

Teacher

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It's about time!



David Chudnovsky told 700 colleagues rallying at the legislature that what's really essential for public education is improved pay for teachers and better learning conditions for students.

by Nancy Knickerbocker

It's about time for all the changes we've been striving for. It's about time to stand together side by side. Our schools will always be the heart of our community. Let's guide them carefully. It's about time.

The rousing chorus to the BCTF campaign song resounded into the halls of the Legislative Buildings as 700 AGM delegates sang and cheered to highlight teachers' objectives in this round of collective bargaining.

The 85th Annual General Meeting occurred over spring break at the Victoria Conference Centre, a short walk from the seat of government. At the lively noon-hour rally, held March 19, BCTF President David Chudnovsky was not at all shy about expressing teachers' demands for a significant salary increase.

"In the last nine years, teachers have received an average raise of less than 1% per year, and that is not even close to the rate of inflation," Chudnovsky told the crowd. "If our salaries had kept pace with inflation, the average teacher would have \$24,000 more in [his]/her pocket today."

With the teacher shortage across Canada and abroad, the B.C. government must ensure that salaries are competitive to attract talented young graduates and retain experienced teachers.

Chudnovsky also warned Gordon Campbell's Liberals that their stated plan to impose

essential services legislation on teachers will result in unnecessary disruption in public schools.

"Is education essential? You bet it's essential, Mr. Campbell, but not in the way you mean," he said. "It's essential that students in intermediate and secondary grades have smaller classes. It's essential that Aboriginal students be given a better chance at success. And it's essential that teachers have the right to full and free collective bargaining."

Chudnovsky pointed out that teachers bargain for themselves, to be sure. But they also bargain on behalf of students and their

"Many of the improvements in our schools have been achieved not through policy decisions by government, but by vigorous negotiations."

learning conditions. "Many of the improvements in our schools have been achieved not through policy decisions by government, but by vigorous negotiations."

He challenged the Liberals to articulate a positive program for public education, rather than proceed with an ill-advised plan that will inevitably provoke conflict.

Other speakers at the AGM echoed Chudnovsky's concerns. Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, referred to the recent Alberta election, in which voters returned Premier Ralph Klein with a huge majority even though in "Ralph's world," education and health-care funding have been slashed.

"Of course," Sinclair added, "it's not always fun living in Glen's world or Ujjal's world either. You were outraged, as we were, by the suspension of CUPE's right to strike during last year's dispute."

But the direction Gordon Campbell is taking as he heads to the polls "has to strike fear into anyone who cares about education in this province," Sinclair said. "In Gordon's world, we'll have charter schools and privatization under the guise of choice. In Gordon's world, education workers have no right to strike. I don't know about you, but I have no intention of living there, but I'm afraid we're going to have to visit for a while."

In another keynote address, Seth Klein, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, offered an assessment of the state of the B.C. economy as teachers begin this round of bargaining. The outlook for 2001 is good, with a predicted increase in revenues of \$1.3 billion over the year. Even within the framework of a third balanced budget, Klein said, there is a great deal of room for fair wage settlements, increases

to social assistance, health, and education, as well as new spending in areas such as home care, childcare, and social housing.

Klein also debunked the theory that tax cuts will increase government revenues. "It's an appealing notion, right? After all, it's hard to say no when someone says you can have it all: tax cuts, increased revenues,

"...the notion that tax cuts will stimulate so much economic growth that they will pay for themselves is a delusion."

and thus more money to fund healthcare and education, and other public programs. The problem is, the proposition is just plain wrong."

In fact, he said, "the notion that tax cuts will stimulate so much economic growth that they will pay for themselves is a delusion."

He acknowledged that tax cuts do offer a small economic stimulus, but even the B.C. Business Summit has admitted that its desired tax cut of \$1.5 billion could only recoup one-third of its value. The rest would have to be paid for by cuts in government spending.

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media relations officer.

President's message



David Chudnovsky

We teachers are sometimes reluctant to speak out on our own behalf. We're going to get over that shyness in this round of bargaining.

Over the last nine years, our salary increases have averaged less than 1% per year. That's about half the increase in the cost of living. If during that period we had achieved raises that simply kept up with inflation, the average B.C. teacher would have \$24,000 more in his/her pocket.

No one ever went into teaching to get rich. And we know that as a result of this round of bargaining, teachers will not join the ranks of the wealthy. But if we are going to attract the best and the brightest of the young people coming out of university, and if we are to retain the experienced teachers we need in our schools, our salaries need to be competitive.

Over the next few months, each of us will be called upon to contribute to our bargaining campaign—by attending a meeting, writing a letter to the editor, speaking with a friend or relative about our bargaining objectives, or perhaps even participating in job action. Every contribution will be vital.

The most important factor in achieving a fair contract is not the brilliance of our bargaining team. They are brilliant, and we are enormously proud of them. It's not the experience and wisdom of our staff. They have tremendous experience and great wisdom. It's not the depth and breadth of the research we do in preparation for the bargaining table. We are doing that research. It is comprehensive and credible.

No, the single most important tool in achieving our collective agreement is the participation, the confidence, and the unity of you, our members. You will make the difference.

David

Construction fumes unhealthy

With extra classrooms being added to the school where I teach, we recently had the roof tarred. The fumes permeated every classroom in the school as well as the children's play area. Out of a class of 20 students, two got headaches, two more had nausea and a headache, one student was dizzy, three had stomach pains, and one had nausea.

I question the present practice of tarring a roof while children are exposed to the fumes and wonder about the respiratory ailments in the future. Isn't there another time this can be done?
Mallee Stanley
Coquitlam

Cola deals bad for teeth

Dianne Dunsmore's excellent article, ("Rich contracts," *Teacher*, March 2001) about contracts with the pop industry in our schools, points out the legal and ethical pitfalls of schools' selling their souls to these companies, but she didn't mention the real danger of the products to students' teeth.

Just last week, my dentist told me that about 10 years ago, the dental profession in B.C. thought it had finally made promising inroads into dental-decay prevention among school-age children. He pointed out that since then, corresponding with aggressive marketing of colas, there has been an alarming increase in tooth decay, especially among teenagers.

Perhaps we can look forward to in-school dental clinics funded by the very same companies that created their necessity.
Brian Ryan
Halfmoon Bay

Info on Oaxaca in Vancouver

While I was volunteering at the Center of Hope for Children in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico, Jodi Bauman, the vice president, showed me an article ("Next summer, help street children in Oaxaca," *Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2000).

In Vancouver, the Oaxaca Street Children Grassroots Society was founded in 1999 to assist the center in Oaxaca. The main objectives are to provide financial contributions to the general revenue fund, clothing for the children, and office and medical supplies requested by the centre.

I would be very pleased to speak with any of your members who might be contemplating a trip to the centre this summer and answer any questions that they might have. Please contact me at (604) 946-6210 (days) or (604) 688-8639 (evenings).

Bernard Sanderson
Vancouver

Getting by in Merritt

While I congratulate Troy Marshall in his tenacity for trying to make a career out of teaching ("Tales from a new teacher," *Teacher*, Jan./Feb. 2001), it does not appear to me he was "forced" into any of his decisions.

I too, had another "life" before teaching. When I made my decision to go back to university, I made sure I knew about the program and courses I would be taking. I also made sure my wife and I would be able to make all our financial obligations without me working. Being a math/science graduate, I too was told there would be lots of teaching opportunities in the Lower Mainland, I reluctantly broadened my scope and was hired for a job in Merritt. Enjoying the enthusiasm of teaching, I too volunteer to help with many school and union activities. However, I also realize the value of doing something "else" just for me, which is playing the piano and getting together with others to play music just for the heck of it.

My wife and I have needed to make adjustments in our financial priorities from time to time, as she has not been able to find sustained work during our 10 years in Merritt. I currently have a mortgage and a loan and have had my share of financial ups and downs. However, my bank manager does think teaching is a good profession, as I have a stable job (in an area with an unstable economy) with a reasonable salary to meet my financial obligations now and into the future.

Peter Vogt
Merritt

CFS Study needs participants

I am writing to request the help of your readers in a study on chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) that I am conducting in collaboration with Dr. Grant Stiver, Division of Infectious Diseases, Vancouver General Hospital. CFS is a poorly understood illness characterized by incapacitating fatigue, flu-like symptoms, and cognitive disturbances. Teachers and nurses seem to be especially at risk.

The purpose of the study is to identify the illness perceptions, coping and social support strategies people with CFS use to deal with symptoms, the impact of illness perceptions and strategies on functioning, anxiety, depression, and the utilization of health care services. Respondents complete four sets of questionnaires over a two-year period. I hope to enroll 160 individuals with CFS over the next year.

If any reader has CFS, or knows someone with CFS who may be interested in being a study participant, please contact me at 875-5555 ext. 62366 or pager 871-5263.

Kenna Sleight, RN, MSN
Vancouver General Hospital

Yukon teachers grateful

On behalf of myself, my executive, and all our members, I want to thank President David Chudnovsky and the BCTF for all your help and support.

We entered into our first-ever job action with trepidation. We had gone through several unsatisfactory rounds of negotiations until the members finally said "Enough is enough."

The BCTF president had provided advice and offers of support prior to our strike vote, but it was his very timely phone call on our first day of job action that really meant something to our members. The BCTF donation and words of support, followed by interviews with the local media, were further evidence for our members that they were not standing alone.

We send the BCTF Executive and all BCTF members, our heartfelt thanks for the role that BCTF played in helping us achieve a fair collective agreement.

The Yukon Teachers' Association wishes you all the best in your upcoming negotiations, and we stand ready to help you in whatever way we can.

Paul Nordahl
President
Yukon Teachers' Association

Looking for Mr. Stewart

I am trying to find a teacher in your country. His name is Steven J. Stewart. Mr. Stewart is an Australian who came to your country in the 1960s. He was a very dedicated teacher, and he was very helpful in moulding my education. For this reason, I would love to be able to contact him and let him know that his efforts in teaching me paid off. Mr. Stewart's last school that he taught at in Australia was Auburn Central Public School, in New South Wales. I am sure one of your readers would probably know Mr. Stewart, and if they do, if they could pass on my details to him so he could contact me, it would be very much appreciated. Phone 61 2 49548688, e-mail vk2fa@arrl.net

Grahame Brien
Australia

Travel and learn

On five occasions since 1989, my husband and I attended different seminars for North American Educators that are normally held early in July in Germany and a neighbouring country or countries. The sessions are for two or two-and-a-half weeks. We arrange our flights and flight times to Germany and return so that we can add on visits. All ground transportation, meals prepared by regional cooks, lectures in English, accommodation, cultural visits, etc. are included in the seminar fee.

This is the way to see western Europe with our Canadian dollar because the German government

and German businesses subsidize this venture so that one is paying only about one-third of the actual cost. We have also found that this is the way to gain professional development, as you are with North American educators, and you visit classrooms and visit with European educators. Some of this year's seminars are as follows: Germany and Poland July 8-21; Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary July 2-15; Germany, the Czech Republic July 1-12; Responding to Globalization July 13-21; Education Made in Germany July 17-25; Cultural Diversity in Germany July 2-13; Urban Landscapes in Transition June 30-July 13; Women and Leadership July 9-19. For more information about this wonderful program, phone 011-49-711-22 25-177. Fax 011-49-711-22 25-195, e-mail stellmach@ifa.de, <http://www.ifa.de/edutavel>.

Mary Nemeth
Retired, Victoria

Want to know what's new on the web?

Sign up for the new BCTF e-alert lists! The BCTF has created two new e-mail lists to alert members and non-members to new information on the BCTF web site—www.bctf.bc.ca. Our web site has more than 3,000 documents, several databases, and streaming video and audio. It is updated every day to keep you up-to-date with important issues, such as collective bargaining and negotiations, professional development, and social justice.

Once a week, BCTF staff will send a message to the list giving you a short description of new content, and a link that will connect you directly to the new information on the web site. It is an easy and convenient way to keep informed.

Access the BCTF web site sign-up page—www.bctf.bc.ca/SignUp. Members will join the bctf-e-alert list, and non-members will join the bctf-web-alert list.

You need to enter your e-mail address, name, and school district. You will receive a confirmation message when you have successfully joined the list.

Please do sign up. We're sure you will find it a useful reminder of the wealth of information on our award-winning site.

—Diana Broome

Write to us

Letters to "Readers Write" may be edited for reasons of legality, taste, brevity, and clarity. To be considered for publication, they must be not more than 150 to 200 words, signed, and include a home phone number for verification.



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New teachers' conference

by Jan Eastman

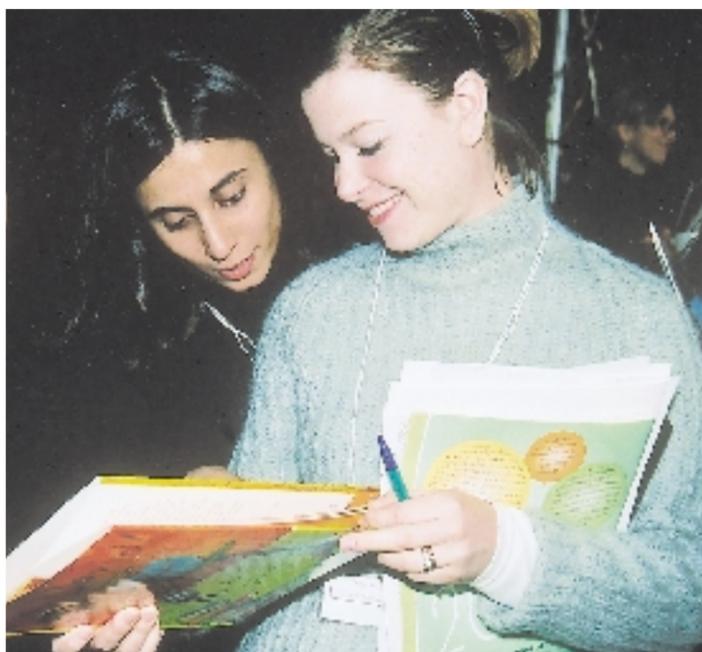
The seventh annual BCTF conference for new teachers, held February 9-10, 2001, at the Delta Resort and Conference Centre, in Richmond, was, again, a popular event. Four hundred new teachers attended, bringing with them palpable levels of energy, excitement, and enthusiasm, as well as enormous interest.

The cadre of excellent facilitators came from provincial specialist associations, PD associates, staff, and other members to lead the 70 workshop sessions.

BCTF President David Chudnovsky welcomed the participants, and he and Janice Tapp, chairperson of the PSA Council, drew the first names for PSA memberships, a record number this year at 52. The display area, filled to capacity, offered a wide array of PSA and commercial material. Networking around the display area is a hallmark of the conference, continuing well into the social mix-and-mingle at the end of Friday's sessions.

The conference is one of the many BCTF initiatives for welcoming and supporting new members. Increasingly, it seems, the nominal registration fee of \$50 (which includes food, prizes, displays, workshops, and materials), is being paid by locals and/or school districts—a welcome trend. Participants are encouraged to access PD funds for TOC, transportation, and accommodation costs. While most attendees come from the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley, the conference is a provincial one, with representation from all regions. Unfortunately, some new teachers had to return to their classrooms on Friday morning because of the unavailability of TOCs.

There is no doubt that new teachers find the conference useful and enjoyable—an opportunity to stand back from their classrooms for a brief time, reflect, share and literally grab new ideas, tips, and resources for immediate use. Participants describe the conference as a highlight of the first year of



The New Teachers' Conference attracted over 400 teachers who used the opportunity to attend workshops, browse materials, and network with colleagues.

teaching, reporting that it exceeds expectations, provides high-quality workshops, and warmly welcomes them to the BCTF. Participants are also clear that practical strategies and networking with others are the order of the day, as well as learning again that "I am not alone."

New teachers tell us that teaching is harder than it looks, that it is in fact exhausting, but that it is more satisfying than they imagined it would be. As to what will keep them in classrooms—the kids will. One new teacher spoke of her "intense pleasure in watching kids love learning." Being a learner oneself will also extend a new teacher's career. Support from colleagues, from a mentor, and from experienced teachers sharing their teaching style, philosophy, and tips at conferences such as this are needed and valued.

Facilitators and organizers alike clearly enjoy the new-teacher audience. "Enthusiastic, positive, ready to go" is how Lori Robinson, primary workshop facilitator describes participants. In her view, recent

graduates are better prepared than ever. But because a new teacher may be hired late, have assignment changes, and find resources stripped, and because the curriculum is not scripted, teaching is harder than ever. Organizing, planning, fitting IRPs and performance standards together, communicating with parents, and building effective relationships are all hot topics in her popular workshop.

While there is much good reason to continue this successful event on an annual basis, efforts to support and retain new teachers in the profession must focus on induction and mentoring programs. Such programs clearly benefit new teachers; they also benefit the teacher who is the mentor. When trusting collaborative relationships between teachers aimed at breaking down walls of isolation, enhancing practice, and providing personal support are developed in schools, students and the school culture alike reap an enormous benefit.

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

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

Class size. "142. (1) The number of teachers in the service of a Board of School Trustees toward whose salaries grants shall be paid by the Minister of Finance shall not, unless approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, exceed the number as ascertained according to the following standards:

"(a) For each elementary school having 35 or fewer pupils in regular attendance, one teacher; for each elementary school having 36 to 80 pupils, inclusive, in regular attendance, two teachers; and for each elementary school having over 80 pupils in regular attendance, one teacher for each 40 pupils and for any fraction of that number..."

— BC Teacher, June 1931

50 years ago

Teachers are even more important to the community than doctors. The scope of their profession is, or should be,

greater. Its requirements should be as exacting and are more complex. Teachers have often reached toward these things, but they have never, as a whole profession, quite grasped them. I believe that the normal workings of state education, by preferring obedient civil servants to creative individuals, throttles not merely the profession's hope for itself, but the whole broad meaning of education.

— Roderick L. Haig-Brown

— BC Teacher, March 1951

30 years ago

Seeing the young people last summer on Fourth Avenue in Vancouver or on the Dam Square in Amsterdam or the Spanish Steps in Rome, one was struck by what must be the unmitigated boredom of such a life style. There they sat like great herds of somnolent seals, staring vacantly into space, flopping over occasionally as the sun moved around.

— BC Teacher, April 1971

10 years ago

I began teaching in the '70s, and I cannot remember a time when the education system in B.C. has not been in turmoil. I started out just as the only NDP government in B.C.'s history was defeated and Bill Bennett's government launched a second dynasty of conservatism...

...For five long years of restraint (1982-87), teachers' wages were cut back by the Compensation Stabilization Program (CSP), presided over by Ed Peck, now of the Industrial Relations Council and Bill 19. In 1982, our salaries lagged behind those of our Ontario counterparts by 4.9%. Last year, that difference had grown to a staggering 18.9%. Under CSP and restraint, increments were frozen, class sizes increased, preparation time shrunk. And today, we have Bill 82, a law even more draconian than CSP.

— Teacher Newsmagazine, April 1991

— Janet Amsden, Fairview Elementary School, Maple Ridge

Top 10 BCTF lesson aids

1 Critical Challenges in English for Secondary Students.

Edited by Samantha Butler, Holly Husarski, and Nancy Shea. 144 p. 1998. A collection of lesson ideas to assist English teachers in promoting critical thinking in secondary English classes. Genres studied include novels, short stories, poetry, plays, essays, songs and fairy tales; and a selection of reading strategies is included. Sample activities include: assessing which character in *Lord of the Flies* is the best leader; arguing for or against the inclusion of a particular novel in the curriculum for a specific grade level; judging the extent to which the fate of Romeo and Juliet was beyond their control; and then assessing students' own levels of control over their fates. Grades 8-12. LA 1070—\$20.95

2 Harry Potter—The Philosopher's Stone—A Study Guide.

Raymond Garford. 58 p. 2001. Includes chapter analysis for the 17 chapters of *The Philosopher's Stone*, activities for elementary grades, activities for intermediate grades, and answer keys. Grades 3-7. LA 9109—\$5.75

3 Cougar Cove.

Julie Lawson 141 p. 1996. This novel is about 11-year-old Sam's first visit to the remote West Coast of Vancouver Island. Her older cousins tease "the city kid" mercilessly, when they're not ignoring her altogether. She often finds herself left to her own devices. The woods and beaches around Brackenwood Point offer plenty of room to explore. Then one day Sam comes face-to-face with a wild cougar and her two cubs, and her summer vacation suddenly gets much more exciting. The author won the Ontario Silver Birch Award in 1997 for this book and the novel is a Canadian Children's Book Centre Choice. Grades 4-8. LA 9072A—\$8.95

Cougar Cove—A Teacher's Guide.

Anne Nilsen. 50 p. 1999. Contains ideas and activities encompassing all areas of language arts, as well as science and art. A sample framework at the beginning aids planning. Grades 4-8. LA9072B—\$8.95

4 The Lives of Medieval Women: A Co-operatively Planned Humanities Unit on Medieval Women for the Late Intermediate Level.

Judith Coffin, Marlowe Irvine, Ramona Sousa. 73 p. 1994. This unit attempts to present a glimpse of the lives of peasant, middle class, and aristocratic medieval women. Ten activities, handouts, and summary of resources required are included. Also includes length of time for each activity, teacher preparation, class procedure, and suggestions for evaluation. Grade 8. LA 9248—\$8.25

5 Experimenting with Electricity.

Gordon R. Gore. 48 p. ©1999. This is a student resource intended for use by keen individual students who wish to experiment with electricity and magnetism. The book is illustrated with drawings, photographs and cartoons. Topics include static electricity, current electricity, electromagnets and permanent magnets. Grades 4-7. LA 9546—\$11.00

6 Experimenting with Air.

Gordon R. Gore. 46 p. ©1999. This is a student resource intended for use by keen individual students who wish to experiment with the properties of air. Topics include Is Air Real Matter?, Air Pressure (including Pascal's Law and its many uses), Moving Air (Bernoulli), Flight (kites, airplanes) and Other Ways To Fly (hot air balloons, dirigibles, parachutes). The book is illustrated with drawings, photographs, and cartoons. Grades 4-7. LA 9547—\$11.00

7 Middle School Chemistry.

Gordon R. Gore 170 p. ©2001. This sourcebook for science teachers includes a collection of text material and hands-on teaching ideas, which may be useful to teachers in middle schools and junior secondary schools. Experiments are substantial and interesting for beginning chemistry students. This book combines the author's previous two science 8 and 9 Chemistry books (for B.C.) into one sourcebook that is suitable for curriculum across Canada. A 28-page teacher's guide is included with each book. Middle School LA 4035—\$20.00

8 Middle School Physics.

Gordon R. Gore. 288 p. This sourcebook for science teachers includes a collection of text material and hands-on activities, which may be useful to teachers in middle schools and junior secondary schools. There are more than 60 investigations in this book. Experiments are substantial and interesting for beginning physics students. This book combines the author's previous three Science 8, 9 and 10 Physics books for (B.C.) into one sourcebook that is suitable for curriculum across Canada. A 29-page teacher's guide is included with each book. Middle School LA 4036—\$25.00

9 Shaking the Tree—Social Responsibility in Education.

Susanne Tabata. 55 min. VHS videocassette. ©1995. Radical philosopher, author and noted professor of Linguistics Noam Chomsky keynotes this video which argues the need for social responsibility in education. Social issues covered include racism, racism and First Nations, gender inequality, poverty, homophobia, violence, and the environment. This program was originally developed as a teacher resource; however, mature students could benefit from its use if carefully guided. *Shaking the Tree* is the companion video to LA SR300 *Talk with Me*, which was developed for students Grades 8-12. Includes a discussion guide. *Shaking the Tree* was awarded the Silver Hugo Statue at the 1997 Chicago International Film Festival and the Apple Award at the 1996 National Educational Media Network. Teacher. LA SR400—\$37.95

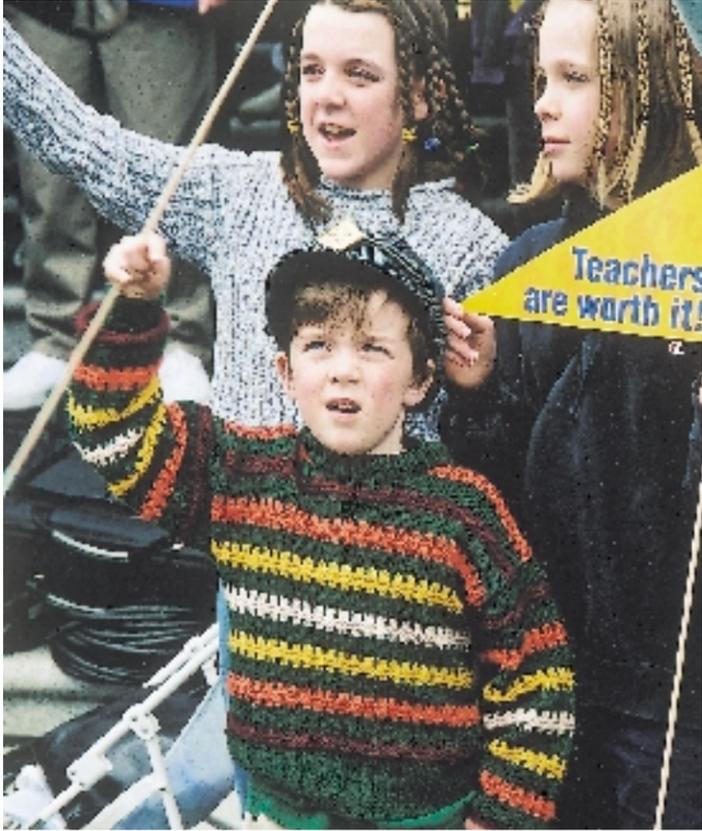
10 Beans and Their Buddies.

Produced by the B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. 134 p. 1993. This resource is designed to introduce primary students to the world of food production—that is, plants and animals. Most children today have little contact with the farm community, and therefore, little chance to learn where their food really comes from. They honestly believe that milk comes from a carton and that food magically appears on supermarket shelves. This resource book begins to correct that misconception. Twenty science activities in this resource and activity book are organized under fall, winter, and spring. Suggestions to integrate the seeds theme across the curriculum are outlined. Excellent reproducible pages are included in a cerlox-bound book. Recommended by the B.C. Ministry of Education. Grades 1-4. LA 8514—\$18.95

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.

AGM 2001



Carpeting out and handwashing in

An historic event occurred at the 2001 AGM as delegates discussed the first health and safety recommendations from the first provincial health and safety advisory committee. The recommendations came forward from the Executive Committee as part of setting the stage for our expanding and ongoing work in health and safety.

Lively debates ensued on subjects that ranged from handwashing to ozone generators and from removal of carpeting to violence prevention. Teachers told stories of moving and sometimes humorous events in their schools that underscored the importance of ensuring everyone's health and safety, including teachers'.

Notable recommendations included the removal of all carpeting from schools over the long term, background checks on all students new to a school, recording of all violent incidents and informing staff of them, notification of any risk of violence from parents/guardians, handwashing programs, adequate furnishing of staff-rooms, and the provision of custodians at all times schools are in session.

Handwashing, known to be the most effective method of preventing the spread of communicable diseases, was the subject of one of the lengthier debates. A recommendation to include handwashing programs in all schools, and soap in student and staff washrooms, provoked a lengthy debate in which delegates made amendments to strengthen the recommendation. The meeting decided to include warm water, soap, paper towels, and taps that do not turn off automatically and prematurely. The staff of the conference centre where the AGM was held reported that they had to fill the soap and paper towel dispensers at a much faster rate than normal!

The media picked up on the recommendation that background checks be done on all students new to a school prior to attendance and lambasted teachers for promoting violations of students' civil liberties.

These are the same media that daily attack public schools for supposedly rampant bullying. Delegates at the AGM got it right—they understood that a simple telephone call to a student's previous school or pre-school could help ensure appropriate program placement, resources, and elimination of the risk of violence. Several school districts already have such procedures in which students are held out of class for one day while phone checks are completed. Delegates spoke eloquently of the need for this

This AGM did raise our health and safety consciousness.

kind of procedure wherein students receive positive starts in new schools because their needs are addressed up front and wherein all other students and staff are protected from unnecessary risks of violence.

Recommendations to record all violent incidents and to inform staff of any risk of violence from parents or guardians of students carried easily, upholding the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requirements and enshrining them in member policy for education and awareness. In addition, a recommendation to have safety plans for all teachers working alone helped interpret the working alone regulation by listing applicable situations such as portables, remote wings, hospital/homebound, and so forth. A specific recommendation for hospital/homebound and distributed learning teachers that requires that they be assured a non-smoking environment, the presence of another adult, and a means of communication in an emergency carried. Teachers on call were also singled out in a recommendation to highlight the necessity of informing them upon call out and/or upon arrival at the worksite of the occupational health and safety risks of the assignment.

Removal of carpeting in schools was another lively debate in which delegates spoke eloquently about health and safety hazards. Val Hamilton, member of the provincial Health and Safety Advisory Committee and a VESTA delegate, described the carpets as "cess pools" in which bacteria, bodily fluids, and other grime is ground into rugs that are never properly or regularly cleaned. An amendment to ensure health and safety related to the removal of carpeting—such as noise abatement—carried. Victoria school district has been gathering used tennis balls and putting them on the legs of chairs and tables in a cost-effective, practical approach to that problem.

Delegates did not just want adequately furnished staff-rooms; they wanted *spacious* staffrooms with outside windows and they did not want them used as classrooms or first aid rooms. The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requirement that there be a dedicated lunchroom for all staff has now been interpreted, BCTF style!

Delegates also supported the inclusion of occupational health and safety training in teacher-education programs so that student teachers (who are covered by WCB during practicum) and all prospective teachers are taught preventative measures to protect their health and safety before they begin teaching. Speakers mentioned posture and breathing techniques to protect our voices as one example of training.

Students on work experience, who are covered by WCB, also need to receive occupational health and safety training appropriate to the job and worksite and should not be placed in a workplace that is not covered by WCB, according to BCTF policy set at the AGM.

This AGM did raise our health and safety consciousness. Many of the evaluations commented on the comfort level of the chairs, the quality of the air, and the lighting, and many also complimented the quality of the debate!

— Lynne Sinclair



The BCTF's 85th AGM demonstrated a tremendous sense of unity for the third round of provincial bargaining.

Executive committee election results

President David Chudnovsky (Surrey), First Vice-President Neil Worboys (Kitimat), and Second Vice-President Jinny Sims (Nanaimo) were re-elected for one-year terms.

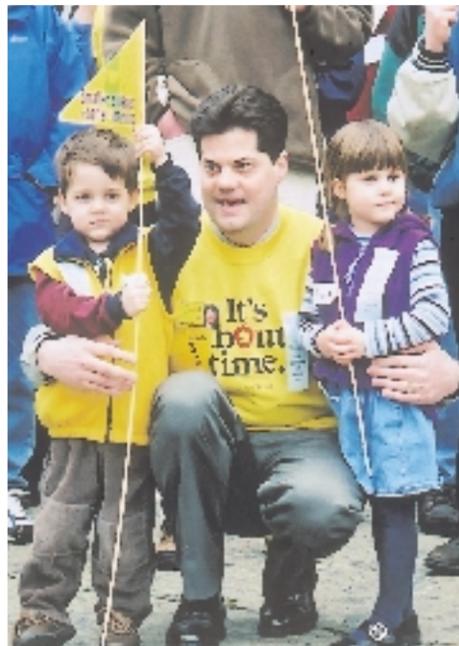
Re-elected as Members-at-Large for 2001-03 were Barb Parrott (Vancouver Elementary), Linda Shuto (Burnaby), and Kathleen Thomson (Coquitlam).

New Members-at-Large are Dave Harper (Powell River), elected for a two-year term, and John Chisamore (Creston Valley) and Murray Helmer (Cariboo-Chilcotin) for one-year terms. Continuing as Members-at-Large for one more year are Patricia Clough (Shuswap) and Margaret Little (Peace River North).

2001-02 Executive Committee



David Chudnovsky President Neil Worboys 1st Vice-president Jinny Sims 2nd Vice-president John Chisamore Dave Harper Murray Helmer Barb Parrott Members-at-Large ELECTED Linda Shuto Kathleen Thomson Patricia Clough Margaret Little Members-at-Large CONTINUING



(Clockwise from top left): Linda Watson congratulates David Chudnovsky on his re-election as president. Don Walmsley accepts Honorary Life Membership in the BCTF. Troy Marshall with his children at the rally in front of the Legislature. Delegates wrapped up the AGM singing *It's about time...* Burnaby teachers' brought their banner to the rally.



PETER OWENS PHOTOS

David Yorke speaks to the 2001 AGM



Don't be afraid to take on new challenges in the new and innovative and creative ways that we know teachers can always come up with.

But for sure, don't lose sight of what has served you well in the past, and don't let go of the first principles that have made this an extraordinary organization with a record of gains for your members, for your schools, and for your society.

Hold tight to your professionalism—to that passion for public education and commitment to kids and pride in your craft of teaching that wins the respect of the world and is the source of the amazing energies of your members. You are a union of professionals; you have learned that your profession is strengthened by the gains of your union, and your union is strengthened by the power of your professionalism.

Maintain the tradition of

democracy—of high member involvement and real member participation in decisions—for which the BCTF is rightly famous. From my earliest days with the Federation, I have found the volunteer energies of teachers for their organization amazing, and a credit to you all. Every weekend small armies of teachers are working at the BCTF building on committees and PSAs and the business of your union; every school day in local offices and school staff-rooms, teachers are buzzing with the work of the organization, and every summer conference and spring break teachers like you give up well-

“...you have learned that your profession is strengthened by the gains of your union, and your union is strengthened by the power of your professionalism.”

earned holiday time in order to come and represent colleagues in these most important councils of leadership.

Continue to work through your problems in that democratic process of involvement you have developed. Try to keep your feet on the ground, and try to listen carefully when someone (maybe even a lawyer) gives you

advice you might not like. But, above all, continue to give your organization your best judgment in its excellent avenues and structures for action that are there for you and all the members of the BCTF.

And my final advice is this: Never underestimate the value of your unity.

You are an organization that represents every public school teacher in every school in every corner of this province. That basic unity has been granted to you by the work of generations of teachers before you, and it should never be taken for granted.

There are countries—there are provinces in this country—where teachers are not united in that basic way, and whatever the reason for it, they suffer from that division. You are the guardians of a precious prize: the single house in which all the teachers of this province come and discuss and debate and decide on the right course—and then act together to that end.

And I can tell you that when the teachers of this province act in that united way, you are a power to behold, a force for education and social justice that has made this province a better place in the past and that will do so in the future.

Never, ever, let anyone divert your eyes from that prize.

David Yorke was awarded Honorary Membership in the BCTF. This excerpt is from his acceptance speech.

Des vacances enrichissantes

by Christian Legault

Certains diront qu'il faut être fou pour passer quatre jours de notre semaine de relâche à une assemblée générale. Et bien, nous étions plus de 650 délégués réunis au Centre de Conférence de Victoria, pour l'AGA de la Fédération. C'était une rencontre de grande importance non seulement pour traiter d'affaires courantes mais aussi pour discuter la négociation imminente de notre prochaine convention collective et les prochaines élections provinciales.

Pour un petit nouveau comme moi, une AGA peut être intimidante. En effet, la lourdeur de l'ordre du jour et les différentes procédures peuvent être difficile à assimiler. Cependant, après une session et plusieurs questions, j'ai pu voir la lumière au bout du tunnel.

Il faut savoir que l'AGA est un événement très politique où une bonne stratégie est de mise pour les nombreuses associations locales ainsi que pour les candidats et candidates à l'élection. Il ne faut donc pas se surprendre que les vétérans sont ceux et celles qui mènent le bal et qui contrôlent la majorité des discussions et des interventions lors d'une telle assemblée. L'expérience est très importante pour faire entendre et valoir ses idées. Sans compter que, dans mon cas, la langue pourrait être en plus un obstacle lors d'une intervention!

Je peux vous affirmer qu'on pouvait sentir une fébrilité certaine venant de l'ensemble des délégués et ce, pour deux raisons majeures. La première étant les prochaines élections provinciales qui pourraient amener au pouvoir un parti politique dont le chef a bien fait comprendre à la population son intention de légiférer en matière d'éducation afin que l'enseignement devienne un service essentiel. Cette possibilité est

inacceptable pour l'assemblée, ce que celle-ci a démontré à plusieurs reprises lors des rencontres. La deuxième raison, bien entendu, ce sont les prochaines négociations, en vue du renouvellement de notre convention collective.

L'AGA est l'endroit où notre fédération prend d'importantes décisions et choisit ceux et celles qui nous représentent officiellement auprès des membres des diverses organisations avec qui nous travaillons et négocions. Lors de l'AGA 2001, il s'est pris des décisions déterminantes dans un processus démocratique, ce qui devrait mener à beaucoup d'action dans un avenir très rapproché. Ce fut une très belle expérience que j'aimerais bien renouveler.

La tenue de l'AGA dans la capitale provinciale nous a permis de faire connaître au gouvernement et à la population le sérieux de nos demandes. Ensemble, nous avons manifesté devant l'Assemblée législative de la CB, portant banderoles et tee-shirts, chantant avec fierté le slogan de cette année de négociations, C'est le temps ou jamais! Cette assemblée n'était qu'un début aux activités de la FECB pour obtenir un contrat dont tous les membres seront fiers.

Christian Legault, École secondaire Brooks.

Synopsis of this article

Christian was a first-time ADEF delegate to the AGM. Although overwhelmed on the first day with the knowledge and experience base of the speakers and the procedural process of such a large assembly, he quickly got accustomed to it. He enjoyed meeting other delegates and did not hesitate to ask questions of them. He would gladly repeat the experience.

Bargaining It's about time...

Negotiations opened on March 5, 2001. The BCTF bargaining team consists of co-chief negotiators Irene Lanzinger and Alan Crawford, Lydia Picucha, Peggy Salaberry, Kelly Shields, George Taylor, Neil Worboys, Brian Porter, and Ray Worley.

The B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) represents the employer at the bargaining table. The BCPSEA team is composed of Rick Davis and Bonda Bitzer (co-chief negotiators), Russ Searle, Sherida Harris, Janet Shauntz, Dan Peebles, and Brian Junek.

The teams have met five times and have agreed to exchange proposed language later this month. A BCTF *Bargaining Bulletin* is faxed to schools after each bargaining session. If your work site is not receiving the bulletins, please contact Bev Humphries at 604-871-1875 or bhumphries@bctf.bc.ca. The bulletins are available online at <http://bctf.bc.ca/BargainingBulletin/archive/2000-2001>.

— Peter Owens

Inflation costs teachers

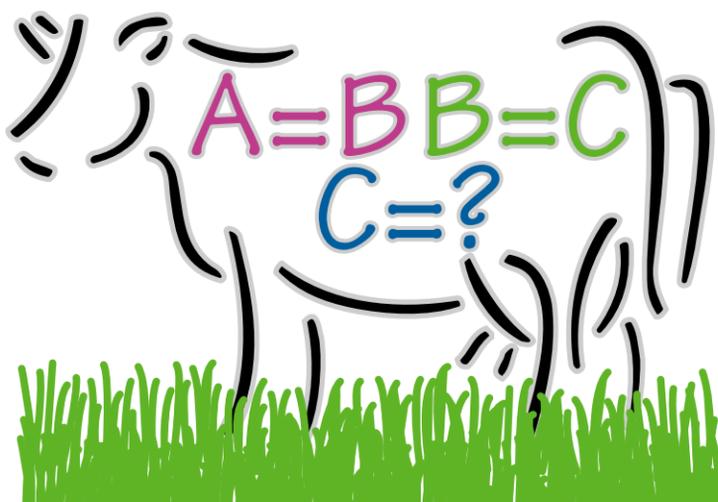
by Irene Lanzinger

The average B.C. teacher has lost more than \$24,000 in nine years! If our salaries had kept pace with inflation since 1992, a Category 5 teacher with 10 years of teaching experience would have earned over \$24,000 more than he/she actually did over the last decade.

In the 1992-93 school year alone, the average teacher's salary fell behind inflation by almost \$1,000. The average loss per year in each of the next seven years was more than \$2,700. This school year, with no pay increase and if inflation continues at its current rate, we'll lose over \$4,000 in buying power. Add it all up, and each teacher's earnings have fallen behind by \$24,167!

While the average teacher with five years of university education and at least 10 years of classroom experience now earns about \$59,850, he/she would be earning over \$64,000 if salary increases hadn't been limited to 8.2% over the last nine years, while inflation ran at 15%. Just to break even, he/she would need almost a 7% immediate pay hike. And that doesn't take into account whether his/her 1992 salary was high enough in the first place, as well as current labour market conditions such as a growing shortage of teachers worldwide and higher starting salaries in other occupations, some of which don't require as much preparation time (or have as much stress).

Irene Lanzinger, a Vancouver secondary teacher, is co-chief negotiator on the BCTF's bargaining team.



Misconstruing "Essential"

by Peggy Salaberry

It's very far away now, 40 years in the past, the wood and varnish scent of the classroom where my teacher formally introduced me to logic. I still remember it though, those mathlike language ways of representing thought. If A equals B and B equals C, then A equals C. Sounds reasonable enough. "All cows eat grass. Bossy is a cow. Darned if Bossy won't be out there eating grass with the rest of the cows."

The legislation on essential-service designation for education seeks to curtail permanently and incisively the right to collective action.

I learned back in logic class, too, that logic can be flawed, that there are a lot of tricks people play to make thought sound logical when it is not. One trick is the fourth term. "Grass gets you high. Bossy eats grass. Therefore Bossy is as high as a kite." *Bossy* and *high* are terms one and two. *Grass* is the third and the fourth term, because it has two meanings. So, logically the conclusion doesn't work.

This is what Gordon Campbell has done with his advertising campaign about schools and essential services. Education, he argues, is essential. What is essential should be protected. Therefore, his government (should it exist) must enact legislation to protect education.

Gordon Campbell is playing with words, because both *education* and *essential*, in this context, have two meanings. There is *education*, the ongoing experience that builds to form a body of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. However, this is not the same thing as the set of days, taken individually or in small groups, where a student misses school for any number of reasons—illness or trips to

Disneyland. The child has, regrettably perhaps, lost some days of school, but he or she has not missed out on an education. *Essential* is tricky in the same way. That big "E" *education* is said to be *essential*. It gets you ahead in life. It enriches everything you do. Still, that's an item different from *essential*, such as one cannot live without it.

What is lost when a public service involved in education goes on strike is the convenience of a set routine. It is difficult for families to regroup and make alternative arrangements. No one is happy about this, but when all is said and done, the students will still be educated.

On the flip-side of this argument is another consideration: People's rights, and this includes families and children, are more threatened than protected by this proposed legislation. The legislation on essential-service designation for education seeks to curtail permanently and incisively the right to collective action. No one likes the inconvenience of a strike, least of all the workers on strike, but over and over and over again, the right to take job action has promoted the health, safety, security, and well-being of workers and their families.

...the right to take job action has promoted the health, safety, security, and well-being of workers and their families.

I am thankful to my logic teacher for the lesson she taught so long ago. I may have missed the lesson the first time around. I may have been absent that day, but she repeated the information, and it was included in the text, and I reviewed it before the test, and it has been very useful, if not essential, in teasing the truth from the statements of politicians.

Peggy Salaberry, a member of the BCTF Bargaining Team, is on leave from Central Okanagan.

Principals' president attacks agreement

by Peter Owens

Stu Dale, president of the B.C. Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA), has been making presentations to chambers of commerce around the province claiming that teachers have taken control of schools through the collective agreement and that principals are powerless.

According to Dale, class-size limits force children out of their neighbourhood schools, teachers' salaries remove much-needed resources from the classroom, and the provisions of the collective agreement prevent administrators from choosing the best teacher for the job. He even suggests that the collective agreement is more powerful than the *School Act*.

BCTF President David Chudnovsky responds that many teachers in the communities where Dale has spoken have been outraged by his comments and questions the accuracy of his claims. Dale's speech is an attack on the collective agreement, Chudnovsky said.

"Our collective agreement has been the most important tool for improving learning conditions for students over the past 15 years," he said. "The contract has provided lower class sizes, better services for students with special, better support for

students taking ESL, and improved professional-development opportunities for teachers.

"Dale has attacked that and therefore attacked learning conditions for students and professionals standards and opportunities," Chudnovsky said.

Chudnovsky says Dale is incorrect when he claims collective agreements with the BCTF are more powerful than the *School Act*.

"The *School Act* clearly takes precedence over the collective agreement in many ways," Chudnovsky said. "Teachers wish it didn't, and they have lobbied over the years to change the *Act* but it most certainly does at the moment."

Dale is also off the mark when he says that the province does not fully fund collective agreements with teachers, and that under those agreements principals have lost decision-making authority, Chudnovsky said.

"Principals have enormous power under the *School Act*, and the contention that they do not is incorrect. Teachers would be amused by that notion," he added.

Peter Owens, editor of *Teacher newsmagazine*, is an assistant director in the BCTF's Organization Support Division.



Teacher-librarian staffing declines

by Larry Kuehn

Library services are in decline in many schools, according to the 20th annual B.C. Teacher-Librarians' Working and Learning Conditions Survey. Garth Harkess, of the B.C. Teacher-Librarians' Association (PSA) says that the survey shows a number of disturbing trends.

Teacher-librarian and clerical-aide time have been reduced in many districts. Elementary teacher-librarians have been assigned to covering for prep time instead of performing library-related duties in collaboration with classroom teachers. Funding for library supplies has been reduced.

While the cost of books has continued to rise, average budget allocations for libraries have fallen, on a per capita basis, from the previous year. Elementary went down from \$13.83 to \$12.79; secondary from \$14.30 to \$14.22.

While budgets have gone down, expenditures on electronic services are taking up more of the budgets. Most

schools now have computerized catalogues, CD-ROMs, and Internet access in the library resource centre.

Many district resource centres have been closed or have had professional and clerical time, as well as budgets, cut in recent years. However, several districts continue to operate district resources centres with extensive services.

The 2000-01 survey represents data collected from 41 districts—918 elementary and 284 secondary school library resource centres. To facilitate comparisons, the report from the B.C. Teacher-Librarians' Association contains individual district figures as well as summary data for all the districts that reported.

The full report will be available in the PSA's journal, *The Bookmark*, March 2001, or on request from the BCTF Research Department (contact Anne Field, afield@bctf.bc.ca, or 604-871-2251).

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division, lkuehn@bctf.bc.ca.

Data is being collected for a Canadian study of children and youth

Over the course of this school year, close to 40,000 Canadian children and their parents will be interviewed in their homes. In April and May, the teachers and principals of some of those children will also be surveyed. This is the most recent data-gathering phase of a major national survey: the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) is a unique study of Canadians from birth to adulthood: comprehensive and longitudinal, it measures the development and well-being of children and youth over time. Every two years, from 1994 through to 2018, the same children are contacted and interviewed at home. They and their parents or guardians answer questions about school, health, behaviour, feelings, relationships with family and friends, family functioning, and many other themes.

The questions are designed to uncover the results of interactions that occur throughout a child's development and social-

ization, such as the effects of family structure, socio-economic status, and schooling. Federal and provincial governments (including many provincial departments of education), school boards, and academics will use survey results to develop policies and strategies to help young people follow healthy, active, and rewarding lives.

...you may be part of the survey in future years...

To construct a complete picture of child development, information is also gathered from the teachers and principals of some children. The Teacher Questionnaire gathers information on the child's academic achievement and behaviour at school, along with educational practices in the classroom, and the classroom environment. The Principal Questionnaire collects information on the school's educational practices, the availability of educational resources, and the social climate

of the school.

You may have participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth during previous data-collection phases, and you may be part of the survey in future years as the children progress through the school system. If you are teaching one of the children in this survey, you may have already received an introductory letter and a questionnaire. Statistics Canada, the federal department responsible for collecting the data, and Human Resources Development Canada, the sponsor of the NLSCY, are counting on your help with the survey and ask that you fill out and return the questionnaire. If you have not received a questionnaire, don't worry; that just means none of the children you are teaching this year is in the survey.

If you have any questions or comments, please call us toll free at 1-888-408-8897 until the end of June. For information on the NLSCY, visit the Human Resources Development Canada web site, www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/arb, or Statistics Canada web site, www.statcan.ca.

Maxwell A. Cameron Award updated

Who was Maxwell A. Cameron, and why does the BCTF give 10 awards a year in his name? Since 1974, BCTF has awarded a silver medal, along with a cheque for \$100, to an elementary and a secondary student teacher graduating from each of the approved teacher-education programs: UBC, SFU, UVIC, and Malaspina University College. UBC graduates students in both fall and spring, bringing the number of awards to 10 per year.

Max Cameron, head of the Department of Education at UBC in the mid-1940s, undertook a major study and report on educational costs on behalf of the government of the day. His 1945 report called for the establishment of a uniform basis for taxation and a commission to equalize assessment, an increase in the cost of education provided by the province from 32% to 55%, a reduction in the number of school boards from 600 to fewer than 100, an increase in teaching staff, with a commensurate decrease in class size. In short, he called for, among other things, reduced

class sizes and amalgamation of school boards from 600 to fewer than 100.

The BCTF, along with many other educational groups, endorsed the Cameron report.

The beautiful medal formerly presented to award winners is being replaced with a silver lapel pin, with the money saved going to the student. Clearly, inflation has devalued the \$100 first awarded 17 years ago, and the BCTF Executive Committee saw fit to increase the amount to \$500.

The award continues to be made available to students enrolled in a discrete teacher-education program at a public university in British Columbia. The criteria also remain unchanged, namely outstanding students completing the final year in education in elementary and secondary school teaching.

The recipients are honoured also at local induction ceremonies when they join our ranks as practising teachers and BCTF members.

—Jan Eastman

A forum for better understanding in Surrey

by Myra Ottewell

Can Surrey teachers discuss matters of educational political action and religious or moral convictions in a civil manner? Yes! On November 10, 2000, we held a forum—"Protection of Conscience: Issues in Education"—sponsored by the Teachers' PREP (Professionalism, Representation, Ethics and Priorities). See www.cbbs.org/prep/ for a transcript of the forum. Teachers' PREP is a recently organized political caucus within Surrey Teachers' Association.

The three panelists—Jinny Sims, second vice-president of the BCTF; Craig Jones, president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association; and Iain Benson, of the Centre for Cultural Renewal—represented different aspects of the political spectrum. The PREP caucus wished to present a balanced view of the complex matters relating to sensitive and controversial issues in Surrey in a manner that fostered civil discourse and understanding.

The presenters were all very well spoken, knowledgeable, and interesting. Each presenter spoke for approximately 10 minutes and then for up to 5 minutes responded to anything that had been said. Audience members were asked to write questions for discussion. Most questions centred on the tension between individual rights and union responsibilities and constraints. We also looked at the tension between parents' rights and the court's recent decision about the limitation of teachers to present their point of view when the two conflict. Many references were made to the Chamberlain v. School District No. 36 (Surrey) court case. The judgment of that case—on the Internet—provides interesting information about the history and the meaning of terms like *secular* and *non-sectarian principles*. (www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/ca/00/05/c00-0519.html).

Jinny Sims, second vice-president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, has also been a member-at-large on the executive committee. Sims has been a teacher for 24 years and has been active in addressing a range of issues affecting the working lives of teachers, including working and learning conditions for teachers and students, and anti-racism, multiculturalism, and status of women. Her experience includes being president of Nanaimo Teachers' Association, as well as working on bargaining and grievance committees in her local. English, social studies, and counselling are Sims's teaching specialties.

Jinny Sims's statement centered on the notion of the union working together for the good of the collective, since there will always be individuals who disagree with the union position. She focussed on the democratic processes of the BCTF. When members do not agree with the policies of their union, there are ways to change and amend our collective

We have democratic processes in place so that members can, through active involvement, change and help to shape the direction taken by our union.

policies. We have democratic processes in place so that members can, through active involvement, change and help to shape the direction taken by our union. Her own view of dealing with controversy is to engage in debate and dialogue, and do it in a respectful way.

Sims said of the evening: "I want to thank the organizers for the invitation to participate in this evening's discussions and thank the participants (both on

the panel and in the audience) for the respectful debate. Public education faces many challenges, and we must ensure that the debate on issues is inclusive and respectful of different points of view. We are going to have differences, and it is imperative that we agree to disagree without becoming disagreeable in the process. Once again, thank you for hosting this discussion, and my appreciation to one and all for keeping the discussion open and respectful."

Craig Jones is in his second term as president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, an organization that works to protect citizens from both government and private-sector intrusions into our lives. His comments centred on his philosophically libertarian views. On some issues, he holds a personal belief that is opposed to his legal position. Although he is pro-choice, the BCCLA is representing students on the basis of freedom of speech, the pro-life students at UBC who had their club display destroyed by AMS. On the matter of the Trinity Western University v. B.C. College of Teachers, the BCCLA is in agreement with the Langley university, while taking the side of the plaintiffs on the three-books Surrey School Board case. These are his comments:

"The evening's interchange was thoughtful, respectful, and enormously productive. The questions we confronted are difficult and complex but by no means unsolvable. The panel discussion and, in particular, the questions from the audience, exemplified free and open dialogue and brought us one step closer, if not to a solution, at least to a far more nuanced understanding of some of the most important problems faced in public education today. I am pleased to have contributed in some small way to the success of the evening, and I look forward to more such events."

Iain Benson is the executive director of the Centre for Cul-

tural Renewal, a think-tank dedicated to the connections among public policy, culture, moral discourse, and religious conviction. The independent, nonprofit, charitable organization helps Canadians and their leaders shape a vision of civil

"...Let's keep trying to get people to think and to honour the views of others, even when they vehemently disagree."

society. Benson's comments drew heavily on the recent Surrey book case, in which the Court of Appeal recognized the primary authority of parents in Canadian and international law. He spoke of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in which Canada has undertaken "to have respect for the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions." This right, which is also part of common law, is not merely a right to be consulted or to be allowed to participate with teachers and boards in discussions about curricula. In the words of the Court, "parental views on [moral questions] are entitled to be respected."

Benson had this to say about the evening: "Over the years, there has been a need to bring together the different perspectives among those involved with the often polarized questions in public education. One of these questions is the scope for the freedom of conscience and religion of public teachers themselves. Teachers' PREP is to be congratulated for its vision in hosting a successful forum to discuss important questions related to the place of conscience and religion in public schools. To have brought to-

gether a diversity of groups, the British Columbia Civil Liberties' Association, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Centre for Cultural Renewal, indicates that Teachers' PREP is taking badly needed leadership in this area. Speaking as one of the participants, I hope that the discussion will set a good example for future events of how civil discourse can build towards a better and more civil society for all citizens."

Here is what several colleagues had to say about the evening:

"I really liked the context created where the topic could be discussed in a respectful and rational manner. It was thought provoking. I think we all need to have our concepts challenged at times. Let's keep trying to get people to think and to honour the views of others, even when they vehemently disagree."

"Presenters were challenging, eloquent and well-informed. Please do something like this again!"

"I appreciate the way it was set up, as we all had the opportunity to ask questions that have been on our minds. I particularly liked the opportunity they had to ask questions of each other, and the respect they showed each other, even though they didn't agree on several issues."

This event signals the beginning of a new kind of civil discourse within the Surrey School District. Try to imagine a headline in our local paper about the STA and the Surrey School Board having a civil discussion and a productive outcome about matters of religious conviction and the concerns of gays and lesbians. This kind of interaction has already taken place in the corridors and meeting places at the BCTF Annual General Meeting. It can also happen in Surrey.

Myra Ottewell teaches at Queen Elizabeth Senior Secondary School, Surrey.

THE TEACHER

Teacher supply and demand workgroup

The BCTF teacher supply and demand workgroup members wrote the articles appearing on these pages.

- Jan Eastman, Professional Development
- Garry Litke, Bargaining
- Mike Lombardi, Professional Development
- Anny Schaefer, Research & Technology
- Charlene Watts, Professional Development

A call to action

ate in 2000, the BCTF submitted a brief exhorting the provincial government to act on teacher supply and demand issues. "Enhancing the Quality of Education: Attracting, Recruiting, and Retaining the Best Teachers" called on the government to "...act now, in concert with education partners, to avoid a general shortage of teachers and to ensure that the children of British Columbia continue to receive high quality public education. A comprehensive plan including research, programs, and supports must be put in place to enable the teaching profession to attract, recruit, and retain the best teachers."

A dramatic demographic picture of B.C.'s current teaching force has emerged, resulting largely from cutbacks in the early 1980s and again in the 1990s. Retirements will peak in the next three to seven years, creating widespread demand. In 1975, the most common age of teachers in B.C. was 28; in 1999

it was 53. In 1999, 9% of teachers and 14% of principals were 55 or older.

Furthermore, shortages are already evident in some geographic areas and specific subject areas. In a recent survey undertaken by the Ministry of Education, 39 districts reported that they are experiencing a teacher shortage. "Shortage" is generally defined as districts having difficulty filling vacant positions, assigning teachers out of field, or cancelling courses. Current shortages are most acute in the northern or rural districts. The survey reports that 34% of the current shortages come from 14 northern/rural districts that represent less than 7% of the student population. Secondary shortages are predominantly in technology

In B.C., average annual earnings of a teacher on call is \$11,000.

education, math, science, and languages, especially French immersion. At the elementary level, shortages are predominantly in French immersion as well as special education.

B.C. has traditionally relied on teacher-education programs outside the province to provide the full complement of teachers needed, but in recent years fewer teachers have been migrating to B.C. Sources are apt to dry up as other jurisdictions in Canada and throughout the English-speaking world implement aggressive recruitment campaigns with financial and other incentives to address their own teacher shortages.

Teachers on call are integral to the education system's ability to provide quality public educa-

tion for B.C.'s diverse student population. Unfortunately, the first indication that the system is not keeping up is often the cancellation of much-needed professional development because TOCs are not available.

A new teacher who attended the BCTF New Teachers' Conference in February works on call in Surrey and Delta. She enthusiastically describes her learning from teaching in every possible type of classroom, and she clearly values the experience. "But," she adds, "I'm not sure my nerves can stand another year of waking at 05:00 for calls at 05:30, and I'm quite sure my bank account can't." She thinks she may head south next year if she is not hired for a full-time position. In B.C., average annual earnings of a teacher on call is \$11,000.

The BCTF brief recommends a range of initiatives to address the current shortages and help prevent a future crisis by making teaching more financially attractive, improving working conditions for teachers, various initiatives to assist in recruiting and supporting new teachers, enhancing professional support, augmenting teacher education with additional seats and maintaining certification standards while investigating alternative pathways, supporting public education, and engaging in planning, research, and communication efforts such as a centralized web site for teacher recruitment.

Because of the crunch,

New York recruiters came to Vancouver recently garnering considerable media attention.

schools around the world must now hire earlier in the year. There are already indications that other jurisdictions are competing for B.C. teachers. In Ontario, where 56,000 teachers are expected to retire by 2010, boards are now offering jobs on the spot at job fairs. Graduates are now receiving multiple job offers—a far and welcome cry from previous years, where teachers often had to wait until boards issued summer recall notices to learn of vacancies. A recent report from Queensland, Australia, indicates that increased salaries contributed to lower-than-expected retirements and leaves of absence between 1997 and 2000. In the United Kingdom, the *Time Educational Supplement* has been running several thousand job ads each week, mostly for openings in September 2001. Three supplements in January carried nearly 4,000 ads. As well, the United Kingdom and California are recruiting online. New York recruiters came to Vancouver recently garnering considerable media attention. And stories abound as to signing bonuses and other recruitment incentives, most notably from the U.S. Given that the prediction is for two million teachers to be needed in the U.S. over the next 10 years, competitive and aggressive recruitment

campaigns are hardly surprising. Hiring done in September, after classes start, will not be healthy for the system in years to come if projections of increased demand are correct.

BCTF is an active participant in the provincial Teacher Supply and Demand Consortium, formed in January 2000. Some short-term actions the consortium currently is investigating include the development of a web site; a feasibility study of financial incentives for attracting, recruiting, and retaining teachers; recruiting for shortages in specific and specialized areas; and a report on harmonizing data to provide for better understanding of teacher supply and demand in B.C. Other

To attract, recruit, and retain teachers in a time of impending retirements and a world-wide teacher shortage, B.C. will need to provide an array of financial incentives.

strategies of interest to the various members of the consortium and definitely of interest to BCTF are supporting programs that mentor new teachers, finding alternative pathways to certification, and recruiting underrepresented groups.

To attract, recruit, and retain teachers in a time of impending retirements and a world-wide teacher shortage, B.C. will need to provide an array of financial incentives.

Perhaps one of the most important things that government and the education partners that form the consortium can do is to speak and act to enhance the status of the teaching profession.

The BCTF brief is on the web at www.bctf.bc.ca/education/herSupply/2000brief/.

A snapshot of teacher supply and demand in B.C.

Teacher supply and demand can change unexpectedly. Remember "the Asian flu" a few years ago? That financial crisis caused people to leave the province—and the schools. Here are some factors in B.C.'s teacher supply and demand.

New hires

Almost 2,100 new educators got part-time or full-time teaching jobs in 2000. Some were replacing retirees and other teachers who left the system, and some were hired because of enrolment growth and the collective agreement. We don't know how many were teachers on call (TOCs) in the past, or how many came from outside the province.

Gender

Nearly three-quarters of new hires in 2000 were female.

Retirees

Just over 550 teachers retired from schools in 2000, compared with 1,340 in 1999 and 1,024 in 1998. The lower number this year probably results from veteran teachers' deciding to take part in provincially negotiated early-retirement plans in 1998 and 1999.

Collective agreement

As a result of the staffing formulas and primary class size initiative in the 1998 collective agreement, 1,284 full-time equivalent teaching positions have been created—an increase in demand that would not have occurred otherwise.

Enrolment

Provincially, enrolment has been declining slightly for the past three years. The trend is expected to continue into the future, with a number of districts experiencing little change or losing enrolment. Some districts, such as Abbotsford and Surrey, however, are still growing relatively quickly.

Impending retirements

The average retirement age for teachers in B.C. is 59. The earliest age at which teachers can retire with a pension is 55. Large numbers of educators will retire within the next five to ten years.

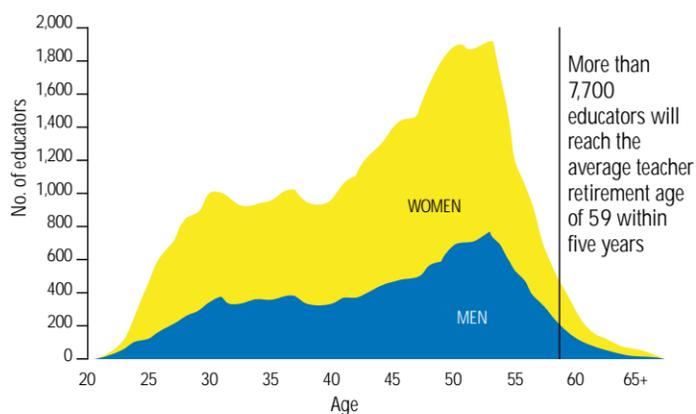
In 2000, more than 13,000—over one-third—of all educators are 50 or older, meaning they are likely to retire within the next four to eight years. That breaks down into more than half of all administrative officers (AOs) and one-third of all teachers.

The retirement of the more than 4,000 educators who are at least 55 this year is likely within one to three years. This accounts for nearly 11% of all educators. Among AOs, 15% are 55 or older.

TOCs

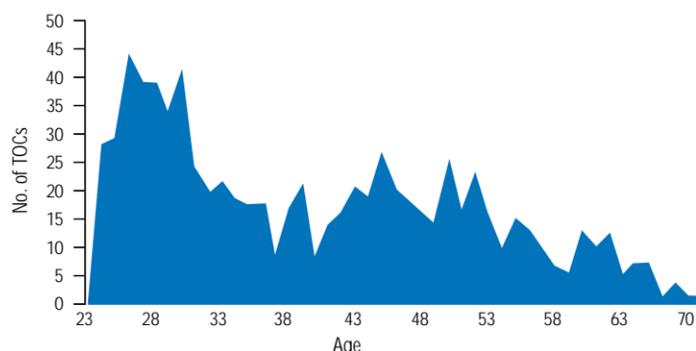
Teachers on call (TOCs) are an integral part of the public education system. They are needed to replace regular teachers who are ill, accessing professional development, or away for brief periods for other reasons. Each district manages the size of its TOC pool, often limiting it to those they would ultimately like to hire on continuing contracts. The optimal number of TOCs needed by the system has not been calculated. BCTF's member

Educator Age Tsunami, 2000–2001



Source: Based on Ministry of Education Standard Report 2057, September 30, 2000

Age Distribution of TOCs



BCTF Research Survey, Spring 1999



SHORTAGE

female teachers and 8% of males work part-time—overall 23%. We don't know how many of them choose part-time work for health or lifestyle reasons. Surveys show, however, that 75% of TOCs want an ongoing teaching position.

Supply and demand

Retirements will escalate over the next few years, peaking at perhaps 2,100 per year from 2004 to 2006. As noted above, about 2,300 to 2,600 new teachers are available each year.

Shortages

While the aggregated numbers may look okay, the devil is in the details. Districts throughout the province have already reported difficulty hiring for a wide range of subjects, from technology education, math, and science to modern languages and visual/performing arts. Shortages of TOCs have also been reported, in some cases resulting in cancellation of PD and leaves for contract teachers. Furthermore, certain districts, especially in the north, hire uncertificated substitutes.

As more and more teachers retire, the challenge for teachers, universities, and school districts will be to align the specializations of new and existing teachers (subject areas and elementary or secondary level) with the needs of each school in the province. Efforts are already under way through the Teacher Supply and Demand Consortium to enhance co-operation among the interested parties and ensure that children in British Columbia continue to receive the best education possible.

Districts throughout the province have already reported difficulty hiring for a wide range of subjects, from technology education, math, and science to modern languages and visual/performing arts.



Ministry survey details teacher shortage

According to B.C. school districts, the teacher shortage has arrived. In the fall, 39 districts reported to the ministry that they had a teacher shortage. The districts were cancelling courses, assigning teachers out of their field, or having difficulty filling vacant positions. Based on responses from 49 districts, the ministry found that:

- the current shortage totals 175 teachers province wide.
- shortages at the secondary level are most predominant for industrial education (technology education), math, science, and languages.
- shortages at the elementary level are most predominant in French immersion and special education.
- shortages of TOCs also exist in music and computer science.
- 34% of the current shortage comes from 14

northern/rural districts that represent less than 7% of the student population.

- few districts are able to predict the magnitude of future demand based on projected retirements and resignations.
- most districts are recruiting.
- most districts maintain web sites containing employment information such as job postings and application procedures.

Having recognized the shortage, school districts made some recommendations to address the problem:

- increasing starting salaries and shortening the grid.
- offering financial incentives such as forgivable loans, tuition credits, or housing subsidies for teachers willing to work in rural settings.
- recruiting more aggressively.
- increasing the number of spaces in teacher education programs.
- changing certification requirements.

Unfortunately, although the shortage is real, it does not mean that every TOC or under-employed teacher can now get a full-time job, or that a teacher from Ontario can move here and start working.

For now, the shortages exist only in a limited range of subjects and in particular geographical locations. While school districts predict that the situation will worsen, lack of reliable data makes it impossible to predict how far-reaching the shortage will become and which grades, subjects, and geographical areas will be most affected. With additional data related to retirement, resignation, and student population, a more accurate picture will develop on exactly how many teachers will be required to address the growing teacher shortage.

Early retirement provides orderly transition

Retirements will escalate over the next few years. Despite a teacher shortage anticipated to peak at 2,100 per year from 2004 to 2006, ERIPs need to be in place and maintained. Well-planned long-term retirement programs benefit the public education system by facilitating appropriate decision making among teachers nearing retirement and an orderly transition to a younger teaching force. When senior teachers are encouraged to leave the profession, the savings can be used to provide incentives for others to join, and remain in, the profession. In combination with other initiatives, an ERIP is a useful tool for attracting and retaining teachers. Rather than a means to save money for individual employers, or the system at large, those savings reinvested in the system as a whole will maintain a first-rate teaching force. ERIPs also reduce potential sick-leave costs, increase opportunities for new teachers,

and assist planning by school districts and university teacher-education programs.

More and more teachers will be retiring over the next few years. In 1999, more than 12,000 (31%) of all educators were 50 years or older, which means that they are likely to retire in the next four to eight years. By offering competitive base salaries and improved benefits packages, B.C. will be well positioned to attract, recruit, and retain first-rate teachers.

The B.C. teacher supply and demand consortium

Many of B.C.'s education partners agree that it is time to work together to enhance the status of the teaching profession.

In January 2000, the Teacher Supply and Demand Consortium (TSDC) was formed in the province of B.C. Organizations in the TSDC include the B.C. Teachers' Federation, B.C. College of Teachers, B.C. School Superintendents' Association, B.C. School Trustees Association, B.C. Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Advanced Education, B.C. Public School Employers' Association, and each approved teacher-education program.

The terms of reference for the TSDC are:

- To ensure that necessary data is available and accessible to assist in developing policies and programs to match the supply of teachers with certificates to the demand for teachers throughout B.C.
- To provide for the analysis of data available and make recommendations on teacher supply and demand.
- To recommend programs that help retain new teachers, such as induction and mentoring.
- To promote diversity in the teaching force through employment-equity programs and identifying and reducing systemic barriers to minority groups entering teaching.
- To make recommendations on approaches to replacing school administrators who are retiring.

TSDC member organizations have been working together to utilize existing databases and to collect data as necessary to provide supply-and-demand forecasts to the consortium and other interested parties.

Some of the reports the consortium has considered include *The Final Report of the Pilot Study of the Teacher Supply and Demand Study in the Province of B.C.* (Echols, Grimmett and Kitchenham, September 1999), *A Survey of Educator Supply and Demand in B.C. School Districts* (Ministry of Education, February 2001), *A Discussion Paper: Teacher Supply and Demand* (Ministry of Education, February 2001), *Teacher Data*

Collection Harmonization Study (Centre for Educational Information, January 2000), and the *BCTF Brief on Teacher and Supply and Demand in B.C.* (BCTF, December 2000). The TSDC has also discussed related information and data from other jurisdictions and organizations.

In addition to participating in the TSDC, the BCTF and some of the other organizations represented on the consortium have been initiating studies and reports on teacher supply and demand.

At its meeting in February 2001, the TSDC established the framework for a short-term action plan on teacher supply and demand. The action plan will include the following four elements:

- A proposal for the development of a web site that will provide useful and user-friendly information about job prospects and teaching in the province.
- A report on financial incentives for attracting, recruiting, and retaining teachers.
- A report on dealing with shortages of teachers in specific/specialized areas.
- A report on harmonizing data related to teacher supply and demand.

The TSDC will consider reports on these issues at its meeting in April 2001.

Financial incentives

With a world-wide shortage of teachers growing more acute all the time, school systems throughout North America and the western world are offering competitive salaries and a wide range of benefits to attract and retain the brightest individuals to the teaching profession.

Some districts in North America are offering a variety of financial inducements to recruit and retain teachers:

- higher teacher salaries
- shorter salary grids
- signing bonuses
- income tax credits (including deductions for professional materials/courses)
- housing subsidies
- forgivable loans
- reduced mortgage/bank loans
- scholarship and bursary programs
- tuition-rebate programs
- early-retirement incentive plans
- improved retirement benefits
- expanded benefit plans (i.e., childcare and parentcare plans, counselling, etc.)
- relocation allowances
- improved working conditions
- paid sabbatical leave
- retraining programs
- northern/remote allowances
- enhanced professional development opportunities
- mentoring/professional support programs.

To recruit and retain teachers in a time of world-wide teacher shortages, B.C. must provide an array of financial incentives.

records indicate that there were just over 7,300 TOCs throughout the province as of February 2000. Some of them also had a part-time teaching contract.

TOCs' daily rates of pay vary by district. For example, in the Lower Mainland, where many TOCs are on multiple TOC lists and can pick and choose assignments, Surrey TOCs in Category 5 earn about \$144 per day. In Richmond, Vancouver, and Delta, they earn about \$152; whereas in Burnaby, the rate is \$163, and in Maple Ridge, New Westminster, and Coquitlam, it is almost \$170.

Starting salaries

The median starting salary for a teacher with five years of university preparation who obtains a full-time contract is \$38,400. Among teachers, starting salaries vary even between Lower Mainland districts: a beginning Category 5 teacher can summon anywhere from \$35,675 in West Vancouver, to \$39,658 in Vancouver.

In contrast, some occupations requiring about two years of college-level training command higher starting salaries. For example, firefighters and public health inspectors average almost \$41,000 to start, construction millwrights get about \$45,000, and dental hygienists earn nearly \$50,000 after completing their training.

Supply of new teachers

New teachers are educated at B.C.'s major universities and one university-college. About 1,500 to 1,700 new B.C.-educated teachers receive a teaching certificate each year. Not all of them will decide to enter teaching; others will leave teaching after a short while.

New teachers also move to B.C. from outside the province. In recent years, the College of Teachers has issued 650 to 900 certificates per year to out-of-province teachers. The 10-year average is 918, but numbers have declined significantly since 1995. There is no guarantee that B.C. will continue to receive such a large number of qualified teachers from outside the province, as many other jurisdictions are in the early throes of teacher shortages.

Between 1990 and 1999, the college granted just under 25,000 teaching certificates, and there were just over 19,500 "new hires." That means that 5,315 new teachers did not find contract teaching positions. A quarter may prefer TOC work.

Some teachers are working part-time involuntarily: 30% of

Corporate sponsorship in ancient Greece

by Constance Rulka

Plato taught his students (the young people who shared his enthusiasm for the search for truth) in the grove of Academe, not far from Athens. Aristotle led his disciples through the grove of Lyceum, also in the neighbourhood of Athens. What is not so generally known is that the two groups were sponsored by two rival soft-drink companies: Nectar and Ambrosia. In return for wearing the logos of the companies on their tunics (and never switching allegiance from one drink to the other), the young Athenians received concessions at the Olympic Games. Those from the Academe were given passes to the grandstand, to hear the odes written to the heroes; and those from the Lyceum had a monopoly on the making of laurel-wreaths for the victors. All the privileges outweighed their usual frivolous pursuits of discussing the meaning of life and such conundrums as a definition of thought—which never brought them tangible rewards.

Socrates fell foul of the system, though. He had no regular teaching area, and thought the soft-drink issue a restrictive one for rational minds. As a result, he wore both logos on his tunic on the very day that Phidias came to make preliminary sketches of the Academics before starting a massive sculpture of the group to grace the entrance to the Parthenon. The authorities took a dim view of what they saw as Socrates's divided loyalties; and he was condemned to commit suicide for "corrupting the youth of Athens." He said his farewells and then drank hemlock, which was not in competition with either of the rival soft drinks.

That had an unsettling effect on Plato, who then wrote a complicated allegory, "The Cave." In it, he saw all human beings sitting in a great cave, gazing at the rear wall and unable to turn to see the outside world of reality. At the mouth of the cave burned a great bonfire that threw a glow on the rear wall. Figures of various creatures passed between the fire and the cave, but all that the human beings saw of them were the dark silhouettes reflected on the wall. From those, they formed only a vague idea of the universe beyond. Many learned people have tried to explain what Plato meant by that image. It is now becoming clear that the philosopher had a vision of TV and its attendant commercials, especially as they intrude into the schools. Those in the cave see, not reality, but only the shadows on the wall.

Another citizen of Ancient Greece who received acclaim was Pheidippides, who ran all the way from the battlefield at Marathon to tell the Athenians that they were safe, inasmuch as the Persian invaders had been defeated. His mission accomplished, he dropped dead in the marketplace. The important question, though, was what brand name was on the runners he was wearing. Who had sponsored that 26-mile run from Marathon? There had to be

some money involved in there somewhere!

Forgive the levity; but we have to get what humour we can by looking back at how oddly our current standards would fit into another age. Our present situation is grim—beyond laughter; and the fear is that we may have already gone too far to draw back. The lure of money from corporate sponsors has blinded many of us to the existence of the trap beyond the lure.

When the year 1984 came and went, apparently without the dire changes predicted in George Orwell's book, we heard a collective sigh of relief. It seemed that we were not going to give up our independence and individuality to work like robots at the will of "Big Brother." That all-powerful, unseen figure would not always be watching us and our actions. Nor would we have his "thought police" to control what went on in our heads. Perhaps Orwell just got the date wrong.

In his book, he describes the danger of *doublethink*, the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting them both.

It would mean believing:

- that the health of our children is of paramount importance, yet urging them to eat more and more junk food, and drink more and more caffeine-filled beverages—so that money will be available for sports equipment to maintain their health.

- that children going to school in poorer districts should have the same advantages as those in more affluent neighbourhoods, yet knowing full well that corporations are not going to sink funds into localities where the residents cannot afford to consume enough of their products to give them a handsome profit. Thus, the gap widens.

- that our public schools are the last strongholds of democracy, individuality, and creativity, yet encourage the brain-washing that goes along with constant advertising of the same products everywhere the students look.

- that the Jesuits were right when they declared that, given a child early enough, those in charge of that child's education can condition him/her to beliefs that can never be shaken during the child's lifetime, yet handing over the shaping of beliefs to corporations that are concerned only with the amount of profit to be made from the results.

- that we have freedom of choice, yet signing contracts for 10 years or more that bind our schools to give exclusive selling rights to one product rather than another.

- that dealings should all be open and above board, yet signing contracts that seem to contain a lot of secret clauses, unknown to many of the stakeholders on whose behalf they are signed.

- that it is immoral, as explicitly stated in the teachers' Code of Ethics, to exploit the students in our care (a few decades ago, that meant refusing to sell them an expensive set of encyclopaedia by taking advantage of the learner/teacher relationship; but that was a simpler world) being willing to have them exploited by sellers of food, drink, and clothing that have nothing to do with their education.

- that children should feel safe and comfortable in school (which is the reason for stopping bullying and trying to build self-esteem), yet letting them be bombarded by the constant advertising of things that many of them will never be able to afford.

- that childhood should be a happy time and as carefree as possible, yet creating a dissatisfied, materialistic generation that is always hungry for more and more *things*—and not just *any* things but the passing fads for the expensive brand-name things that they see advertised.

- that there is no such thing as a "free lunch," yet really believing in the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, held by a benevolently smiling sponsor, who understands our needs.

- that there are many things in the outside world from which we should protect our children until they have enough critical skills to make wise decisions (that is why we have workshops on smoking, alcohol, and drugs) yet hearing even parents argue that, since there is so much advertising in the outside world, it is better for students to get used to it inside the schools as well.

Of course, there are all kinds of excuses. The school district in B.C. that allows commercial advertisements to appear on its school grounds in order to make money to pay its fuel bills may argue that cutbacks in funding have driven it to that course of action. Parents who want more and more computers, to put into newer and bigger labs, may argue that our students will be at a disadvantage on the job-market unless they have the most up-to-date equipment to learn on. For this, they must raise funds from that kindly bystander, the corporate sponsor, who stands, like Santa Claus, ready to hand out largesse (under certain conditions) to all who ask. Of course, we adults believe in Santa Claus, and the Tooth Fairy, and the Easter Bunny; but I believe that our youngsters are a tad more realistic than their elders in that respect. Maybe they will be the ones who will eventually (decades from now, when the ironclad contracts have rusted a little) free their children from the shackles. If not, we shall indeed have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

Constance Rulka, a retired teacher, is a school trustee for the Howe Sound School District.

Training kitchens or fast-food courts?

by Pierre Dubrulle

On September 24, 1999, I read an article in *The Province*, titled "School lunch breakthrough." The author, Peter Clough, was praising the newly opened food court at Terry Fox Secondary School, in Port Coquitlam, and he qualified the existing cafeteria as "old and boring where kids trade peanut butter sandwiches for soggy microwaved pizza pops." The comments might have been appropriate a couple of decades ago, but things have changed for the better.

Unlike fast-food places and soft-drink giants, whose main interests are profits, chef instructors care for their students, their education, working along with them to shape a concerned, responsible citizen and tradesperson.

Culinary arts is one of a handful of dual programs: students who attend regularly meet their fine arts and applied skilled requirements. For instance, locally developed courses such as gingerbread-house making, and lard sculpting give students throughout the province a chance to participate and compete in their annual competitions. In my district, cake decorating has been locally recognized as a fine arts course. What would happen to these courses if teaching kitchens were replaced with fast-food courts? Students would be losing out, as the courses would not be offered any more.

There are 75 teaching kitchens in B.C., all run by fine certified teachers. Some who are not certified attend the UBC Chef's Education Program and are working toward getting a Bachelor of Education. I am in this category and have been attending university part time during the school year and full time during the summer.

Students who join culinary arts are regular students or career-preparation students. Both groups are eager to learn either some life skills or a trade. Career-preparation students need to complete 100 hours of trade-related work experience; the regular students will do 30 hours. Where would the students enrolled in these courses go, were the teaching kitchens of B.C. replaced by fast-food courts?

Chef instructors are also certified to teach the Food Safe level-one course. It is mandatory for all culinary arts students to be in possession of the Food Safe certificate, giving them an advantage when seeking a job in the food and hospitality or tourism trades. Who would teach them this valued course, dealing with microbiology and personal hygiene? Subway or Pizza Hut? I doubt it!



In addition, some chef instructors are involved in the delivery of the B.C. Secondary School Apprenticeship Program, enabling students to move directly into the apprenticeship-training system while attending school and graduating. The program is more and more popular with students interested in a trade, as they get paid while learning.

Terry Fox Secondary School has a fast-food court hosting Subway, Pizza Hut, Panago, Great Canadian Bagels, White Spot, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Sashimi Sushi, and Taco Time—as if the invasion of schools by Pepsi and Coke was not enough! What nutritional message are they sending our students? In my teaching kitchen, we take good nutrition and health to heart, we make everything from scratch, using the best seasonal ingredients. We provide our students with a clean, safe, healthy, teaching and working environment. Making money is not a priority to us, as we are more concerned with the students' welfare and education. However, this is not to say that we are losing money. The three teaching kitchens in my district are showing a profit each year, and I invest some of that profit in my students in the form of field trips, equipment purchase such as a cappuccino bar, a commercial smoker, an ice-cream maker, a chocolate-tempering machine, and lately, a hydroponics system for our greenhouse program, allowing students to grow vegetables and fresh herbs in a controlled environment. Students take an active part in the recycling

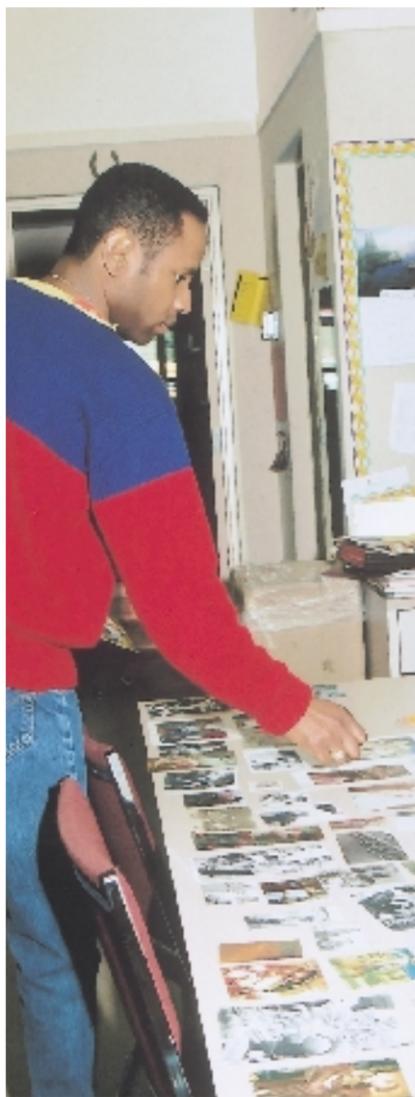
Schools are not in the business of selling fast food and soft drinks but in the business of delivering good solid education in a safe, commercial-free environment.

program. Many of us do fundraising dinners, enabling students to practise their favourite sport or travel to California, Asia, New York, and Europe. Our students, with help from their chef instructor, take an active part in culinary competitions such as B.C. Junior Chapter of the B.C. Chefs' Association and the nationally recognized Skills Canada.

I hope I have shed some light on the importance of having teaching kitchens in B.C. and in schools in general. I will sum up by adding up a few numbers: a student attending and completing Culinary Arts 11A, B, C, and 12A, B, and C will get 30 course credits toward graduation. Students struggling with academics welcome electives being offered by the culinary arts program.

In closing, I hope to see a retreat of fast-food courts in schools. Unlike fast-food places and soft-drink giants, whose main interests are profits, chef instructors care for their students, their education, working along with them to shape a concerned, responsible citizen and tradesperson. Schools are not in the business of selling fast food and soft drinks but in the business of delivering good solid education in a safe, commercial-free environment.

Pierre Dubrulle is a chef instructor at Thomas Haney Secondary School, Maple Ridge.



Students at DeBeck Elementary School, in Richmond, are learning to identify and critique bias and stereotyping in advertising, art, literature, and film. Visual artist Sean George is working with teachers Linda Con and Sharon Straathof as part of "Art as a Catalyst for Change" program.

Art counters prejudice

by June Chow

Richmond's Howard DeBeck Elementary School teachers Linda Con and Sharon Straathof are turning their unassuming Grade 4 to 6 students into ad execs' worst nightmares: critical viewers. Through a residency by visual artist, Sean George, students are learning to identify and critique stereotyping and bias in advertising, art, literature, and film. Specifically, they are examining representations of children—themselves—and learning to ask a number of questions. Is the child represented in a position of power, comfort, danger, or excitement? If you were the child shown here, what might you say? In the DeBeck classroom, a wall is covered in questions to challenge and stimulate the way students respond to images and text about children. The questions are underscored through classroom activities led by George, and students keep a journal/scrapbook of found images and text that hold meaning for them, plus their personal responses.

In one visit, George introduces ad images of children from mainstream magazines. Though the ads target adult consumers, they feature children. In one ad for sunscreen, a young girl dressed and posed provocatively in a black bikini suntans at a resort. A woman of questionable relationship lounges behind her, similarly clothed. The ad elicits genuine shock, and although the students still lack the vocabulary to fully articulate their feelings toward the ad, when asked what they would change, many agree they would put more clothes on the girl or dress her in a different, more appropriate bathing suit. One student says he would

remove the girl from the ad.

George's residency is part of Art as a Catalyst for Change, a program designed and implemented through the Vancouver-based, non-profit arts organization ArtStarts in Schools. An innovative program addressing human-rights issues, Catalyst brings artists into classrooms to create environments in which students can explore their feelings, opinions, and ideas about racism, diversity, and difference through the creative process. The program aims to give youth basic expressive tools to articulate and explore their experiences and respond to issues in the world around them. Also involved in the program this year are Cree performance artist Archer Pechawis, Japanese-Canadian visual artist

Art and art-making serve as alternative modes of teaching and learning prejudice reduction and diversity education in schools.

Haruko Okano, and Nigerian storyteller Comfort Ero. Art as a Catalyst for Change is just one of ArtStarts' many artist-in-the-classroom programs available to B.C. schools and teachers. The organization's workshop/residency artists not only are professional artists, but also are experienced teachers and youth educators in their communities. George has been an educator at the Vancouver Art Gallery since 1995, running hands-on visual art programs for children and adults for over 10 years. Con and Straathof, who have been involved in Catalyst for two

consecutive years, view the artist-in-the-classroom experience as an opportunity to have a real artist and real person, with life experience as well as art expertise, connect with their students in a way that they would not be able to as teachers. Artists brought into the classroom validate and give quality to the arts experience, relating art as life experience rather than simply a curriculum area. According to Con and Straathof, essential to a successful artist residency is the development of a working partnership between teacher and artist. During artist visits, Con and Straathof provide support through classroom management, facilitating activities, encouraging discussion, and providing one-on-one help for students. Strong believers that lesson plans are dynamic and flexible rather than set in stone, they hold a weekly debriefing session with George to reflect, prepare, and make adjustments to the program in response to students' needs and interests.

Where is the "art" of George's artist residency at Howard DeBeck? Only after students have learned to identify and critique representations of children do they begin art making. Combining found image and text using collage and design techniques, students create greeting cards offering subversive commentary on media representations of children and exploring the power of combining image and text. Both artists and teachers involved in Catalyst emphasize process over product. Art and art-making serve as alternative modes of teaching and learning prejudice reduction and diversity education in schools. As George points out, we all harbour racism and

stereotypes within us—what's important is to be able to question and discuss those opinions and feelings. As racism today manifests itself subtly, it is crucial to cultivate the skills necessary to recognize instances of racism that appear in every-

...some day, they're going to look at an ad, and they're going to say, 'That's not fair to that kid,' or 'I don't think that girl should be in that picture.'

day, popular images and text. And as the effectiveness of overt antiracism messages to youth becomes increasingly questionable, programs like Catalyst provide creative ways to address sensitive issues affecting youth.

For Linda Con and Sharon Straathof, program evaluation will be difficult—they are looking toward the long-term effects of prejudice reduction. Says Straathof, "We have to have some sense of certainty that this is going to come back to [the students]—that it's going to come back to them when they need it. Right now, they're just seeing it as an activity, but some day, they're going to look at an ad, and they're going to say, 'That's not fair to that kid,' or 'I don't think that girl should be in that picture.' When you assess it in the moment, I think it's different from looking at the long-term. And that's one of the things they say in the prejudice-reduction literature, right? Nothing happens right now. It starts."

June Chow, ArtStarts in Schools.

Project overseas: St. Vincent/ Grenadines

by Stephen Fairbairn

A year ago, I responded to an ad in *Teacher for Project Overseas*, sponsored jointly by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member organizations, and I was accepted into the program. I was going to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Eastern Caribbean.

As the school year ended, I headed to Ottawa for a three-day intensive-training session.

Project Overseas has a long and successful history of educational support and partnerships in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. Since 1962, approximately 1,500 Canadian teachers have worked with co-tutors in host countries to deliver educational and professional development courses to 60,000 teachers. The program uses up 45% of the CTF's annual budget. Part of your monthly paycheque deduction to the BCTF supports and advances education around the world.

The St. Vincent/Grenadines Teachers' Union has just entered a new phase of development, moving from a union of volunteer workers (the national president teaches full time) to one consisting of paid executive workers. The union's first paid union executive member—Deniston Douglas—began his first term as an Industrial Relations Officer this September. This position is being funded by the CTF for its first year.

Our group of six, from Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C., worked with co-tutors to deliver courses on union issues (finance and budgets, internal communications), information technology (using word processors, spreadsheets, and databases in the classroom), special needs, using technology and media in the classroom, course design and evaluation, AIDS education, and gender equity.

Classes started at about 08:30, as our pupils arrived from all over the island. Many of the teachers travelled for two hours to get to school on time; some never made it on time. We presented our various curricula to groups of 25 teachers in rooms with little technology while ceiling fans and open windows moved the air and added to the background noise. The lack of Canadian-style equipment and visuals was overcome by the dedication and

enthusiasm of our classes. My co-tutors and I worked with our fellow union members to develop a plan for improving union communications, and we worked on a new approach for their next budget presentation.

Lunch was a big meal: fish, chicken, mutton, breadfruit, rice with lentil beans, bananas, plantains, and shredded lettuce/carrot salad.

After lunch, the team tended to split up to cover the daily chores of shopping in the market or heading up to the union hall for lesson preparation.

Our weekends were filled with team sightseeing. We worked hard, and we all made many friends, with one another and with the local teachers. We learned about a different culture, about secondary school entrance exams, limited access to secondary schools, the realities of a recently autonomous state dependent on banana exports to England, and about ourselves.

We had the opportunity to demonstrate our support for the teachers in St. Vincent during our second week on site. The union organized a picket line in front of Government House to protest a divisive pension bill being voted on. We were there, on the line, writing placards, and being interviewed by the press.

We taught about Canada. We joked with one another. We left a flag in the union hall. We made laughter. We shared knowledge. We listened. We didn't judge. We didn't criticize. We asked for nothing, and we gave as much as we could.

I returned with a better understanding of cultural differences, of the effects of cultural genocide at the hands of old world colonial powers, and a greater fear of globalization and how it will affect developing countries.

The experience has shown me how hard we must work to maintain what we have, how hard others are working to get a fraction of what we have. I began the summer being proud of who and what I am. I ended the summer being even prouder: I am proud to be a Canadian and proud to be a teacher.

Stephen Fairbairn teaches at Elkford Secondary School, Elkford.



History texts should engage us

by Keith Rispin

As a student of Canadian History, I have been exposed ad-nauseum to countless mind-numbing texts on Canada's illustrious history. Now that I am a teacher of Canadian history, I find myself subjecting my students to the same mind-numbing texts. Try as I might to supplement my curriculum with interesting and entertaining anecdotes from our past, the simple utterance of the words "history text" elicit a collective groan that could wake John A. himself. The carefully edited puff-ball versions of Canadian history in classroom texts have all the moxie of Melba toast; about all they inspire is sleep. We Canadians have been lulled into a complacent contempt for our history. We have engineered this indifference through the textual history we provide in the classroom.

Last night I turned the final page of Will Ferguson's book, *Bastards and Boneheads*, and could not help but feel that Ferguson could be the answer to Melba-toast texts in our schools. Ferguson, "Pierre Berton with attitude," delivers Canadian

history in a factual but witty style. He would be a shot of Jack Daniels in a world of watered-down rhetoric. Ferguson pulls no punches in his version of Canadian history; he clearly defines the negative as well as the positive in the people and events that shaped Canada.

A text by Ferguson would certainly be a shift from the feel-good versions of Canadian History available to us today. No longer would Mackenzie King be venerated as one of Canada's

"History is a verdict and we are all on the jury." Let's give our children the facts in an engaging and honest way and let them judge for themselves.

greatest prime ministers. Instead students would learn of his anti-Semitic policies, and that his indifference to the plight of European Jews contributed to the deaths of thousands of people—an act, some would say,

worthy of a seat at the Nuremberg trials next to Goering and Hess. No longer would battles on Canadian soil be boring and limited to the Plains of Abraham, New Brunswick, and the Red River Valley. Students would learn of the contribution and sacrifice of First Nations and that they were not simply noble savages or pawns in the struggle for nationhood but an active, vital force in the birth of our nation. Students would learn that the cast of characters who built Canada was diverse and not limited to a select few, whose stories were edited into a version that was fit to print.

Canadian history is engaging and interesting if we take it for what it truly is, a ruthless immoral battle in a pit of historical vipers. At the end of *Bastards and Boneheads*, Ferguson states, "History is a verdict and we are all on the jury." Let's give our children the facts in an engaging and honest way and let them judge for themselves.

Calling Will Ferguson! Write us a textbook kids will take home and read.

Keith Rispin teaches at West Vancouver Senior Secondary School, West Vancouver.

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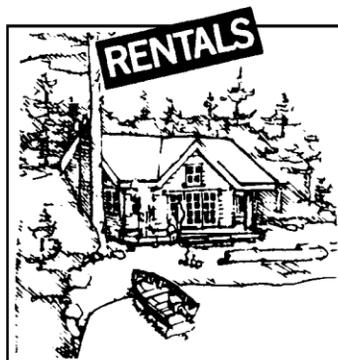
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VANCOUVER by week/month, May-Aug. Clean bright 1 bd. apt. in Kitsilano. 2 blk. to 4th Ave. shops, 6 blk. to Kits beach. Min. from town and UBC. Furn., stove, fridge, d/washer, u/ground parking. Contact Liz, (250) 498-2265, or dfairbro@sd53.bc.ca

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VICTORIA. Character house renting. 3 bd. July 2001-July 2002. Desirable location, nr UVic. Must love cats. Sweetheart deal. N/S, N/P. (250) 477-2010, 6-8 pm.

VICTORIA. 3 bd., 1 bath, fully furn. house. On bus route. Close to beach and shopping. Avail. month of July. email: jerrykyle@home.com

VANCOUVER. Nicely furn. 1 bd. basement suite, fully equipped, linens, cooking, TV, VCR, cable, hydro, laundry. Kootenay bus loop, resp. person, N/S, N/P. \$800/mo. avail. June 1. (604) 294-1265, aston@intergate.ca

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PROFESSIONAL COUPLE avail. for housesitting. <http://members.theglobe.com/housesitting/AD.HTML>

VANCOUVER. 1 bd. condo. July for rent, centrally located, view. \$1000, (604) 732-3423.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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TEACHER EXCHANGE. Would you like to work on the Wirral Peninsula? I am a special needs teacher living and working here, would like to swap job, house, car for 12 months only from Sept. 2002. This is a lovely residential area in the Northwest of England, very close to bustling Liverpool and Roman Chester. Handy for motorway network to the rest of England. Within very easy reach of sports facilities, parks, shops, theatres, museums, entertainment and more. For further details e-mail: dot@thedrum.demon.co.uk

TEACHER EXCHANGE. Australia. Female primary teacher living in tropical Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, seeks exchange to Vancouver, BC E-mail: kaylene_capra@hotmail.com, Hilder Road State School, Kaloma Rd., The Gap, 4061, Brisbane.

TEACHER EXCHANGE. Aussie teachers near Queensland's Sunshine Coast seeking exchange to BC or Alberta for 2002-teaching areas are secondary Drama & Dance and secondary Health & Physical Education. Contact Brad & Sue Fox at bsfox@squirrel.com.au

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MAY

3-4 Vancouver. On Becoming a Facilitator of Learning, Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) workshop. \$385 includes course materials. Register by Friday, April 27. Contact Ione Wagner, University of Victoria, (250)721-8944, iwagner@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie/cace/ (register online).

4-6 Nelson. Secondary Tourism Educator Group (STEG) AGM, at the Tourism Educators' Conference, hosted by Selkirk College and co-ordinated by Tourism Educators Consortium, Selkirk College. Contact Dave Hutchings, davehutchings@home.com, h: (250)477-4505, www.ShellPaylessVictoria.Open.com (link to STEG).

5 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices: Fourth Annual Conference on Teacher Research/Researching Teaching, UBC. Contact Gaalen Erickson, (604)822-2867, gaalen.erickson@ubc.ca, www.ocpe.educ.ubc.ca/wcs/c_invest-prac.html.

4-5 New Westminster. Working with Children with Sexual Behavior Problems (TS531). 185. Justice Institute. Contact Amber Hall, (604)528-5620, www.jibc.bc.ca/cs.

7-8 New Westminster. Making Connections: Working Through Conflict with Youth Series. Workshop 3: Making Connections—Third Party Facilitation when Working with Youth (CY187). \$185. Justice Inst. Contact Nenita Capli, (604) 528-5631, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

8-9 North Vancouver. Fast Forward 2001, Educational Media Showcase, Capilano College Sportplex. \$101.65 before March 6; \$133.75 thereafter. Visit www.lan-gara.bc.ca/ffwd; fax registration forms to (604)323-5577.

10-13 Prince George. Bridging the Gap, A Lifetime of Opportunities in Education; bridging the gap between high school and post-secondary education, trends for life-long learning, UNBC. Keynoters: Ann Dowsett Johnston and Crawford Killian. Visit www.res.unbc.ca/btgconference.

11-12 Nanaimo. New PE in the New Millennium, B.C. Rural Teachers' Association (BCRTA) Conference, Small Schools/Small Communities/Recreation, Malaspina University College. Home/School/Community Links/Celebration. Contact Linda Myres, (250)728-1220, lmmyres@sd70.bc.ca, or Darlene Higgins, (250)753-3245 (2554), f: (250)741-2393, higging@mala.bc.ca, www.bctf.bc.ca/BCRTA.

16-17 New Westminster, BC Working with Adolescent Females in Trauma: Innovations in Group Treatment (TS527). \$185. Justice Inst. Contact Heather Olson, (604) 528-5573, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

18-19 Richmond. Catalyst 2001, A Conference for K-12 Science Educators, sponsored by the B.C. Science Teachers' Assn., Delta Pacific Resort and Conference Centre. Contact Kitty Morgan, kmorgan@telus.net, f: (604)298-5562, or David Barnum, c/o West Sechelt Elementary School, PO Box 220, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0, (604)885-2825, f: (604)885-6468, dbarnum@sd46.bc.ca, www.bctf.bc.ca/BCSCTA.

25 New Westminster. Identifying and Overcoming Racism in the Counselling Relationship (EP321). \$95. Justice Institute. Contact Heather Olson, (604)528-5573, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

28-29 New Westminster. Counselling Skills: The Art of asking Effective Questions (EP587). \$185. Justice Inst. Contact Heather Olson, (604)528-5573, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

28-June 1 Victoria. Design and Development of Effective Computer-Based and Web-Based Training Programs. Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) workshop. \$495 includes course materials. Register by Monday, May 21. Contact Ione Wagner, University of Victoria, (250)721-8944, iwagner@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie/cace/ (register online).

JUNE

1-2 New Westminster. Safe Teen , Powerful Alternatives: Skills to Stand Strong Without Violence (EP562). \$195. Justice Institute. Contact Heather Olson, (604)528-5573, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

7-8 New Westminster. Children Exposed to Family Violence, Level 2 (EP231). \$185. Justice Institute. Contact Amber Hall, (604)528-5620, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

8-9 New Westminster. Caught Between Two Worlds: Supporting Culturally Diverse Adolescent Girls (CY109A). \$185. Justice Institute. Contact Heather Olson, (604)528-5573, www.jibc.bc.ca/ccs.

JULY

2-5 Calgary. Solution-Focussed Counselling (four-day intensive) with Nancy McConkey. Contact Solution Talk, (403)216-8255, f: (403)939-3321, soltalk@telusplanet.net, www.solutiontalk.ab.ca.

2-6 Langley. Introductory and Intermediate Video Production for Secondary Teachers (starting a production program, camera work, editing, lighting, audio, and scripting; curriculum ideas and materials), Brookwood Secondary School. \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604)530-2141, dtomlinson@bss.sd35.bc.ca.

3-6 Surrey. Creating Powerful Learning Communities: Building a Culture of Opportunity presented by the Surrey School District's Leadership Academy. Call (604)465-8499, or visit www.twblearn.com.

9-13 Langley. 2-6 Langley. Advanced Video Production for Secondary Teachers (evaluation of student work, scripting, basic film analysis, video genres, production from concept to final product), Brookwood Secondary School. \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604)530-2141, dtomlinson@bss.sd35.bc.ca.

9-13 Victoria. Transformative Learning for Organizational Change. Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) elective. \$320 plus course materials. Register by Friday, June 15. Contact Ione Wagner, University of Victoria, (250)721-8944, iwagner@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie/cace/ (register online).

16-20 Victoria. Facilitating Adult Education. Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) elective. \$320 plus course materials. Register by Friday, June 15. Contact Ione Wagner, University of Victoria, (250)721-8944, iwagner@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie/cace/ (register online).

17-21 Vancouver. World Congress of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel. Contact Mary Ellen Brown, (212)647-1890, f: (212)647-1865, mebrown@aabt.org, www.aabt.org

AUGUST

6-11 Devon, AB. Alberta Teachers' Association Council on School Administration Educational Leadership Academy, Leadership 2001: A Personal and Professional Odyssey, Westridge Park Lodge. Apply by May 31. Contact Vaal Riewe or Leslie Kaun, (780)447-9400, f: (780)455-6481, lkaun@teachers.ab.ca.

20-24 Victoria. Adult Learning and Development. Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) elective. \$320 plus course materials. Register by Friday, July 20. Contact Ione Wagner, University of Victoria, (250)721-8944, iwagner@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie/cace/ (register online).

PD Calendar web site
<http://pdonline.bctf.bc.ca/conferences/PD-Calendar.html>

Additions or changes?
E-mail Debby Stagg, PSA services co-ordinator, PD Division, BCTF dstagg@bctf.bc.ca

Skytrain at school?

by Sarah Agnew

I have been working at Secord Elementary School, in East Vancouver, for nearly three years now. We are spending this year amid construction. An addition is being built onto our school and Skytrain is being expanded. Not two blocks away from Secord and in the backyards of some of my students' homes, Skytrain construction is well under way. Skytrain construction has also made its way into the classroom; the local issue has provided a unique and authentic learning opportunity as a natural exten-

Fuelled with new information as a result of our January field trip, my students are learning first-hand that issues are rarely one-sided.

sion to the unit "Our Community" that we began in September.

In the fall of this school year, the Grade 5s at Secord learned about the history of the houses, as well as characteristic features of Grandview. That opened the door to ongoing thinking and consideration of the controversial Skytrain construction. My students and I have used this local issue as an opportunity to develop critical-thinking skills and engage in thoughtful discussion and writing. For example, students realized that with the roads to Trout Lake



blocked off, it takes them 20 minutes to walk to the local ice rink and running route instead of 5-10 minutes. My students and I have been thinking about the impact Skytrain will have on our neighbourhood now and in the future.

Students are aware of the relentless noise of the construction, traffic problems due to bridge closures, and the huge amounts of money being spent on the project. Students have been warned several times about the dangers associated with the construction zones. They have shown concern over their own safety and that of the construction workers themselves. Also, they are upset about the disruption—or should I say total destruction—of local green space, the Grandview Cut. When I take the class along Broadway and Victoria and we look down at the Cut, we see that what used to be full of trees and bushes, and home to many birds and animals, is now a clear cut where the new train tracks are being built.

If you asked any of my students their opinion of the Skytrain construction last fall, they could have listed several "cons" to the project. At the time, their one-sided opinions

seemed logical and justified. Recently, however, my students and I were given the chance to revisit the issue of the Skytrain and how all the construction might actually be beneficial to the neighbourhood in the future.

In January, I took a group of Grade 5 students from Secord to the official unveiling of the first Millennium Line Skytrain cars. The ceremony, at the Bombardier Plant in Burnaby, was attended by the media as well as B.C. Premier Ujjal Dosanjh. The students were very excited to see the new train cars and go inside them. They commented on the "cool, cushy seats," the

They are learning not only that it's ok to consider new information when forming opinions, but that it's necessary.

sleek exteriors, and the "neat view from one car to the next." They were thrilled to take photos and shake Mr. Dosanjh's hand. But in addition to all the high-tech glitz and publicity, it

got all of us thinking about the issues again. The field trip gave the children another chance to consider all the pros and cons to the ongoing debate. Beyond the novelty of being in a brand new Skytrain, my students have come up with several arguments in favour of the new line. For example, it will provide reliable, safe transportation to many places in the Lower Mainland, and fewer people will need to use cars as often, leading, in theory, to less pollution, less traffic, and fewer accidents. Furthermore, they figure the new Skytrain will provide safe transportation for the elderly who cannot drive. They also realized that the Skytrain construction has provided jobs in B.C., with both the guideways and the train cars themselves. I was pleasantly surprised when the students came up with these sophisticated and real-life benefits of the Skytrain. Talking at such a young age about the implications of the choices they make may lead the students to incorporate alternative methods of transportation into their lifestyle as adults. As the premier said on our visit to the Bombardier plant, "they are the [Skytrain] customers of the future."

Fuelled with new information as a result of our January field trip, my students are learning first-hand that issues are rarely one-sided. They have heard loud voices expressing extremely different perspectives regarding the construction of the new Skytrain—from local protesters to Skytrain marketers. Now, it is up to the students to decide what they want to believe in and stand for. They are learning not only that it's ok to consider new information when forming opinions, but that it's necessary. There is no one way to look at events or stories, that they have to gather as much information as they can, think for themselves, and feel confident enough to allow their opinions to evolve.

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This has been an exciting year of discussion about real issues. My Grade 5 students have developed an awareness and a better understanding of what is happening in the world outside the classroom through discussions and activities inside the classroom. I thank my Grade 5 students for allowing the issue to come to life. I also thank my teaching colleague Dan Taylor and Kimberly Toye, the principal at Secord, for being integral to this exciting year of growth, not just on our school grounds and in the Grandview community, but also in the minds of all the students who benefited from this unique opportunity.

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