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Teacher

One-room schoolhouses *...by choice and circumstance*



Crescent Park School reopened in 1996 with an enrolment of 23 students in one multi-age Grade 1-3 class. This heritage building was revived as part of the community's history.

by Verena Foxx

From Crescent Beach in southwestern B.C. to Quatsino Sound on the northern tip of Vancouver Island; through Gold River in the Caribou region to a small town in the Kettle Valley; and as far east as the Alberta border in the Rocky Mountains, there are still a handful of one-room schoolhouses in our province. In the 1930s, there were an estimated 300.

The teachers who work in these one-room schools have a lot in common. They love their jobs. They believe in family groupings. Most of them have taught their own children. They are conversant with multi-level curriculums. They are an integral part of their community. They feel comfortable working in isolation.

Heather Johnson, in Quatsino, has eight students in her one-room K-7 school. "It's a precious teaching experience," she says, even though "there is a lot of time spent to prepare lessons." Johnson notes that her school days are calm, with very few discipline problems because of the range of ages. "The setting helps older children mature and realize that they are role models. The younger ones are academically and socially helped by having older ones to look up to." Johnson admits that the students may miss out on sports teams, and have only her skills and talents to guide them. "But," she emphasizes, "they mature in this setting, and are ready by Grade 8 to take the 20-minute water taxi followed by a 20-minute school bus ride to Port Hardy's secondary school."

Dodie Eyer, in the Gold Trail School District, teaches Grades K-12 at Big Bar School, 50 km northwest of Clinton. With 15 students this year, she has an assistant who supports her Grade 8-12 students with their secondary school correspondence courses. One-third of

Younger ones learn by being exposed to a broader curriculum.

Eyer's school is a family of five students who "ride an hour from their ranch every day, then cross the Fraser River by ferry, and take a 20-minute school bus ride" to attend classes. Eyer says she considers rural teachers to be "expert generalists." She believes that the strength of one-room schools is that students learn to have a healthy attitude toward each other because they grow up being able to relate to other ages. They are more independent in their work, and are more accepting. "It's much better than streaming kids by ages," she continues. "All these kids play together, and help and support each other. As adults, they easily get along with people of all ages. At our school, kids play and learn with each other, no matter what their age," reflects Eyer. "Rural schools naturally provide a family atmosphere."

This sentiment is echoed by Cathy Erikson at Beaverdell School in the Kettle Valley, one hour south of Kelowna. Her K-4 one-room school serves 14 students in a small community where, she says, the school is

"the only government institution left in this town." This situation makes the school an important focus of the community, which strongly supports its existence. Parents receive a transportation allowance in lieu of a school bus to drive their primary-aged children the average 45-minutes to school. "My education didn't prepare me for all of this," says Erikson, explaining that her job description includes chasing cows out of the school yard. "But," she adds enthusiastically, "this has got to be the best teaching experience in B.C." Like her colleagues, she stresses the educational value of the small setting. Older students become independent, responsible, and motivated learners. Younger ones learn by being exposed to a broader curriculum. Students with special needs become part of the family in this small setting, and children learn to accept their differences. Unlike many of her one-room colleagues, Erikson doesn't live in her school's community. She has a daily two-hour commute "in all weather conditions."

Although most of these one-roomers still exist to serve isolated communities, another one—in the Lower Mainland—was revived by choice, in September 1996.

Dorthe Davison is a primary teacher in her community at Crescent Park, minutes away from the Canada-US border south of Vancouver. After 26 years as a Surrey teacher, Davison, who believed in the educational value of creating a multi-aged family grouping program for Grades 1-3, became an activist and lobbyist to fulfill her dream. With the

support of South Surrey community members, she worked tirelessly for a year-and-a-half to reopen a one-room schoolhouse in her neighbourhood for that purpose. The 1918 building originally served as Crescent Park's one-room elementary school for 30 years. From 1948-1992, the little school became the primary annex to Crescent Park Elementary, situated several blocks away. Funding shortfalls in the early '90s forced the building to be boarded up and put up for sale. "I thought the uniqueness of the setting would really complement the multi-age program," said Davison as she and others began working on a massive campaign in March 1995 to reopen the building. Helped by the family that originally donated the land as a school site, as well as fellow teachers, parents in the neighbourhood, and some elected officials, the schoolhouse reopened in September 1996. With an enrolment of 23 students in one multi-age Grade 1-3 class, Davison is still working at her "dream job" in the heritage building that was revived as part of the community's history, and is within walking distance of her home.

One-room schoolhouse teachers Dorthe Davison, Cathy Erikson, Dodie Eyer, and Heather Johnson all support and strongly defend the outcomes of the teaching style that they practise—whether by choice or circumstance.

Verena Foxx teaches at David Livingstone Elementary School, Vancouver and is a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board.

President's message



David Chudnovsky

One of the most critical questions we face is which of two conflicting visions for public education will predominate in the 21st Century.

Our vision is one of education as a social trust. Teachers, as servants of the public interest, are entrusted with the intellectual and social development of the next generation. Schools have a key role in community building and students learn the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

The other side defines education as a product to be bought, sold, and traded on the "free" market. Schools are reduced to job preparation sites and students are seen primarily as future workers and consumers.

With global public spending on education estimated at \$2 trillion a year, corporations are eyeing public schools as a vast, untapped market. Indeed, thousands of would-be profiteers are converging on Vancouver for the World Education Market, a trade show for those seeking to profit from the "education industry."

To us, education never has been, and never will be, an industry. Nor is knowledge a commodity to be bought and sold.

Our concerns about the WEM were heightened after we learned that the provincial and federal governments have given Reed-Midem, the Paris-based organizers, a total of \$750,000 to help stage the event!

The BCTF is working with the Coalition for Public Education to highlight our vision of democratic schools responding to community needs. On May 23 and 24, the coalition is hosting a major conference entitled Public Education—Not for Sale! It will bring together dynamic educators, writers and activists from Canada, the United States and Mexico.

In addition, the BCTF is researching commercialization already taking place in B.C. schools. Our survey instrument went out to all 1,800 schools and, with almost 900 returns, the response is a dramatic indicator of how seriously teachers view this issue.

Warm thanks to the staff reps for taking the time to complete the survey. Their efforts are a reminder that all of us can play a role in defending the vision of education in the public interest, not in the corporate interest.

David

Buddy-up to a real audience for writing

"What? Your English 12 students write children's books?"

"Well, actually, I dedicate a whole unit to children's literature in Grade 12."

"Oh...so...do you get much snow in Revelstoke?"

by Andy Pfeiffer

This is the discussion with some of my colleagues when I talk about one of the more worthwhile projects I do with my senior English students. Surprise, concern, and incredulity are the reactions that I get from some teachers and parents, but from my students I get skillful writing, a deep commitment to do their best, and an emotional attachment to their writing that is seldom seen in a classroom.

It is not difficult to understand why critics would react in a less than supportive manner to my Little Buddy Project. English 12 is, after all, an academic course that not only meets the requirements to graduate, but also helps students prepare for the language activities that they will experience in colleges and universities. So what is the rationale for such activities in a senior English class?

Project outline

Groundwork for this activity begins during the first week of classes where I begin to foster an open and thoughtful forum in my classroom—an environment where creativity is praised and ideas are shared without prejudice. Two or three months later, the Little Buddy Project is introduced to the Grade 12s. They are told that they will each be paired-up with a Grade 3 student and, after three separate visits, they will create a quality, hardcover children's book that they will give to their buddy to keep. As a group, my English 12 students decide how best to get to know their little buddies during our first one hour visit to the neighbourhood elementary school: usually an interview with formal questions is their choice. After the Grade 12s first visit and get acquainted with the Grade 3s, an in-depth lesson on children's literature is given covering topics ranging

from how best to write it, to types of illustrations, to the relationships between text and pictures. Many examples of storybooks are read and students begin writing a draft of their stories. Since my expertise in the area of children's literature is limited, I sought and solicited an expert in this area to give the lesson. Nathan Senner, a colleague on staff, graciously offered his knowledge of children's literature and presented a lesson to my English 12s.

For our second visit to the elementary school, the Grade 12s are armed with a draft copy of their story to read to their little buddies. The Grade 3 students help to collaborate on the story giving their reactions and helping to develop the plot, characters, and illustrations. This second visit is crucial in the project because, from it, a definite rapport and emotional relationship begins to develop between the big and little buddies. The bond that is established is the key element of this project.

Back in class, after more revision, rewriting, and editing, students place text and illustrations in a mini-book or storyboard and work on the final stages of their book. Soon after, a lesson on how to physically construct a quality hardcover-bound book is presented by Sue Leach, another teacher on staff whose expertise and advice are critical to the success of this project.

The entire Little Buddy Project ends with the third visit when the bright-eyed Grade 3s come to Revelstoke Secondary School, tour the school with their big buddies, and share some quality buddy time together. The big and little buddies find an appropriate sharing spot, and the Grade 12s show the books to the Grade 3s, first by reading and enjoying it, and then by giving the book to them to keep permanently. Smiles abound and even an occasional hug is shared as the sticky hands clutch their new treasures—books dedicated, written, and illustrated exclusively for them.

After the last little buddies walk out of the high school, we go back upstairs to our class-

room and debrief. I pose this question: "Do you believe this is a valid activity in English 12?"

In the four years that I have organized this project the overwhelming majority of students have said, yes, it is one of the most enjoyable and worthwhile assignments they have completed.

"I really worked hard on my book. I didn't want to let my little buddy down."

"I was writing for someone else this time—not just the teacher."

"I've never spent so much of my own time completing a project before."

The Little Buddy Project is one of the few examples in my English class where students become emotionally attached to their writing, and it is not because I urge or inspire them and it is not because I assign a mark worth a certain amount. Students become attached to their writing because for the first time a real live human being is their audience. Sure, I read and evaluate their children's books as I do most written work, but this time my marks and my impressions have little bearing on the Grade 12s. The assessment that matters most to them is found in the faces of their new 8 year-old friends.

How can I, as a teacher, substantiate the positive effects of the Little Buddy Project? What theoretical-practical support is there for such an activity? In the writing process, providing an audience for student work has long been understood by researchers and teachers as important. Many teachers, though, tend to focus more on pre-writing, drafting, and editing skills. Sure, we sometimes pay homage to the importance of publishing in the writing process by trying everything from guided imagery to pen pals in class (Booth, 1987, p. 75). Although these attempts at sharing student writing are pedagogically sound, English teachers often fail to provide "the real audience other than the teacher [which] has been shown to improve greatly the quality of writing" (Moore, 1998, p. 204). Recent research continues to support the strong relationship between effective

learning and having an "orchestrated, authentic experience" (Caine, 1997, p. 120). The Little Buddy Project, though, goes beyond even Caine's suggestions since it actually creates a real and authentic audience.

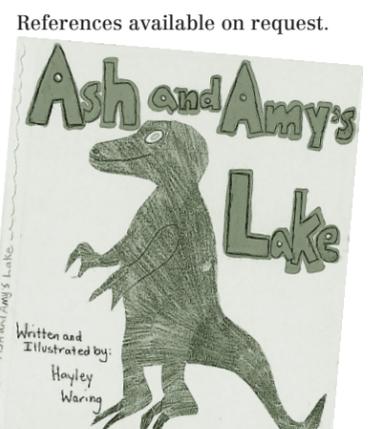
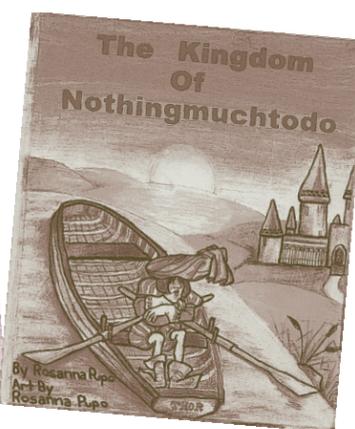
In my research, surprisingly, I found only one clear example of another teacher using the creation of children's books as a way to provide a real and authentic audience for senior high school students (Draper, 1990, p. 67). In this case, an inner-city school in New York City successfully used a similar project to help dysfunctional students with their writing. The same article also noted that another place where authentic audiences can be found for student writing is in long-term health care facilities. In the effort to find even more real audiences for students, Draper has her high school students visit seniors and then get to know them and listen to some of their stories (Draper, 1990, p. 67). After one or two visits, an emotional attachment forms between the students and the seniors. From this elder buddy project one could also imagine some excellent pieces of student writing.

Creative, thoughtful, and precise written work is certainly one of the more pedagogically important aspects of the Little Buddy Project, but there are also many intangible rewards. For example, a much greater sense of community develops as the positive relationships between the buddies extend beyond the walls of the school and reach out into the community. Also, collegially, this project is valuable since it brings together teachers from different disciplines and from both elementary and secondary schools.

As a young boy, I was often guided by my father's sage advice, which included, "Son... there's no substitute for the real thing." So, just as I know that I'll be shovelling snow off of my roof again this winter, I know that providing real audiences for student work is both a practically and a theoretically sound way of improving student writing.

Andy Pfeiffer teaches at Revelstoke Secondary School, Revelstoke.

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LOOKING BACK

70 Years

In these 30 years education itself had changed in that it was a different brand from the old. The old education was split into two divisions. There were the three Rs for vocational, and classics and mathematics for cultural purposes. Now all sorts of things, ranging from art to respect for old age, were getting into the curriculum. The reasons for this were that practical demands were changing and required a new kind of education. An efficient farmer today must know both physics and chemistry. A big change had come over our social and spiritual environment. People were becoming economically independent. Boys felt that they could go out into the world and make their own way. Girls were different. Fathers had lost their old authority. Women did not feel the sense of dependence that characterized those of an earlier generation.

The BC Teacher, June 1930.

50 Years

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has set up a Manitoba Teachers' Emergency Relief Fund and will receive donations from teachers in all parts of Canada. The money collected will be turned over to

the Manitoba Teachers' Society to aid in the relief and rehabilitation of teachers and their families in the flood stricken area.

This procedure does not in any way detract from the assistance now being rendered to flood victims generally by schools and teachers across Canada, but is intended to provide a supplementary personal contribution from teachers to their unfortunate colleagues who have lost homes, furnishings, and personal belongings. It is hoped, thus, to speed up rehabilitation of Manitoba teachers and enable them to render sooner that personal service that they can give in the job of rebuilding the community morally as well as physically.

The BC Teacher, May/June 1950.

30 Years

There has been a shortage of teachers for so long that many people have regarded a teacher shortage as a normal situation...

That situation no longer prevails. Such factors as the graduation from university of the post-World War II 'bumper crop' of babies, the effect of the pill on present and projected school enrollments, and the economic gains made by teachers have combined to improve greatly the teacher

supply-demand situation.

Last year saw the first signs of real competition for teaching positions, and that competition will increase this year. Teachers may no longer find it possible to move at will.

The BC Teacher, May/June 1970.

10 Years

In his recently published book, *The Quality School—Managing Students Without Coercion* (March 1990), Dr. William Glasser claims that when we look into who taught the Japanese managers how to manage so that all workers do high quality work, one name stands out: Dr. W. Edwards Deming...

The secret of Deming's success was a non-coercive method of management, which Glasser calls *lead management*. Lead management is based on the tenets of control theory that claims we are all internally motivated. Traditional management, which Glasser calls *boss management*, tries to motivate people from the outside. Standardized tests, master-teacher awards, honour rolls, merit pay, suspensions, detentions, top-down professional development, and educational policies are all forms of boss management, or, in Glasser terms, *futile attempts at forging quality*.

Teacher, May/June 1990.

Yours for the asking

Human resource centre for students

An electronic resume, or e-rez for short, looks just like its paper cousin, but it's formatted to be read on a computer. Your students might post an e-rez on their web sites or email it to prospective employers. The Human Resource Centre for Students (HRC-S) can tell your class about different types of e-rez's, Internet protocol, and common resume mistakes. Your local HRC-S can also help students with online job applications.

Do your students know whether they're obligated to buy their own uniforms? What if a manager told your student to pay for all broken equipment with his or her own money? What's the minimum wage?

While you've got an HRC-S summer employment officer in your classroom, ask him or her to tell your class about their rights and obligations and "shady employers." Your students' eagerness to gain work experience—any work experience—and their naivety about labour laws makes them an easy target. The

Workers' Compensation Board also says teenagers are the most likely to be injured on the job. The HRC-S can talk with your students about protecting themselves in the workplace. Summer employment officers are glad to visit your classroom, as well as show students around the centre. Call 1-800-935-5555 to find your local centre, or visit: www.bc.hrdrhc.gc.ca/hireastudent.

That body image thing

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) recently announced the launch of two publications on young women and body image: *The Body Image Thing: Young Women Speak Out* is a collection of essays written by young women across Canada, and a parallel volume of essays written by young francophone women, *Le corps en tête: Les jeunes femmes s'expriment*.

The publications contain resource sections to locate a wide range of information on body image including books, films, web sites, education tools and contact information for community services. The cost to order is

\$13.95 (postage included). We can be contacted at CRIAW, 151 Slater Street, Ste. 408, Ottawa, ON K1P 5H3. mcote@criaw-icref.ca, fax (613) 563-0682, phone: (613) 563-0682, www.criaw-icref.ca

B.C. Encyclopedia

The first edition of the B.C. Encyclopedia will be released by Harbour publishing on B.C. Day—August 1, 2000. It will come out in three versions—print, CD-ROM, and web site.

The publishers are looking for teachers to provide feedback on the materials and how they could be useful in classrooms. They are interested in publishing a teacher's guide that will relate the encyclopedia materials to the B.C. IRPs.

An email list has been created to provide information and to be a forum for sharing ideas about integrating B.C. materials into the curriculum. If you are interested in joining the email list, send a message to craig_riggs@telus.net with a message saying "subscribe education."

Information about the new encyclopedia is available on the web at: www.KnowBC.com

Top 10 BCTF lesson aids

1 What Would You Do? A Kid's Guide to Tricky and Sticky Situations. Linda Swartz, 184p. ©1990. This book is written to help kids and their parents discuss and decide in advance how they will handle peer pressure, strangers, fears and feelings, cuts, bites and stings, fires and leaks, and natural disasters. Ages 9–16. LA 2319—\$14.95

2 What Do You Think? A Kid's Guide to Dealing with Daily Dilemmas. Linda Swartz, 184p. ©1993. This book is written to help kids and their parents to look at issues from more than one perspective and to clarify their thinking about conflict resolution, values, morals, getting along with others and discovering themselves. The book asks kids "What do you think?" about ordinary things like sharing space, sparing feelings, talking on the phone and respecting privacy and more difficult issues like abusing drugs, cheating on a test, and following the crowd. Ages 9–16. LA 2320—\$14.95

3 Spirit Quest. Diane Silvey & Joe Silvey, 52p. ©1997. This story, told in the tradition of Coast Salish legend, recounts the adventures of teenaged twins Kaya and Tala as they journey into the B.C. wilderness confronting fish and fowl, feast and phantom, on their mission to retrieve a sacred box that houses the sacred values of their villagers from the "evil ones" who have stolen it. Imaginative black and white illustrations, explanatory maps and comprehensive field notes. Ages 7–10. LA 3111—\$11.95

Spirit Quest—Teacher's Guide. Includes notes for the teacher on classroom uses, student worksheets and a reading log. Ages 7–10. LA 3111A—\$8.95

4 Whale Girl. Written and illustrated by First Nations People (Salish) Diane Silvey and Joe Silvey, 25p. ©1996. This story is about Peta, a girl whose self-sacrifice and courage saves his village from the double-headed sea serpents who plan to attack the village and devour all the people. Peta is assisted by her friends the killer whales, beaver, and raven to foil their plan. Grades 2–4. LA 3105 — \$10

5 British Columbia—Its Land, Mineral and Water Resources. Sandy Frances Duncan, 104p. ©1996. Addresses the learning outcomes for Grade 5 Life Science and Earth Science, as outlined in the Science K–7 IRP package 1995. Each unit covers the uses, benefits and economic impact of B.C.'s resources—from traditional First Nations to present day, the evolution of the technology used in resource development, environmental issues, sustainability and careers. Grade 5. LA 9513A—\$18.95

British Columbia—Its Land, Mineral and Water Resources. Teachers guide. Cathy Ready, Diana Mumford, and Ron Mumford, 160p. ©1996. Outlines info on learning outcomes, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, curriculum integration and how to use the student text and teacher's guide. Includes activities for the three units in the student text. Four appendixes include assessment tools, answer key, related resources and web sites and blackline masters. Teacher: LA9513B—\$49.95

6 Telling Tales on the Rim. Naomi Wakan, 143p. ©1995. Folk tales reflecting the cultures of many different peoples living on the Pacific-Rim. Intermediate and up. LA 2551—\$22.95

Telling Tales on the Rim Teacher's Guide. Naomi Wakan, 37p. ©1995. Will help the teacher expand on the stories and use them across the curriculum. Writing, art exercises, library research, discussion points and even a few recipes. LA 2551A—\$10.95

7 Songs for Schools. Mike Blake, 38p. and 30-min. audio cassette, 1992. Songbook for guitar or piano and a 30-min. "Save Our World" cassette audio tape of original songs on environmental awareness. Includes songs about recycling, friendship, endangered species, world peace, skin cancer awareness, water conservation, road safety, environment and self esteem. All grades. LA EE 214—\$8.80

8 Legacy: Indian Treaty Relationships. Richard T. Price, 168p. ©1991. This book provides an opportunity for younger students in Canadian high schools to gain some insight and to better understand the Indian perspective of the treaties with the Crown. Two distinct, yet inter-related sections, dealing with the past and the present. Discussion questions on the content of each unit and analysis questions for research are included. Secondary. LA 3313—\$15

9 Creative Comparative Civilizations. Fred Schoenrock and Naomi Wakan, 25p. ©1997. Invites students to set out on a great adventure, an exploration of humanity's potential as seen through the accomplishments of past civilizations, the present challenge facing humankind's very survival, and the incredible vision of what it means to live responsibly as a member of an emerging global community. Reproducible for classroom use. Grade 12. LA 2003—\$13.95

10 Chemistry: A Student's Guide to Science 9. Gordon Gore, 88p. ©1992, rev. 1995. Contains 20 lessons; each includes an experiment for students to do or a demo or project in which the whole class can participate. Emphasis on "hands-on" chemistry and practical implications of the student's growing knowledge of chemistry. Text material is brief and stresses applications that might be of interest to "aware" young learners. Grade 9. LA 4037—\$11

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?

Accreditation

School accreditation continues to be a major concern for BCTF members. Our accreditation home page, www.bctf.bc.ca/education/accreditation provides the latest information about the issues and the Federation's campaign to influence the ministry to significantly alter its proposed accreditation process.

Mailing list for summer school issues

Would you like to join BCTF's discussion of issues surrounding school-district sponsored summer school programs and courses for secondary students? If you are a secondary school teacher with an interest in summer school issues, please e-mail your request to join summerschool@bctf.bc.ca to wburgess@bctf.bc.ca

Discussion on this list will be led by BCTF's Wayne Rowley, assistant director, Professional

Development Division, and will focus on:

- What are the positive features associated with teaching and learning in summer school programs and courses?
- What are the concerns/issues associated with teaching and learning in summer school programs and courses?

— Diana Broome



by Tammy Hartmann

"I beg the all powerful children to unite with me for the building of peace in (humanity) and in the world." These words which appear on Maria Montessori's epitaph have been taken to heart at the elementary school in which I teach in Surrey Tynehead Montessori Elementary School. As a public Montessori school, the students and staff embrace the beliefs and philosophy of peace advocates such as Ghandi and Maria Montessori in delivering the curriculum to students. Maria Montessori believed that education must teach children to love each other and the world, and ultimately make the world a better place. I have always believed in the power of literature, especially historical fiction, but had no idea that my students would become so passionate about an issue that they would pledge to the community a campaign to fold 300,000 Origami peace cranes—one for each person that lives in Surrey.

I teach in a multi-age classroom, Grades 4 to 6, and it was during a unit on "War and Peace" that the seed was planted. Our peace crane project began as a simple novel study of "Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes." As students were immersed in research and a novel study that focussed on social issues surrounding the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima during WWII, they learned and talked about the similarities and differences in the world that they and Sadako experienced. All students learned the art of Origami and enjoyed teaching others in the school. In honour of Remembrance Day my class, along with another in the school, pledged to fold 1,000 Peace Cranes.

Fifty students working together side by side, helping each other with the difficult parts, was a sight to behold. As we watched our students work to reach their goal, my colleague, Sandy Hall, and I realized that this novel had touched the lives of many of our students. There was no competition that ensued to see who could fold the most or who had the "best" folded crane; the goal was to fold cranes for peace, and this they did. The cranes were brought into the gym for our Remembrance Day ceremony. As we listened to the

"Last Post" being played on the bugle, students eyes were on the cranes, proud of their efforts and comforted by the fact that they lived in a world of peace, unlike Sadako. During the assembly, my students read the two voice poems that they had written which examined the issues of war from both sides. There were many tears that day as we listened to their words.

On the Internet I learned about a worldwide movement that had already gained the support of 125 countries and over 800 organizations. The goal of this movement was to

enter the new millennium in peace. I brought this information into the classroom and my students jumped on the idea. They began writing letters that were delivered to the mayor's office.

On April 25, the students made a presentation to city council and as a result, January 1, 2000 was declared a day of peace in Surrey, and students at Tynehead would work toward their goal of folding 300,000 cranes. When asked by the local media, what they were going to do with the cranes, a Grade 4 student replied, "We want to

have a peace monument somewhere in Surrey so that people will see the cranes and remember how important peace is. We want people to know that kids can make a difference." The project kept growing in scope as I worried how this was all going to come together.

Our principal's mother, Mary Simmers, at age 80, heard about the project and wanted to learn how to fold cranes. She has become an icon around our school. She has folded more than 3,000 herself. Whenever she comes to a peace assembly, or is invited to a crane-folding

workshop, she is greeted warmly and enthusiastically by students who run to her, calling her "Peace Grandma" as they line up for their hugs.

With the year 2000 declared by the United Nations as "International Year of Peace," the staff have agreed on "peace" as our school-wide theme for the year.

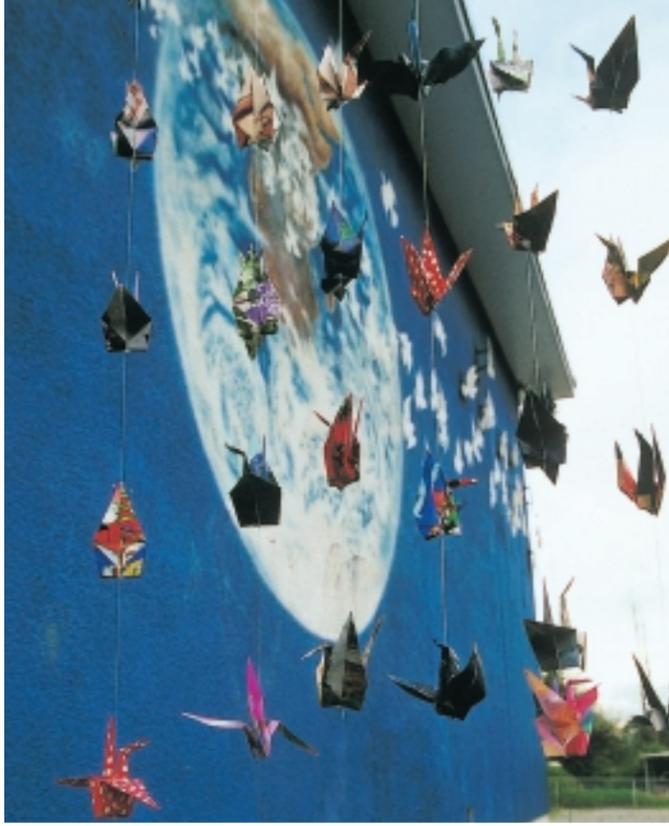
Some of the events embracing the theme of peace were:

- a peace-crane folding day on "Hear the Children Day" September 21.
- a "Peace Club" was formed and students folded cranes on their lunch breaks.
- a "Peace Garden Club" was formed and students planted flowers and shrubs.
- students wrote and performed plays about peace.
- Sandy Hall, Emilie Colbourne, and I held an in-service in our district, sharing the unit on War and Peace.
- a parent organized a crane-folding party.
- a grandparents' tea was planned and students taught them how to fold cranes.
- in December the students displayed their project in the malls.
- many other schools folded cranes throughout the year.
- businesses and parents donated and cut paper.

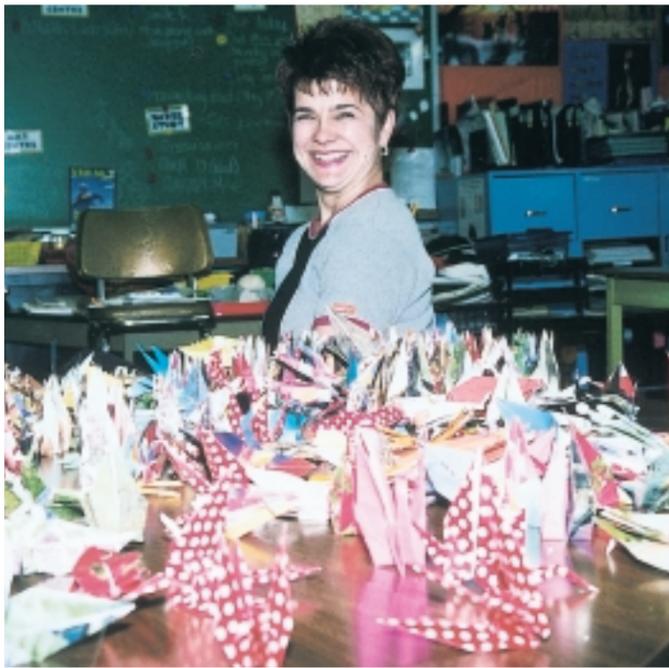
Students continued to count and track the progress being made. Then, a local sign company owner, Tony Sziskos, heard about our project and wanted to get involved. I shared with him the vision of my students. He immediately got to work on a design and it will be housed in the Fleetwood Library.

Students are continuing to take their message out into the community and to date, with the help of many, we have over 67,000 peace cranes. We are a long way from reaching our goal, but I am very proud of my students and am delighted by the support they have received from so many. As an educator, I hope to help create citizens who will look after each other and their world. By helping them get involved in causes that promote peace, love, hope, and understanding, we are educating them far beyond the curriculum. I truly believe Ghandi's words "...if we are to reach peace in the world, we shall have to begin with children."

Tammy Hartmann teaches at Tynehead Montessori Elementary School, Surrey.



Peace cranes



PETER OWENS PHOTOS



NANCY KNICKERBOCKER PHOTOS

Left: Jillian Skeet of End the Arms Race and her son, Adrian, were among more than 1,000 people who turned out to mark May Day by participating in the Walk for Democracy and Against Corporate Rule. Right: The BCTF worked with other public-sector unions on an action site dedicated to protecting public services. Activists stage a mock auction, selling off school houses, hospitals, roads, forests, and even fresh air.

You get what you pay for!

Teacher shortage sets stage for salary increase

by Garry Litke

North America is finally waking up to the fact that we can no longer afford to undervalue the work of teachers. Although many people go into education for altruistic reasons, leaving teaching to the kind-hearted and expecting them to accept low salaries is the wrong strategy in the face of a teacher shortage. Not only do educators suffer but the entire system suffers as well because the direct consequence of low salaries is an under supply of skilled individuals. As the teacher shortage becomes more serious, the result will be a decline in the quality of instruction as those without teacher qualifications are placed in the classroom. This can only negatively affect students and society as a whole.

Although it is anticipated that the shortage will become most acute between 2005 and 2010, some shortages are being felt already, most seriously in rural areas and in specialist subjects.

The problem is caused by several converging factors. Up to 44% of new teachers leave the profession within five years, often citing the lack of financial reward for their effort as a factor. In an economy in which salaries are climbing for many other educated workers, teach-

ing is not seen as economically viable.

Of equal concern is the inadequate number of teachers graduating from faculties of education. When many students look at the average salaries of a number of professions, they do not choose education as a career.

Add to this the number of teachers eligible for retirement in the next 10 years, creating vacancies that cannot be filled, and the result is a teacher shortage, a shortage that could be ameliorated by offering salaries that recruit and retain teachers.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation says a minimum 15% increase in the starting wage for teachers is needed to stop the flow of education graduates out of their province.

The shortage cannot be addressed by recruiting from other provinces and countries as has been done in the past. Those jurisdictions are facing the same demographics as we are, and some of them are already ahead of us in the competition for qualified teachers, adding to our problem as they lure teachers out of B.C.

In Massachusetts, where 50% of educators will be eligible to retire over the next 10 years, recruiters are offering a \$20,000 (US) signing bonus and an extensive training program in an attempt to attract new teachers. Across the U.S., it is estimated that 2.2 million new teachers will be required during the next decade.

The gravity of this situation in and of itself will not be enough to secure salary increases however. Experience from the United States is demonstrating that some states address the problem while others do not. Good arguments alone rarely carry the day. Change is effected by public and political support as well as strong union leadership and solidarity of membership.

Jared Bernstein, a labour economist with the Economic Policy Institute in Washington maintains that a strong union is vital in achieving a salary increase:

"When you're trying to define the worth of what you're doing in a climate where the market economy is idealized, you need articulate spokespersons." Given a clear and logical message, the public is starting to listen.

A poll conducted by the National Education Association in the U.S. found the public considers that increasing salaries is an important approach to improving schools. This belief is reflected in Vice President Al Gore's promise to spend federal money on raising teachers' salaries. For teachers in high poverty areas, the increase could be as high as \$10,000.

Teachers' unions are working hard to capitalize on public sentiments and political promises. In Texas, the union organized a campaign to educate, rather than lobby, state legislators, which resulted in a \$3,000 raise for teachers. In

Average Employment Income of Full-time Full-year Workers, Selected Occupations, B.C., 1995 Census

Occupation	Average (\$)	Relative to Teachers (%)
Specialist physicians	133,385	280
General practitioners & family physicians	93,653	196
Dentists	86,406	181
Lawyers	84,576	177
Elem.-sec. principals & administrators	69,807	146
University professors	69,280	145
Police officers (except commissioned)	55,202	116
Firefighters	53,348	112
Pharmacists	52,511	110
Computer systems analysts	49,905	105
Physiotherapists	49,769	104
Head nurses and supervisors	48,206	101
College and other vocational instructors	47,758	100
TEACHERS	47,714	100
Computer programmers	45,481	95
Registered nurses	42,840	90
ALL OCCUPATIONS	39,414	83
Elem.-sec. school teacher assistants	25,231	53
Early childhood educators and assistants	17,925	38

— Anne C. Schaefer, BCTF Research, March 2000

Omaha, Nebraska, the teachers' union organized 1,200 teachers, parents, students, representatives from other unions, and even politicians to attend a school board meeting to "raise the awareness" of trustees. The overwhelming public and private support helped secure a one-year contract that included a 5.6% raise. In Pawling, NY, a five-year contract will increase salaries by an average of 40%.

Teachers' unions in Canada have more work to do in raising the awareness of teacher supply and demand. Teachers in the Northwest Territories recently ratified a two-year contract that provides a salary increase of

6.25% plus allowances, but in Nova Scotia teachers reluctantly accepted only 3.9% over 26 months. PEI teachers are currently campaigning for a reinstatement of a 7.5% rollback legislated in 1994. In B.C. teachers are saying "No more zeroes!"

It will take good arguments, public support, political pressure, articulate spokespersons, and union solidarity to secure the changes we need in the next round of negotiation. How will you contribute to the campaign?

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



by Peter Thomson

The early '70s were heady times in Surrey education. The School Board had, by October 1973, voluntarily agreed to observe the BCTF recommended class-size limits. Staff committees were springing up and innovative practices were encouraged. There was a new, and we hoped still education-friendly, NDP government that many of us had helped to elect. Optimism reigned!

Of course, there was reaction brewing. In November 1973 Surrey elected a more conservative board replacing the left-leaning "For All Surrey Team." Our salary arbitration award produced a 10.2% general increase and scale shortening in category six. It was not out of line with other districts but when combined with growing enrolment and the agreed-to class-size limits, Surrey's property tax bill looked ready for a hefty increase. Not a happy prospect for a new Tory trustee!

The provincial government soon began to feel financial and political heat, so Minister of Education Eileen Dailly called on all trustees to achieve some economies. At the same time the premier mentioned the problem of rising administrative costs. Those pleas became the Surrey board's cue. In early February 1974 it announced that it would not submit a budget based on student needs, but rather one driven by taxpayer wants. In order to keep the mil rate down, Surrey was to have larger classes, and all its vice-principal positions were to be eliminated!

All our buttons were pushed. On February 13, the STA leader-

Surrey teachers' strike 1974



ship met with the trustees in Liaison Committee and, expressing dismay, demanded an explanation and the restoration of a budget based on needs. The board refused and blamed the province. The STA leadership then caucused in an extraordinary executive meeting and decided to call an emergency general meeting for the following day to vote on its recommendation to strike on February 15. We returned to the liaison meeting and Lloyd Edwards, our president, announced our decision and invited trustees to come with us to Victoria. The board declined.

The following 48 hours were a frantic blur of activity for Surrey teachers. First the general meeting call had to be phoned out to teachers and schools, a meeting place had to be booked, and buses to meet us on the Island arranged on short notice.

The Valentine's Day General Meeting at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School was attended by 1,000 of the 1,400 STA members. BCTF President Jim MacFarlan witnessed and was amazed by the turnout and the

outcome. The meeting first heard the executive's liaison report. Then President Edwards moved the strike motion, and Gerry Powlik, a new secondary vice-principal, seconded. That sealed it. It was clear the administrators were on side. The motion carried with fewer than five dissenting votes.

Feverish activity continued as all in attendance left quickly to phone colleagues who had missed the meeting and to make arrangements for the trek. Doris Hahn, learning conditions chairperson, remembers painting protest signs at the STA office late into that evening. By 09:00 Friday, Surrey teachers boarded ferries for Victoria, so many that only the earliest made the first ferry because of overcrowding!

In Victoria we massed on the legislature lawn and then were invited to meet in an auditorium of the museum next door. Some of us crowded into that small hall to hear a condescending message from government delivered by Surrey's MLA and Provincial Secretary Ernie Hall. What followed was to become the best remembered scene of the day.

Wes Janzen, a past BCTF president and Surrey principal, leaped up onto the stage and confronted Ernie, reminding him loudly that many teachers had helped to put him into office. Hall told him to cool it. "Don't tell me to cool it," shouted Janzen, whipping out his NDP card. "Here's my card and I'll tear it up if that's what you're going to do!" Perhaps it was then the government began to realise the serious nature of our case. There were some promises to review the budget and the meeting broke up.

As the rally was dispersing, Jim MacFarlan and Ralph Sundby, who had accompanied us, were passing outside Eileen Dailly's office when she signalled them to come in and asked MacFarlan to speak with Premier Dave Barrett. Barrett asked MacFarlan what it would take to get his people off the lawn. The response was, "We want a reduction in class sizes of 2% for each of three years." Barrett balked, so MacFarlan took from his pocket the 1972 NDP election brochure that promised teachers staged class-

size reductions. Barrett countered with 1% per year and MacFarlan raised that to 1.5% and so a deal was struck. A few days later Education Minister Dailly made that class-size reduction commitment in the legislature.

Three to four thousand teaching jobs province-wide, a 20% increase, came from that day even though the government later partially welched on the deal. In Surrey the board stubbornly refused to re-submit a needs budget, so Surrey's share of the deal was diminished—but the vice principals' jobs were saved. By any measure that strike was a resounding success. It was one of the most significant events in the modern history of the BCTF; a watershed. That job action showed teachers' firm dedication to quality public education.

Peter Thomson is a retired Surrey teacher.

The legacy

In thanking Peter Thomson for pulling together this important story, I want to emphasize the significant effect that the events in this particular story had on B.C. education. In 1972-73 the pupil/teacher ratio in B.C. was 22.68. By 1981-82 the PTR had actually dropped to 16.70; this reduction was initiated by the NDP government agreement to reduce the PTR and class sizes, and was followed through by the Bill Bennett Social Credit government. The legacy of the Surrey teachers' action was that thousands of new teachers were hired into the system and a much reduced PTR resulted.

— Ken Novakowski

Why taking the FSA path is the wrong path

by Sandra Davie

The ministry's Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) initiative to test every Grade 4, 7, and 10 student in the province on a yearly basis will ultimately be detrimental to the education of children. What is tested will be interpreted as what is important. Well-meaning people and some not-so-well-meaning, according to some arbitrary and facile standards, will suggest that there is something wrong with schools and children who do not score well or well enough. They will also suggest that educators will need to "fix" the problems in the "weaker" schools and unnecessary time and energy will be diverted from teaching as it should be done. The quality of education in schools will deteriorate and the loss of educational options for students will become an increasing reality. The Assessment Branch of the ministry may think it has found the path to educational nirvana, but teachers know that we are heading down the wrong path.

One concern is the time taken to prepare students to write the government exams at the expense of other more meaningful and valuable educational experiences.

I base my statements on observations made over the past five years in the Prince George School District. Four years ago, our board decided that Prince George students were not performing adequately on the Grade 12 provincial exams. A District Academic Review Committee (DARC) composed of representatives from senior administration, a trustee, administrators, teachers, and parents was created to improve not only exam results but also the number of students who received As and Bs. A vice-principal was eventually appointed for a two-year period to oversee the committee and

help schools set and achieve academic goals. On February 8, 2000 a report was made to the school board indicating that in the past three years DARC had been successful in that "8 out of 10 targets have been reached, and in seven of these subjects the targets were exceeded." Marks appear to be improving and the number of As and Bs seems to be increasing. These improvements, however, have not been without cost. One concern is the time taken to prepare students to write the government exams at the expense of other more meaningful and valuable educational experiences. Creating situations that help students learn generally involves active participation; yet, the necessity of covering everything that could be tested means it is often done in a superficial way that will satisfy the expectations of the exam. Pursuing anything in real depth is no longer an option. In Literature 12, in order to cover the course, I would find myself telling my students what was likely to be on the exam. If "spoonfeeding" is what education is about, I was doing it! Somehow, though, I thought we had moved into a greater understanding of what con-

stitutes learning and the process to get there. Apparently not. The 1993 B.C. Communication Skills Assessment (PLAP) found that Grade 10 students spent 16% of their school week, on average, taking tests and quizzes. Why do we need to do all this assessment and preparation for external exams when research shows that the best predictor of student

...the downside of the extension of time for math is that students are losing out on other opportunities to expand their awareness of the world.

success is the teacher's internal evaluation? Certainly, taking so much time to prepare students for external exams and assessing their performance to the nth degree, create curriculum crunches where we do not have enough time to properly teach. Children, teachers, and the community are the losers here.

A second concern is that the format of the tests directs instruction. Our board wants grade level final exams to match the format of the Grade 12 exams. Yet, even though I have been told it is possible to test higher level thinking skills through multiple-choice questions, I have not seen much evidence of that assertion. Two-hour exams written by all students in the province must be cost efficient. Therefore, many of them rely on multiple choice questions as a significant portion of the test. Quick recall of isolated pieces of information becomes the driving force of teaching. Again, I thought we had moved past that form of pedagogy.

A third concern I have has to do with what is happening in Prince George with math. To improve government exam scores, many schools decided to offer math over a semester and

I also abhor the message that is sent to those students who are discouraged from taking a challenging course so that the class average remains high.

a half. Math scores have improved and while they have not yet matched the provincial average, they are certainly closer. Unfortunately, the downside of the extension of time for math is that students are losing out on other opportunities to expand their awareness of the world. Our elective teachers are watching the demise of their programs because students cannot participate in both. Placing such importance on high exam scores has narrowed the educational experience available to students in my district.

Our board, I believe, has the best of intentions and is truly concerned about the academic success of Prince George students. They also willingly acknowledge that there are many different ways of being successful in school. Yet, because of the spotlight placed on government exam scores in our district, our teachers must provide a less enriching educational experience than is within their capabilities. I also abhor the message that is sent to those students who are discouraged from taking a challenging course so that the class average remains high.

The Foundation Skills Assessment initiative will now bring all of these horrors into the Grade 4, 7, and 10 classroom. And while the Grade 12 exams, at least, test all aspects of the curriculum, the FSA

...the FSA advertises itself as being a "snapshot" of the curriculum. It is a snapshot that is easy to test—unless you are nine years old and have never written a multiple choice test.

advertises itself as being a "snapshot" of the curriculum. It is a snapshot that is easy to test—unless you are nine years old and have never written a multiple choice test. It is what will become important and it is what teachers in all grades will have to emphasize. Do we want this for our children? What are our responsibilities as professionals? These are important questions that we will have to answer in the coming months. While FSA may not be "the slippery slope," it is definitely the wrong path.

Sandra Davie is president of the Prince George District Teachers' Association.

Problems with releasing individual FSA results

by Rob Taylor

I was one of the people in my district (Cariboo-Chilcotin) who realized the government was planning to release individual FSA results, and took a motion to my executive, and then to my PD zone meeting, and then to PDAC opposing their plans.

I am not in the least opposed to program assessment. I believe PLAP was a relatively valuable tool for looking at program delivery on a province-wide basis, and believe that we should be evaluating what we do regularly, so that we can track our effectiveness and plan ways to improve the delivery of service.

However, I cannot believe that the ministry would even consider releasing results on an individual or even school-by-school basis. Apart from the fact that we all know that such use of standardized test results is completely invalid and inappropriate, we have to examine the impact in a district such as mine.

We have 36 schools (31 schools when the district closes 5), many of which have only one teacher at a given grade level. In fact, that person may be the only Grade 4, 7, or 10 teacher in the whole community; in some cases, the teacher could be both the Grade 4 and 7 teacher in one of our smaller schools.

What these individual results will do is target those teachers in small communities as being "poor" because individual student results or school results are lower than the provincial results, without taking into account the socio-economic strength of the community, the access to the outside world (one of our communities doesn't have electricity on a full-time basis) access to books (no library), and a host of other issues. That doesn't even begin to look at the validity of a one-time test in relation to a student's development over several years, or differences in students' developmental rates.

I would also hate to be the teacher who bears the brunt of a parent's wrath when I deliver the results six months after the test that indicate that their child is either significantly below average and getting a relatively good report card (maybe they didn't put a lot of effort into a test that they know is not being scored for report cards) or is significantly above average and getting less than average marks on their report cards. (Maybe they do tests well and don't work at all in class, or they just had a good day on the test day.)

As I stated at the outset, I don't object to program evaluation; I do object to atrocious educational and pedagogical practices, and that is what these are. The Ministry of Education should be ashamed of itself for promulgating what amounts to educational malpractice.

Rob Taylor teaches at Nesika Elementary School, Williams Lake and is PD chairperson, Cariboo-Chilcotin Teachers' Association.



Psssst... want to get a perfect score?

A modest proposal for schools wanting to boost their ranking on the Fraser Institute's Report Card

by Karen Hawkins

As every student knows, if you want to do well on a test, you can consider how the teacher has written and graded tests in the past. With that in mind, here is a primer for educators looking to raise their Fraser Institute ranking.

1. *Focus on Grade 12.* In this ranking system, nothing that happens in the other grades matters.

2. *Only allow the very best students into Grade 12.* The idea here is to drive up the average provincial exam marks. But don't turn away students too aggressively, because your school must enroll at least 15 Grade 12 students to qualify for ranking.

3. *Ensure students take all of their Grade 12 provincially examinable subjects in Grade 12, so that you drive up the average number of Grade 12 provincially examinable subjects taken by Grade 12 students.* (Why waste time by taking them in Grade 11, when they don't count toward the ranking?) Ideally, you want students to take 3.5 or more of these subjects in Grades 12. If you really want to rack up the points, limit your Grade 12 students options to the 19 provincially examinable subjects! And remember, don't allow students to take Grade 12 courses by correspondence, or by any other means that will not garner Grade 12 course credits for your school, in their Grade 12 year.

4. *Don't let anyone write an exam until they are absolutely ready.* The ranking punishes you

for allowing poor students to write exams because their scores drive the average down and the failure rate up. And don't think you can beat the system by allowing students to ultimately pass or even excel on the test: that initial mark or failure is still built into your school's ranking.

5. *Make sure that your teachers concentrate exclusively on the content and format of the exam:* if it can't be examined or doesn't teach kids how to take an exam, it's a frill. The ranking considers the difference between the student's exam mark and school mark; if there is a big difference, your ranking suffers. So, all in-class assessments should also follow their rule of sticking to the test material and format. It doesn't matter if your students' in-class scores are higher or lower than their exam scores: what matters is the difference between them, and there is little room for error on this section of the ranking. (Note: how much a student learns is of no real relevance to the ranking. As well, although learning persistence, problem solving, working in a team, doing extra work at home, learning from mistakes or generating novel ways of presenting information may be cute, and even, ultimately helpful in life and employment, it will not help your ranking.)

6. *Do not allow students who are likely to need extra time to complete their graduation requirements to register in Grade 12.* The



rationale here is that the ranking gives high points to schools that graduate, by June 30, all students who were registered in Grade 12 on September 30. Any students who, for whatever reason, do not graduate by June 30 will just pull down your school's score. Either they take things seriously and graduate, or they just stay out, for the good of the school ranking.

7. *Pick your parents with care.* The difference between a perfect score of 10 and a dismal one of two can be predicted by the amount of education mothers (or single-parent fathers) have. Poorly educated parents will just drag down your school's score.

Karen Hawkins is the B.C. School Trustees Association's communications officer.

Source: *Educator Leader*, February 24, 2000.

Health and Safety

BCTF creates health and safety committee and trainers

by Lynne Sinclair

The BCTF Executive Committee has created a new provincial health and safety advisory committee and a health and safety trainers group. The BCTF AGM voted to expand and develop the health and safety program and these two initiatives will enhance member involvement in health and safety by providing a forum for discussion and advice and by the provision of skilled, trained teachers who can facilitate health and safety training in locals.

The postings are out for both the committee and the trainers. Consider applying and offering your expertise and advice in the health and safety area. The new legislation requires eight hours of training annually of all health and safety committee members and the Federation will be in a position by September to offer this training as part of our commitment to teachers training teachers. Our courses will be WCB-approved with the added advantage that they will be relevant to teachers, reflecting schools as workplaces, and the work of teachers.

We have recently won more cases of voice dysfunction, a major occupational hazard of teachers. Thanks to our advocacy, the WCB is now recognizing this hazard and is accepting claims. In addition, the BCTF is working with the Provincial Voice Care Program to develop and conduct a survey of our members in order to identify the risk factors associated with voice dysfunction. We have requested funding from WCB to support the survey and have received an initial favourable response. The health and safety program has already brought in money from both the ministry and WCB to support violence prevention initiatives and has helped educate WCB about teacher health and safety issues. Successful claims and appeals of claims have also resulted in savings to the Salary Indemnity Plan, which is paid for by teachers. The benefits of the program are far-ranging. Of course, the most important benefit is the increased health and safety of teachers that results from our education and prevention efforts. The voice dysfunction survey will help focus our prevention efforts so that teachers' vocal cords are not injured on the job. Teachers are all at risk from this injury,

but some who appear to have an increased risk are language teachers, primary teachers, physical education teachers, music teachers, and drama teachers. One of our key health and safety issues, indoor air quality, is also linked to an increased risk for voice dysfunction.

The BCTF was asked by the CTF to attend a meeting of Health Canada in Ottawa. The meeting was held to discuss indoor air quality in schools and Health Canada's possible contribution and involvement in assisting the education stakeholders in this regard. The BCTF was asked to participate because of the extensive work the Federation has done on indoor air quality. Our presentation to the committee was well received and again may result in additional resources in the area of indoor air quality. We asked Health Canada to lend its considerable expertise and knowledge to our cause. The committee is developing an indoor air quality guide for schools that is adapted from the Environmental Protection Agency's "Tools for Schools" kit in the United States. There is increasing medical research that links serious health effects to mould. It is now estimated, according to David Miller of Carleton University, an internationally recognized expert on mould, that mould and moisture can powerfully affect respiratory health, equal to the impact of breathing second-hand smoke.

In addition to our concerns about mould, we urged Health Canada to adopt ventilation standards that are independent of the privately-established ones adopted by WCB. We believe that the Canadian government should be establishing indoor air quality standards for our public schools that reflects our health concerns, not only of teachers and support staff, but of students. Currently, a private organization of engineers largely based in the United States, called ASHRAE, establishes ventilation rates for schools and they have recently voted to reduce those rates due to a strong lobby from southern, humid states such as Florida. We are hopeful that Health Canada will work with us to establish government standards reflective of our country's climate and level of health protection.

Lynne Sinclair is the BCTF's health and safety officer.

GSA's

Supporters of Gay/Straight Alliances say these clubs would provide a place of safety and support for youth whose educational success and personal well-being is damaged on a daily basis by homophobia in the hallways and classrooms of B.C. schools.

One of the best reasons for having a gay/straight alliance, she said, is that students will "be able to talk openly..."

Samantha Pothier, a 1999 graduate of John Oliver Secondary in Vancouver, believes a GSA in her school would have made a huge difference for her. She was taunted "20 times a day" throughout her high school years, but by the end of Grade 12 she decided she wasn't living a lie any longer, and she came out to her four closest gal pals. Two dropped her right away, but the other two remain fast friends.

One special teacher helped her through. "She really made

a difference for me," Pothier recalled. "When I came out she was so okay with it. That helped me a lot. I was feeling suicidal... but having her accept me, having that support, really helped me become who I am. That's what enabled me to be here today, in the front row, standing up to this bigotry."

Pothier feels strongly that our schools are not doing a good enough job of preventing homophobic bullying. One of the best reasons for having a gay/straight alliance, she said, is that students will "be able to talk openly, and be able to challenge teachers who don't do anything to counter 'faggot' name-calling." Many times she has wished a teacher would react to such slurs with a quick intervention. "It'd be great if teachers would start coming down on these kids. They should just say, 'That's simply not acceptable,' and give them something like a week of garbage duty."

Pothier believes action has to come not only from teachers, but from principals, vice-principals, and support workers too. "I think professional development days should address these issues for everyone in schools."

And, she says, parents have to examine their hearts and

open their minds. "You have some parents who kick their kids out of the house when they find out they're gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. These people keep thinking they can change us. Why would anybody choose homosexuality against their will? So people like these can hate you? So you can lose friends? So your parents can kick you out?"

Many times she has wished a teacher would react to such slurs with a quick intervention. ... They should just say, 'That's simply not acceptable,' ...

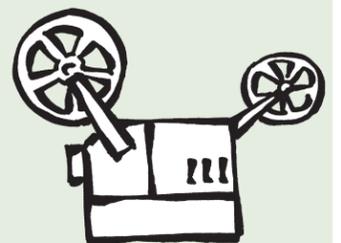
Pothier says the year since she finished high school and came out as a proud young lesbian woman has been a time of tremendous intellectual growth and personal liberation. "I'm tired of living in fear," she said. "Nothing's holding me back now."

She has plans to enrol in Langara College in the fall.

— Nancy Knickerbocker

Projectionists settle

Members of the projectionists' union have settled their dispute with Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon. The lockout is over and there are no more picket lines at the theatres. The projectionists were successful in increasing the amount the theatre chains were prepared



to pay for buying out projectionists but they were not able to fend off massive pay cuts. Famous Players has just announced a price increase.

Compulsory gullibility and the social studies classroom

by Pat Clarke

Recent items in *The Vancouver Sun* regarding the teaching of Canadian history are a welcome contribution to an important public discussion of how and why we teach social studies. The provincial Social Studies Task Force has suggested that any public consideration of the state of social studies education would be a welcome change from the neglect, disinterest, and marginalization social studies and subsequently history have experienced over the last 20 years in B.C.

We can only hope that the attention *The Sun* has focussed on the issue is a reflection of a public realization that we have gone too far in promoting certain aspects of education (applications of technology) at the expense of others (humanities, art). Or, to put it another way, our dedication to turning out good little technicians has a down side. The educational "back seat" is not a good place for matters like citizenship and social responsibility. Social studies, of which history is a central element, are our primary means of attending to these crucial concerns in the education of children and youth.

The Social Studies Task Force emphasized, "Students are leaving the British Columbia school system with only marginal abilities in such important contemporary citizenship skills as detecting bias, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and developing a reasoned argument. The social consequences of a potentially gullible citizenry should be apparent."

On paper, B.C. has a comprehensive social studies program that covers the fundamentals of what most would consider important in history, geography, and to some extent social science. Students, by the end of their 13-year stay in the provinces' schools, have theoretically had many opportunities to learn about Canada and the world. But social studies educators are increasingly concerned that social education in B.C. is mostly just good intentions. When push comes to shove, social awareness, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship, mostly get shoved.

So what is the problem? Why has this critical element of what has long been regarded as part of the core of a good education seemingly been relegated to the

margins of what "really matters" in school? The supposed exigencies of the technological age may have a lot to do with it, but that is only a part of the answer. The alarms sounded by the Social Studies Task Force were actually voiced in the 1977 Provincial Learning Assessment for Social Studies. This was obviously long before our current obsession with electronic and digital media. In fact I recall video-cassette recorders were considered cutting edge at the time. No, the real issue is elsewhere. As history so often demonstrates, if we ever care to read it, the most obvious villain is often not the only one.

The central problem is the way we expect children and youth to engage in and learn social studies and hence develop attitudes of responsible citizenship. For some reason, the rationale for which still escapes me after 25 years of working at social education, when it comes to social learning we believe children are like plants—it happens through osmosis.

So, for example, the lessons of history are still almost entirely related to students sequentially. History, as far as most students would know it, is about "what happened next." As a practical matter, once we have completed this great pageant from Mesopotamia (Grade 6) to the United Nations (Grade 11 or 12) and got the order straight, as well as the who's who, we don't have time for much else, certainly not an actual critical inquiry. "Was that fair?" "What might be the other side of this story?" Those are the sorts of questions that help develop responsible citizenship. Unfortunately given the widely held public conviction that history is "one damned thing after another" and that's just the

First Nations 12 is a true "social study" in that it combines and connects history, anthropology, legend, geography, and ecology. It does not "egg crate" them as separate subjects...

way it has to be learned, we don't have much space and time to spend on those questions. In other words the thoughtful, critical questions are not the focus—the sequential content is.

There are, of course, many teachers of social studies who involve students in critical inquiries all the time, not only in history but in geography and economics and other social studies. But they can't do it nearly as often as they would like to because they are imprisoned by imposed and antediluvian ideas regarding what social studies should be about. Hence what we end up with, in spite of the efforts of those teachers, is a subject that has a distinctly musty odor that repels too many students; so much for citizenship. If I had a conspiratorial frame of mind I might say that the reason social studies has been marginalized is because it is designed to self-destruct; built-in obsolescence as it were. Somebody up there doesn't like it.

The answer is in a reconceptualized notion of what we mean by social studies and historical learning. Interestingly, an example of this is the new First Nations 12, a course that is causing some consternation for editorialists and others. First Nations 12 is a true "social study" in that it combines and connects history, anthropology, legend, geography, and ecology. It does not "egg crate" them as separate subjects or try to frog march students through 10,000 years of historical events. It has the potential to actually engage students in relevant and interesting social questions. These are the kinds of questions that will involve and encourage them in thinking about social issues.

The primary goal of social studies is the development of socially responsible citizens. There are a variety of pathways to that goal. Our current and long-standing devotion to "capex and bays geography" and "dead man history" has not been especially successful. In short, the content doesn't matter so much as the method. Fretting about Canadian content in History 12 does not address the central issue. We need a different approach altogether. It is either that or face the "consequences of a gullible citizenry."

Pat Clarke is assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division and a member of the Provincial Social Studies Task Force.



Arrowview Elementary School, Parksville/Qualicum

Teaching in a new school

by Lois Johnstone and Lynne Saddington

Arrowview Elementary School, S.D. #69 (Parksville/Qualicum), opened its doors to 335 excited students on September 10, 1999. The 3.2 million dollar facility includes 14 classrooms, a library, a computer room, a gym with a stage that doubles as a music room, two kitchens for class use, and a special education area with three teaching rooms and four offices.

A fresh air exchanger recirculates the air eight times an hour. Staff have commented on the excellent air quality and how it has increased alertness. Parents, students, and staff also appreciate a new, clean, bright school.

Everyone was affected differently.

"It's fun to build a team and to set expectations and goals together." — classroom teacher

"Everyone is working together and seeing the growth from the ground up. We have gone from having no play area outside to having swings, a sandbox, and fields. This is a great lesson in appreciation for new things and learning patience." — teacher assistant

"It's exciting to purchase new materials and equipment." — specialist teacher

"It's wonderful to have space to work in and offices for counselors and specialist teachers." — resource teacher

"The administration offices are a dream to work in and are open and friendly for students, parents, and teachers." — secretary

"I like our new resource room and having new toys to play with." — student with special needs

"It's great to work in a new building and use all new equipment and resources." — principal

"The gym and music room combination makes both rooms very usable, both for ordinary functions and for assemblies and school plays." — staff member

"The challenge of creating a new school community from two established schools gave us a common goal to focus on. Safety issues, lack of playground equipment and library resources were projects

needing concentrated effort. PAC initiatives have been met with enthusiastic support from the administration, teachers, and all other staff. It's exciting to see so many people come together and work so hard to create a safe, co-operative, respectful environment in which our children play and learn." — PAC parents

On the down side, there is the reality of having few learning resources, few books for the library, and little playground equipment. The playground was mud all fall, with no fields or fencing. A water problem meant bottled water was brought in for several months. Design and construction glitches showed up such as a fire door that opens in front of a door to the AV Room. These issues are reflected in the following comments:

"Getting the school up and running in three weeks—from entry to opening was lots of work and meant working most of the summer." — principal

"Cheap construction." — custodian

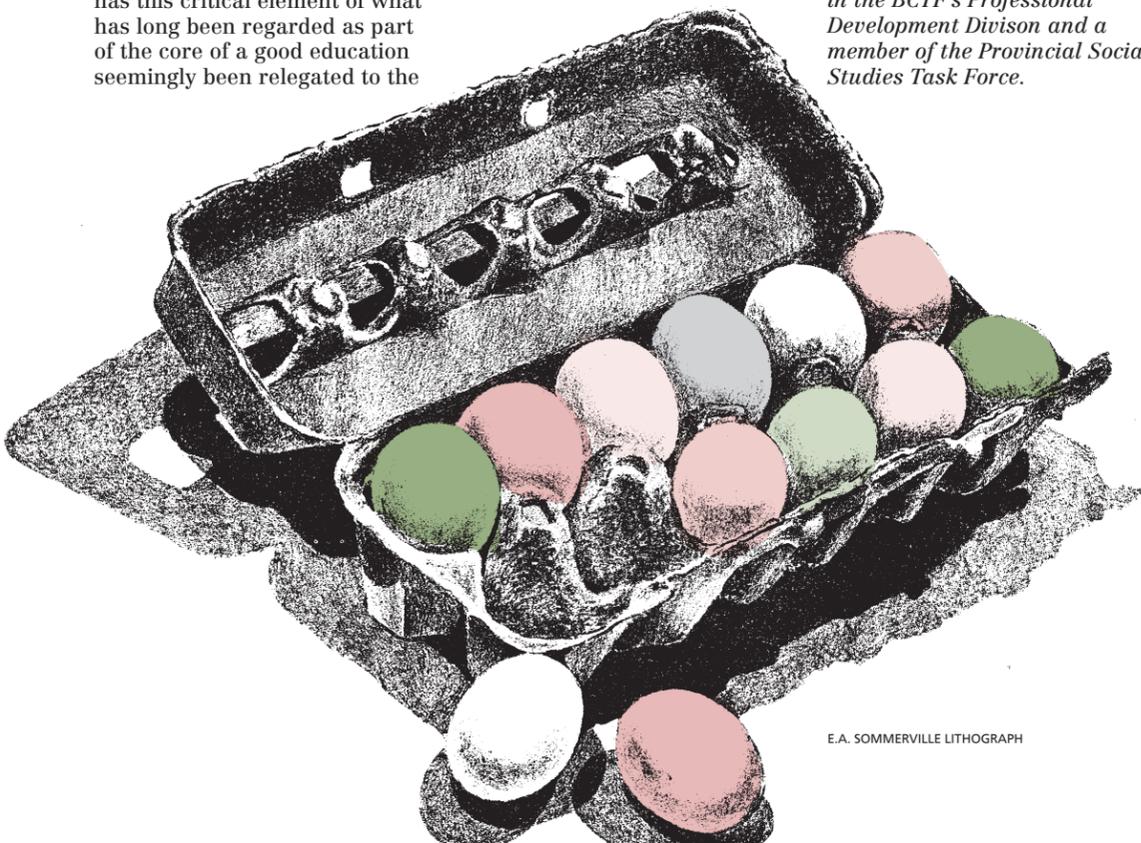
"Leaving friends at other schools was difficult but we have adjusted and made lots of new friends." — student

"Working through the growing pains—procedures, rules, school policies meant more meetings and lots of discussion to get consensus." — teacher

Nevertheless, everyone agrees that a new school is a challenging and invigorating experience. Arrowview Elementary School is building a sense of community. We have gone through the initial stage of the "cocktail party"—the excitement and new adventure, to a little chaos—"fussing and feuding" to "we can work it out and we can conquer the world."

New students, new staff, new parents are coming together with shared goals and mutual respect and support. We are exploring an exciting, new adventure together and creating a wonderful learning environment for our community's children.

Lois Johnstone is an itinerant resource teacher for Qualicum School District and a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board. Lynne Saddington is a learning assistance teacher, Arrowview Elementary School, Qualicum.



E.A. SOMMERVILLE LITHOGRAPH

OPINION

Technology and the changing role of a teacher

by Henning von Krogh

Change confronting teachers is a constant. In fact, the role of teachers and "teaching" is changing dramatically. The change resulting from the implementation and use of technology can be massive. I would like to share my experience of some of the changes taking place. When I called the BCTF in June with questions about other schools in our situation and what to expect with regard to changing working conditions, there was really no assistance or guidance they could offer.

I teach at Lucerne Elementary-Secondary School, a K-12 school in New Denver, B.C. I have worked here, except for a short stint with DND, since 1977, primarily as a secondary science specialist. With a small enrolment, a typical course load over the years has been seven different preps. At the secondary level, Lucerne was a very traditional school.

Over the last few years, the staff has been investigating different instructional/learning environments at the Grade 8-12 level. Staff members visited schools offering different instructional models; teacher-developed modules, such as those being offered at Thomas Haney in Maple Ridge, were of particular interest. Lucerne has a Facilitated Learning Centre developing in the school for the last five years. This is a self-directed, learner-focused, computer-managed learning

environment, offered as an alternate program for adults wishing to upgrade, for students seeking an alternative to regular class structure and for students wishing to take a course Lucerne could not offer. Thus the delivery

The change resulting from our implementation and use of technology has been massive.

of courses by the Pathfinder computer-directed method was also looked at as an option.

In a small school with a declining enrolment, with a desire to provide as wide a course offering to our students as possible, and faced with the distinct possibility of having some or all of the high school bussed some 50 km to the next community, the staff and administration worked on developing a different model of instruction for Lucerne. This model, working toward a more student-directed and self-paced curriculum, would have teachers initially offer classes in three ways:

1. Offer some courses, initially, in a traditional manner.
2. Develop modules so instruction could be more self-paced.
3. Use a Pathfinder presentation, perhaps for classes not previously offered.

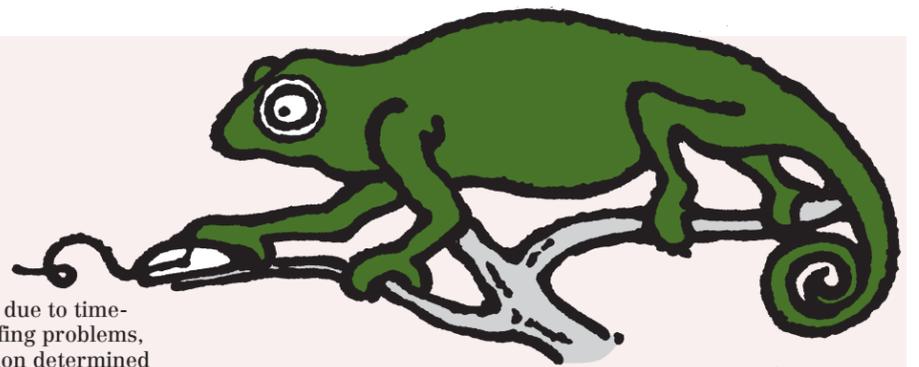
It was perhaps a good plan but, with limited staffing, fraught with timetabling problems.

So what happened? The staff learned, the second week of

June 1999, that due to timetabling and staffing problems, the administration determined that the basis for instruction, for academic classes 8-12, was to be Pathfinders. The staff received introduction and training in Pathfinder, two days in June and two days in late August, and a massive change took place with the opening of school in September. Basically all academic classes were to be based on Pathfinders; electives were to be offered in a more traditional manner. It is to the credit of all of the staff involved with the secondary portion of the school that we progressed as far, and as positively, as we did. (And I thought accreditation was a lot of work!)

How does this affect my workload and the expectations of me? As the science specialist, I am responsible for students enrolled in: Science 8, 9, 10, Biology 11, 12, Chemistry 11, 12, Physics 11, Geography 12, Forestry 11, 12, Earth Science 11.

I am also available to help students in Math 8, 9, 10, 11A, or anything else they might ask. I am responsible for helping students with technical support, answering any questions, at any point, in any of these courses, and trouble-shooting the new system. I am to modify the courses if I deem it beneficial, add in my "best practices," "learn" new material for courses I have not taught before, negotiate alternate projects for students wishing to replace Pathfinder work with more active research and investigation, make the courses



more relevant and essentially be a mentor to all students. With 23 years of teaching experience, a solid background in many of these courses, and the confidence that comes with practice, it is easier for me. What of a beginning teacher? Where would one start?

Teachers at Lucerne have worked very hard in their effort to provide a quality education for our students. Individual effort, commitment, and personal accountability are very evident. But teachers, faced with this challenge, respond in different ways. In some cases massive amounts of work went into rewriting Pathfinder course "paths," or producing instant "modular" courses. Others responded as quickly as possible, adjusting, making changes as time permitted, and responding where the system seemed weakest. Signs of weariness,

This is a challenge for which the BCTF needs to prepare, and needs to provide leadership and guidance to its members.

stress, and burnout are evident. A third option was to do nothing extra and follow a Pathfinder-only approach, but this was not evident at Lucerne.

This change has had an impact on teachers, but has also affected students and parents. A

long discussion can be had regarding the positive and negative aspects of the change, but this is not the time. I am writing this article seven months into the process. Let me say I miss speaking with and interacting with a "class," but negotiating alternate projects with students, seeing them pursue their interests in a variety of means, is rewarding. I am most impressed with the effort of staff members to cope with the challenge of change, and the effort they have put in to do the best for their students.

My conclusion? The change resulting from our implementation and use of technology has been massive. With it came a major shift in the role of the teacher, be it managing a multi-grade, multi-subject classroom, handling different course materials, handling new curricular subject material, evaluating and reporting computer managed courses, or just coping with the change. This is a challenge for which the BCTF needs to prepare, and needs to provide leadership and guidance to its members.

Oh, did I mention our principal, who began the process, resigned in November? We were fortunate; a very capable replacement was found until June. Then? Well, change confronting teachers is a constant.

Henning von Krogh teaches at Lucerne Elementary-Secondary school, New Denver.

B.C. high school students receive multicultural awards

by Kathleen Cherry

Kitimat's Students Together Against Racism (STAR) and the Global Issues Club from Johnston Heights Secondary School in Surrey each received an End Racism Award.

Presented annually through the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, these awards recognize outstanding anti-racism initiatives. Seven awards and two honourable mentions were presented in B.C., but the Surrey and Kitimat groups were the only school-based recipients.

"We were thrilled to be recognized and it was great to attend the ceremony. It was very motivational," said Ravneet Bhandar, a Grade 12 student at Mount Elizabeth Secondary School and the STAR member chosen to attend the ceremony. "I enjoyed talking to students from Johnston Heights and learning about their program," she added.

Global Issues Club sponsor teacher Beata Hittrich said that her students were very excited about the award and the success of their project. The club had developed the Ribbon Simulation Game, which is designed to help participants understand issues of racism and discrimination.

"Participants are treated differently according to the colour of the ribbon they are given. There are six facilitators



from the club who take on different roles. There are jails and court sessions. It's quite involved," said Hittrich.

It has also proven to be effective in many different classes. "You can talk to kids about discrimination and racism until you're blue in the face. But when they experience it, that is different," Hittrich added. She said that at the conclusion of the game there was always an insightful discussion and debriefing session.

STAR has also presented workshops to several local elementary schools as well as participating in other community events. Like the Global Issues Club, students recognized the need for something more dynamic and compelling than the traditional lecture format. Instead, they acted out scenarios based on real-life situations.

"We enjoyed talking and working with the students. I think they could relate to us well because we are closer to their age," Bhandar explained.

As well as working with local schools, STAR has become very well-known in the community which, Bhandar explained, was an important criteria for the award. Much of their work has been done in conjunction with the Kitimat Multicultural Society that nominated the student group for the recent award.

Indeed, STAR has been hard to miss in Kitimat. Their projects have included a multicultural fashion show featured on a local telethon, a school-wide trivia game with a multicultural theme, a potluck dinner for staff, the sale of Brazilian jewelry to raise money for Brazilian schools, workshops for elementary-age students, and

full participation in the community's multicultural week activities.

Sponsor teachers Malar Benet and Dianne Fulsom said they were consistently impressed with the students' enthusiasm, industry, and organization.

"We just do a little administrative work and acquire permission for certain projects. The students do everything," Benet explained.

"They come up with the ideas, say what they're going to do, and what they need us to do," Fulsom added.

Hittrich is similarly impressed. All the sponsor teachers said they admired the students' dedication to work on these projects, particularly senior students who are also coping with the academic pressures of the Grade 12 year. But Grade 12 students Bhandar and Asha

Sharda say that this has been a wonderful and enriching challenge that can only add to their academic experience. They are just thrilled that STAR's hard work has been recognized.

Other award winners were Vancouver's Multicultural Family Centre, the Multicultural Society of Kelowna, the Okanagan Jewish Community Centre, the Surrey Services to Communities Society, and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. Honourable Mentions went to the 'A Step Ahead' Foundation and the Trail and District Multicultural Society.

Kathleen Cherry teaches at Kidala Elementary School, Kitimat and is a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board.



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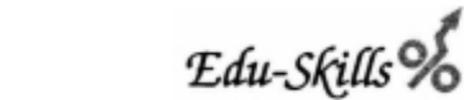
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So you want to go on an exchange

by Jacqui Birchall

A teaching exchange can be a wonderful thing. One can experience another culture for a year. One can make new friends. One can see the world. One can also enter the twilight zone of a teaching horror where one thing after another seems to go wrong.

Do not go on exchange if you want everything to be the same.

Take as an example the Canadian family who went on exchange. This family of four arranged an exchange with a single, young female. When the Canadian family arrived at their exchangee's modest home, two weeks before she was to depart for Canada, they vetoed the home exchange. They called their friends in Canada, told them to rent the house out and to find an apartment for the unfortunate exchangee. Chagrined Canadian school staff members ran around in September sheepishly trying to furnish an empty apartment. The young woman had two weeks to find someone to rent her house for a year.

Then there was the Canadian teacher who supplied photos and diagrams of his Canadian home, arranged an exchange, also with a family of four, and then rented his house out and put them in his mom's basement. The visitors lasted three months and he was obliged to return home.

What about the young British teacher who arranged an exchange with a family from the USA? Her boyfriend moved in with her, confounding her exchangees, who had certain religious beliefs about living together outside of marriage. Both parties eventually engaged lawyers.

Or the Canadian teacher who was instructed by his exchangee to visit a particular

lawyer immediately upon arrival in the country in order to sign a legal agreement protecting the home and property the Canadian teacher was using for the year. The lawyer advised the Canadian teacher against signing, saying his client was clearly not in his right mind.

Principals will not necessarily be interested in you. Schools may well be very different with no protection for you in the case of abusive parents or students. One Canadian teacher was obliged to hand her timetable over to two department heads who advised her that in no way was she to expect that it would be her timetable for the year and gave her two of their classes. The principal in this school cared nothing for the exchange and was only glad that the departing teacher had gone on exchange as she was a constant thorn in his side. Or there is the Canadian exchange teacher who was threatened with physical violence by a parent in the office of a principal. When she asked to be excused she was told she had to stay and listen to the abuse, which continued for close to one hour.

You may find you spend the whole year saying "Pardon?" as you try to understand the accents. "Heyoop miss, dost thou not like oos? Whys thou going 'ome?" We all knew, the students and I, that teachers should not be addressed as "thou" but there was a certain charm in it that I found beguiling. Or you could embarrass yourself like the poor teacher from England who asked her Canadian class if anyone could lend her a rubber and who called her students "clever dicks."

When I was on exchange one house burned down. One car

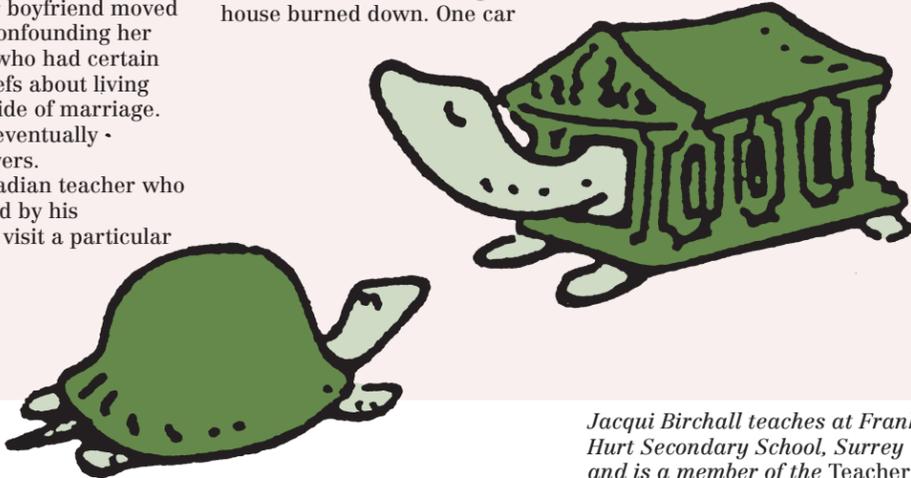
was damaged beyond repair. One teacher had a nervous breakdown in the second month and was never heard from again.

When we assembled for our first meeting of exchange teachers as a whole, most people sat around complaining. No dishwasher! No central heating! No carport! And sitting quietly amongst them were the teachers from the poorer countries. They were not complaining—the Sanskrit scholar who had only a room; the Kenyan who had to pay rent; the Jamaican who could not get warm.

Obviously hundreds of people have gone on exchange and had a wonderful time. It is true that a teaching exchange can be very

Do go on exchange if you are open to new experiences, if you are adaptable, and if you can roll with the punches.

rewarding. It is equally true that things can go very wrong; that you can be alone in a foreign country without friends to talk to when you need an understanding ear. Do not go on exchange if you want everything to be the same. You will be disappointed. Do not go on exchange if everything in your life is going wrong. Changing countries will not necessarily make your problems go away. Do go on exchange if you are open to new experiences, if you are adaptable, and if you can roll with the punches. There may be many.



Jacqui Birchall teaches at Frank Hurt Secondary School, Surrey and is a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board.

Changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan April 1, 2000

by Karen Harper

On April 1, 2000, the Superannuation Commission became the Pension Corporation, a crown corporation servicing all of the family of public sector pension plans. This will be helpful in that the Pension Corporation will be staffed based on the requirements of the pension plans, rather than being affected by government limitations during periods of hiring freezes or layoffs. Thus, service to members from the Pension Corporation should improve.

In addition to the Pension Corporation coming into force, a number of changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan occurred.

1. Leaves of absences: there are now only three categories—maternity, parental, and general. Maternity and Parental are pursuant to the Employment Standards Act covering, therefore, 18 and 12 weeks of time respectively, requiring only single contributions to purchase, and have a maximum of three years of time purchasable. The general category now permits the purchase of up to 50 months of pensionable service during a career at double employee contributions plus interest. The three categories cannot exceed 8 years of service between them (these are Revenue Canada limitations for registered pension plans).

2. In the area of reinstatement, there is no longer a deadline of December 31, 2000 to reinstate. Reinstatement can occur at any time up to retirement. However, from a financial perspective it is far better to reinstate as soon as possible rather than to delay. The longer one waits, the more costly the reinstatement will be. In addition, for those who qualify to reinstate under the "old" or "refund rate" rules, the return to work period is now 2 years, or 20 months of contributory service, rather than the former 10 years of 100 months of contributory service.

3. For those who in the past worked less than half time, were not contributors, and did not waive in writing their right to contribute, they are now able to purchase the service at current costs—that is employee and

employer costs on today's salary. This will help many members, usually women, who returned to work part-time after the birth of their children, and did not contribute to the Teachers' Pension Plan and are ineligible for the Child Rearing Drop-out Credit as they were working. No one should apply for this until at least the fall of 2000 due to backlogs at the Pension Corporation. To protect members of the plan from increasing costs due to delayed applications, any application during the next 18 months will have the salary frozen as at June 30, 2000. If the non-contributor would be eligible under the arrears provision rather than the purchase of service provision, interest will similarly be capped as at June 30, 2000 during the 18 month window.

4. The calculation of the early retirement reduction has been amended to leave a larger lifetime pension (after age 65) by reducing the bridge benefit the same percentage as the total pension. For example, under the old calculation, a pension of \$2,500 reduced by 15% at age 55 left \$2,125 to age 65, reducing to \$1,575 thereafter. On the new method of calculation, the pension is still \$2,125 to age 65, but will be \$1,657 after age 65, an improvement of \$82 per month in lifetime income.

5. Under the Public Sector Pension Plans Act, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation can enter into negotiations regarding a jointly trustee pension plan. As the AGM was advised, government requested that such negotiations commence, and the AGM approved. The BCTF will be keeping you apprised of the negotiations as they are ongoing, and would strongly encourage you to attend the meetings that will be held in each local in the fall should an agreement be reached. These meetings will provide you with information and answer your questions so that you can vote on the commencement of a jointly trustee pension plan.

Karen Harper, formerly BCTF staffperson responsible for pensions, now vice-president of Policy and Plan Management as at May 1, 2000 at the new Pension Corporation.

Should I stop my long-term SIP!?

Are you 64 or factor 88?

Teachers who have reached the age of 64 or the factor 88, age plus contributory service with the teachers or municipal pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan: Long Term. If you have reached age 65 or factor 90, you are no longer eligible for long-term benefits and should withdraw. It is necessary for you to apply to withdraw as the SIP does not have information about your age or contributory service.

If you fit one of the above criteria and wish to withdraw from the long-term part of the plan, send a completed form (available from Income Security, local presidents, or online at www.bctf.bc.ca/pensions/salary/LT-Withdrawal-Form.shtml) to the BCTF Income Security Department.

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Dandelion defense league

by Jim McMurtry

Long ago in a place called Surrey, nobody put poisons on their lawns. Babies could crawl on the grass and children wallow in the mud without absorbing the cosmetic toxins used against dandelions, clover, and other wild flowers (read "weeds").

Now almost everyone in our suburban landscape goes to the hardware store to buy pesticides with the same active ingredient as Agent Orange, which the Americans dropped from planes during the Vietnam War to rid the country of its plant life.

The Surrey School District, like every other district in the province, uses pesticides as well. The poison of choice is Roundup, used mostly over the summer. The district had stopped using pesticides a few years ago but reintroduced Roundup after receiving complaints from teachers, principals, and parents about the wild flowers.

Roundup is described in a Greenpeace fact sheet as "the third most commonly related cause of pesticide-related illness among agricultural workers (in California). Glyphosate (the active ingredient of Roundup) is the most frequent cause of complaints to the UK's Health and Safety Executive's Pesticides Incident Appraisal Panel." Elsewhere in the fact sheet the pesticide is described as "one of the most toxic herbicides."

Within the cornucopia of information on the toxic effects of pesticides are anecdotes from Canadian doctors of high rates of skin irritation in children who deliver newspapers—as they cross many lawns along their routes. Dogs and cats are also victims of pesticide sprays, with dogs more likely now to die from cancer than anything else. Agricultural workers are the most affected, with some experiencing sudden death, as was the case in Abbotsford recently.

When I moved to Cloverdale, in the east of Surrey, I soon learned how the town got its name. Within weeks the clover

began to take over the lawn. My children had nightmares that it would one day cover the house, and the clover flowers attracted bees that stung my wife—two things the Cloverdale Welcome Wagon lady hadn't hold us about.

So I went to the hardware store to buy a pesticide. But the packages had so many skull-and-crossbones pictures on them I decided to leave them on the shelf.

I began talking to others and learned that there are harmless, natural ways of eliminating or reducing the prevalence of wild flowers—such as raking, aeration, top dressing, and over-seeding. I also discovered that wild flowers have a beauty of their own, despite their perceived flaw of not looking like the outdoor carpet sold at Revy. While the clover on my lawn attracts bees, it also offers a pleasing odour, a year-round verdant look, and, well, a place for bees—who have their place in the nature of things.

A man I know in the Newton area takes great pleasure in walking along a bicycle path by Surrey's Bear Creek Park. He spends hours during the spawning season looking down at the salmon in nearby streams. One day recently he watched in horror as wild flowers above the stream were sprayed heavily with pesticides, knowing that the poison would eventually seep into the water. It brought tears to his eyes.

If, as educators, we did the sensible thing and banned cosmetic pesticides from school grounds we would send the right message to the public about a harmful environmental practice and reduce preventable illness in children. It all seems rather compelling to me. I hope you see it that way, too.

I have formed an organization called the Dandelion Defense League that is working with the Sierra Club in Ottawa in its national campaign to reduce pesticide use. If you would like to join the organization or receive information from me, I may be reached at Princess Margaret School, 604-594-5458 or home 604-574-1724.

Jim McMurtry teaches at Princess Margaret Secondary School, Surrey.

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY: THE MAYAN CHILDREN

by Yves Parizeau

As I sat by Lake Atitlan, surrounded by towering volcanoes in the Highlands of Guatemala, I was suddenly aware of the presence of two little girls. They were Mayans and both dressed in their beautiful traditional clothes. They sat beside me, holding the handmade friendship bracelets they were selling. One of them, 8-year-old Manuela sighed as she said: "We haven't sold anything today!" followed by: "My mom won't be very happy!" It was the beginning of our conversation and as you might have guessed, Manuela and her friend were successful in completing their first sale of the day (or was it really the first one!?). My conversation with Carmen,

All the tasks were done manually and the children were expected to do their share.

Manuela's friend, was more limited as she spoke mainly *Catchiquel*, one of 20 or so Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala. Talking in Spanish (or trying to!) with Manuela, I had a chance not only to discover she was a shrewd businessperson like so many other children who need to work to help their families but also to find out more about her life and how she felt about school. It was one of several conversations I had with Mayan children in Guatemala.

I have now just returned from this amazing country, thanks to a Global Education grant from the BCTF. For the last three years, the school where I teach has been involved in helping and learning from Mayan organizations that are

promoting culture and literacy programs in Spanish and Mayan languages. The impetus came from our school commitment to global education and from a meeting we had with Sheila Reid. A former B.C. teacher and social activist, Reid had been working in Guatemala for a number of years and provided us with ideas on how we could help and learn from the indigenous people of Guatemala.

I was fortunate to be able to see first hand how we could be more involved. Up until now our commitment had been limited to a one-time exchange of art work between our students and Mayan children, as well as raising \$350 to buy much needed books for a school in a small town by the name of Momostanango. The trip has now given me a much clearer picture of where we can go from here.

Guatemala is a country with a tragic past. As recently as the '80s and early '90s, Guatemala was engulfed in a war that killed an estimated 200,000, mainly indigenous people, and forced scores of refugees into Mexico. Whole villages were annihilated. Two years ago, a peace accord was signed but the scars remain. The Truth Commission determined that 90% of the atrocities had been committed by the army backed by the government.

Guatemala's population is at least 60% Mayan. Guatemalans of Mayan descent are still perceived as second-class citizens and have little political and economic powers. According to a recent report from UNICEF, 75% live in extreme poverty, 60% of the children do not attend school and half of them suffer from malnutrition.

The Mayan organization our school is now involved with is called Pop Atziak (pronounced "pup-pat-tsee-AK"), which means in Quiche (one of the main Mayan languages),

"History of Weaving." Weaving is a very important part of the culture and it is indeed very striking as one travels around to notice the colourful traditional clothes woven on human

No wonder a lot of them don't go to school—where would they find the time? ...Mayan children will continue to be needed at home because it's a question of survival.

powered looms. Pop Atziak supports a group of weavers by finding markets offering fair pricing.

Pop Atziak sponsors two literacy groups. Children and adults meet in the evening three to four times a week. Under the guidance of their teacher, they learn *Quiche* in its written form, Spanish, and the rich Mayan culture. Pop Atziak also provides scholarships for secondary school students; although public school is free, families must still pay for books and uniforms, an impossible task for most Mayan people.

The children and the families I visited lived under conditions that would be considered very poor by North American standards. Their small houses, made of adobe bricks, were often without electricity or running water. All the tasks were done manually and the children were expected to do their share. I witnessed them planting corn in the fields, carrying huge loads of wood for cooking on their shoulders, preparing the corn to make tortillas, starting the fire in a primitive woodstove, carrying water, and washing clothes by hand in basins or in

The arts' ambassadors have arrived

by Sally Stubbs

The Ambassador: Is it an alien? Is it a joke? Is it art? Is it self-indulgent? Does it matter? Twenty-two film and television students from the Vancouver School District, their teachers, and video instructors, Corin Browne and Stuart Poyntz of Pacific Cinematheque, and Aerlyn Weissman (award winning documentary film maker), say emphatically, "Yes! It does matter."

They're all part of "Documenting Vancouver Youth Art" (now entitled "Videosyncrata" by the artists), a video documentary project that aims to celebrate and raise the profile of the arts in Vancouver's schools. The final documentary, consisting of several video shorts created by students from nine Vancouver secondary schools, will be screened for up to a year beginning June 2000 as part of the Vancouver Museum's V2K Millennium Exhibition. It will also be toured to Vancouver Community

Centres, and a selection from the video will be featured at the Vancouver School Board, May 1, 2000, as part of the opening ceremonies of Millennium May, the district's month-long celebration of the fine arts in Vancouver schools.

The Ambassador and hundreds of lime green flyers arrived mysteriously and abruptly in the main hallway of University Hill Secondary School as part of a creative happening orchestrated by students Adam Shamash, Andrea Actis, and Annah Kassen, as part of their video production. The artists, concerned that the arts are losing prominence in the halls of their school, were eager to illicit responses to the Ambassador and were on hand with three cameras when students met their creation for the first time. They got them. Responses were eclectic and illuminating and ranged from enthusiastic and supportive, to creative, crazy, dismissive, and downright hostile. These responses will be incorporated into their final

short that is taking the form of a documentary story involving a visitation.

The project was co-operative-ly forged last spring by myself, working on behalf of the Vancouver Fine Arts Leadership Committee, and Stuart Poyntz, Aerlyn Weissman, and Corin Browne.

...this project...was seen as a way of bringing attention to the importance and high calibre of the arts in our schools.

At a time when funding is limited and morale often low in arts education, this project, as part of the more comprehensive Millennium May celebration, was seen as a way of bringing attention to the importance and high calibre of the arts in our schools. By bringing students from across the district together to work on the documentary, project initiators hoped also to spawn friendships, communi-

cation, and build creative partnerships.

Work on the documentary really got under way in November, when students travelled to the Gulf Islands Film & Television School to meet one another and their video mentors and establish the parameters and schedules of the video and their individual creations within it. Individual shorts will focus on everything from graffiti art (Lord Byng Secondary), a one-act play festival (Prince of Wales Secondary), the creative process involved in producing theatre (Sir Charles Tupper Secondary), an individual actor (Templeton Secondary), a jazz band (Vancouver Technical Secondary), the creative arts community working in and around Kitsilano Secondary and its feeder schools, generations of music and murals (John Oliver Secondary), and the spinning of fictional characters, events, and metaphors to celebrate the arts (Magee and University Hill Secondary Schools). Also on board are documentary

photographers from Windermere Secondary School. These students are documenting the process for posterity, promotions, and exhibition in the Vancouver Museum.

At the Gulf Islands Film & Television School in November, Weissman, Poyntz, and Browne got students off to a whirlwind start with head-to-head planning and active workshops involving the pitching of their ideas, writing, camera work, sound, lighting, and interviewing techniques for documentaries.

Instructors and teachers continue to monitor and assist students in their independent production work between meetings. The young video artists came together again in January at Pacific Cinematheque for screenings of their early footage and instruction on shooting events and performing necessary paper edits in preparation for their post-production work.

Post-production takes place at Simon Fraser University at the

CHILDREN OF GUATEMALA

streams. Older kids looked after the younger ones, helped with the weaving, or sold crafts in the streets.

No wonder a lot of them don't go to school—where would they find the time? Without a redistribution of the wealth that is in the hands of the very few rich and without a true commitment from the government to education and fair job creation, Mayan children will continue to be needed at home because it's a question of survival.

But some Mayan children do go to school. They go from 07:30 to 12:30, then they go home to work! I was able to visit several schools often unannounced, and was always warmly welcomed. The children were exuberant and their teachers more than willing to share their thoughts on an education system that is not working; they were doing the best they could under difficult working circumstances—underpaid (average wages of \$250 a month), lacking in resources and having to face large class sizes. Classes usually have over 40 students; I saw a

Providing books for Pop Atziak's literacy groups seems to be a logical way for my school to help.

Grade 4 class of 47 and a Grade 6 class with 65 students!

In all of the schools I visited, I didn't notice any books except for some provided by non-profit organizations such as *Probigua*, a language school in Antigua.

Providing books for *Pop Atziak's* literacy groups seems to be a logical way for my school to help. Secondly, a few staff members are developing a series of lessons on comparing the lives of Mayan children with the lives of our students. Using the UN Rights of the Child as a

A "bus" full of books travels between schools to help develop literacy skills of Mayan children.

framework is something we are considering. Above all, we want to celebrate childhood.

Visiting those families and schools was a very emotional experience and it often brought tears to my eyes. I felt moved by the strength of the people and their determination to survive. As I settled back home, I was struck by how much we waste and how much "stuff" we have. What used to bother me doesn't seem to be that significant after all; things need to be kept in perspective. I'm also very energized because I know that together we can make a difference. The Mayan children have made a tremendous impact on me. Manuela and so many other children will never know how much they taught me. I'm grateful for what they gave me and I can hardly wait to go back—there is still so much to learn!

Yves Parizeau teaches at Rogers Elementary School, Victoria.

We hope that in the near future the lessons we're developing will be available to other teachers through Lesson Aids. I am available to talk and show slides to individuals and groups who would like to know more about the project and how they could help. There are also many individuals who have lived or traveled in central America and who might want to share their expertise with us. Some teachers might have developed units on the Rights of the Child or on the lives of children from other countries: we would love to hear from you. I can be reached at Rogers School at (250) 727-0188, fax: (250) 727-2079.



end of April and the beginning of May. Students will work with their mentors and technical assistance provided by MOSS, a non-profit society operating out of the Simon Fraser editing studios, to produce the final project.

Last stops—opening celebrations, promotion of their artistic endeavours, some goodbyes, some ongoing friendships, and a big artistic payoff—a year long screening of their work to an estimated audience of at least 15,000 people. That's exposure that's hard to beat at any point in an artist's career.

Videosyncrata: Projecting Youth Art was funded and supported by the Canada Millennium Project, the Vancouver Foundation, Vancouver City Savings Credit Union, the Vancouver School District, and Pacific Cinematheque.

Sally Stubbs teaches theatre, film, and TV production at *University Hill Secondary School, Vancouver.*

Videosyncrata is a video documentary project celebrating the arts in Vancouver schools.

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SHUSWAP LAKE CABIN. Sleeps 4-6, lakeview, wkly. rentals. Avail. June-Sept. Call (604) 525-9558.

COZY COTTAGE. Lake Erroch, 1.5 hr. from Vancouver, 30 min. from Harrison. Sleeps 4-6. Golfing,

hiking, fishing nearby. Call (604) 525-9558.

CARIBOO CABIN. 3 bd. comfortable fully equipped on crystal clear Ruth Lake, 1/2 hr. east of 100 Mile House. 5 ac. of private park-like waterfront property perfect for a quiet retreat, shared with owner's home. \$500/wk. (604) 984-9664.

SATURNA ISLAND waterfront, 2 bd., 2 bath. rustic quiet cottage. Great kayaking, hiking, biking. Avail. June-Sept. \$600/wk. Reservations (604) 686-1874 (pager) or PBrent@Compuserve.com

WHISTLER. Plan now for a summer holiday hiking, biking, swimming. \$500-600/wk., \$80-95/night. Sleeps 6. (604) 926-4315 or cedartree@home.com

SALTSRING IS. OCEANFRONT Quaint 1930s 2 bd. bungalow with sleeping cabin. Fully equip. kitchen. H/wood floors and F/P. Quiet location with private warm swimming beach and rowboat. Fabulous ocean views and sunsets. N/S, N/P, \$1140/wk. Avail. July 22 (604) 253-6466 or (250) 748-9710.

SOUTH AMERICAN summer ski & cultural adventure. sunshinecable.com/~rdelisle/skichile

SAVARY ISLAND. 2 bd. deluxe water view duplex, 100 level yards. to sandy beach. N/P. Avail. pre-July 2 and post-Aug. 27 only, from \$500/wk. (250) 248-9215. www.vanisle.net/savary

PARKSVILLE BAY WATERFRONT private cabins, panoramic view, 1 blk. to town, with boats. N/P. Avail. July 8-15 and Aug. 26 onward, from \$500/wk. (250) 248-9215. www.vanisle.net/maxwell

VACATION IN SUNNY KELOWNA newer, exec. home, hot tub. Private, designer garden, walk to beach, tennis, shops. Avail. July, Aug. weekly @ \$225/day, 5-day min. (250) 764-2900, F: (250) 764-9115.

DENMAN ISLAND, furn. 2 bd. waterfront home with private beach access. Ocean views from every room. Available for summer rentals \$800/wkly. (604) 254-2640.

NORTH OKANAGAN. 2 bd. cottage, quiet, fully furn., 2 large decks, 112' beach, large wharf. June-Sept. (604) 937-3095, cjordan@planetee.com

PALM SPRINGS luxury condo poolside, sleeps 6, patio, BBQ facilities. Avail. Dec. 22-Jan.5 (14 nights) 2000-01 for \$1800 CDN. (604) 572-8813.

QUALICUM BEACH, Vancouver Is. cottage, 1.5 blks to magnificent sandy beaches, across from golf course. 6 blks to town. 2-4 people. N/S, N/P, not suitable for small children, \$500/wk. Late July & Aug. two rounds of golf incl. John/ Donna (250) 752-3342 or F: John (250) 752-7291.

WHISTLER. Deluxe fully equip. condos, some with hot tub & outdoor pool. Free parking. Close to villages, shops, restaurants, golf, tennis, hiking/biking trails. Discount sightseeing tickets & activity bookings avail. Special rates for BCTF members, call 1-888-877-6611, www.mountainvacations.bc.ca

OSOYOOS. 4 bd. new home, sleeps 8, breathtaking view, all amen. Great wkend golf get-away, May/ June wkends only, July & Aug. wkly only. Avoid high hotel costs, have the pleasures of home. (250) 495-2146, email bbygdnes@sd53.bc.ca

MAYNE ISLAND. Waterfront, private beach, deluxe trailer, sleeps 8. \$75/day weekends or \$500/wk. \$60 Mon-Thurs. Call Brenda (604) 945-0799.

TOFINO. Chesterman Beach across the street. Cozy cottage, fully equip., avail. year round. \$100/night. (604) 581-3964.

GALIANO ISLAND. Waterfront modern guest cottage, 8 ac. forested hillside, Retreat Cove. Sleeps 4. Beautiful views, quiet, near hiking, kayaking. Weekend or wkly rates. (250) 539-2978. adelaarridge@gulfnet.pinc.com

QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS, Haida Gwaii "Place of Wonder." The spirit of the universe calls. Reconnect. www.island.net/~archipel or toll free 1-888-559-8317.

WHISTLER/ALTA LAKE CONDOS Lakefront condos, 2 storey, fully equip., beach, walk to golf course & village. (A) 2 bd. \$150/night, (B) 1 bd. \$125/night (C) combination of adjoining units A&B. Discounts for wk-day/weeks. (604) 988-8231.

KELOWNA house for rent. 5 min. to downtown. Park-like setting, hot tub. Week of July 30 & Aug. 6 \$750/wk or \$1400 for both weeks. (250) 769-6090.

OCEANFRONT RETREAT, COMOX Suite, sleeps 4 from \$450/wk. Dly. rates & B.B. avail. (250) 339-1038. www.pixsell.bc.ca/bb/1418.htm

FOR RENT EXCHANGE

OCEAN PARK family house for rent during the summer months. July 1-Aug. 18, 2000. Walking distance to Crescent Beach. Hot tub. N/S. 604-535-3447 or alinel@mailcity.com

WHITE ROCK. 3 bd. exec home. Breathtaking ocean view. 2 bl. to beach. Furn., long-term rental. Avail. July 2000, \$1800/mo. N/S, N/P. (604) 536-1200.

BURNABY. Large furn. suite with kitchen in exec townhome. 10 min. to SFU by car, bus 1 blk. Female, N/S, N/P. \$550 (604) 421-5292.

COQUITLAM. 3 bd. large spacious home with deck, garden and studio. 20 min. to SFU. Avail. daily, wkly or mthly in July & Aug. N/P, N/S. (604) 939-4779.

N.BURNABY Sublet 1 bd. May-Sept. \$750. Excellent location. Rita (604) 871-2214.

VICTORIA. 2 bd., 2.5 bath, townhouse fully furn. Close to downtown, park, beach. Easy access to UVic. Avail. summer 2000 for 1 yr. with extension possible. (250) 380-3075. astir@island.net

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

VANCOUVER. Deluxe condo, Robson nr. Blue Horizon. Daily rate \$75, dbl. occ. wkly rate \$495. (604) 608-4268.

VICTORIA. 20 min. Marina owenr's cottage with moorage. Sleeps 4. \$700/wk. (July-Sept.) \$1500/mo. (Oct.-June) (250) 652-2211.

CENTRAL COQUITLAM. 2 bd. condo avail. July to mid-Aug. N/S. Shopping, rec facilities, freeway, SFU nr by. Outdoor pool & cat in residence. (604) 931-5991.

SUMMER in beautiful vibrant NELSON, BC. Affordable sublet July & Aug. in quiet area with mountain view. Nice, bright, clean furn. mobile home. Enclosed porch, garden, trees, hammock. N/P, N/S. \$700/mo. incl. util. and basic phone. Can email photos. (250) 352-6944, suzie1946@hotmail.com

VANCOUVER. Small furn. 1 bd., 19th fl. new highrise across from Granville Is., avail. July 9 to Aug. 12. False Creek/sunset views. Swimming pool, health club. \$350 wkly, or \$1200/mo. Suit single or couple. Brian (250) 564-2326.

VANCOUVER. Spacious bright furn. 1 bd, queen-size bed, in bsmt suite (util. incl.) cable, washer & dryer avail. share kitch. \$360/mo. (604) 325-4278.

VANCOUVER shared accom. July 1-Aug. 31. 1 fully furn. rm in a large 2 bd. Kitsilano house. Quiet, Bright. Close to downtown, UBC, shopping areas and the beach. \$500/mo. (604) 730-0461.

KELOWNA. Hospital area, 3 blks from beach, 3 bd., 1 bath, fully furn. cozy house for July/Aug. Rent and dates negotiable. Terri (250) 868-2236 or tdunphy@sd23.bc.ca

VICTORIA. 2 bd. apt., character house. Lovely area, close to beach/university. July-Aug. \$750/mo. (250) 592-4563.

PORT COQUITLAM. Top fl., spacious 1 bd & den in peaceful area. Vaulted ceiling, overlooks green belt and pond. Access to hot tub and gym. Incl. 5 appl. \$850/mo. Avail. Aug. 1, (604) 942-5294.

KITSILANO Ensuite bd. with view in sparsely populated 3 bd. heritage suite. Shared kitchen. Avail. July & Aug. \$500/mo. (604) 732-4774.

VANCOUVER Beautiful 3 bd. Kitsilano townhse. Private, sunny garden, close to beaches, downtown and shops. Avail. July 8-Aug. 5 (dates neg) \$1650. (604) 737-2856.

COQUITLAM 3 bd. fully furn. house in gorgeous New Horizons area. 1-yr lease Aug.-Aug. (604) 468-1416 or view at www.raymarrealty.com (click "property management" and then "rental information.")

VANCOUVER Sublet apt. this summer. \$395/mo. (604)731-4109.

VANCOUVER Fully furn. 1 bd. apt. on a quiet street in the center of Van., 5 min. walk from Stanley Park, beaches and Robson Street. Avail. July 4-20. \$400/wk. (604) 687-7708 or F: (604) 981-1226, attention Fay.

WEST VANCOUVER 1 bd. suite, bright, spacious with spectacular mountain & ocean views, d/washer, w/d, avail. July & Aug. only. (604) 913-1471.

WANTED Teacher to rent/house-sit furn. home/apt., Rutland/Kelowna area for figure skating school. Close to Rutland arena if possible. July 2-Aug. 17. Have ref. Call Ann (250) 442-8086.

VICTORIA Bachelor apt. on Mt. Tolmie. Quiet bldg. with pool. Good bus to UVic and downtown. Sublet May-Aug. \$500/mo. N/S, N/P (604) 534-0590.

NORTH VANCOUVER 3 bd., 2 bath, house fully furn. Avail. July 4-Aug. 9. \$1300. (604) 980-0143.

VICTORIA July. Lovely country house nr. lakes, all amen. 10 min. to downtown, ocean, N/S, N/P, Adults only. (250) 479-7963. istanbridge@home.com

WHITE ROCK Family home, July 21-Aug. 11, close to beaches, \$400/wk. \$1000/3 wks., (604) 541-1025, peter_noah@yahoo.com

VANCOUVER False Creek, 2 bd. townhouse, fully equip. by seawall & Granville Is. avail. July 29-Aug. 25. \$500/wk. (604) 731-2486.

VANCOUVER 1 bd. condo, lightly furn. Fairview slopes (nr. Granville Is.) fabulous view, undergd. parking, w/d, d/washer, close to bus. \$250/wkly. \$450/bi-wkly. \$800/mo. (250) 888-7302.

VANCOUVER Furn. 1 bd apt. July/Aug., heritage bldg. 11 & Oak. \$750/mo. Susan (604) 738-5079.

VANCOUVER Tranquil Fraser River, view, 1 bd. deluxe condo nr. Knight St. Fully furn. enste lndry. Sec. parking, NS/NP. Avail. June 30 for July/Aug. \$900 (604) 325-5772.

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 1-888-270-2941.

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. F: 250-752-0304, kito@nisa.net

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

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

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/

HOMESTAY/TUTORSWANTED! 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

DISCOVER YOUR URBAN WILDERNESS! Enhance your science and ecology unit with an exciting interpretive tour or interactive classroom presentation about Burns Bog for your students. Expand your curriculum. Arrange a teachers' workshop for your school or district PD day. Free brochures-SASE to Burns Bog Conservation Society, 202-11961-88th Ave., Delta, BC V4C 3C9, toll free 1-888-850-6264, burnsbog@uniserve.com, web site www.burnsbog.org

A PD DAY WITH A DIFFERENCE Oct. 20, 2000! Escape to North America's most endangered ecosystem right here in Delta. Refresh your soul and enhance your classroom science program all at the same time. \$85 +GST incl. lunch, tour and discounts on educational materials. Contact Adele at (604) 572-0373, Burns Bog Conservation Society, 202-11961-88th Ave., Delta, BC V4C 3C9, toll free 1-888-850-6264, burnsbog@uniserve.com, web site www.burnsbog.org

ATTENTION FORMER BRIDGEVIEW STAFF (Surrey). Come and meet former colleagues and students at the Bridgeview Reunion on June 1, 2000 from 3:30-9:00 pm at Bridgeview School. Call Charlene (604) 580-3380 for more info.

MOTORHOME FOR RENT. 23 ft. Class C excellent condition, 22,000 miles, stove, fridge, roof air, generator, rear bath, TV, awning, etc. Very reasonable rates. N/S only. (250) 595-2436 (Victoria).

FREE STUFF FOR TEACHER is a web site where Canadian educators can find the latest links to free resources, materials, teachers guides, software and even computers. Check it out at www.TheCanadianTeacher.com/free1.htm

TEACHING FROM THE INSIDE OUT. Proactive summer workshop retreat for educators. Develop personal creativity and resilience in the spirit of community with international facilitator, Heather Ferris. Aug. 24-26 nr. Brentwood Bay, Saanich Peninsula. Cost \$250. For info. call (250) 360-0474.

EXCHANGE AUSTRALIA Elem. (Gr. 3-6) for 2001. Located in Queanbeyan NSW, 10 km from Canberra. 3/4 bd. house in Canberra suburb. Seeking an exchange and residence to accom. family with 3 children in suburban area. gordonweir@hotmail.com

NO TIME FOR PLANNING LESSONS? Discover "Singing, Learning and Laughing" a teacher created recording/activity booklet that uses fun songs and pre-made activities to teach calendar skills, vowel skills, multiculturalism, environmentalism, and much more. Visit www.paulbehnke.on.ca or call (519) 454-4184. CD/Cassette avail. at record stores everywhere.

CUBA TEACHER TOUR December 2000. Take advantage of the opportunity to experience Cuba on a 2 wk. educational tour for Christmas break 2000. Visit schools & participate in educational exchanges with Cuban teachers, and discover the historical areas and natural beauty of Cuba. For more info. contact Carmen Christiansen at CoDevelopment Canada (604) 708-1495 or ccodev@web.net

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.

DISCOVER GABRIOLA 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 www.realestate-gabriola.com or call for free catalogue and brochure, email: spring@island.net, 1-800-205-8080, Jheira Springford, Coast Realty (Gabriola Village)

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.)

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

TEACHING MATERIALS complete classroom, many books, racks, videos, aids, seasonal decorations, many arts & crafts supplies. Value over \$10,000—sell \$1,500. (604) 948-8686.

GOLF CLUBS Full set of new Harvey Penick irons used 5 times and full set of Ping Red Eye irons, (250) 495-2146 or (604) 813-6101, email bbygdnes@sd53.bc.ca

BURNABY HOME 9980 Martin Crt. Just a 10/15 min. walk to new Burnaby Mtn. Sec. School and Lougheed Mall. 3 bd. full bsmt. over 2350 sq.ft. Offers to \$279,900 Call Ed Goss, Park Georgia Rlty. (604) 421-7275.

DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS . New software assists teachers, counsellors and administrators. Student DT Manager software provides a record of incident and catalyst for problem solving. Send cheque/money order for \$19.95 to Teck Plus Interactive Software Inc. Box 1199, Gold River, BC V0P 1G0

PENDER ISLAND REAL ESTATE Free information package. Call toll free 1-888-629-3383, penderislandrealty.com Doug Oliver, Windermere Pender Island Realty.

RETIRE IN THE SHUSWAP 2 bd. 2 bath nr. new townhome in Sicomous popular Shuswap Lane. 2 min. walk to lake, 7 appl. all window coverings, many extras. \$103,000 firm. To view (250) 836-3773, more info (604) 514-9992.

WATERFRONT COTTAGE . Desolation Sound. (250) 935-0120 See web site for pic and details. www.cortesisland.com/waterfrontforsale/

JUNE

2-3 Vernon. What Works! A Literacy Symposium, at the Kalamalka Campus of Okanagan College in Vernon, jointly sponsored with SD 22. Info: 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," University of British Columbia. Contact Roweena Bacchus, (604) 822-5374; Fax: (604) 822-4244, roweena.bacchus@ubc.ca or visit the conference web site at www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/

10-13 UBC. Pulling Together: 6th Biennial National Conflict Resolution Conference. Conference web site: www.nicr.ca/i2000

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

2-7 Victoria. Quantum Summer Institute. High school and college tourism educators are invited to attend one-day Tourism Career Sampler train-the-trainer workshops. Contact Leslie Robinson at Quantum Learning, (250)598-6632; info@careersamplers.com

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

4-August 10 SFU. Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism in the B.C. Public School System. EDUC 374-3, Tues. and Thur. 13:00-16:50. Contact Murray Warren, P: (604) 469-2531; F: (604) 469-2541; anewfie@home.com

4-14 Vancouver. Conceptual Physics with Hewitt, at the King Ed Campus of Vancouver Community College. More information at the college web site www.vcc.bc.ca under the "What's New" button, or Peter Hopkinson, (604)871-7285, phopkinson@vcc.bc.ca

10-14 Osoyoos. Desert Graphic Workshop. Mon. to Fri., 09:00-15:00, \$200. (Repeated July 17-21) Learn how to produce high quality graphics using the latest versions of Corel Draw and PhotoPaint through hands-on project oriented instruction. Participants will receive CD-ROM with materials. Limited to 10 per session. Contact Miles Derksen, (250) 495-5165; Fax: (250) 495-5185, mderksen@sd53.bc.ca or visit www.oslc.sd53.bc.ca/oslc/Prod/mainframe.htm

10-14 Langley. Advanced Video Production for Secondary Teachers. One week intensive follow-up course. Limited enrollment, \$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 Education and Counselling Psychology and Special Education and the Office of Continuing Professional Education, UBC. \$300. Credit option available. Contact: OCPE, (604) 822-2013, ocpe.educ@ubc.ca, www.ocpe.educ.ubc.ca

31-August 4 Vancouver. H.R. MacMillan Space Centre. A week-long summer institute for Grade 2-9 teachers, covering astronomy, the solar system, the International Space Station and space exploration, robotics, and aspects of being an astronaut. Cost is \$275. Contact Kathy Knight (604) 738-7827, local 253; kknight@pacific-space-centre.bc.ca or visit <http://pacific-space-centre.bc.ca>

AUGUST

7-11 Drumheller, Alberta. Bringing Palaeontology to Life Workshop for Teachers. Limited to 20 teachers. Contact Bookings Office, 1-888-440-4240; Fax: (403) 823-7131, ewiebe@mcd.gov.ab.ca

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 Victoria, and UVic. Early registration \$300 or \$350 after June 30. Register on-line at www.uvcs.uvic.ca/conf/peace Info: peace@uvcs.uvic.ca or phone (250) 721-8703, F: (250) 721-8774.

19-25 Golden. Wilderness Leadership for Educators. Includes a 5-day backpack trip in the Rocky Mtns. \$475 Contact: Wayne Pelter at SD#6 Continuing Education, (250) 427-5308; wpelter@sd6.bc.ca

28-31 Vancouver. Fundamentals of Davis Dyslexia Correction: A 4-day workshop based on "The Gift of Dyslexia" by Ronald D. Davis. Contact: Sue Hall, P/F: (604) 921-1084; Posihall@paralynx.com or visit www.dyslexia.com

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

SEPTEMBER

21-22 BC Educators for Distributed Learning PSA Conference #2. Jane Youngberg (604) 590-2255, local 258 or visit www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/bcdlpsa/EDLconference2.html

OCTOBER

6-7 Burnaby. The Computer Using Educators of BC (CUEBC) hosts Horizons 2000 at SFU. Information at: www.bctf.bc.ca/CUEBC

19-21 Vancouver. Realms of Gold: The 5th National Literacy Conf. Consult www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/bctela. Contact: Birgit Nielsen or Jean Stubbs at Delta Sr. Sec., (604) 596-7471; Fax: (604) 596-6192.

19-21 Coquitlam. BC Teacher-Librarians' (BCTLA) PSA Conference 2000, Teaching and Technology: Breaking the Barriers. See web site for reg and call for presenters: www.s95.sd43.bc.ca:8000/district/TNT.htm

19-21 Victoria. 39th NW Mathematics Conference: Year 2000 Math for the Millennium. Sponsored by BCAMT PSA. Contact: Laurel Evans, (250) 652-1135; laurel_evans@sd63.bc.ca www.nwmath2000.com

20 Vancouver. Building the Co-operative Classroom sponsored by the Co-operative Education PSA. SFU Harbour Centre. Cost \$50-\$60. Contact: Holly Stibbs, (604) 461-3332; holly@istar.ca

20 North Vancouver. "A Coat of Many Colours." Mini Drama Conference sponsored by ABCDE (Assn. of BC Drama Educators PSA) at Carson Graham Sec. Contact: Larry Bauer, F: (604) 736-9754; lbauer@talmudtorah.com

20 Richmond. Primary Leadership 2000: BC Primary Teachers' Annual Fall Conf. Delta Pacific Resort & Conference Centre. Musical Opening by Charlotte Diamond and keynote "One Destination-Many Roads," by Dr. Gary Phillips. BCPTA Members \$140. Contact: Conference Co-ordinator Grace Sinnema, (604) 850-5526; F: (604) 850-1817; johgra@aol.com

Access the complete calendar at www.bctf.bc.ca/events/PD-Calendar.html. #Additions changes dstagg@bctf.bc.ca

The Nisga'a project

by Michael Fitzgerald

During Spring Break 1999, I travelled up to the Nass Valley at the invitation of a Nisga'a colleague. At the same time, in Vancouver, the BCTF AGM was passing the recommendations of the Task Force on First Nations Education. Those seemingly unrelated events were later to form the basis of what I would eventually call The Nisga'a Project.

Those few days last year spent listening to, and discussing, both substantive and broad, comprehensive issues with a wide spectrum of people from three of the Nass valley communities were to be the initial impetus in beginning my thinking about how these experiences could be shared, with whom, and to what end. Upon reading the policy discussion guide, I soon realized that enriching and rewarding connections might be constructed from a conflation of these two events.

In my work as a faculty associate in the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University, I had participated in numerous conversations with faculty and students on the integration of First Nations families into the urban fabric of the Lower Mainland and, more specifically, how non-Aboriginal teachers might approach the problems faced by First Nations children. My teaching colleague, Susanne Cruickshank, who had taught in Lytton and East Vancouver, shared her knowledge of First Nations with our student teachers and me. I began to see the connection when I read the BCTF task force report opening: "The most important changes in the school for Aboriginal students will come about with greater understanding by teachers." What better way than to have student teachers experience the lives of some of those children and listen to Aboriginal elders and educators share with us.

During the summer of 1999, I began connecting ideals with a concrete scheme. After creating the project document, I found widespread support, and the faxes, e-mails, and telephone calls began with Nisga'a contacts in the North. In the fall, Deanna Nyce, CEO of *Wilp Wilxo'oskwil Nisga'a* (Nisga'a House of Learning), in New Aiyansh, and faculty associate and Nisga'a colleague on campus, Marjean Brown, provided enormous help in the project's realization.



Stringing oolichans on cedar poles for smoking.

Nyce suggested a Nisga'a-language-and-culture course for student teachers as preparation for a possible one-week practicum in three of the four schools in the Nass Valley, an ad hoc extension of Education 402, their initial Lower Mainland practicum in PDP. Spring Break and the week following seemed the ideal time for implementing the project.

During this period we learned about our personal motives and, consequently, about ourselves by simply listening.

Brown invited two other faculty associates and me to New Aiyansh to attend two important ceremonies in November—a *yukw*, or the moving of stones, in which the headstones of deceased members of the community would be collected and transported in a procession to the cemetery, and the Naming Ceremony, a part of the *yukw* in which selected people (including Brown) would be honoured with Nisga'a names. Both ceremonies were moving and culturally significant. During that stay, we finalized plans for bringing students up to the valley. In January, 11 students applied and were accepted for the project. That the cost of the trip was borne by the students themselves kept the number of participants down.

Brown says, "I believe that it is not what teachers *don't know* that presents barriers for success for Aboriginal students, but what teachers *don't get to know or experience*. Therefore, we need to provide opportunities for experiences, such as this Nass Valley trip, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and students that will help facilitate a disposition of openness that we need in order for them to develop a deeper understanding of the various roles and responsibilities we all



The unity totem pole carved by Eli Gosnell and standing in front of the Nisga'a Elementary-Secondary School in New Aiyansh.

need to assume and partake in to make our public school system a better place for Aboriginal students in this province."

The students began to articulate why the project would be meaningful in informing their future practice. John said, "I wanted to resolve some of the unease I had about stereotypical perspectives on First Nations people." Janet, as well, was eager to explore the differences and similarities between cultures. Each student had a personal agenda—perception, misconceptions that needed to be refined, clarified, reshaped. From there, we made connections to another proposed task force policy: "The teacher recognizes that treating all students just the same is not a form of social justice, but is a form of submerging the aboriginal student in a culture that is based on European patterns." During that period, we learned about our personal motives and, consequently, about ourselves by simply listening. That practice would be the central focus of our entire sojourn.

We left Vancouver on March 19, 1999, with great expectations and a sense of unknowing curiosity about our forthcoming experiences. We arrived in the Nass Valley about 100 kilometres north of Terrace; none of us was prepared for the quietly awesome landscape under a warm sky awaiting us, one we thoroughly explored over the next two weeks.

The students were soon introduced to the Nisga'a families with whom they would be billeted so that learned experiences during the day could be shared in the evenings. Some students were billeted in *Laxgalts'ap* (Greenville) and others in *Gitwinksihlkw* (Canyon City).



Cutting up fresh sea lion meat for smoking.

From the moment we arrived, we were warmly and graciously invited to share in the life of the Nisga'a. "I don't think that at any point was I made to feel like a stranger or a tourist," says Nerissa. Our days were full of rich experiences—among other things, participating in discussions with cultural and government co-ordinators, taking a week-long workshop with educator and Elder Bert McKay, engaging in a "mini-practicum" in the three valley schools facilitated by principals David Griffin, Ed McMillan, and Ray Skelly, assisting in the carving of a new totem pole under the guidance of a master carver, spending a day travelling to Fishery Bay to watch the oolichan catch and the making of oolichan grease, stringing and drying oolichan, cutting half-metre lengths of freshly caught sea lion meat for smoking, and being invited to dinner with various families. The students' time was full, rich, experiential, and ultimately, exhausting! As

"...One hundred, thirteen years of waiting was about to culminate in this extraordinary treaty, relevant not only to these people but to all Canadians."

one of our hosts Irene Seguin states: "Often we get new teachers in the valley and they spend a lot of time adjusting... I'm really excited about this program because I'm sure that this is going to be a model that other institutions will follow. It's wonderful to have these pre-teachers up here learning about our culture... [the students] have been like sponges soaking up everything that they can."

The Nisga'a land deal was about to be given royal assent in Ottawa. Each one of us marvelled at the patience of the Nisga'a. One hundred thirteen

years of waiting was about to culminate in the extraordinary treaty, relevant not only to these people but to all Canadians. "I had thought," says John, "that the land-claims-settlement issue could be viewed in isolation from some of the other things that I was curious about when we came up here to the valley, but I found that every conversation I got involved in inevitably turned to the land claims issue because it correlates with virtually all the other issues that they have to deal with here... They can't move forward and they can't move back until this issue is dealt with." The current generation of children, as we heard many times, will grow and mature knowing that this land will now belong to them and that that will affect, not just their current identities, but their entire futures. But, as Tina notes metaphorically: "As I walked across the new bridge connecting *Gitwinksihlkw* to the Nass Valley, I realized the Nisga'a are moving forward... The new treaty represents all the turbulent and happy times they will face... But then as I walked across the old suspension bridge I also believed that the Nisga'a will always look back and hold on to their old traditions."

We arrived back in Vancouver changed and enlightened. The students will continue in PDP and will undoubtedly carry the experiences with them. Many supporters are urging the continuation of the project, citing its value in mirroring the task force proposals. My tenure at SFU is ending; others will have to come forward to facilitate future projects. The school community, the Aboriginal urban community, and the student teachers will all be beneficiaries of small initiatives such as this because we realize the inherent commonalities. The project's future look may be entirely different. Its continuance, will require, as the Nisga'a people have shown us, a very patient but firm tenacity. We can never forget the significance of the "large picture" as long as we continue creating those small pictures. We've learned that much.

Michael Fitzgerald is a Vancouver teacher seconded as a faculty associate at Simon Fraser University for the past two years.

JANET FRIESEN PHOTOS