all of the economic, social, and professional interests of teachers. As well, the public profile of the BCTF and its president, Elsie McMurphy, were raised to new heights through the campaign of opposition and mobilization. And we further strengthened our relationship with the labour movement through participation in the general strike. We then turned our minds to preparing for our first effort at full collective bargaining with the right to strike.

What emerged was a system of co-ordinated local bargaining. Locals were the bargaining unit charged with the responsibility of negotiating a collective agreement with their school board. The BCTF developed the *Collective Bargaining Handbook*, with model clause language on every conceivable provision that teachers might wish to negotiate. Local bargaining teams were trained by the BCTF and supported by staff assigned to work with locals.

Additional staff were hired to assist and new policies and procedures were put in place to support the new bargaining regime, including strike pay and assistance.

The first round of full collective bargaining for teachers in 1988 continued to mobilize the excitement and energy of teachers that was generated in the sign-up certification campaign the year before. On November 28, 1988, Kitimat teachers began a 10-day strike before successfully concluding an agreement. Eleven other locals struck in the first round and others mobilized to achieve their objectives that became identified in the slogan “WHY NOT HERE?”. The important aspect of the experience of co-ordinated local bargaining was not that we did well—we did. What was so very important about local bargaining was the high degree of democracy and member participation in decisions and the process of achieving local collective agreements. As a Federation officer in the first two rounds of local bargaining, I will remember my visits to locals and the high percentage of members who attended meetings, took part in activities, and supported their bargaining teams in their efforts to achieve improvements in teacher salaries, working conditions, and professional rights.

The stories of local bargaining in the three rounds before provincial bargaining was imposed in 1994 constitute an exciting and dramatic period in the history of the BCTF. I can see a series of articles shaping up on the history of collective bargaining for next year's *Teacher Newsmagazine*.

Ken Novakowski is the BCTF's executive director.

AGM adopts challenging agenda

by Nancy Knickerbocker

2000
AGM

1 DAY

The 84th Annual General Meeting of the B.C. Teachers' Federation began on a sunny Sunday afternoon, March 19, 2000. As almost 700 delegates began to converge on the Hyatt Regency in downtown Vancouver, hundreds of demonstrators assembled on either side of the hotel entrance.

On the north side about 100 protesters stood up for their beliefs. They held signs lettered in red or blue, full caps:

"BCTF LEAVE PARENTING TO PARENTS"

"EDUCATION—NOT INDOCTRINATION"

"NO GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCES IN SCHOOLS"

On the south side were about 200 supporters of a resolution to actively support Gay/Straight Alliances—clubs for gay students and their straight friends to get together and work through the perplexing problems of growing up in the 21st Century.

"Two, four, six, eight!
Who do we appreciate?
Our teachers, our allies!
Vote yes Tuesday!"

Their chants were interspersed with rousing renditions of "Jesus loves me," "Somewhere over the rainbow," and "Que sera sera." They offered three cheers for the friendly Vancouver police officers assigned to keep the peace. They carried signs in rainbow colours:

"Build Bridges Not Walls."
"Gay is Okay."

"Open Minds Learn Better."

Television, radio, and print reporters and photographers were busy working the crowd. Media attention was especially intense due to the recent shocking suicide of Hamed Nastoh, a bright 14-year-old student at Enver Creek Secondary in Surrey. Tormented as a geek, a nerd, a fag, Hamed so despaired over the constant torment at school that he was driven to leap off the Patullo Bridge to his death. Suddenly the issues of teen bullying and homophobic taunting had a deeper urgency for the community in general, and for teachers in particular.

Tim Stevenson, one of the first openly gay ministers in the United Church of Canada and the local MLA, cried

"Shame!" on those who would keep homosexuals closeted away in shame. "How wonderful it is today to see so many young people standing up and saying, 'No! Enough is enough!'"

In the annual president's report, David Chudnovsky spoke of an enormous range of issues that confronted the BCTF in the past year. From the ABCs of accreditation, bargaining, and class size to support workers, strikes and social justice, he articulated how the BCTF's policies and proposals have a significant impact on the agenda for education in British Columbia.

Of course, the BCTF's leaders play leading roles on the provincial education scene. Contesting the president's office once again were incumbent Chudnovsky and past-president Kit Krieger. Each candidate made a brief election statement focusing on his approach to the next round of bargaining and other challenges facing the Federation.

Other key players in B.C.'s education community also spoke during the first session. In her final address as president of the B.C. School Trustees Association, Carole James spoke warmly of how teachers try to support the success of all students. "You know how unique, and special, and precious every child is. You can see the promise that leaps out at us from every pair of eyes. They remind us where our responsibility lies, where the future is."

James called upon all British Columbians to recognize their duty to be engaged with the young people of their communities. "Public education really is everybody's business," she said, thanking teachers for the "demanding, exhausting, crucial, and critical roles you play."

Debbie Look, president of the Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, spoke of the research linking parental involvement with children's success in school. "Parents appreciate the tremendous energy and dedication of teachers," she said, and they understand that "teaching is a highly demanding profession."

With the impending strike by school support workers in 42 districts, teachers were anxious to hear from Barry O'Neill, B.C. president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. For the 20,000 CUPE members in the K-12 sector, job security and pay equity were among the top priorities, he said.

He criticized the B.C. Public School Employers' Association for its "arrogant attitude toward our members," and its "unstabbling effect on public education." O'Neill concluded by offering "sincere thanks for teachers' unbending support and solidarity across the province. Our struggle does continue."

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh also came to the AGM, "to reaffirm your government's commitment to public education, to reaffirm our friendship with you as an organization, and to recognize the wonderful and important

work you do for the citizens of this province." He praised Federation activists for confronting the controversy over support for sexual minority youth. "I know that change is difficult, particularly when you are challenging prejudice," Dosanjh said. "But what you are doing is one more part of our struggle to win dignity for each and every British Columbian."

2 DAY

On the Monday morning, the Task Force on First Nations Education presented its report. But before they began the official business, the First Nations teachers honoured Larry Kuehn, the BCTF's director of research and the staff member who worked most closely with them. They gave Larry a warm tribute, a Salish weaving, and the promise of an aboriginal name.

Task force co-chairs Deborah Jeffrey and Frank Conibear introduced a series of recommendations to help improve school success for First Nations students. In doing so, they committed their professional union to working with communities to improve the educational success of Aboriginal students, now with a graduation rate of about 31%, compared to about 85% for the general population.

In particular, the teachers endorsed an employment equity program, a series of principles on teaching practice and inclusive schools, and vowed to pay special attention to appropriate classroom materials and knowledge about the treaty process and other current social issues, in order to weave Aboriginal content throughout the curriculum.

Coming after two years of ground-breaking work by the First Nations Education Task Force, implementation of the recommendations will make a significant difference for Aboriginal teachers and learners, said Conibear.

"It's the beginning of a new relationship of respectful inclusion through employment equity," Jeffrey said. "It's so heartening to see the Federation opening up to First

Nations teachers and communities. I think it's real cause for celebration."

3 DAY

March 21, 1960: South African security forces massacre protesters, young and old alike, in Sharpeville. The United Nations declares the anniversary as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On the 40th anniversary of that brutal, pivotal event, Willy Madisha spoke from the heart about education in post-apartheid South Africa. As president of both the South African Democratic Teachers' Union and of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions, Madisha represents two million workers from the public school classrooms to the diamond mines.

Madisha spoke of SADTU's central role in the victory of democracy in South Africa, and its success in helping transform the public education system "from one that entrenched subservience and racial discrimination, to a system that promotes human dignity." He gave gracious thanks to the BCTF for a decade of solidarity. SADTU has grown to 220,000 members, and now is in a position to help other teacher unions in the region. "That is the international solidarity you taught us, and we shall carry the torch forward," he said.

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, spoke of the union movement's resistance to the world view promoted by the B.C. Business Summit. Their corporate agenda is to drive down wages, end the tuition freeze, cripple the Labour Code, and cut a billion dollars out of the public service.

But labour has a different vision for the kind of world we want to build for our children, Sinclair said. It's a place where everyone, regardless of gender or race or sexual orientation, has an equal right to participate. And it's a society devoted to meeting the needs of people, not the greed of corporations.

As Sinclair spoke, dozens of people were lined up at the microphones, preparing for the next item on the agenda: the anti-homophobia resolution. Debate was impassioned, but respectful, as delegates on both sides of the issue expressed their convictions. In the end, the resolution to actively support the establishment of GSAs was overwhelmingly passed.

First-time delegates reflect on the AGM



Todd Webber
Cariboo-Chilcotin

First-year teacher, first-time AGM delegate, first experience speaking in a room full of 680 of my colleagues! As a new teacher in the profession, and new teacher in the Cariboo-Chilcotin School District, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to represent my local as a delegate at the BCTF's 85th AGM.

Upon arriving for the first session, I will admit to feeling a sense of intimidation. It was obvious many of the people in attendance had been to the AGM several times, and those speaking at the microphones seemed so knowledgeable and well spoken. If I was going to speak at the microphone regarding any of the recommendations, I had to quickly learn how things worked. The other members of my delegation were instrumental in this process; they erased any feeling of intimidation that I initially felt, and quickly brought me up to speed regarding party politics, procedural aspects of the meeting, and almost all other subtleties related to the AGM.

Coincidentally, the first recommendation I spoke to was one submitted by our delegation. The recommendation proposed that the BCTF expand the currently funded categories of students with special needs to include such disorders as ADHD, FAS, and FAE. This recommendation is of particular importance to me and my colleagues in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. At the microphone, I explained to members the difficulties I face as a new teacher trying to address the needs of all my FAE students. If the currently funded categories of students with special needs included students with FAE/FAS, it would go a long way to furthering the amount and quality of support I would be able to provide for these kids. I was beyond nervous when I got to the microphone to say these things. When the chair recognized me, and it was my turn to talk, everything seemed to slow down and I simply began speaking. Even though I was nervous, and I felt I could have done better, the amount of support I received after I spoke was encouraging.

During my second appearance at the microphone, I spoke about Recommendation 33. One of the primary reasons I came to the AGM was to increase member awareness of the substandard living conditions being imposed on teachers living and working in rural communities. Some of the pictures in the March 2000 issue of *Teacher* ("Rural teachers resent rent hikes for substandard housing") were of my teacherage. If there are issues surrounding your job

that make things difficult inside and/or outside the classroom, you can make a difference. That is one thing I took away from the meeting that I am most grateful for—knowing there is a mechanism in place for us to improve our work environment. As well, it was clear to me all week that one of the priorities of the BCTF is to involve new members. I left the AGM with a wealth of knowledge, a tremendous amount of experience, and the desire to return again next year. A special thanks for all the support I received from the members of my delegation.



Sean Cook
Coquitlam

The first question that a new delegate to the AGM asks is, "Why have I willingly given four days of my precious, hard-won spring break to do Federation business?"

For me, and I suspect many other delegates, these four days in March are a time when teachers who care deeply for public education speak their minds and contribute their voices to the great dialogue of how best to educate students in a just and democratic society. Having experienced the scope and significance of this profoundly democratic event, one feels a sense of pride for both the educators who participated and the society that values such civic participation.

When teachers in a democracy share a vision for creating a more just society, it is only a matter of time before their vision is shared by the broader community.

After reflecting on the significance of what had taken place and the small but essential role I had played in making our schools and our province just a little better, I thought, "How could I not take part in something so noble?"



Carol Gillis
Kamloops

What was I thinking when, in my second year of teaching, I let my name stand to be a delegate from my local to the BCTF's Annual General Meeting—at spring break? Well, I was thinking that some interesting issues were coming before the

Federation, and I wanted to have input into the direction we were to take on First Nations education, on Gay Straight Alliances, and on labour affiliation, among others. And I wanted to support the member of my local who was running for an executive position. And, of course, I could spend at least some of the time productively marking at my table. (I ask again, what was I thinking?)

Having attended numerous meetings and conventions, I was prepared for the format of the AGM. I was somewhat surprised, though, at the delegates' expertise in parliamentary procedure and rules of order.

When the resolutions that had brought me to the AGM came up, I envied our scrutineer, who by now had had some practice at the mike. It's a little unsettling to hear one's voice echoing around the room. And although I wasn't terribly nervous, and my voice stayed strong, I was dismayed when my friend told me that he had pointed out my shaking legs to all the members at his table!

I was not prepared for the electioneering that went on, and was alternately fascinated and appalled by it. All candidates seemed competent and dedicated, and I thought there was often little to separate them.

I enjoyed the speakers—from the Premier Ujjal Dosanjh and Minister of Education Penny Priddy, to Congress of South African Trade Unions' president Willie Madisha and B.C. Fed President Jim Sinclair—the speakers' commitment to public education as an avenue for social justice and global solidarity was heartening and refreshing.

So it was worth my spring break to be part of the AGM. I have come away from a BCTF function inspired about being a teacher and being a member of a progressive union.



Sharon Smith
New Westminster

As a first-time delegate to the 2000 AGM, I was unsure that I would be able to represent my local and colleagues effectively. My insecurities were quickly quelled. I was initially impressed with the friendly, comfortable, and inclusive manner of all the attendees. As a staff rep, I was prepared to feel overwhelmed by the onslaught of information.

As I waited in the registration lineup, friendly faces welcomed me. I was amazed to find a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere throughout the hotel. Comfortable, well appointed rooms, good food, and accessible entertainment were a great help.

However, what impressed me most was the excitement and passion I noted in our candidates. It was obvious to me that these dedicated and informed teachers were the real leaders in our province.

I felt most honoured to have been given the opportunity to serve with such committed individuals. In fact, I would urge all teachers to become more involved in our Federation. You'll find that the benefits will be all yours.



Jessye Labaj
West Vancouver

For the first-time delegate watching all of this unfold it can look intimidating. It sent me back to my own days of elementary school, asking classmates what was going on. "What page are we on?" "What is he talking about?" "Are we voting in the affirmative or negative?" Although we did have a delegation meeting to prepare for the AGM, voting on the spot became difficult. As people came up with their persuasive points either for the negative or affirmative, I had trouble remembering what we were originally voting on.

I enjoyed the speeches of the CUPE president, the President of SADTU, our provincial Minister of Education, as well as our new Premier. All seemed to have the same concerns about education.

I have a whole new respect for my colleagues who ran for the BCTF Executive. There was a huge effort put into running their campaigns. Most competed in Surrey's Lightning Forum on the first evening and answered questions with professionalism and incredible background knowledge about the issues. Every candidate handed out campaign literature stating their views and where they stood on issues.

After an evening session delegates would make their way to "Phantasy Island" on the 34th floor of the Hyatt. It was here that I had a chance to talk to teachers from all over the province. I was appalled to hear about how some of our colleagues who live in remote areas had to put up with substandard housing. Although I had read the article about the substandard housing of rural teachers in the last *Teacher* newsmagazine, the message didn't hit home until I had talked to one of the delegates who actually lived in one of these homes.

Before I knew it the AGM was over and many issues that had to be addressed were dealt with.

If someone asked me today if I would attend next year's AGM, without hesitation, my answer would be yes.

On Wednesday morning, Penny Priddy, the newly-appointed Minister of Education, gave a wide-ranging homespun address on the importance of public education, with frequent references to her grandson who will enter Kindergarten in the fall. Priddy did not have a substantive announcement for teachers, so delegates became restless as she concluded her speech. They were eager to hear the results of the balloting for president.

The results were decisive: David Chudnovsky 376, Kit Krieger 288. The elections for the rest of the Executive Committee took the rest of the day, with tight races on nine additional ballots. The following candidates were elected: First Vice-President Neil Worboys, Kitimat Second Vice-President Jinny Sims, Nanaimo Members-at-large Patricia Clough, Salmon Arm Mike Hayes, Saanich Margaret Little, Fort St. John Suzie Mah, Vancouver Kathleen Thompson, Coquitlam

This year's recipient of the G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award was Mike Zlotnik, former director of Professional Development for the BCTF. Zlotnik gave an eloquent speech about those who inspired him as an educator, the lessons he learned from his wife and children, and the great satisfaction he found in advocating for teachers.

He spoke of the pride he felt in the solidarity work of the BCTF around the globe. "I define solidarity as inclusive love," Zlotnik said. "Solidarity is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason. Therefore, educators must stand together with all who are oppressed.... It is not right that millions of children have no schools or millions more are schooled in the disgusting conditions I have seen abroad."

Zlotnik concluded by urging colleagues to "work for the inspiring legacy that came from the founders of public education—the common school for all. Proposed reforms to make education a market commodity purchased by parents betray that ideal and undermine solidarity, equality and social reason.... The common school for all children of diverse social backgrounds, ethnicities and religions is now more essential than it ever was. That vision is our common cause."

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media relations officer.

PROBLEM: FOUNDATION

The fundamental error underlying the B.C. Foundation Skills Assessment

by Anne Davies

Would you choose a mutual fund based on a single day's performance? Would you decide the skill level of a baseball pitcher after watching one game, two-thirds of the way through a season? Logic tells you, "No." You wouldn't have enough information. Without enough information we can't make informed decisions or draw responsible conclusions.

This May the B.C. Ministry of Education is planning to test thousands of children, calculate each student's performance, and in the fall send parents a report of their child's "foundation skill level." This test given at Grades 4, 7, and 10 will take four hours or less and is supposed to tell parents how well students are able to read, write, and do math. In other words, it will be a single look at a student's work part way through the school year. How can the minister of education afford to add this expenditure to an already overtaxed budget, especially when any conclusions drawn from it about students and their level of skill will be invalid? Do you think this has anything to do with politics? While that is for you to decide, I can tell you the plan is not based on sound assessment practices.

When teachers assess students in their classrooms, they collect assessment data from three different sources: observing students as they work; reviewing the products students create; and talking with students about their work.

It is a fact that large-scale assessments like the new Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) are too limited and incomplete to give a valid report concerning an individual student's level of skill. To get a valid assessment of an individual student's learning, you need to gather evidence using a variety of classroom assessment techniques. As parents trying to make sense of how well our children are doing, it is important to understand the difference between these two types of assessment.

Large-scale assessments have two important purposes—to account for how

well the system is operating and to identify trends for the development of curriculum and fine-tuning classroom instruction. Traditionally in British Columbia, large-scale assessment data has been collected from a randomly selected, statistically significant sample of students. The information from large-scale assessments has helped identify which areas of curriculum need more attention. When districts or the province have compared the results of subsequent assessments, they get feedback about how well the system is doing. By providing such critical information, large-scale assessments have filled an important role in the

...the limited evidence about a particular student gathered in a few hours during a large-scale assessment, such as the FSA, is not a valid way to assess or report on individual student's learning.

continual improvement of the educational system in this province. This is what the B.C. provincial learning assessment program does when it assesses a statistically significant number of students across the province and gives valid reports about how students as a group are learning—it is a good use of time and money.

The purposes of classroom assessment are different from large-scale assessment. Classroom assessment helps the teacher know what kind of instruction their students need and communicates to the student's family what and how well each student is learning. When teachers assess students in their classrooms, they collect assessment data from three different sources: observing students as they work; reviewing the products students create; and talking with students about their work. They do this over time, looking for patterns and trends. This process ensures reliability and validity. This is similar to a financial planner looking at several different factors over time to determine how well a mutual fund is performing or reviewing an athlete's performance statistics over an entire season.

Compared to the approach of classroom assessment, it is clear that the limited evidence about a particular student gathered in a few hours during a large-scale assessment, such as the FSA, is not a valid way to assess or report on individual student's learning. The report to parents, months later, can only be misleading.

Don't be fooled by the FSA's appearance of accountability



and substance. When we educate our children we are investing in the future. We need to make responsible decisions based on valid information; we need to be at least as thoughtful about our assessment of our children's learning as we are about our financial investments. To do that we need valid information, not the illusion of it. After all, our children and their learning also deserve care and attention.

Dr. Anne Davies is an independent consultant and author of numerous books. She is invited to speak and consult across North America on issues related to assessment.

AGM calls on members to oppose FSA

Despite considerable effort, the Federation has not been able to get the ministry to change its plans for the Foundation Skills Assessment. The AGM therefore called on members to take strong action in opposition to this testing.

Teachers have expressed concerns about the ministry's expansion of its traditional Provincial Learning Assessment Program (PLAP). The expanded program, the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), will see the testing of virtually all Grade 4, 7, and 10 students every May in reading comprehension, first-draft writing, and some aspects of numeracy. In a significant departure from past practice, the ministry will produce school and individual student results despite the fact that large-scale assessments do not provide us with reliable information for reporting at that level. A Stanford University statistician has found that the results of standardized tests used in California were accurate only 42% of the time in reading and only 30% of the time in mathematics.

The decision to expand large-scale assessment in B.C. was made by government without the advice of any of the partner groups in education. None of the partner groups except the B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) supports the production of individual student results. The FSA was partially implemented in the last two school years and will be fully implemented

Why teachers are opposed to individual student results from FSA

by Anita Chapman

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to help students learn by giving teachers, and students themselves, the information they need to plan for further learning. Teachers need information about which students are not doing well and what strategies they might use to assist them. This is the basis for the day-to-day assessment and evaluation we

A large-scale assessment cannot be designed to serve all purposes.

do in our classrooms. The ministry will produce individual student results from the Foundation Skills Assessment this May, but those results will not provide good information on individual students to augment the information that teachers already collect in other ways.

Large-scale assessments like FSA administered to all students cannot be comprehensive enough to perform a diagnostic purpose. For diagnosis, we want to know about all aspects of a student's performance in writing, for example. Large scale assessments like FSA tests consist of a few common tasks, such as one piece of first draft writing, that lend themselves to pencil-and-paper time-limited testing formats.

this May. Since its inception, members have expressed many concerns about the quality of the tests, the effect of the tests on students, and the use or misuse of the results.

The BCTF's position is that:

- The purpose of large-scale assessment should be program evaluation. Results would be used to inform curriculum development, in-service activities, resource development, etc.
- Large-scale assessments should be administered on a sample basis rather than a census (every student) basis.
- The ministry should not produce individual student scores.

The Federation's intention is to challenge the professional and ethical concerns regarding the FSA and not to put individual teachers at jeopardy. The BCTF is advising members to comply with any order or directive from the employer to administer the FSA tests.

Complying with an order or directive to administer the tests includes administrative tasks such as affixing student labels to the booklets. Some schools are making arrangements to have others take on these tasks, but refusal to do so in the face of an order could put a member at risk of discipline.

If members are faced with an order to administer the tests, they should comply and inform their employer that they are doing so under protest.

The BCTF will continue its campaign to inform parents and the public about our professional and ethical concerns regarding FSA.

— Anita Chapman

PLAP
FSA

IN SKILLS ASSESSMENT

A large-scale assessment cannot be designed to serve all purposes. A test designed for program evaluation is not

The FSA tests might tell us which students are not achieving within expectations but cannot tell us why.

likely a valid test for identifying students who need additional support. Even standardized, individual, diagnostic tests that are developed for one purpose, for example, identifying students for a gifted program, cannot be used for another purpose, for example, identifying students for learning assistance. A standardized diagnostic test

designed to identify students for additional support would have lots of very easy questions in order to spread out performance at the lower end. There is too much measurement error in individual student's scores on large-scale assessments such as FSA to use the results for diagnostic purposes.

The FSA tests might tell us which students are not achieving within expectations but cannot tell us why. Students with the same score may have very different patterns of correct and incorrect responses. To find out why, we would need one-on-one diagnostic measures. A large-scale assessment does not provide us with any information on what strategies are most likely to support students who are performing below expectations.

If the ministry reports individual results accurately, that is, in a way that does not imply more precision than is

Parents may wonder why their children spent up to four hours taking these tests if they are not good measures of their child's progress.

possible, parents are likely to be frustrated that these results do not really tell them anything. Parents may wonder why their children spent up to four hours taking these tests if they are not good measures of their child's progress.

Anita Chapman is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

students ought to be thinking constantly about improving their performance. This focus on results turns out to be remarkably simplistic, particularly when one considers the psychological issues involved. A *preoccupation with achievement* is not only different from, but often detrimental to, a focus on learning.

2. As I've already noted, the tougher standards movement tends to favour *old-school teaching*, the sort of instruction that treats kids as though they were inert objects, that prepares a concoction called "basic skills" and "core knowledge" and then tries to pour it down children's throats. This model might be described as outdated were it not for the fact that, frankly, it never worked all that well. Modern cognitive science just explains more systematically why it has always come up short.

3. This movement is *wedded to standardized testing*. "Excellence" and "higher standards" typically mean higher test scores, and that is what schools are pressed to produce. Indeed, much of the discussion about education today is arrested at the level of "test scores are low; make them go up." All the limits of, and problems with, such testing amount to a serious indictment of the version of school reform that relies on these tests.

4. The tougher standards movement usually consists of *imposing specific requirements and trying to coerce improvement* by specifying exactly what must be taught and learned—that is, by mandating a particular kind of education. Even if we set aside the first three concerns—a very problematic set of beliefs about achievement, teaching, and measurement, respectively—we should be wary of the assumption that the way one changes education is simply to compel teachers and students to do things differently.

5. Finally, weaving its way through many of these ideas is an implicit assumption about what it means to improve, about the nature of "rigor" or "challenge." That assumption can be summarized in three words: *harder is better*. This reductive (and really rather silly) premise is the basis for judging teachers, textbooks, and tests; it lurks behind complaints about "dumbing down" education and strident calls to "raise the bar." Its first cousin is the idea that if something isn't working very well—say, requiring students to do homework of dubious value—then insisting on more of the same will surely solve the problem.

Source: "Five Fatal Flaws," from *The Schools our Children Deserve* by Alfie Kohn, Copyright ©1999 by Alfie Kohn. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Teacher, do no harm...

by Janet Amsden

As an AGM delegate considering the recommendation to oppose the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) program, I needed information. I asked Grade 4 teachers what the impact of the FSA, has been on their students. They told me:

"There's such a spread of ability in my class. Some of them don't have the reading or writing skills to handle the format of the FSA. It really frustrates them. To give them all the same test just isn't fair. I never assign them regular class work that way."

"My ESL students have a lot of trouble with the FSA and there is no way to identify them as ESL. It skews the results."

"In order to give these tests effectively I should be preparing the students beforehand by giving them booklet-type practice tests."

"I know teachers who prep their Grade 4 students with practice tests and others who don't. It makes me question the validity of the FSA test administration. I'm not comfortable with the way they are marked either."

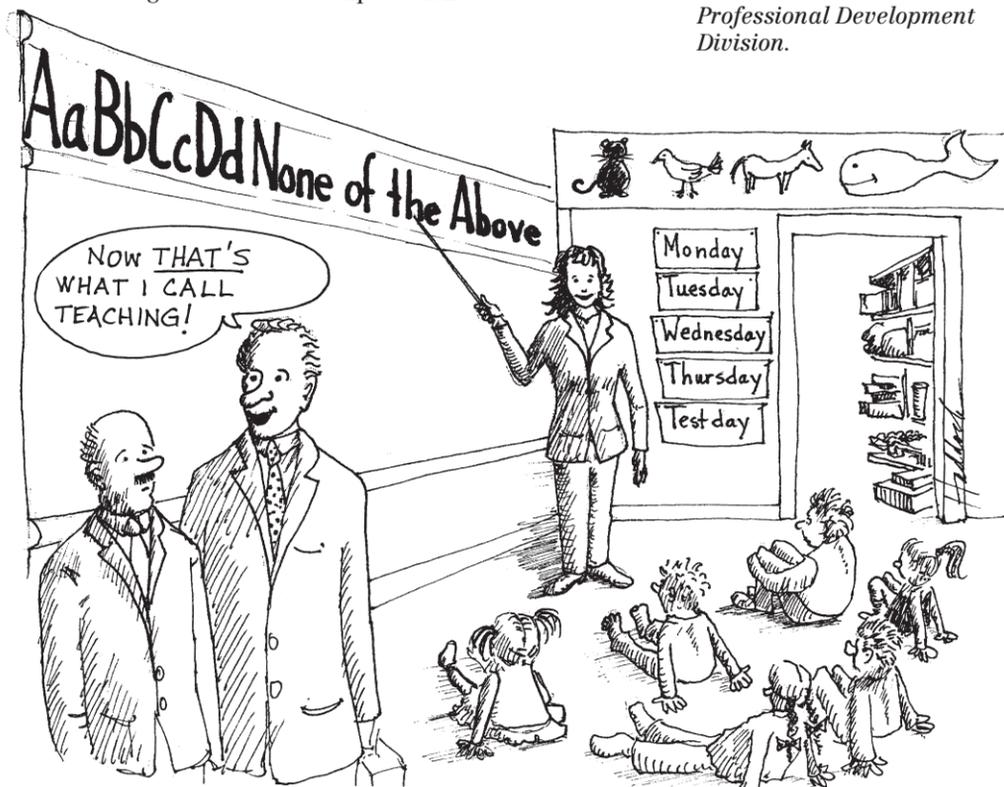
"For my little guy with ADHD the FSA is so stressful. He tries but there's no way he can sustain his attention for the required time, and yet I have to ask him to."

"Why does the minister (of education) complain about the Fraser Institute's ranking of schools and say nothing about the FSA? Doesn't she see that the Fraser Institute is going to use the FSA results for elementary schools the same way they use provincial exam results for high schools?"

Since the FSA promises to bring trauma to all students in Grades 4, 7, and 10, it was no surprise that AGM delegates voted overwhelmingly to oppose the FSA, particularly the reporting of individual school and student results. We also voted to refuse to perform administrative procedures on FSA tests that would identify individual students or schools and to support members in any refusal to administer FSA tests without a direct written order of the board.

It makes sense. No one was able to suggest the FSA is of any direct benefit to students, and our first responsibility must be to do no harm.

Janet Amsden teaches at Fairview Elementary School, Maple Ridge.



Five fatal flaws

Back in 1959, the education critic John Holt became concerned about the way some people were already starting to talk about improving education. "One ironical consequence of the drive for so-called higher standards in schools," he remarked, "is that the children are too busy to think." His implication is that higher standards and better thinking are not only different ideas in theory but may be opposites in practice—an idea that will seem surprising, even confusing, to a lot of people. But I think Holt has been proved right over the ensuing four decades. Specifically, I would contend that the tougher standards movement is fundamentally misguided in five separate respects.

1. This approach proceeds from the assumption—one so widely shared as to be largely taken for granted—that



Electronically distributed education

by Al Maxwell

Much has been said and written about the quality of public education in the B.C. school system. Proponents of choice advocate for more and newer structures within the existing framework that richly serves our 560,000 students. A new feature of that debate has opened with the advent of electronically distributed education, or EDE. Parent and member advocates extol the virtues of virtual communities, ministry officials are impressed with the savings that accrue in electronic delivery as opposed to traditional models, and society in general looks to this future-oriented solution.

In attempting an objective look at how this recent technology burst might impact our teaching lives, the following questions arise for BCTF members: Is it as good, better, or worse? Is public education threatened? Is it cheaper? Is it fairly distributed? Is it public education? Can it be defined? Is

job security an issue? How prevalent is it now? What will it look like in a few years? and myriad other linked questions.

Two resolutions at the AGM were referred to the Executive Committee for a report at next year's AGM. Recommendation 54 suggested a definition of EDE and policy processes, while Recommendation 55 dealt with the distribution of public resources. The year will allow PSAC and the general membership to have an opportunity to review the wording and propose changes that reflect our new realities.

Current BCTF policies are quite definite with regard to vouchered or chartered schools. At the time of acceptance of those policies, the concept of a virtual school was barely a reality. The question of whether current practices in our system might qualify some schools as virtual vouchered schools has become an issue. Unfortunately, ministry policies and guidelines are unclear in determining when a virtual school takes on the reality of a regular school. Our own policy also stands in need of interpretation by members.

BCTF policy 9.A.05B Public Education Alternatives That the BCTF oppose "vouchers," "charter schools,"

and similar initiatives that privatize public schools and undermine the democratic principles upon which public schools are founded. (95 AGM)

One could interpret policy 9.A.05B to include virtual schools. Do parents not in effect present a voucher when they choose to place students in a current EDE program, when the choice of a suitable regular in-building public school program is available?

On the issue of parent choice, a reading of the Statement of Education Policy Order D-78 through D-79 on Diversity and Choice informs, but does it enlighten?: "Government is committed to ensuring that parents in every region of the province have access to quality public schooling for their children. For those students unable to attend school because of remoteness or illness, the province will provide appropriate delivery systems to ensure access to the provincial curriculum.

In an effort to accommodate varying parental and student expectations of school services, public schools, within available resources, will provide parents and students with choice of programs." (September 9, 1999)

Perhaps its time to draw from our collective experience in the 18 pilot EDE projects throughout

the system and to put in place the guidelines that allow decisions to be made without the doubt that now exists. The BCTF is in accord with the ministry in the wish to develop standards, protocols, and implementation strategies that will allow the current cap on EDE to become a thing of the past.

We must be sure in doing so that the needs of society and the needs (not wishes) of our students and parents are both being met equitably and responsibly. To date, the needs of the parents have been admirably filled with appropriate placements of students in excellent EDE programs when access or illness or behaviour were issues. There is a growing trend, however, to exercise the choice language and to place students in electronically delivered programs solely because parents don't like the current public in-building climate of their son or daughter's current school. In learning situations like these, questions surface. Whose purpose is served? Is the student getting the benefit of a full education, including the social aspects that are expected of all students? Is the quality of instruction as good? Is it really public education? Can the B.C. social agenda remain intact, if large numbers of students receive

their education via electronic mediated instruction rather than through direct human interaction?

There is also an international issue that concerns us all. While CTF maintains that WTO restrictions will not apply with regard to education, other sources are less convinced of our federal government's intent. The Klein experiment in health care could conceivably be replicated with education in that province, with its current virtual school systems. Politically aware members will see the possible dangers.

Recommendations 54 and 55 were an attempt to provide some direction for members with regard to these weighty issues. Electronic debate on these and other issues goes on at a listserv like *bctf-social justice* and *bctf-pd-issues*. Articles such as this, discussion on the floor of local meetings, and consensus building through staffroom discussions can only serve to strengthen those recommendations.

For more information, contact me at (604) 871-2258 or by email at amaxwell@bctf.bc.ca.

Al Maxwell is an assistant director in the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

Time to stop commercialization

by Chris Bocking

Commercialization is tainting more areas of society all the time. It is becoming difficult to escape no matter where one goes. Sitting in the Swartz Bay ferry terminal parking lot one is confronted with ultra-bright, richly-coloured, fast-paced, and choppily-edited images from an immense TV screen. The back of the fare receipt reminds us that "Coca Cola is always refreshing."

I have written before about the extent of corporate sponsorship in the public school system, and of how the "captive audiences" in our care are being eyed hungrily by the business world. It has become apparent that there is, indeed, a deliberate corporate agenda in place to try to influence those with the most impressionable minds.

But direct corporate sponsorship is only one part, albeit an important one, in the commercial scheme of things. Other scenarios, once considered unthinkable, are beginning to surface.

At an elementary school in our district there was serious

discussion of charging parents to attend a musical production put on by their children. After making costumes, helping with scenery, and practising dialogue with their children, the parents were going to have to pay for the privilege of finally seeing them perform! As I write this it is not known if the teachers and administrators in charge will continue to insist on diluting the pleasure of this fine arts production by making it a crass fund-raiser.

Corporate logos are still showing up on children's clothing, a practise known as "branding." The image that springs to mind of young calves being seared by

hot irons is an unpleasant one, but one that seems apt when one considers the hundreds of times per day that the Nike "swoosh," for example, is imprinted on children's retinas, and then into their brains.

Wayne Gretzky, known as "The Great One," gazes out at us from Esso gas pumps and cold cereal boxes as we go about our daily business. His smile seems somewhat tentative, as if he too may be wondering how much money one man really needs.

As educators, we can't do much about retired hockey stars on the grocery store shelves, but we are well-placed to try and minimize,

if not eliminate, the commercialization of our schools. The first step is to become aware of the extent to which it is already around us, and to avoid becoming desensitized to it.

Think about your own school, and your community. There are, more than likely, many examples of this tide of commercialization around you. The people intent on turning our students into future consumers of their products would like nothing better than to be able to count on our apathy.

Chris Bocking teaches at Keating Elementary School, Victoria and is a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board.

Year 2000 Beginning Teachers' Conference a success

by Jan Eastman

The 5th annual BCTF-sponsored Beginning Teachers' Conference once again rated high approval by participants. Approximately 400 teachers in their first few years of teaching came from around the province to attend this sold out conference designed to meet their unique needs.

"This was an amazing conference," said one. "Dynamic!" said another. Topping the list of participants' praise was the multitude of "free" resources and information. The variety and usefulness of the workshops, the tips and practical knowledge of the presenters, and the opportunity to meet with other beginning teachers added to the event's success. As one participant put it, the conference "built a strong sense of community and sharing of stories, ideas, and solutions."

You could feel the energy, anticipation, and excitement as the participants gathered in the ballroom of the Delta Pacific

Hotel in Richmond. In his opening address, David Chudnovsky, BCTF President, said that the BCTF "began to pay more attention to the needs of our colleagues who are embarking on the challenging and rewarding career of teaching just a few years ago. For most of the '90s we saw few new members beginning a teaching career. That is no longer the case, and increasingly we are welcoming new members to the profession and to the BCTF."

Participants chose from a smorgasbord of specific sessions throughout the two days, including: using drama to teach social studies and to address social justice issues, communicating with parents, managing stress and time, teaching controversial issues, developing hands-on and multiple teaching strategies in subject content areas, writing structured report cards, addressing the needs of diverse learners, and using online resources and technology to enhance teaching and learning. Creating a positive classroom

environment and sessions on pensions and worker health and safety were also well received.

Meeting, greeting, and networking kept participants busy through lunch and the social at the end of the first day. Displays of BCTF and commercially available materials transformed the foyer area at the Delta conference centre. The Provincial Specialist Associations were particularly energetic and visible, and in addition to demonstrations and displays, the PSAs provided many of the workshops. Janice Tapp, chairperson of the PSA Council, in her welcoming remarks offered the participants 20 free memberships donated by individual PSAs. In fact, the donated prizes—PSA memberships and an assortment of lesson aids, T-shirts, gift vouchers, and field trips were so plentiful we very nearly had to extend the conference to complete all the draws.

An important part of the conference for the BCTF was the focus group sessions—BCTF

Executive and staff listened as beginning teachers talked about their experiences and the support they need. They spoke of the daily challenges of teaching today's diverse, multicultural student population. They asked to be involved in their profession and in their union. They want to know more of the history of teaching in B.C., and our role as stewards of an inclusive and quality public education system; one that recognizes that hungry children cannot learn well, that children afraid for their lives

cannot learn well, that a teacher's interest and care is the greatest gift, and that advocacy that makes a difference for children is a collective endeavour.

The evaluations call for the Beginning Teachers' Conference to continue to be an annual event.

Watch for a flyer in schools in September.

Jan Eastman is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

Look for program and registration information in your staffroom and online in mid-December. Register early. More than 100 members were turned away this year. At \$50 a person this conference is a bargain and a collegial experience to boot. Call BCTF or your local association office, talk to your staff or PD school rep about how to access your local PD funds for travel assistance and release time. And mark your calendar



for February 2001. Contact Jan Eastman, (604) 871-1847 or Barb Preus (604) 871-1833, toll free 1-800-663-9163, for more information.

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Aboriginal education

by Merle Williams

Aboriginal education has been discussed within the BCTF through the First Nations Education Task Force for the past two years. The issues are not new. There is a long history in regard to the education of Aboriginal people and it is one that has to be addressed if we want to have social change and success for all Aboriginal learners.

It is evident from the past work of the task force that there is a lot of work to be done in Aboriginal education...

At the 84th Annual General Meeting, there were six recommendations regarding Aboriginal education that were passed overwhelmingly, three of which were passed without dissent. The task force co-chairs, Deborah Jeffrey (Prince Rupert) and Frank Conibear (Victoria) best sum up the recommendations that were passed:

"It's the beginning of a new relationship of respectful inclusion through employment equity," said Jeffrey. "It's so heartening to see the Federation opening up to First Nations teachers and communities. I

think it's real cause for celebration."

"Coming after two years of ground-breaking work by the First Nations Task Force, implementation of the recommendations will make a significant difference for Aboriginal teachers and learners," said Conibear.

The BCTF has committed to work with Aboriginal communities to help to improve the success rate for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students' graduation rate is at 31%, compared to about 85% for the general population.

The BCTF endorsed the teacher awareness and commitment principles and the elements of an inclusive school for continued discussion and for action by the BCTF and its locals. These discussions have been an integral part of the process for initiating change and will continue in an atmosphere of respect and mutual responsibility.

The BCTF has also taken on the responsibility to seek improvements that will assist teachers and schools to provide high quality programs for Aboriginal students that improve their educational success, with particular focus on academic performance and school completion rates.

Employment Equity is a very positive step, as it would give students the opportunity to have



Larry Kuehn is honoured for his dedication to the work for Aboriginal education.

role models in their classrooms. There are approximately 300 to 400 Aboriginal teachers in B.C. public schools, about 1% of the total population, whereas the Aboriginal student population is 6.5%. If the goal were to have the number of teachers be reflective of the Aboriginal student population then more than 2,000 teachers would be required.

Many of the issues that reflect the make-up of an employment equity program would include:

- Goals for achieving employment equity, including having Aboriginal teachers in programs throughout the system, as well as in programs supported by targeted Aboriginal education funding.
- Workshops for teachers

and school districts to explain employment equity programs and how they work.

- A registry for Aboriginal teachers who hold B.C. College of Teachers' certificates and who are seeking employment as teachers in B.C. will provide a base line.

- Employment equity pilot projects in districts where the BCTF local and school board agree to undertake a project.

- A program with targets and actions to increase the number of Aboriginal people who seek and achieve teacher training and qualifications.

- Research to identify systemic impediments to employment equity, including hiring policies, employment practices, and workplace climate.

- Support networks, which include a mentoring program for beginning Aboriginal teachers.

- An annual report on the monitoring of progress toward meeting the employment equity goals.

It is evident from the past work of the task force that there is a lot of work to be done in Aboriginal education, which of course is to look forward with optimism and courage and to work diligently with all the partner groups that will encourage positive change for Aboriginal students.

The BCTF Aboriginal Task

Force members are Geraldine Bob, Lexi Charlie, Frank Conibear, Alice Gro, Debbie Jeffrey, Carol Macauley, Ian

The long journey to improvements for Aboriginal students and teachers has begun...

Stuart, Merle Williams, and Larry Kuehn, First Nations PSA (Jan Gladish, Lorna Mathias).

In its address to the AGM, the task force honoured Larry Kuehn with a Coast Salish weaving created by Christa Point of the Musqueam Band. He was honoured for his outstanding contribution and dedication to the work for Aboriginal education.

The BCTF has also made some outstanding commitments by establishing an Aboriginal staff position as well as to commit to the establishment of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

The long journey to improvements for Aboriginal students and teachers has begun, as was evident at the AGM with the endorsement of the recommendations that were passed overwhelmingly.

Merle Williams is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

Gay/Straight Alliances

The BCTF AGM overwhelmingly endorsed an Executive Committee recommendation that the Federation actively support the establishment of Gay/Straight Alliance support groups (GSAs) in middle and high schools throughout B.C. The recommendation received national and international media attention. While much of the public attention focussed on negative reaction to the proposal, the

Federation in fact received a great deal of encouragement and endorsement from individuals and groups all over North America. The BCTF is being widely recognized as taking an invaluable and commendable leadership position on the issue.

Debate on the recommendation focussed on the need for these groups as a way to address the harassment, intimidation, and bullying so common for sexual minority students or students

perceived as such. The decision to support Gay/Straight Alliance groups means that BCTF members will be encouraged to act as sponsors for GSAs and local associations will be supported in their efforts to educate members about the importance and value of GSAs in building safe and inclusive schools.

The Federation's Social Justice Advisory Committee, with the assistance of homophobia and heterosexism (H/H) associates, will

now develop a program to assist locals and members in implementing the AGM motion.

The H/H program currently has in place two workshops, one of which is intended to raise awareness of the issue and a second that is designed as a planning session on taking action against homophobia in schools and locals. The Social Justice Advisory Committee has also recently provided support for a resource book for teachers

Reaching Through Teaching, developed by the Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C. (GALE). The resource should be available in the fall. Advice on forming GSAs is, or will be, an important element of the workshops and the resource materials.

For more information on the Federation's Homophobia and Heterosexism program, contact the Professional Development Division at the BCTF.

— Pat Clarke

AGM says no to accreditation

The time has come for collective action on accreditation. Almost 700 delegates to the BCTF Annual General Meeting responded to teachers' concerns regarding the futility and excessive workload of the school accreditation process. The AGM overwhelmingly adopted the following recommendations:

1. That teachers not participate in the 2000-01 Ministry of Education school accreditation program and that BCTF and local support be given to teachers who have to resign from their positions in the process.

2. That BCTF and local support be given to teachers who are currently completing the 1999-2000 school accreditation process who wish to:
 - a. resign from their positions in the process: or
 - b. continue in their positions until their tasks are completed.

3. That school staffs be encouraged to undertake a school-based needs assessment and goal-setting process next year.

4. That the Representative Assembly be authorized to

revise decisions of this Annual General Meeting regarding school accreditation, providing such revisions meet the expectations of BCTF members.

Why is it time for action?

The following concerns have been expressed by teachers throughout the province:

- The current accreditation process is a significant waste of teacher time, resources, and funding.

- The proposed ministry refinements to the process do not substantially reduce teachers' workload. Furthermore, the changes to the evidence-gathering process move accreditation in a dangerous direction based on a narrow set of quantitative data.

- The ministry rejected a key recommendation of the Accreditation Review Committee that called for each school to be allowed to convert up to six days of instructional time to non-instructional time during each six-year accreditation cycle.

- The draft changes to the external process propose that school superintendents take responsibility for preparing the

external accreditation reports and that school boards be given responsibility for accrediting schools within their districts.

- The ministry has not authorized piloting of the BCTF Schools Taking Action and Review (STAR) process as an alternative to accreditation.

Ongoing accreditation work

Some schools have an external team visit this spring. Many other schools are working on implementing school growth plans from previous accreditation processes. These staffs should meet to decide whether they intend to continue or discontinue participation in the program. The BCTF and locals will provide support to teachers regardless of the decision made.

According to ministry documents, 273 public schools are scheduled to participate in the 2000-01 accreditation program. All schools have been informed of this schedule and school representatives have attended ministry training sessions this spring.

The AGM is advising teachers in these 273 schools to stop

participating in the accreditation program. If your school is one of these schools:

- Teachers should stop participating in accreditation activities for the remainder of this school year and next year. The BCTF and locals will provide support.

- Teachers should resist all pressure to participate in accreditation activities and should communicate with their local president if any pressure is being applied.

- In the event that teachers are issued a direct order of the board to participate in school accreditation, they should immediately contact their local president. The local president and BCTF staff will provide appropriate advice and support.

- School staffs are strongly encouraged to undertake a school-based needs assessment and goal-setting process during the year. This one-day interactive process promotes school growth and development, and leads to school-based goals and action plans.

We hope that this action plan will influence the ministry to

make significant changes in the accreditation program. The BCTF will continue to discuss changes to the school accreditation program with the Ministry of Education. If we are successful in influencing revisions to the accreditation process, the Representative Assembly is empowered to revise decisions of the AGM.

A time for collective action

Our decision not to participate in the 2000-01 accreditation program was overwhelmingly supported by delegates at the AGM. The collective action of teachers on this issue will support the BCTF in its campaign to work with the ministry to develop a useful school review process. We recognize that the decision not to participate in the 2000-01 accreditation program will place pressure on individual members and school staffs in 273 schools. Members can count on locals and the BCTF to support them.

If you would like more information contact your local president.

— Mike Lombardi

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VICTORIA. Peaceful Gorge waterfront. 2 bd. home. 15 min. to UVic. N/S, N/P, July \$900. (250) 727-6747.

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CASA MORA fully equipped short stay suites (Garden & Penthouse with view) in beautiful Point Grey home, near UBC on express bus route;. Fast access to downtown. Min. stay 2 night. Occasional sublet of main fl. may also be avail. during school holidays. www3.telus.net/cyberwest/suite/Penthouse or (604) 228-8079, mariette@telus.net

MISCELLANEOUS

ENRICH YOUR INUIT UNIT! Experienced teacher presents dynamic 2 hr. classroom presentation: slides, music, games, more. Hands on! Authentic Inuit tools, clothing, toys. Okanagan, Kootenays, Lower Mainland. \$199 includes presentation, supplies, and teacher's kit. Classroom Expeditions 250-352-3598.

TRAVEL-TEACH ENGLISH. 5 day/40 hr. June 21-25, Oct. 25-29. TESOL teacher certification course (or by correspondence). Thousands of jobs available now. Free info package, toll free 1-888-270-9411.

RETIREMENT! Can you afford to retire? Confused about your teachers' pension plan benefits or purchase of service? Confidential, individual retirement counseling available. No product sales. Call Cherith Cayford CFP, RFP, PRP at Camelot Management Group 604-913-0090, or cherith_camelot@bc.sympatico.ca

DEGREES BY DISTANCE LEARNING: World's most complete guide. Accredited bachelors, masters, doctorates—more than 350 fields of study. Fax: 250-752-0304, kito@nisa.net

EXPAND YOUR CURRICULUM. Reach more students in more ways. Group workshops: private consultation. Contact Kelvin Beckett, PhD in Education. 12 yrs. experience working with BC teachers. 604-222-7811 or kgbeckett@sprint.ca

ESL TEACHERS urgently needed in Korea, Taiwan and China. Positions available immediately and throughout the year. Accommodation & return airfare provided. Fax resumes to: Lawrence Fast, Century College, 731-8830 or lawfast@centurycollege.com

TEACHERS/EDUCATORS! 25 recorded stories of the Canadian West. History is fun. Motivational & inspirational entertaining! Singing, storytelling and trick roping. Cowboy "Sky Floyd Drew" 250-836-5327. References available.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION SCHOOL SHOW. The Buddy System brings the Personal Planning Program alive! Dynamic, fun, musical presentation. 604-990-4033, www.festival.bc.ca

GERMAN EXCHANGE Learn about Germany, spend a week in Berlin, stay with a German teacher. Aug. 6-Aug. 27, 2000. All-incl. \$2,450. Contact Marlene Isaac, (250) 862-5433, F: (250) 862-5470, inted@okanagan.bc.ca

DOWN SYNDROME RESEARCH FDN. presents "Striving for Independence" an educational conference for educators wanting support and information to make a difference in lives of teens with DS. May 26/27, Vancouver. The DSRF Fall Conference will cover issues re elementary age children with DS. October 20/21. Info: (604) 431-9694.

TUTOR NEEDED. Full-time private tutor for 2 children (Gr. 3 & 1) English & French req. German language an asset. Start with new school year. Fax inquiries and resumes to (250) 362-7364.

TRAVEL & CREATIVE WRITING Workshops during July & Aug. in Vancouver and on Van. Island. Daily, weekend & week-long sessions. Contact Sea to Sky Expeditions 1-800-990-8735 for more info or visit www.netcom.ca/~seatosky/

NEED E-TUTORS. To e-tutor (online) from your home. Subjects: math or physics or chemistry, Grade levels 4-12 and/or/each 1st yr. univ. Times: weekday even. and/or weekends. Of interest to school teachers, senior students, teaching assistants, etc. Work from home and make money at the same time! Email beverly.henri@home.com for more information.

GLADSTONE GRAD CLASS 1960 40th Reunion on Sat. Aug. 5, 2000 at Delta Town and Country Inn, Hwy 99 & 17. Contact June Morin (604) 943-2961 or jamorin@smartt.com

LOVELY SHELTER DOGS who deserve good homes. Permanent or foster homes. Big, sweet, young dogs. (604) 517-1918 or lac_67@hotmail.com

REUNION 2000 for all former students and staff of Surrey High School/Lord Tweedsmuir, Cloverdale, BC, June 3, 11 am to 5 pm, \$10. Call (604) 574-7407 for info.

TEACHER EXCHANGE Kaslo, BC on beautiful Kootenay Lake (1 hr. from Nelson) exchange wanted with Primary teacher in the Okanagan Valley. Offering a 4 bd. home within walking distance from a modern 5 yr. old (K-12) school. Contact Yvonne Gevers (250) 353-7794 collect.

COMPANION READING Powerlines Language Arts and Remedial Reading K-6. Give us a click. www.kidsed.org

HOMESTAY/TUTORS WANTED! In search of a rewarding experience while generating extra income? Gateway Educational Services is seeking experienced, quality people to tutor/host international and Canadian students. Certified teachers within Lower Mainland an asset. (604) 218-1409, gatewayES@hotmail.com

FOR SALE

MANUAL FOR PARAGRAPH & ESSAY writing. Designed for teachers/parents of weaker or remedial students. To order send \$10.75 plus \$1.50 postage to Avstan Publications, 8850c Young Rd., Chilliwack, BC V2P 4P5. Phone/Fax: 604-792-0839.

RETIRE NOW to peaceful Pender Island. Private oceanfront acreage with lovely westcoast home \$399,700. Free Pender Island property info package 1-888-629-3383. Chuck & Stephanie Newell, WindermerePenderIslandRealty.com

DISCOVER GABIOLA ISLAND "Queen of the Gulf Islands." Offering a rural lifestyle in a beautiful serene setting from inland cottages to waterfront acreages. Wouldn't you like to join us... Call Randi or Jennifer Lynch, Coast Realty, 1-877-422-8455 or lynch@island.net for your customized relocation package!

GABRIOLA IS. Looking for an enchanting "retirement environment!" Does living in the Gulf Islands with low crime, low taxes, and low prices appeal to you? Then discover Gabriola Island. Close to major center, mild temperatures, easy access! Visit my website: www.realestate-gabriola.com or call for free catalogue and brochure, **email: spring@island.net**, 1-800-205-8080, Jheira Springfield, Coast Realty (Gabriola Village)

VERNON, BC. Family home immaculate, 3 + 1 bd. partial suite, den, garage, near schools. \$138,500. (250) 545-3388.

SPACIOUS BIRCH BAY CABIN. 1 hr. from Vancouver, 3 bd., sleeps 10-12. One blk. to beach on large subdividable lot. Will consider selling all, time share or trade for lot. Asking \$89,000. US. (604) 467-0017 days, (604) 463-3516 (even.)

HAWKINS LAKE. 1/2 acre lakefront. 2 bd. mobile home. Neat and clean. New wharf, garage, hydro and phone. \$89,000. (604) 532-1312.

FRENCH TEACHERS. Aural comprehension exercises to accompany Disney animated features - all levels. Answer key incl. For info, fax: Debut Productions (250) 768-8141, adesjard@okanagan.net

WOODEN CUISENAIR RODS. Classroom set available, darwood@moberly.vsb.bc.ca

SAILBOAT, 24' sloop at Pt. Roberts, WA for immediate sale. Exc. condition, recently fully upgraded, phone for det. description and picture to be faxed to you. \$12,500 Cdn. obo, Joe Poppe (604) 272-0037.

'89 COUGAR XR7, White in exc. running cond. Body needs work. (604) 272-0037. \$3,900obo, 278 k.

SAILBOAT 22' Catalina pocket cruiser, dinette, pop top, swing keel, sleeps 4. Perfect family fun boat. \$6500. (604) 898-1526 after 5 pm.

PROPERTY 3 ac. wilderness retreat, on Cheakamus River, upper Paradise Valley, north of Squamish, no road access, 15 min. walk via suspension bridge. 15 yr. lease \$48,000 (below prov. assessment) Perfect getaway property. (604) 898-1526 after 5 pm.

CLASSIFIED RATES
70¢ a word, plus 7% GST
Submit in writing and prepay.
Sorry no credit cards. Make cheque payable to BCTF and send to BCTF office, attention Kathleen Smith.

MAY

4-6 Victoria. Phoenix Festival 2000, provincial drama festival for students of drama teachers in the province. UVic. Deadline for applications and deposit: March 31, 2000. Contact Leona Kyrtyow, (250) 755-2157; Fax: (250) 754-7869; lkyrtyow@sd68.bc.ca

4-6 Surrey. 5th Provincial ADD/LD Spring Conference 2000, presented by the Surrey Chapter of the Learning Disabilities Assn. and School District #36 (Surrey), at Sheraton Hotel Guildford. \$185. Contact Bonnie Mackwood (604) 591-5156; F: (604) 591-1669, www.sd36.surrey.bc.ca/add-ld-conf

4-6 Vancouver. Learning Love: Articulating a Space for Love and Compassion in the Teaching and Healing Arts conference, sponsored by the UBC Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, <http://www.ihpr.ubc.ca>

4-6 Vancouver. B.C. Assn. for Play Therapy Year 2000 Conference. Contact B.C.A.P.T., SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings St.

5-7 SFU. 10th Annual Tourism Educators' Conference. \$169. Contact: Penny Southby, Conference Services, (604) 291-3854; F: (604) 291-3420; penny_southby@sfu.bc.ca

6 North Vancouver. Spring meeting of the B.C. Assn. of Physics Teachers. Capilano College. A day of demonstrations, teaching ideas, discussions, and presentations. Contact: Mike Coombes (604) 599-2196; mikec@kwantlen.bc.ca

6 Vancouver. Educators Against Racism PSA Conference, Celebrating Diversity. Parkhill Hotel, 09:00-15:00, \$100 includes PSA membership, lunch, coffee, and snacks. Contact Louisa Sanchez, (250) 624-6989; F: (250) 627-7030, lsanchez@citytel.net

9-10 North Vancouver. Fastforward: the Educational Media Showcase (educational videos, CD-ROM, and multimedia programs, Capilano College Sportsplex. Contact Susan Weber, (604)323-5533, F: (604) 323-5475, sweber@langara.bc.ca.

12 Abbotsford. Farm Field Day, sponsored by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and the Coquitlam SS LSA. Lunch, refreshments, and transportation from the site are included in the \$20 reg. fee. Contact Dale Gregory: (604) 942-5586; dgregory@unixg.ubc.ca or Lindsay Babineau: (604) 660-2421; Lindsay.Babineau@gems9.gov.bc.ca

13 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices, an annual conference for critical reflection on the what, how, and why of teaching, UBC. Contact OCPE, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, V6T 1Z4, F: (604)822-2015, ocpe.educ@ubc.ca, or David Coulter, (604) 822-6196, david.coulter@ubc.ca, or Tony Clarke, (604) 822-2003, anthony.clarke@ubc.ca.

28-31 Vancouver. 27th Annual AMTEC 2000 Conference, Discovering New Educational Horizons, Coast Plaza at Stanley Park. Contact: Leva Lee, (604)431-3099, llee@openschool.bc.ca, www.langara.bc.ca/amtec2000.

29 Victoria. Canadian Meteorological & Oceanographic Society 34th Congress, B.C. High school Teachers' Program: "The Role of the Pacific in Climate and Weather." UVic. Registration \$125.00 Info: Ms. Glenn Martin, (250) 477-7582; F: (250) 477-7581; gmartin@telus.net

JUNE

1-3 Vancouver. 10th International Nursing Conference, Ending Violence Against Women: Setting the Agenda for the Next Millennium. Contact Elaine Liau, UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education, 105-2194 Health Sciences Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z3, (604) 822-4965, F: (604) 822-4835, elaine@cehs.ubc.ca.

2-3 Vernon. What Works! A Literacy Symposium, at the Kalamalka Campus of Okanagan College in Vernon, jointly sponsored with School District 22. Information: <http://www.ouc.bc.ca/literacy>

2-4 Vancouver. 41st Annual Adult Education Research Conference, AERC 2000, "The Right Questions: Research/ing in a New Century,"

UBC. Contact Roweena Bacchus, (604) 822-5374; F: (604) 822-4244, roweena.bacchus@ubc.ca or visit www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/

17-18 Vancouver. Heading Home: A Workshop for Women and Men over 55. Gestalt Training Institute. Contact UBC Continuing Education, (604) 482-8588.

28-July 1 Calgary. Forum 2000: Building Democratic Villages social studies conference. International presenters, including Maki Mandela and Stephen Lewis. University of Calgary. Registration \$175. Contact: NCSS web site www.ncss.org.

JULY

3-7 Langley. Introductory Video Production for Secondary Teachers. One week intensive course. Limited enrolment, \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604) 530-2141; dawne_tomlinson@bc.sympatico.ca

4-14 Vancouver Conceptual Physics with Hewitt, at the King Edward Campus of Vancouver Community College. A two-week workshop led by master teacher and author Paul Hewitt for teachers of physics and physical science. More info at www.vcc.bc.ca under the "What's New" button, or Peter Hopkinson, (604) 871-7285, phopkinson@vcc.bc.ca

10-14 Burnaby. Practicing Vygotsky in Schools. SFU. Speakers include Drs. Gita Vygodskaya and Elena Kravtsova, Lev Vygotsky's daughter and granddaughter. \$350; space is limited. Contact M. Kathie Wright, (604) 291-5356; F: (604) 291-5882; kuraight@sfu.ca

10-14 Langley. Advanced Video Production for Secondary Teachers. 1 week intensive follow-up course. Limited enrolment, \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604) 530-2141; dawne_tomlinson@bc.sympatico.ca

10-21 Vancouver. UBC Infant Development Summer Institute: Education of Atypical Infants and Children. Co-sponsored by the Infant Development Programs of BC, and the Dept of Ed and Counselling Psychology and Special Education and the Office of Continuing Professional Ed., UBC. \$300. Credit option available. Contact: OCPE, (604) 822-2013, ocpe.educ@ubc.ca, www.ocpe.educ.ubc.ca

10-August 14 North Vancouver. Career Development Facilitator Summer Training Program at Capilano College. Leads to eligibility for certification by the Council for Credentialing and Education, a subdivision of the U.S. National board for Certified Counsellors. Cost \$1600 Contact: Kelly Kozar, T: (604) 984-1754; F: (604) 983-7545; kkozar@capcollege.bc.ca

13-16 Vancouver. International Conference on Searching for Meaning in the New Millennium. Contact Dr. Paul T.P. Wong, wong@twu.ca or www.meaning.twu.ca

31-August 4 Vancouver. The H.R. MacMillan Space Centre is presenting a week-long summer institute for Grade 2-9 teachers, covering such topics as astronomy, the solar system, the International Space Station and space exploration, robotics, and aspects of being an astronaut. Cost is \$275 incl. GST, light breakfast and lunch, and hand-outs and resource materials. Contact Kathy Knight (604) 738-7827, local 253; F: (604) 738-5086, kknight@pacific-space-centre.bc.ca or <http://pacific-space-centre.bc.ca>

AUGUST

9-12 Victoria. Valuing the Culture of Peace, a conference for teachers, activists, youth, and community, sponsored by the B.C. Teachers for Peace and Global Education (PAGE), United Nations and UVic. Contact Pat McGuire, (250)721-8746, f: (250)721-8774, pmcguire@wic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/conf/peace.

29-31 Coquitlam. Elements of Creative Dance, a 3-day summer institute based on the creative dance curriculum K-12, presented by SD 43 (Coquitlam). Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam Town Centre. Registration: \$130 before May 31st; \$180 after May 31st. Contact Diana Clark, (604) 936-0491; F: (604) 936-0292; dclark@schdist43.bc.ca

BCTF Governance Review

by Kathleen MacKinnon

Last year's Annual General Meeting adopted as a priority the improvement of the Federation's effectiveness and responsiveness to meeting the needs of members.

A first step in addressing this priority is to be a review of governance and decision-making structures. The last time a formal review of this nature was undertaken was in 1984-1986.

Since that time, there have been huge changes in the public education environment in British Columbia. To name a few, teachers were granted full collective bargaining rights, administrators were removed from the Federation, locals were certified as bargaining agents, local bargaining authority was stripped away, and school boards have been stripped of most of their authority.

Internal structures of the BCTF have also changed, as have their priorities and mandates. It's time to review the ability of the Federation to respond appropriately, effectively, and efficiently, and to

ensure that the BCTF continues to be open to its members and to be seen by them as strong and influential.

The Executive has appointed a task force to carry out this review. Members met on February 21-22, 2000 and agreed to a process of consultation that will lead to the development of recommendations. It is anticipated that these will be presented to the December 2000 Executive meeting.

Consistent with the AGM priority and the mandate adopted by the Executive, the task force will be asking members for their opinions on the effectiveness of the BCTF in meeting their needs. A basic premise of the task force is that we do not want to be directive or restrictive in encouraging members to express their opinions.

A five-phase process has been developed that we hope will allow for maximum member involvement throughout.

Phase 1

A brief, open-ended set of questions will be presented to all members. This will be done individually through the *Teacher*

newsmagazine and by way of the BCTF web site. It will also be done by visits of task force members, if agendas and groups permit, to a wide range of Federation bodies and advisory committees. All responses will be collated and common issues and themes will be identified.

Phase 2

All members and groups will be given the summary of issues related to the effectiveness of Federation structures and asked for suggestions for remedying identified concerns.

Phase 3

The task force will formulate draft recommendations based on the concerns expressed in phase 1 and the remedies suggested in phase 2.

Phase 4

These draft recommendations will be circulated broadly as before, with a request for comments and further suggestions.

Phase 5

The final phase, from the task force's perspective of involvement, will be the presentation of final recommendations to the Executive. The Executive will determine what to report to the Annual General Meeting.

The committee is hopeful that the five-phase process will ensure as much member participation as possible in the review and the development of recommendations. This is an exciting time for the Federation. With your help and input, the review of governance structures and decision-making bodies will make us a stronger Federation, more responsive to the needs of our members, and more democratic than ever.

Please take the time to respond to the following broad questions. You can send your response by:

Mail to:
Task Force on Governance and Decision Making Structures
100-550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
Attn: Marion Shukin

mshukin@bctf.bc.ca;
fax to Marion Shukin at
604-871-2289
or reply online at
[www.bctf.bc.ca/about/
GovernanceResponse](http://www.bctf.bc.ca/about/GovernanceResponse)

Kathleen MacKinnon is director of the BCTF's Organization Support Division.

Member questionnaire on BCTF governance structures and decision-making bodies

1. How do you see the structures of the BCTF responding to the needs of members and locals?
2. What are the strengths of the BCTF in meeting the needs of members and locals?
3. What are the weaknesses of the BCTF in meeting the needs of members and locals?
- 4a. How do you see BCTF advisory bodies (eg. Professional Development Advisory Committee, Pensions Committee, Provincial Specialist Associations) responding to the needs of members and locals currently?
- b. How do you see BCTF decision-making structures (Annual General Meeting, Representative Assembly, Executive Committee) responding to the needs of members and locals currently?
5. Suggest other ways to gather information for our review.

March launched on International Women's Day

Like a natural symbol of women's hopes and strength, a magnificent eagle circled overhead at noon Wednesday, March 8, as thousands of women gathered in the Library Square in downtown Vancouver to celebrate International Women's Day and the launch of the World March of Women.

Wearing the theme colours of red and purple, the women made a colourful sight as they encircled the federal government building to assert their demands for increased services to women and children, such as a national daycare programs, shelters for those suffering domestic violence, and funding for women's centres. Brilliant balloons bobbed overhead with slogans such as "Women's rights, Not victims' rights."

Approximately 40 members of the BCTF staff and executive, both women and men, attended the rally. Labour activist and singer Heidi Archibald offered a rousing rendition of "Women Hold Up Half The Sky," her song written specifically for IWD 2000.

March 8, 2000 will be a date to remember as the launch of a planetary solidarity movement of women. More than 3,600 groups in 146 countries are involved in this unprecedented project. Press conferences were held in Amman, Beirut, Buenos Aires, Brussels, Cairo, Calcutta, Dhaka, Geneva, Kigali, Lagos, Lima, Lisbon, Managua, Maputo, Montreal, Mexico, New Delhi, New York, Rabat, Santiago, Seoul, Tokyo, Vancouver, Washington, and more.

- Nancy Knickerbocker



On March 8, women in Vancouver joined others in 145 countries in launching a march to end poverty and violence.