

Teacher

Features

| | |
|--|----|
| Teacher work arbitration | 3 |
| Penticton, October 26 | 5 |
| Putting students first one day a year! | 6 |
| What can it possibly mean to be too political? | 6 |
| Once upon a time, there were teacher-librarians | 7 |
| New grad proposals: Less choice, less flexibility | 8 |
| Be safe out there | 8 |
| A union of professionals or something else? | 9 |
| Affiliation with the BCFed | 10 |
| Class war | 11 |
| Global education perspective | 12 |
| A charter for public education | 13 |
| L'est rencontre l'quest | 13 |
| Project overseas: Jordan | 20 |

Columns

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| President's message | 2 |
| Readers write | 2 |
| Looking back | 3 |
| 10 New lesson aids | 14 |
| Yours for the asking | 14 |
| Teachers retired | 15 |
| Retirement seminars | 16 |
| Classified | 19 |
| PD calendar | 19 |

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People opposed to the government's agenda of service cuts and privatization participate in the Parade of Lost Services in Penticton during the B.C. Liberal convention. Claire Kujundzic, from Wells describes the successful actions taken to have children educated in their own community. "If we can stop them in Wells, one of the smallest communities in B.C., we can stop them everywhere."

B.C. Liberals push boards to market education

by Larry Kuehn

The B.C. Liberal government is reshaping public education through privatization and a market approach to education. A number of policies put in place will have a profound impact on public education in the long term.

Welcome to School District No. ## Business Company!

Amendments to the *School Act* in Bill 34 in the spring of 2002 brought a new institution to the public schools in B.C.: the School District Business Company. Each school board now has the right to create a company to carry out business activities that would not be possible as a public body or that would expose the school district to financial liability.

The name is spelled out in the legislation: School District No. ## Business Company, with your district's number in the place of ##. Two districts with a great deal of entrepreneurial experience—New Westminster and Vancouver—jumped almost immediately to establish their companies. When asked about why Vancouver had to rush into setting up its company without first studying the implications, board officials said it was to keep up with New Westminster, which had already created its company.

Boards may use their company to make profits to pay for educational programs. That could set up significant inequities as districts successful in marketing offer more programs than those that keep their focus on educating the students

who live in their district. Selling educational programs to students overseas and providing consultants to other schools in Canada are two types of business likely to be undertaken.

Companies must have a board of at least three people, at least one of whom must be a board official or trustee. Boards are not supposed to transfer money to these businesses. If they transfer assets, such as teacher-developed learning resources to these companies, they must be for fair market value.

Offshore B.C. schools as profit centres

One school has been operating as a B.C. school in China, and now the province has chosen 20 more schools to offer the B.C. curriculum. The new schools will be in the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Japan.

The offshore schools must employ teachers with B.C. certificates, meet the learning outcomes of the B.C. curriculum, and have the students write the required B.C. exams. The ministry will certify and inspect the schools and issue Dogwood diplomas to graduates. To meet requirements, the school can work with school district companies, other B.C. companies, independent schools, or consultants.

They are private schools with students whose families can afford to pay high tuitions. They are buying the Dogwood, which provides high status for the student and easier access to post-secondary education in B.C.

The (London) *Times Education*

Supplement, August 2, 2002, ran an article pointing out the irony of B.C. public schools' selling elite private education overseas to finance the public schools in B.C.

Open school is up for sale

Open School has been put on the market with a call for proposals for privatization. When Open School was created, it was given without cost all the materials developed for the ministry while it was a branch of the ministry. Last year, Open School earned a profit of \$142,600 by selling course materials for distance-education students in B.C. and internationally.

International students as "cash cows"

Many districts have moved quickly to bring in international students, who pay high tuition and top up the district budget. In 2000-01, districts charged an average tuition of \$10,000. On average, they spent \$5,000 per student, leaving an average profit of \$5,000. Lots of businesses would like to work on such a margin. The expenditures on those students are not for just a few extra teachers, but also for sending school administrators on expensive overseas recruiting trips.

Between 2000-01 and 2001-02, the number of international students jumped from 2,947 to 4,035. The revenue from international student tuitions totalled \$40 million in 2001-02.

Some students as young as 9 or 10, speaking no English, are being put into classes, some-

times without ESL support. With the stripping of language from the collective agreement, the potential for even bigger profits is great. More students can be put into classes without contractual limits. That affects the learning conditions of not just the international students, but also the other students who receive less of the teachers' attention.

Distributed learning—competition for students... and their funding

For several years, the ministry allowed 18 school districts to run online distributed-learning programs for students being schooled at home rather than in classrooms. A cap of 2,200 students was placed on those programs, and the districts received funding of \$3,500 for each of the students.

As of the 2002-03 school year, the lid is off those programs. Every school district is now free to run its own program. There is no cap on the number of students who can be enrolled in online programs. Each of the students brings to the school district the base funding of \$5,308 each. Students can be enrolled in a district program no matter what district the student lives in.

This is creating a competition for students, with some districts offering incentives for students to sign up. The Gold Trail district, for example, is offering to pay parents \$750 per student for learning resources and \$250 for Internet connections. The Nechako E-bus has advertised that it provides a computer and

See B.C. LIBERALS page 4

President's message



Neil Worboys

As *Teacher* goes to press, we are in the run-up to the municipal and school board elections. In towns and cities around the province, British Columbians are studying the issues and deciding how to cast their ballots.

A recent poll, reported in *The Vancouver Sun*, indicated that education is the key issue in this election. That can be in no small part because of the tremendous energy and commitment that teachers have contributed to the democratic process. Many teachers are working hard to help elect trustees who will truly uphold the public trust and stand up for students. Some teachers have even thrown their hats into the ring and are running for public office.

It's heartening to see so many teachers involved at all levels of the campaign. It's a sign of our strength and resiliency that after the blows of last year and the loss of such important collective-agreement provisions, we have not given up. Far from it!

Teachers continue to be active in their locals and their communities, engaged in the crucial work of building coalitions to support public education and other valuable services. It's more complicated now, in the "New Era." It's more difficult, but we're learning along the way and bringing parents and others into the work.

And we are having success. We are buoyed by the non-confidence motions passed by the school boards of Coast Mountains, Coquitlam, Prince Rupert, Richmond, and Vancouver Island North. Congratulations to those trustees who have demonstrated the courage to take a stand. They're among increasing numbers of citizens and groups opposing the B.C. Liberals' agenda of service cuts and privatization to pay for tax cuts.

I look forward to working with you, as we continue our struggle to promote a strong and stable public education system.

Wisdom needed to implement change

Certain information must be considered before changes are made in a school system. The first consideration has to do with the kinds of students in today's classrooms and how this affects teaching. In some homes, there are fears, frustrations, displacements, layoffs, and feelings of inadequacy. It follows that the performance of a child is affected by the home conditions. In addition, a policy of inclusion is in place. A teacher can find incidents of FAS, ADHD, autism, criminal tendencies, child neglect, and substance abuse in a class. Presence of these exceptional conditions requires an inordinate amount of time in preparing individualized work and in meetings with parents, aides, and other assistants.

Furthermore, such students do not respond to rules and can be most disruptive. Since sanctions are counter productive, it takes patience and constant support on the part of a teacher to motivate them.

The second consideration is the purpose of an institution. The purpose of school used to be literacy and numeracy, in other words, learning activities that promote the thinking skills. A lawyer wouldn't think of performing surgery, and a dedicated doctor would feel out of place in a primary classroom. In other words, professional competence depends on specialized training as well as on personal attributes. When an institution maintains its original purpose, it is capable of making the necessary adjustments to accommodate change. That brings us to the function of the institution of government, which has the sole responsibility of facilitating the operation of all the institutions that make up a society. The third consideration for those in education is the exciting research in education, and particularly that of brain-based learning. Imaging of the brain, discovered in medical research, has revealed how learning takes place and the optimum conditions for its achievement. With their knowledge of learning theories and emotional intelligence, teachers had intuitively known what research confirmed. The research has also confirmed that when adverse conditions exist, the results are adversely affected. In other words, there are conditions that impede learning. Those obstacles must be removed. It takes more than testing to accomplish that.

Finally, since parents are the first educators and are party to that role throughout the formative years of a child, it is imperative that the parent/teacher team work in harmony. At a large educational workshop I asked, "What is the most serious problem you have in your classroom?" The immediate answer: "The waste of potential." That became the topic of discussion. I wish parents could have heard the degree of concern about it. In all my experiences with teachers, I have been convinced that, in the profession,

there is a universal will to do the best for every student.

What is needed is the wisdom to use effectively the financial means we have and, most urgently, to open our minds to the existing experience and information, of which there is a much greater bank than is now being acknowledged.

Mary MacMillan
Abbotsford

We can't afford Olympics

I have written two letters to President Jacques Rogge, International Olympic Committee, Chateau de Vidy, 1007 Lausanne, Switzerland, regarding the Vancouver 2010 Olympic bid. Here are some excerpts from both letters.

"I am pleading with the International Olympic committee to reject the Vancouver bid. B.C. simply cannot afford, at this time to host the Olympics. To raise the estimated \$21.5 million bid costs, the current B.C. government has instigated massive ministry budget cuts in transportation, justice, education, parks and recreation, forestry, social services, and health. All of these cuts are occurring as the B.C. government frantically tries to scrape together enough money to cover just the bid costs..."

"...Alberta already has all of the required Olympic venues from their 1988 Winter Olympics and Canadian athletes have availed themselves of these facilities since they were built..."

"...No country can ever cover the costs of hosting the Olympics because of the increased costs of providing security against terrorist threats..."

"...There is definitely a ground swell in the province against hosting the Olympics. These protests are not against the ideals of the Olympics. People are upset that at this time of political and social upheaval, instigated by the B.C. Liberal cuts to services, that the government would even consider hosting the Olympics..."

"The social structures in B.C. are being compromised; citizens safety and health are being put in jeopardy... Now is not the time."
Rick Foulger
Nelson

Is a crisis looming for TOCs?

I would like some feedback from other TOCs and beginning teachers about the level of TOC work in your district.

I chair the TOC committee in Victoria, and many TOCs here are reporting a significant drop in work compared with the same period last year. If the trend continues, it could result in a crisis for TOCs here in Victoria.

I have received e-mails from TOCs who have gotten only a handful of calls since September. I haven't had a call since September 30. In my previous three years, I never went a week without at least one call. If I didn't have an EI claim I would be in se-

rious trouble. I don't know how some TOCs are getting by.

The main culprit for us in Victoria is district budget cuts and teacher layoffs. Teacher layoffs are causing extreme downward pressure. TOCs who last year worked year-long temp contracts are now taking the half-year or short-term contracts. TOCs who worked the short-term contracts are scrambling for whatever is left and are back day-to-day subbing. The remaining TOCs are shut out of contracts and are facing more competition for straight TOC work.

TOC work has been affected in other ways:

- Loss of temp contracts resulted from the lifting of class-size limits.
- More district meetings are being held after school rather than during instructional time.
- Oversize class time, for which teachers used to book TOCs, has been lost.
- Reduced funding has meant greater restrictions on school based in-service education and fewer TOC days.
- The proliferation of part-time and reduced assignments has meant that coverage is being provided "in house" rather than by a TOC.

All these add up and translate into fewer TOC opportunities. With many TOCs barely eking out a living as it is, even a minor drop in work can have a huge impact.

TOCs are the "hidden casualties" in the layoff process. No one knows how this process is going to play out, whether it will be a minor setback or the beginning of a tough couple of years for TOCs.

Brian Bradley
Greater Victoria

Send a powerful message now

Teachers of this region should know that they need not wait until the provincial election in 2005 to send a clear message of concern to this government.

Jeff Bray, MLA for Victoria, Beacon Hill, was elected with less than 38% of the popular vote. During the campaign Mr. Bray said that it was "fear-mongering at its worst" to suggest that Liberal policies would reduce public services.

Bray has supported his government on every measure. He is an enthusiastic supporter of the cuts to educational funding.

A non-partisan group of citizens believe that it would be very appropriate for the first successful Canadian recall campaign to occur in the provincial capital. The Recall Bray Campaign volunteers are planning to collect 15,000 signatures early in 2003 in order to force a by-election.

You do not have to live in the riding to be involved. You can help by:

- Volunteering to gather signatures, stuff envelopes, do data input, etc.
- Donating cash, goods and/or services to help the campaign.
- Pre-register. If you were eligible to vote in the Victoria-Bea-

con Hill riding in the May 2001 election (whether you voted or not), pre-register on the Recall Bray Campaign web site so that we know where to find you when the 60-day recall period starts.

Join the Recall Bray Campaign (www.recallbray.com) or phone 250-370-5180) and send a powerful message to Gordon Campbell and his government.

Bert Slater
Greater Victoria

G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award

The award may be made annually, at the AGM. Nominations of candidates for the award may be made by any Federation member or by a local of the Federation.

See Page 148 of *The Members' Guide to the BCTF* or call Donna Coulombe for more details. Deadline for nominations is Thursday, February 20, 2003.

Governance structures

The Governance Review Steering Committee provided options to the BCTF Executive Committee on some aspects of the Federation's governance structures. The executive is seeking advice prior to making recommendations to the 2003 Annual General Meeting.

The options cover local recognition and release-time grants, the structure of the Representative Assembly, the term of office for the president, and the designation of first- and second-vice presidents.

Options are outlined in a discussion guide, which can be found at www.bctf.ca/about/governance/discussionguide, along with background documents.

While the guide suggests options, you may wish to formulate others, particularly options related to local recognition and grants. The Executive Committee will consider your suggestions. Please don't feel constrained to choose only one of the options presented in the document. Advice needs to be provided by December 15, 2002.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the review of governance structures.

— Barb Parrott, Executive Committee representative to the Governance Review Steering Committee

In memoriam

Former BCTF President Jim Killeen died recently. We will have an article about his career in the next issue.

BCTF winter holiday closure

The BCTF office will be closed at noon on December 24, 2002, and will reopen at 8:15 a.m. on January 2, 2003.



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All advertisements will be reviewed and approved by the BCTF. They must reflect BCTF policy and be politically, environmentally, and professionally appropriate.

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

In conclusion, your (BCTF) Committee would emphasize as strongly as possible its condemnation of the recommendations of the Kidd Committee with regard to education, which, in our opinion, have been made solely in the interests of the moneyed classes of the province. There is not, in our opinion, a recommendation of the committee that is not a calculated attempt to set up a class barrier as far as education is concerned; to enable the children of the wealthy to continue through secondary schools and university, and to see that the children of the poorer classes do not; in other words, to do away with a system of education which has justly been a source of pride to Canada as a whole and to British Columbia in particular, inasmuch as it offers (rich and poor alike) equal opportunity to all.

(The B.C. Teacher, October 1932)

50 years ago

At the 1952 BCTF Annual Convention the former Minister of Education announced that the Vancouver Normal School would be abandoned in 1953 and a proposed new Faculty of Education at U.B.C. would provide the training for all student teachers with the Victoria Normal School being affiliated with U.B.C. The first two years of teacher training would be offered and teachers wishing to teach in the elementary school would be permitted to withdraw from the course after the first or second year.

(The B.C. Teacher, November 1952)

30 years ago

If change is to occur in the educational practices in our schools—and to many it seems imperative that it does occur—teacher education must change too. But if we hope to produce a different kind of teacher, for a different kind of world from that of 20 years ago, the in-school, experiences that the student-teacher encounters must also change. Responsibility for teacher education lies neither with faculties of education nor with members of the teaching profession alone; accountability rests with both.

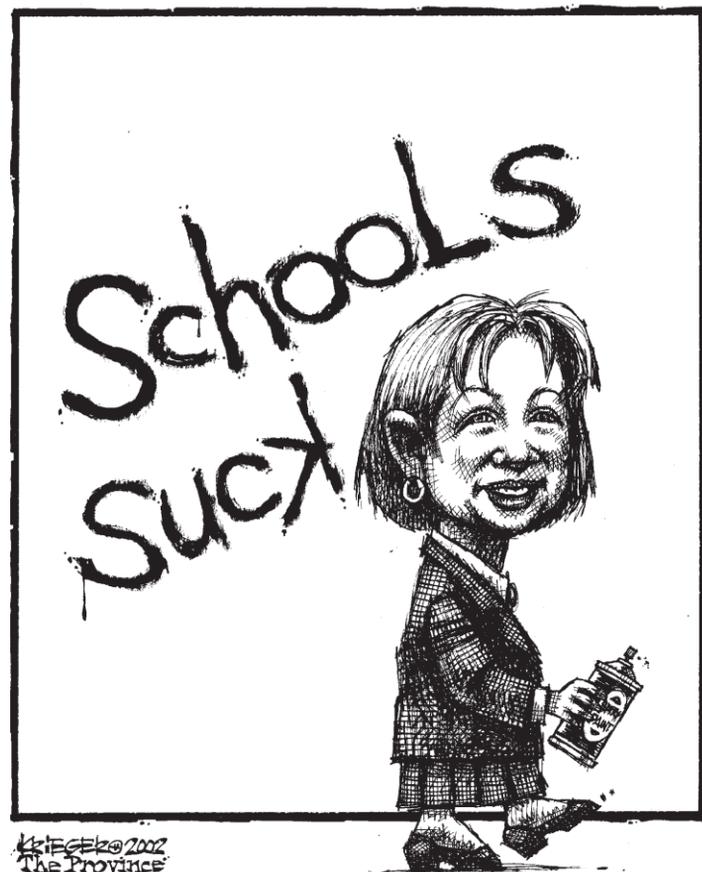
(The B.C. Teacher, November 1972)

10 years ago

Recent changes in School Act regulations have resulted in school board demands that we increase our instructional time. We should resist such changes for many reasons, not the least of which is the long and arduous collective struggle that we've had to secure preparation time. B.C. teachers have long held that preparation time, class size, and good learning conditions are essential ingredients in a quality education system. With preparation time, we have been able to plan and organize, work with colleagues, and make more effective contact with our school community. Without preparation time, our professional lives would be more chaotic and stressful.

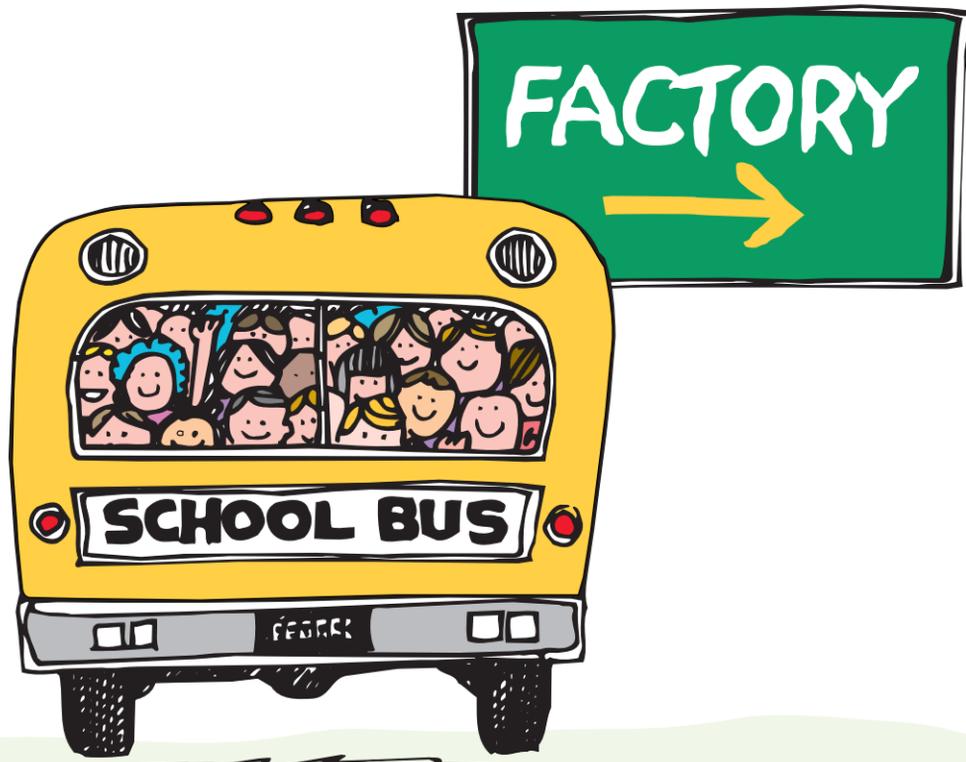
(Teacher Newsmagazine, Oct. 1992)

— Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



USED WITH PERMISSION, ALL PROCEEDS TO THE VANCOUVER FOOD BANK

On school-opening day in September, Minister of Education Christy Clark called school "irrelevant" for 80% of students. She claimed that only 20% of students go on to university, but the ministry's own figures indicate that 65% of B.C. students do go on to post-secondary institutions. Clark also claimed that 25% of high school students don't complete Grade 12. In fact, 86% of 20-year-olds in B.C. have completed secondary school or are working toward completion.



Teacher work arbitration

by Pat Clarke

In November 2002, the BCTF and the BCPSEA will be in an arbitration hearing on the nature of teacher work. The hearing has been scheduled because BCPSEA filed a grievance in the hope that an arbitrator will define the *work of teachers* broadly enough to include activities that are extra-curricular or voluntary. The

The model proposed by BCPSEA is based on a factory model where teachers are to follow directions and treat students as materials on an assembly line.

employer is attempting to make many of the activities that are voluntary part of the job of teaching and therefore mandatory. That would prevent teachers withdrawing from activities that are voluntary. Members will no longer have the choice of whether or not they will participate in those activities.

The implications of a successful grievance on the employer's part are devastating not only for teachers as employees but for the profession of teaching. The consequences for teachers as employees are evident. A successful outcome for BCPSEA would have even more dire consequences for public education. If BCPSEA convinces an arbitrator that the nature of teacher work is as all encompassing as it maintains, and that as employers it has a very wide mandate in terms of what it can require teachers to do, it will have turned teaching from a profession into an occupation.

One of the defining characteristics of a profession is professional autonomy. Our education, training, and experience enable and entitle us to make our own decisions about how we practise and how we interact with our students. We determine what is appropriate and necessary, we

apply our skills as we see fit, and we dedicate ourselves to our work according to our determination of where our skills lie. We make those decisions, not an employer or an agent of that employer. If we do not have that authority, we are not professional workers.

For many, the distinction between *profession* and *occupation* may not seem that important. But the implications for quality public education are enormous. Teaching is a demanding job that requires creativity, spontaneity, and resourcefulness. It demands a relationship between teachers and their employer that accommodates those demands. A working environment that discounts teachers as professionals, that limits their decision-making autonomy and professional discretion, will undermine the quality of teaching. It will weaken teacher morale and inevitably make teaching a less-than-desirable occupation.

The model proposed by BCPSEA is based on a factory

We should let our employers, in particular school trustees and district and school administrators know what we think of this latest assault on teachers by BCPSEA.

model where teachers are to follow directions and treat students as materials on an assembly line. Currently teachers are professionals who are expected to use their creativity, experience, and knowledge to ensure the success of every student. In mid October 2002, the New Westminster School Board passed two motions directing BCPSEA to withdraw from the teacher work arbitration. The first motion called on BCPSEA to withdraw from the arbitration and the second motion directed the

board to seek intervenor status if BCPSEA continues with the case. The board wants to make sure that the arbitrator is aware that it does not support BCPSEA's efforts to have the work of teachers defined in an arbitration.

We should let our employers, in particular school trustees and district and school administrators know what we think of this latest assault on teachers by BCPSEA. An expanded definition will not work. It will further undermine the trust and mutual respect so essential for effective schools. If our employers are serious about *teamwork* and *co-operation*, destroying teachers' professional autonomy and treating them only as personnel is the wrong way to go.

Pat Clarke is the director of the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.

School board calls on BCPSEA to stop arbitration

In mid-October 2002, the New Westminster School Board passed two motions directing BCPSEA to withdraw from the teacher work arbitration. The two motions are:

"That the New Westminster School Board inform BCPSEA that we are opposed to their continuation of the Arbitration — BCTF Interference with Management Rights, and demand their immediate withdrawal of that arbitration.

"If BCPSEA does not withdraw the arbitration then the New Westminster School Board seek intervenor status to oppose the arbitration, on the grounds that at no time has BCPSEA sought their advice or opinion on this matter and that they have violated their duty to represent us."

Other school boards may be interested in maintaining positive relations with its teachers and passing similar motions.

— Peter Owens

B.C. Liberals from page 1

Internet links to families who sign up with the program. Some of the Regional Distance Education Schools have reported that students in their programs have moved to other programs that offer more incentives to sign up.

Funding is determined by the number of students enrolled by September 30, so teachers in some of the programs have been told to focus on recruiting students so that there will be enough funding to pay for their positions. Since this is one of the few ways that a district can increase its funding, we can expect that the pressure to find new distributed-learning students will increase. With student loads often 50 or more per distributed-learning teacher, some districts see making a "profit" on those students, even after giving a portion of the public funding to private individuals for learning resources, computers, and Internet links.

In the past, the distributed-learning programs primarily sought students who were being home schooled and not in the school system. Now, however, with deregulation, a district can recruit students from other distributed-education programs or from among students who would otherwise be attending regular classes in their own or other school districts.

With these new financial incentives, we could well see a rush by school districts to create new programs to keep from losing students and their funding. The situation could turn into another dot-com fiasco, where districts think they can whip together a program without first finding out if there is a real need or if distributed learning is really educationally sound for most students compared with participating in a classroom.

Who owns the teaching resources developed by teachers?

Ownership of teaching resources hasn't been a big issue for teachers. We have shared things that work for us, borrowing from many sources and giving permission for use without formal agreements. Our work has, in effect, been part of a public commons.

With the commercialization of education that is taking place, questions of copyright and ownership are taking on a new importance. What has been a part of the commons has been privatized. When a teacher develops a resource for a distributed-learning program, can the school board (or the "School District ## Business Company") sell that resource?

The answer is clear in a few cases—where the teacher was explicitly engaged to write something for the board to sell or where the teacher develops something on his/her own time for the specific purpose of selling it herself. But many real situations are somewhere in between; where the issues will have to be clarified over time.

Commodifying education moves it into the sphere of trade agreements

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization covers education and all other services. The agreement as it exists has limited application to education, but negotiations to be completed by 2005 expand the terms of the GATS.

What is considered trade in education? Four categories are defined by the WTO:

1. Cross-border supply: service provided from one country into the territory of another country; e.g., providing education services through the Internet are a form of this type of trade.

2. Consumption abroad: consumers, such as students



The privatization of highways is the focus of the B.C. Government Service Employee Union trailer in the Parade of Lost Services in Penticton organized by the B.C. Fed.

studying abroad, cross borders.

3. Commercial presence: investment in service providers in another country, such as in a privatized Open School.

4. Presence of natural persons. Individuals travel to another country to provide a service on a temporary basis, such as B.C. inspectors travelling to China, Japan, and Taiwan to inspect B.C. schools.

Clearly B.C. is already engaging in or is about to embark on a number of these forms of trade in education. The implication is that the entire public education system will come under the trade rules. When a province adopts legislation to allow public bodies—school boards—to create private companies for international trade, it can hardly claim that it should have an exclusion for "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority."

So what is the problem with education as international trade?

International exchanges can open up attitudes and develop cross-cultural understanding. People in the rich countries like Canada have a social responsibility to share in the development of the educational possibilities for the millions of children who lack access to even the most rudimentary primary education. Communication technologies—satellite television and the Internet—are creating experiences with media that are common across national borders.

Internationalism is not the problem. Commodification and privatization is the problem.

Positive forms of international cross-fertilization can be carried out on a basis other than trade. Experiences can be based on solidarity and support, rather than on commerce and profits.

Two particularly negative effects flow from moving public education into the realm of international trade. The first is the exacerbation of inequalities. When the funding of the education of British Columbia children and youth depends on the sale of services, then the resources available will depend on the entrepreneurial success of the district rather than on an equitable distribution of public resources. Creating elite private schools outside Canada will increase inequalities in the countries where the schools are set up.

The second negative is the loss of democratic control of our

own education system. Trade rules trump democratic decisions. If a school district wants to give preference to local suppliers or say that curriculum must be developed by people who have taught in the province, that action could be declared an inappropriate restraint on trade and on the right of corporations from elsewhere to profit by supplying those goods and services.

We have already seen a trade tribunal set up under NAFTA decide that a city in Mexico does not have the right to stop a dump of toxic wastes from a U.S.-based corporation on the borders of the city. In another case, a Canadian corporation is seeking damages for unrealized profits from a hazardous gasoline additive that California has banned. Such decisions are made by trade tribunals—which operate in secret—simply on the basis of trade rules, not on the basis of social justice or public health and environmental protection.

Public education is threatened when it faces cuts in resources that make the system less able to meet the needs of students and communities.

Commodifying education, making it a salable and tradable product, and privatizing its delivery lead us down that path. Maintaining education as a public good requires challenging provincial efforts to privatize. Further, it requires pressure on the federal government not to agree to provisions in the GATS negotiations that would broaden the coverage of education.

Public education is threatened when it faces cuts in resources that make the system less able to meet the needs of students and communities. But it is also threatened when ideological preference for market competition distracts it into profit-seeking rather than focussing on the needs of the students in its classrooms.

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

www.bctf.ca/NotForSale/privatization/MarketSchools.html

Trustees vote unanimously to sell resources and expertise offshore

by Kathleen Thompson

School District 43 (Coquitlam) Business Company is up and running. Tuesday, October 21, 2002, Coquitlam trustees carried unanimously a motion to expand the International Education Program by:

- establishing an international college here in Coquitlam, and
- incorporating a business company (School District No. 43 Business Company) in order to establish offshore schools in foreign countries.

In addition, the secretary-treasurer Lorcan O'Melinn reported to trustees on additional "revenue making" plans:

1. *The Audiology Clinic at Porter Elementary School:* This service for Coquitlam students may be expanded to include "clients" from other agencies, and may involve the offering of private testing services.

2. *Tutorial Services:* The district is looking into providing "expanded tutorial services" outside the normal school day.

3. *Food Services:* Increased profit-making endeavours are proposed, including the expansion of fountain drink dispensers, etc.

4. *Weekend/summer workshops, programs, immersion courses:* The district is examining providing programs in



Hospital bed closures and cuts to educational services in B.C.'s rural communities are highlighted in Penticton during the B.C. Liberal Party convention.



Spanish, Korean, and Japanese immersion and weekend “workshops” in math, science, and English.

Prior to the trustees’ approval of establishing an international college in Coquitlam (up and running by next September) and offshore school(s) likely in Taiwan, Korea, and/or China, a senior manager in charge of International Education programs gave a promotional presentation replete with glowing tributes to the district and teachers and statements to the effect that offshore expansion means participation in a new “global alumni” of friendship. Her slide-show presentation did not include a single cautionary note.

Alarming facts

- None of the proposals was discussed with any partner groups beforehand, even though it is obvious that teachers and their collective agreements may or will be affected. Instead, news of these initiatives was dropped like a series of bombshells, seemingly with the full support of every trustee and senior manager in the room.

- The proposals were approved in what appeared to be a near vacuum of background information. For example, no official appeared to be clear on whether contractual teachers would be utilized in the various endeavours. No one spoke of the possible necessity of altering the school calendar to accommodate weekend and summer instruction. No facts were given as to expected costs vs. expected revenues for 2002-03 or the following years. No one commented on whether similar initiatives from neighbouring Lower Mainland districts might compromise the financial success of offshore schools. No explanation was given as to how recruitment of overseas students would be handled; instead, trustees were told that details were “secret” so as not to inform the “competition.” No one mentioned issues of exploitation and cultural imperialism that logically must accompany discussions of this nature.

- They tried to deny that the sale of resources, curriculum, and the services of teachers was a form of privatization.

Yes, this is the “New Era” in public education, and this is how the ideology behind the “New Era” comes to fruition here in Coquitlam.

Kathleen Thompson is president of the Coquitlam Teachers’ Association and a member-at-large of the BCTF Executive Committee.



Teacher gives business a lesson about blueberries

by Jamie Vollmer

“If I ran my business the way you people operate your schools, I wouldn’t be in business very long!” I stood before an auditorium filled with outraged teachers who were becoming angrier by the minute. My speech had entirely consumed their precious 90 minutes of inservice. Their initial icy glares had turned to restless agitation. You could cut the hostility with a knife.

I represented a group of business people dedicated to improving public schools. I was an executive at an ice-cream company that became famous in the middle 1980s when *People* magazine chose our blueberry as the “Best Ice Cream in America.”

I was convinced of two things. First, public schools needed to change; they were archaic selecting and sorting mechanisms designed for the industrial age and out of step with the needs of our emerging “knowledge society.” Second, educators were a major part of the problem: they resisted change, hunkered down in their feathered nests, protected by tenure and shielded by a bureaucratic monopoly. They needed to look to business. We knew how to produce quality. Zero defects! TQM! Continuous improvement!

In retrospect, the speech was perfectly balanced: equal parts ignorance and arrogance.

As soon as I finished, a woman’s hand shot up. She appeared polite, pleasant. She was, in fact, a razor-edged, veteran, high-school English teacher who had been waiting to unload.

She began quietly, “We are told, sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream.”

I smugly replied, “Best ice cream in America, Ma’am.”

“How nice,” she said. “Is it rich and smooth?”

“Sixteen percent butterfat,” I crowed.

“Premium ingredients?” she inquired.

“Super-premium! Nothing but triple A.” I was on a roll. I never saw the next line coming.

“Mr. Vollmer,” she said, leaning forward with a wicked eyebrow raised to the sky, “when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see an

inferior shipment of blueberries arrive, what do you do?”

In the silence of that room, I could hear the trap snap... I was dead meat, but I wasn’t going to lie.

“I send them back.”

“That’s right!” she barked, “and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, and brilliant. We take them with ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it’s not a business. It’s school!”

In an explosion, all 290 teachers, principals, bus drivers, aides, custodians, and secretaries jumped to their feet and yelled, “Yeah! Blueberries! Blueberries!”

And so began my long transformation.

Since then, I have visited hundreds of schools. I have learned that a school is not a business. Schools are unable to control the quality of their raw material, they are dependent upon the vagaries of politics for a reliable revenue stream, and they are constantly mauled by a howling horde of disparate, competing customer groups that would send the best CEO screaming into the night.

The most important thing I have learned is that schools reflect the attitudes, beliefs, and health of the communities they serve. Therefore, to improve public education means more than changing our schools; it means changing our society.

Jamie Vollmer, a former business executive and attorney, now works as a motivational speaker and consultant to increase community support for public schools.

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The B.C. Liberal government cuts have resulted in 44 school closures, including the school from which Neil Worboys is on leave.

Penticton, October 26

by Henning von Krogh

It was a beautiful clear, cold morning on Saturday, October 26, 2002, in Penticton. I was able to be at the Penticton Convention Centre as Liberal delegates entered the convention hall. Terms kept crossing my mind as the delegates entered the Convention Hall:

- suits
- scent of money
- men in Black
- religion of Business
- walking in, untouched by what happens in the province
- arrogant
- certainly well dressed
- a lot of young members
- many young men
- Gordo snuck in the back way.

Later, I attended the *Parade of Lost Services* to see my local communities number of lost hospital beds marked out on a

stretcher. It was sad, but it showed how the demonstration reached across the province and brought many people together. Some poignant placards stated:

Liberal conscience—an oxymoron

Profit is not a cure

Poverty is not a crime-lying is!

Whose pain? Whose Gain?

Stop the Plunder by the Pirate Sector

This was followed by some excellent speeches in front of the Convention Centre.

And then Gordo dismissed the demonstration as simply certain interest groups!

We’ll see...

Henning von Krogh (seen below) is president of Arrow Lakes Teachers’ Association.



“Putting students first” one day a year!

Christy Clark promised the public and teachers that class sizes would be firmly in place as part of her government’s plan to “put students first.” Following right along in her wake of mistruths and budget cuts was the B.C. Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA), which represents school boards in collective-bargaining matters. First, they drew lines through all the class-size and composition contract language, through the staffing ratios, and the school-based team language, and then they issued the following advice with regard to the School Act’s class-size language:

“The class-size maximums and averages in section 76.1 of the School Act must be in place on September 30. After September 30, new students may be accommodated within existing classes.” (BCPSEA bulletin, September 11, 2002)

In other words, school boards, through BCPSEA, are taking the position that they have to comply with the law on class size on only one day a year: September 30. That is a complete betrayal of the promises made to parents, students, and teachers that class size would still be protected through limits in the School Act.

The betrayal is made even more egregious by the tearing up of contractual protections with regard to staffing and special-needs support.

Teachers and locals in community coalitions around this province raised the issues of class size and composition and the erosion of specialist teaching staff during the recent school board elections.

In addition to political action around class size, the Federation is also launching a provincial grievance on all statutory class-size violations. We must, and we will, insist that school

boards obey the law on class size. Teachers and locals are compiling class-size data to use for campaigns and for the provincial grievance. If classes exceed the maximums in primary or the district average class-size maximum, we will legally challenge those violations through the grievance procedure. We will include in the provincial grievance a challenge of BCPSEA’s assertion that class size counts one day only.

Class size counts every day for students, for teachers, and for parents. Together, we will restore the learning conditions that Clark and the BCPSEA destroyed.

Contact your local for information about how to be involved.

—Lynne Sinclair

Sign the petition

Sign the petition to return learning conditions to the collective agreement—www.bctf.ca/firmlimits.

Some consequences of the cuts

- More than 27,000 secondary students in Vancouver are now in classes with more than 30 students.
- Some teachers are ending up with more students with special needs in their class because limits have been stripped from contracts.
- Some students with special needs have lost their special education assistant, and can no longer take part in classes. Sometimes students have ended up at home taking distance education instead of getting the classroom-based experience they need.
- Many safety issues have developed. For example, a student with cerebral palsy no longer has an aide, and teachers fear for her safety as she travels from class to class.
- In some districts, classrooms are not being cleaned as frequently as in the past.
- Some districts have virtually eliminated English as a second language programs, throwing the students into regular classrooms without ESL support.
- Counselling service is declining as counsellors are required to teach classes, rather than being available to meet students’ many counselling needs.
- While the government claims to support choice by parents and students, the reality is that there is less choice. Some 44 schools were closed this year, and dozens of others are being considered for closure next year. In many communities, these decisions mean less choice for everyone.
- Secondary students are being counselled, and sometimes directed, to take less than a full load of classes, in order to keep class sizes down in secondary schools.

What can it possibly mean to be too political?

by Moira MacKenzie

“They’ve [the BCTF] got a political agenda they’re pursuing, [and] their political agenda is not a students’ agenda.”

—Christy Clark,
The Vancouver Sun, April 20, 2002

How many times in the past year have you heard someone characterize the teachers in B.C. as “too political?” When the BCTF bargains for improved learning conditions, teachers are described as too political. When a local teachers’ association lets the community know about the effects of budget cuts, the editor of the community newspaper accuses the association of being too political. A school staff that collectively decides not to let corporate sponsorship into the school is labelled too political. A teacher who lets parents know about lost services and asks them to join in advocating for improvements is branded too political.

Those who stand up for a quality public education system are said to be too political, while those who are part of tearing it down are not.

The most ironic example of such branding, which I came across recently, is the case of a DPAC (political body) that decided to hold an all-candidates meeting for school-board candidates (politicians, political action). The DPAC further decided that only parents who pre-registered for the meeting would be allowed to attend. The reason the DPAC gave for gatekeeping the attendees that way? They wanted to keep the meeting from being taken over by political elements.

What is being too political all about? Too political for whom? As compared with what? It is really just about letting people know where you stand and what your values are. If you stand in opposition to the government agenda in B.C. today, apparently you are too political, especially if you support your values with spoken word or action. But apparently if you use the power in your position to pursue an extreme agenda, eliminate opposition, and manipulate messages, you get to accuse others of being too political while avoiding the label yourself.

Hypocrisy is alive and well in B.C. The Liberal government is intent on achieving a fundamental change in the social structure of B.C. in record time. To ride over any opposition, this government needs to cast aspersions, marginalize opposition voices, and denigrate those who are defending the institutions they are racing to dismantle. The Save Our Schools parent organization in Vancouver collected more than 14,000 signatures on letters to Premier Campbell and asked for a meeting with him, a request it has repeated on a number of occasions, only to be turned down for being too political. We have a premier who, from the beginning of his term in office, chose to describe those who represented other perspectives as “special-interest groups” in an attempt to dismiss them. Those who stand up for a quality public education system are said to be too political, while those who are part of tearing it down are not. What can teachers do about it?

First, we need to acknowledge that different values are in conflict in B.C. today. The intense nature of the B.C. Liberal’s ideological agenda has brought into play harsher and more overt tactics than we are accustomed to seeing from a government. The government is intent on privatizing public services such as health, education, and hydro. It does not openly acknowledge that or

Research projects

Monitoring changes in special education and ESL in two school districts

What are the projects?

1. Monitoring the effects of change in two school districts
2. The role of the specialist teacher (special education, learning assistance, ESL)

Why are we doing these projects?

Significant changes have occurred in the B.C. education system, which may affect educational programs offered to students with special needs and ESL students. The changes include:

- Increased class size and no limits or restrictions on class composition.
- Removal of high-incidence targeted funding and other provincial government funding decisions.
- Removal of ratios resulting in fewer specialist support/resource teachers.
- The abolition of the Ministry of Education Special Programs Branch.
- Accountability processes.
- New special education policy guidelines.
- Stripping of teacher contract language relevant to integration.

- Reduced school district capacity and control, with potential for more site-based management.
- Increased part-time employment in schools.
- Cuts to other government areas affecting families of students with special needs.

Who and what will the projects include?

We hope to involve classroom and specialist support teachers, teacher assistants, parents, and others in the research projects. BCTF researcher Charlie Naylor will be working with the Coquitlam and Nanaimo District Teacher Associations, and with teachers and others involved in the projects.

A wide range of data will be collected to consider the impact of change.

Why two districts, and why Nanaimo and Coquitlam?

BCTF Research does not have the capacity and resources to monitor changes to special education and ESL throughout the province. By focussing on two districts, we hope to examine effects and issues that arise in providing services to a

diverse student population in a time of rapid and substantive change. The methods we use are available for consideration in other districts. Our results will be shared and might stimulate discussion and comparison with effects in other districts.

Nanaimo and Coquitlam were selected to reflect diversity of geography, size, student population, and approaches to education. Our research processes include open communication with school district personnel about the BCTF research projects. We anticipate that our projects will benefit from district staff input, and we hope for a constructive dialogue between researchers and district staff in the two districts.

Reporting the project

A series of reports produced during this school year will be posted on the BCTF web site, on a new special education page.

For more information on these projects, contact Charlie Naylor at BCTF Research, cnaylor@bctf.ca, 604-871-2254, or 1-800-663-9163, extension 2254.



Seniors concerned with increased costs, cuts to services, and closures of homes and beds attend the rally in Penticton during the B.C. Liberal convention.

debate it because the services were built and are supported by the citizens of B.C. Instead, the government attacks its opponents. It has created a climate wherein the government, by modelling name calling, blaming, isolating, and disenfranchising, gives tacit permission for bullying behaviour to be practised by those with authority in the workplace and in our society at large.

As with any bullying, ignoring the situation is not the answer. Doing nothing in this case may lead to much worse situations.

Backing away from our mission to defend public education in the face of the "too political" label is not the answer either. Allowing a negation of our role as advocates for public education cannot be reconciled with doing what's best for our students. Teachers have always

In advocating for improved learning conditions, we are both fulfilling a professional obligation to talk about our concerns and honouring what it is to be a teacher.

spoken out about the needs of students and public education overall. Many, many improvements to the system came about as a result of the persistent and dedicated activism of teachers. In advocating for improved learning conditions, we are both fulfilling a professional obligation to talk about our concerns and honouring what it is to be a teacher. It is not in our nature to stand by quietly while learning conditions deteriorate.

In the bargaining that we undertook last year, we declared that we would not sign a contract that made things worse for students and teachers in B.C. When we undertook an action plan in response to Bills 27 and 28, we were letting the public know that things were going very wrong for public education. We wanted parents and the public to pay attention, and we were calling on their assistance. When we pulled out of the contract-stripping process, after tabling our legal arguments, we were saying that we would not be party to a process that had as its sole purpose making conditions worse for students and teachers in B.C. So, it stands to reason that we would be speaking out now, talking about education de-funding, erosion of programs and services, and deteriorating learning conditions. Is it political to do so? Yes. Might it be too political? Yes, if you have a vested interest in teachers' not blowing the whistle on what is happening. Teachers can take the sting out of the "too political" label by talking about the real issues underneath the name-calling and about the hypocrisy inherent in a hurling of insults at dedicated and involved citizens.

To conclude with a view that predates our current minister of education and her government and affirms the need to continue in our role as advocates for education: "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality." (Dante, 1265-1321)

Moir MacKenzie is director of the BCTF's Communications and Campaigns Division.

Once upon a time, there were teacher-librarians

by Elly Werb

Teachers-librarians find it particularly ironic that Canadian school libraries are being phased out just as they are being rebuilt in the U.S.A. Studies in several states have established a direct relationship between improved standardized test scores in schools and a well-stocked and well-funded library run by professional staff.

Today, in B.C., school libraries are at a crossroads. It is a "make or break" year, for both the teacher-librarians and the libraries they staff. The gradual erosion of support for school libraries has put them at the brink of extinction. Following the brutal cuts in staffing this year, many teacher-librarians are finding their jobs all but eliminated, and they are providing preparation time for classroom teachers. That job was previously done by specialized music, art, or PE teachers, who have largely disappeared. Schools have experienced terrible losses in specialized staffing, and the ones who suffer are the students—the reason for their existence!

Our school libraries have experienced a triple blow.

Schools have experienced terrible losses in specialized staffing, and the ones who suffer are the students—the reason for their existence!

Budgets

With budgets reduced to one-fifth of what they were 10 years ago, we cannot keep collections up to date. Only by our keeping collections relevant and interesting will students be willing to use them. Unfortunately, school libraries have lost their "targetted funding" status so the budgets

are no longer guaranteed. The money can now be allocated to other areas of the school, and in times of great need, they may disappear altogether.

A major challenge today is how to improve the education of boys. Overall, girls are much more enthusiastic readers, and literacy for boys has become a major focus. Strong emphasis has been placed on teaching boys to become motivated readers. Cutting our library resources will aggravate the problems associated with poor literacy skills.

Staff cuts

Staffing has been severely cut in the last few years, but especially in the current academic term. Teacher-librarians can use only a fraction of their previously allocated time to educate and assist students. As "prep" teachers, they're wasting their years of special training. Previously, teacher-librarians collaborated with teachers on early, intermediate, and late literacy programs. They ensured that books students chose were at their particular reading level, and they assisted students in finding interesting material that would motivate them to read more. Most important, teacher-librarians taught students how to deal with text, and how to scan for information, and how to find keywords and use them in developing their research projects, thereby avoiding plagiarism. In addition, students acquired a love of reading and literature through author studies, literary circles, and novel studies. Today, most students will not be taught these all-important skills because classroom teachers simply do not have the time or the means to take over those duties.

Status

In Vancouver, school libraries are now lumped together with ESL and LAC services under "resource services" in each school. Promoting one area means cuts to another and creates a wide disparity across the province. A school with few

ESL students may see their libraries untouched; schools with high numbers of ESL and LAC students may have largely eliminated their libraries. At Trafalgar Elementary School, for instance, where an early literacy program has been in place for over two years, students received high scores in reading and writing. Both student and parent borrowings have increased every year. This year, however, the Trafalgar Library has been cut back to 80%, and three-quarters of that time is now used to provide prep time for other teachers. Some school libraries in Vancouver have been all but closed down. What will happen to

The American studies are very clear on the direct correlation between academic success and well-funded and well-staffed school libraries.

the students and their parents? What will happen next year, when more cuts are mandated?

Public libraries cannot replace school libraries when it comes to reading and research material because of their limited supply of information books and specialized young readers' literature, particularly for beginning readers in English. Furthermore, students cannot always access public facilities; whereas school library programs were part of their academic pursuits, and they received professional guidance in their reading choices. Above all else, school libraries encourage students to develop their imaginations. Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than intelligence." Imagination cannot develop without the print and electronic resources, in both fiction and non-fiction, that are found in school libraries, and without the guidance and training provided by teacher-librarians.



Students will be unable to find new ways to solve problems in an increasingly complex world, they will have difficulty accessing relevant information without developing critical-thinking skills, but most of all, they will be unable to think "outside the box."

It is no coincidence that B.C. students' declining reading and writing skills have coincided with the erosion of school libraries. And, it is no coincidence that Alberta, which has largely eliminated its school libraries, is producing students whose reading and writing scores hit rock bottom on their latest SAIP results. The American studies are very clear on the direct correlation between academic success and well-funded and well-staffed school libraries.

It may be too late to save our school libraries, and just as in the U.S., it may take another generation before someone figures out why Johnny can't read. If that is the case, please remember the Vancouver school libraries and the invaluable service they used to provide. Remember that once upon a time, there were teacher-librarians.

Elly Werb is teacher-librarian, Trafalgar Elementary School, Vancouver.

Internet: Protection of teachers

The delegates to the CTF AGM 2002 passed the following resolution:

11.1 THAT CTF provide information to teachers about existing legislative provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, as well as, Civil Law remedies that could apply in such cases.

11.2 THAT CTF communicate with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), the Canadian Home and School Federation (CHSF), the Commission nationale des parents francophones (National Commission of Francophone Parents), and the Regroupement des conseils scolaires francophones (Francophone School Board Consortium), seeking their support for the measures endorsed by the Board of Directors.

11.3 THAT CTF encourage Member organizations to disseminate information and provide as much support as

possible to teachers so as to discourage and prevent individuals or groups from using the Internet for the purpose of personal attacks.

Background

Depending on the nature of the incident, remedies for false or embarrassing information, as well as personal attacks using the Internet as the medium are subject to action under the Criminal Code of Canada using the provisions dealing with hate propaganda and defamatory libel.

In addition, some legal experts suggest that challenges are possible using the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically the reasonable limits provision in combination with the freedom of expression clause. The applicable sections follow:

"Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms

1. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees

the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Fundamental Freedoms

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
a. freedom of conscience and religion
b. freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication
c. freedom of peaceful assembly
d. freedom of association."

Civil law remedies also exist for defamation resulting from libel and slander. The following Criminal Code references could be invoked:

"298. 1. A defamatory libel is matter published, without lawful justification or excuse, that is likely to injure the reputation of any person by exposing him to hatred, contempt or ridicule, or that is designed to insult the

person of or concerning whom it is published.

2. A defamatory libel may be expressed directly or by insinuation or irony (a) in words legibly marked upon any substance; or (b) by any object signifying a defamatory libel otherwise than by words. R.S., c.C.34, s.262.

Publishing

299. A person publishes a libel when he
a. exhibits it in public
b. causes it to be read or seen,
c. shows or delivers it, or causes it to be shown or delivered, with intent that it should be read or seen by the person whom it defames or by any other person. R.S., c.C-34, s.263.

Punishment of libel known to be false

300. Everyone who publishes a defamatory libel that he knows is false is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years. R.S c.C-34, s.264."

New grad proposals: Less choice, less flexibility

by Bill Forst

A new government; therefore new revisions to graduation requirements. We who have been around for a few governments know that each one wants to put its stamp, based on its ideology, on graduation regulations. Some of the proposals recently released by Christy Clark may be a step in the right direction. Some of the initiatives, however, seem to have come from way out in right field, and others appear to pose logistical problems with great potential cost in teacher time and school budgets.

Here are some of the main proposals, with difficulties cited from a school counsellor's point of view.

Add Grade 10 to the graduation program

The proposal appears simply to add the current Grade 10 courses to the officially recorded graduation program. It is self-evident, however, that such a change will significantly reduce the "flexibility" that is supposed to be a key tenet of the changes.

That is of great concern for students with special needs. There is always a percentage of students who, because of various learning disabilities, are unable to meet graduation requirements. The problem of course is that there is no clear dividing line between those who can achieve graduation requirements and those who cannot. Adding Grade 10 to the graduation program essentially gives students with special needs, their teachers, and their families, one less year of flexibility to adapt and modify courses before they get "locked in" to the graduation program standards. This allows for one less year of assessing the student's needs, and one less year for developing strategies that may ultimately lead to success with the graduation program.

Revise the exam program, with new comprehensive graduation exams

• Optional Grade 12 exams

The minister plans to make Grade 12 exams optional. That may, indeed, encourage students to choose the academic courses without worry for the extra challenge of the provincial exam. Universities likely will

still require the provincial exam score as an entrance requirement, so the vast majority of students in the academic Grade 12 courses will still choose to write the exams.

• New comprehensive exams in Grades 10 and 11

The stated goal of the proposal is to "raise the standards and rigour" of the graduation program. The implicit assumption is that comprehensive exams are not already used in schools and that provincial exams have some magic ability to raise "standards and rigour." Standard provincial exams will deny the very flexibility for schools and communities that the minister claims to cherish.

That students with special needs and ESL students will be unduly challenged by Grade 10 Language Arts and Social Studies 11 exams is self-evident, but there is also much evidence that cultural and language barriers handicap Aboriginal students in those areas. The ministry must consider and address those issues, particularly in light of the ministry's stated priority of improving graduation rates for Aboriginal students.

Require portfolio and panel presentations

This intriguing concept could have some considerable value in developing the "whole" student.

Essentially, every student is to develop a "portfolio," based on six "competency" areas. The portfolio requirement will be the first such program in all of the provinces of Canada. It may have some merit in principle, as it requires students to present evidence of a wide range of activities and competencies, but there are many challenges to overcome to make the proposal successful, not least of which is the enormous challenge for educators to monitor and assess the development of the portfolios over three years.

Each student will eventually be required to make a "panel presentation" of the portfolio. The minister's "Decision Document" states that "no additional staffing requirements are expected; teachers freed from supervising provincial examinations and teaching Career and Personal Planning 11-12 will be able to devote time to portfolio assessment," and "One idea might be panels consisting of their portfolio

teacher mentor, principal, vice-principal..."

At best, those suggestions are wishful thinking; at worst, they reflect ignorance of school staffing principles. No teachers will be freed from supervising provincial examinations. With the additional Grade 10 and 11 exams, there will be more exam supervision, not less. It is absurd to think that any administrators would have the time to sit on hundreds of panel presentations in the typical secondary school. Most of those administrators are overwhelmed with their current responsibilities.

As admirable as the intentions of the proposal are, it is doomed to fail unless the staffing question is addressed.

Require students to choose one of eight "pathways"

The media has picked up on this proposal as one of the most controversial. The ministry says this is not "streaming," because no pathway will close any future doors. So why make the pathways mandatory? Pathways can certainly be established and offered to students as a focus in much the same way as our current "career preparation" packages have done.

However, current graduation requirements already offer a great deal of choice and flexibility for the many students who wish to choose their program based on personalized needs and interests rather than some artificial "pathways." Ironically, with this proposal, the ultimate "choice" being denied to students, is the ability to choose "flexibility."

Require Physical Education 11 and 12

No one would deny the value of "continuing the standard for fitness and activity in the graduation program." However, adding PE 11 and 12 to the grad program poses enormous challenges to students and to schools.

For students, it requires either having to fit two courses into their Grade 11 and 12 years, which they may not have otherwise chosen, or arrange for some kind of "equivalency" program. This could be a huge sacrifice of choice and flexibility in those years. The "equivalency" option opens up complex questions of standards, and of professional instruction and evaluation.

For schools, the challenge will be where to find the gym space and where to find the additional PE staffing. This requirement could require a 25% increase of PE space and staff in a traditional 8 to 12 school.

One of the focus areas for the "portfolios" is physical fitness. If the portfolio goals are effective, then why do we need the expensive duplication of required PE 11 and 12?

For more details on the graduation proposals, visit the Ministry of Education's web site at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/grad_req_rev/. You will find a response form and addresses at that web site.

Bill Forst is a counsellor at Elphinstone Secondary School, Gibsons, and president of the B.C. School Counsellors' Association.

Challenging racism in B.C. schools

The Aboriginal education partners have launched a creative antiracism project to address racism at many levels of the public school system to make B.C. schools more welcoming and productive learning environments for Aboriginal students.

Funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Vancouver Foundation made it possible to hire Nora Greenway and Eric Wong. As antiracism officer, Greenway, an Elder of the St'at'imc First Nation, will meet with communities and schools to plan and implement community-based antiracism initiatives. Wong will create an antiracism toolkit for discussing the difficult subjects of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.

Another major component of the antiracism project to watch for is the Aboriginal Multimedia Presentation Challenge. The challenge to all high school students, will be the creation of a multimedia presentation that broadens awareness about some aspect of Aboriginal histories or current issues. For more information, contact Jennifer, 604-925-0687, jenniferu@fnesc.bc.ca.

For more information about the Anti-Racism Working Group or to discuss an antiracism challenge or success story, contact Nora Greenway, 250-675-2807, norag@fnesc.bc.ca.

Be safe out there

by Maureen L. MacDonald

When the spectre of unsafe learning and working conditions looms in your classroom, what do you do? File a grievance? Sure. But there's more! There are laws that might have been violated and actions that could be used to pursue remedies. Tantalized? Read on.

Is your classroom stuffed to the gunwales with more students than usual? Maybe your class exceeds the occupant load set out in the B.C. Fire Code.



The area, in square metres per person, is in Table 2.7.1.3., page 24 of the B.C. Fire Code under "assembly uses" as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Classrooms | 1.85 m ² |
| School shops and vocational rooms | 9.30 m ² |
| Laboratories in schools | 4.60 m ² |

Calculating the occupant load can be a bit tricky if you have posts or fixed furniture, but start by determining the gross area of your room in square metres, and divide it by the number of people (students and staff) in the room. A class of 30 students with one teacher and one special ed assistant would require 32 x 1.85 square metres. That's 59.2 square metres. The occupant load might even be lowered, depending on the number of exits from the room and whether or not there is a sprinkler system. If you think there might be a violation, ask for confirmation. Place the matter on the agenda of the joint health and safety committee at your school.

You should know in advance what the policy is on restraining students, how to get help, and when to involve the police.

"What joint committee?" a teacher asked me on the phone.

"The joint health and safety committee that every worksite in the province is required to have under the Workers Compensation Act if there are 20 or more workers on staff," I replied.

"Does my principal know this?" the teacher asked.

"That's a really good ques-



Students facing increased fees and cuts in services join approximately 2,000 concerned citizens in Penticton to inform the B.C. Liberals that their agenda does not have public support.

tion," I said, "because not only is there a requirement for a joint committee to exist, but there are also eight hours of training for each committee member per year stipulated in the act, and the principal or vice-principal would be a member of the committee as a representative of the employer. The reps of the support staff union would also be on that committee. So your principal should know."

"What does the joint committee do?"

"It has 10 duties and functions listed in Section 130 of the Act," I told the caller. "For example, identify situations that may be unhealthy or unsafe for workers and advise on effective systems

Parents want children to be safe from illness and injury. Spread the word. Involve your staff rep, your local president, your trustees.

for responding to those situations, and consider and expeditiously deal with complaints relating to the health and safety of workers."

"Does my superintendent know?"

"Undoubtedly, yes."

"Oh! Hmm. Where can I get a copy of those rules?"

"They're in a book called *Occupational Health & Safety Regulation, Book 1* published by the Workers' Compensation Board. Every worksite in the province is required to have it. It is an 8.5"x11" paperback with a blue cover. It says 'Worksafe' at the top. Have you seen it at your school?"

"No, I'll ask my principal for it. I have a lot of reading to do!"

Maybe class size is not your problem. Are you concerned about the air quality in your room? Report odd smells, dust, wood chips, moldy spots on the ceiling, dirty carpets, allergic reactions, or lack of fresh air to the joint committee. That's right. The same joint committee that was mentioned before. An



inspection, as required by the WCB, will usually identify the source of the discomfort. According to WCB Regulation 3.9, unsafe or harmful conditions found in the course of an inspection must be remedied without delay.

Violence could be the topic that has you worried. Is your school's violence risk assessment up to date? WCB reg. 4.28 requires that an assessment be done. Does everybody on staff know what it says? WCB reg. 4.30 states that the employer must inform workers who may be exposed to the risk of violence, of the nature and extent of the risk. Plans need to be in place for teachers and other staff who are dealing with students with a history of violence (yes, you have a right to know the history) or identified as potentially violent. That

applies to violent parents, too. You should know in advance what the policy is on restraining students, how to get help, and when to involve the police. Is a telephone or intercom in your room? It is a topic for the joint committee.



Is your problem not being resolved in a timely fashion by school personnel? Escalate. Has the district health and safety committee followed up on the reports of the worksite joint committee? Has the WCB done an inspection? Ask for details. Keep a paper trail. Ultimately, you have the right to refuse unsafe work, guaranteed in WCB reg. 3.12.

Take political action. Telling parents that your school gets cleaned only every second day and that the nasty airborne pathogens, the slippery mess from the goose poop on the front stairs, or the stinky vomit on the floor may bother their children today, but that those situations will be cleaned up tomorrow, should raise eyebrows and start the telephones ringing at the school board office. Parents want children to be safe from illness and injury. Spread the word. Involve your staff rep, your local president, your trustees.

Together we can make schools safer for our students and ourselves.

"There's so much to know," said my phone buddy. "How can I be expected to learn it all?"

"Never fear. Help is available," I said reassuringly. "And you don't have to remember everything, because there are books and binders for you to use as references. The BCTF, under the auspices of the WCB, offers the eight-hour training to members of joint committees, and the school boards pay for it. The BCTF also has health and safety workshops available in the School Union Rep Training (SURT) program. Ask your local president if training has taken place yet this year. Maybe you can be a part of it."

Welcome to the new reality. Together we can make schools safer for our students and ourselves. We did it before, and we can do it again.

Be safe out there.

Maureen L. MacDonald is a BCTF health and safety officer.



A mother and daughter comment on the effects of Gordon Campbell's agenda.

A union of professionals or something else?

Profession or occupation? Professional workers or employees? What's the difference and what difference does it make? These are questions we teachers thought we had dealt with a long time ago. There was a time when teachers' claim to professional status would have been dubious. We had little control over our conditions of practice, specifically the learning conditions of our students. We had few opportunities to determine and pursue professional issues such as accommodating student differences, considering and evaluating methodologies, making independent judgments about student's progress. Teachers were, in earlier times, primarily custodial workers. We worked from tightly prescribed curricula within closely supervised methodologies.

Over time, we teachers have elevated our relative status. We have done that on several fronts, the most obvious being salaries. Less apparent is the effort we have made in expanding professional autonomy. But it is the degree of professional autonomy that determines whether teaching is a profession or an occupation.

The distinction between occupation and profession is important. As practitioners of an occupation, we are entirely governed or controlled by managers and employers. Our education, experience, and judgments are discounted or even disregarded. Teaching is less about innovation and creative adaptation and more about following orders. Teachers are less autonomous in that important decisions about the form and content of our students' education is determined elsewhere, by others often several steps (or kilometres) away from the classroom.

Teaching is starting to look a lot like an occupation. This development has taken various forms. One of the most insidious is the gradual erosion of our opportunity to function effectively in professional

development. If we truly are professionals, we must have the opportunity to decide on the how, where, and what of our education and training related to our practice. This is a fundamental characteristic of any true profession. We are not directed into training programs at the behest of a manager. We do not have demands placed on our time that in our judgment do not apply to or enhance our work.

The most prevalent current example of the incursion on our professional autonomy is the growing tendency for our professional development time to be dedicated to initiatives set in place by the employer. The accountability regime, with all of its requisite parts has in the past 10 years come to dominate our time. Much of what is on offer has value. It does help us teachers do our work. The problem is it is taking up too much space and we are losing some of our autonomy. We are being treated as employees, not professionals, far too often.

What difference does it make? Accountability is important. If we are true professionals, this is a part of our mandate, and we have to take it seriously. If it means using professional development time, so be it; our credibility depends on it. This is all true, but we are rapidly arriving at a point of no return. We may be developing a collective mindset where we blur the distinction between professional development and staff development or in-service education. We are gradually, perhaps unwittingly, abandoning our professional autonomy. Quality teaching does depend on our opportunities as practitioners of a profession to determine our particular professional needs. If all the time and resources we have available go toward the implementation of employer initiatives, then something else is getting short shrift. It may be some aspect of my teaching that is of more relevance to my students than, say, accountability. I have to be able to decide. If I have little chance to do that, then I may still call myself a teacher but not a professional teacher.

— Pat Clarke

How to become a BCTF-endorsed candidate for the B.C. College of Teachers

The B.C. College of Teachers is the regulatory body of the teaching profession in B.C. The college has a focussed mandate: teacher education, teacher certification, and member discipline.

Responsibility for governing the college rests with the 20-person council. Fifteen of 20 council members are elected by the members. Five councillors are appointed (two by the cabinet, two by the minister of education, and one nominated by the deans of the faculties of education.)

The role of a council member is to make policy decisions, to make quasi-judicial decisions concerning individuals and institutions, to represent the college on various external committees, and to communicate with members.

Elections are held in each of 15 geographic zones. Elections are held in even-numbered years in the even-numbered zones, and in odd-numbered years in the odd-numbered zones. In 2003, elections will be held in the following odd-numbered zones: East Kootenay (1), Okanagan (3), Fraser Valley (5), Delta-Richmond (7), Metro (9), North Central (11) South Island (13), and North Coast (15). The term of office is two years beginning in August and ending July 31.

The BCTF has established a policy that provides for the zonal selection of a BCTF-endorsed candidate in each zone where an election is being held. Only active BCTF members are eligible for BCTF endorsement as candidates in the college elections.

Each local has the right to select one nominee. That nominee must be endorsed by an executive, delegate assembly, or general meeting of the local. Each local nominee must undertake to abide by the endorsement process.

Once a local has nominated a candidate, the name of the candidate will be forwarded to the BCTF zone co-ordinator (to be determined by the local presidents in each college zone). The zone co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that each local in the zone conducts a vote to determine the zone's BCTF-endorsed candidate by secret ballot in accordance with BCTF procedures.

The BCTF will publicize, among members, the names of all BCTF-endorsed candidates. The BCTF provides funding to assist local nominees in seeking endorsement to become the BCTF-endorsed candidate in a college zone. The BCTF also provides funding to assist endorsed candidates in the college elections.

If you are interested in being considered as a local nominee for the BCTF-endorsed candidate in a zone, contact your local president by January 15, 2003.

If you have any questions about BCTF college election procedures, contact Mike Lombardi, BCTF staff (1-800-663-9163, local 1849), mlombardi@bctf.ca, or your local president.

— Mike Lombardi

Affiliation with

Why I'll be voting Yes to affiliation with the B.C. Federation of Labour

by Sandra Davie

When it comes time to vote yea or nay to affiliation with the B.C. Federation of Labour, I will cast my vote in favour. I will do so in the worst educational climate I've experienced in 30 years of teaching, and I will do so with the knowledge that the best way to ensure that teachers' working conditions and students' learning conditions will improve is by ending our isolation from the working community of this province. That means joining with other groups, both labour and professional, to stand up to the assaults on our social fabric that are taking place in our communities. That means adding our voices to an organization that represents 450,000 working people in this province.

During our bargaining campaign last year, we learned three important lessons. The first lesson is that the BCTF needs to make the public more aware of our educational issues. We cannot do this by writing angry letters to the editor or by wishing that if the media were more sympathetic to our cause, our true worth would be acknowledged. Swaying the press is an impossible task. In general, editorial policy is unsympathetic to teachers. How then do we make the public more aware of our issues? How do we fight the attitude that

If teachers are to rebuild lost educational services, it will not be with our traditional partners. It will be with others in the community who are willing to listen.

teachers are a "self interest group" whose pleas are suspect? We do it by talking to the public in as many forums as possible. We need to explain and explain again why we fought so hard for better working and learning conditions. We need to have such conversations with people to convince them that we, the people who work with their children every day, do know something about the art and craft of teaching. By joining the B.C. Federation of Labour, we will have such a forum. As

one of the delegates to the June CLC Convention in Vancouver said to me, "You cannot gain strength in isolation."

Another important lesson learned last year is that we can no longer rely on our traditional educational partners. In fact, teachers and students were betrayed by our traditional "partners," who were more interested in advancing their own agendas than advancing quality education in this province. Certainly, the Principals' and Vice Principals'

If we agree that we have a responsibility to the profession and to our students, we need to be exploring ways to improve conditions.

Association campaigned throughout the province saying that our contract was inflexible and that if there were more "flex," they could better manage. We know what nonsense that refrain was, and we know that each administrator who sat silent is culpable for present and future chaos. We were also betrayed by our school trustees, who were led by BCPSEA into our present and future chaos. And we were betrayed by the group that should have been most supportive of our message. I speak of BCCPAC, which purports to represent the parents of this province. BCCPAC promoted a small-minded agenda that has resulted in our present and future chaos. There is no way that we can believe that we can now start working with these groups to improve educational services. We need to find other allies who will listen so that a groundswell of protest can grow and never be ignored again. If teachers are to rebuild lost educational services, it will not be with our traditional partners. It will be with others in the community who are willing to listen. We will find such an audience within the B.C. Federation of Labour.

The third lesson learned is how closely aligned are the improvement of teachers' working conditions and student learning conditions. When we argued for smaller class sizes, more support for students with special needs, and more security for non-enrolling teachers, we were doing so not only to improve our working conditions but also to improve our students' learning conditions. We did not waver from those goals, because we were acting as professionals looking to improve services for children. We cannot separate working

and learning conditions. Yet we find ourselves in much worse teaching situations today, and we know they will be even worse next year. Should we shut our classroom doors and ignore what's going on? Should we say, "Well, we tried to tell them, but they wouldn't listen, so forget it?" As professionals, how can we not fight back? If we agree that we have a responsibility to the profession and to our students, we need to be exploring ways to improve conditions. By joining the B.C. Federation of Labour, we will be a more effective voice for ourselves and our students than we can be in isolation. By joining, we will be fulfilling our professional responsibility. Maureen Shaw, former president of the College Institute Educators' Association said during the summer, "Our members have been members since 1995. We have found solidarity and support for our objectives and our students." Joining the B.C. Fed means we are fighting back for our profession and our students.

Of course joining will bring responsibilities. We cannot just use the Fed as a platform for our agenda. We must reach out to find allies, and we will find that they, too, have issues that need our support. Teachers and students can only benefit from discussing important issues that affect people's lives. As a participating partner, the BCTF will gain from its involvement with working people. We need now to look beyond our classrooms.

Will it cost us? Yes. A year's membership in the Fed will be \$250,000, and if locals join labour councils, there is additional cost. Also after three years, if we remain in the Fed, we will be required to join the CLC. That will also cost \$250,000. Will our fees have to go up? Probably. Will the money be well spent? Absolutely. We will be spending money to reach a broader audience and to take part in determining social initiatives in this province. We will be working to improve working and learning conditions. We will be standing up for our beliefs, and we will have

Joining the B.C. Fed means we are fighting back for our profession and our students.

friends and allies who will support us.

Will I be voting YEA to joining with the B.C. Fed? Absolutely. Teachers and students can only benefit from such a union.

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

Open letter to teachers from the B.C. Nurses' Union's president

I would like to share the following thoughts and information with you as you consider your vote to affiliate to the B.C. Federation of Labour, a step the B.C. Nurses' Union took this year.

We realized that no one union could withstand the onslaught on its own; we realized that we had to work in coalition with other unions and with community groups.

The provincial government characterizes trade unionists as mainly male, violent, and unthinking, solely concerned about protecting their inflated wages. That is not the face of the union movement. The movement is made up of many women and many different workers from many different workplaces. It's a union movement that speaks up to protect social programs and to protect the vulnerable in society, for the good of all, not just union members.

In making that commitment, nurses did not become less professional.

That is the image that nurses, like teachers, can project to the public as both professionals and active trade unionists. We bring our culture, our views, and our unique ways of doing things to the house of labour, and in doing so, we strengthen the ability to protect the social programs and services that redress the inequities in our communities.

Here's how the BCNU made its decision

At the 2002 annual convention of the B.C. Nurses' Union, delegates voted overwhelmingly to join the B.C. Federation of Labour. The decision was the culmination of a debate of many years. As an organization of professionals, BCNU struggled with the idea of officially joining the wider labour movement. As nurses, we had to overcome the notion that professionals do not become members of houses of labour.

We have long been a member of the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions, and through that membership, we took the

first step of joining forces with the broader labour movement when we voted to affiliate with the Canadian Labour Congress in 1997.

In 1999, following a year of courage and strength shown by nurses in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, who took on their governments over back-to-work legislation, nurses affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress and attended their first CLC convention. It was a profoundly moving experience for nurses as they took their stories to the floor of the convention and received strong support from other unions, private-sector and public-sector alike.

Following that convention, some nurses felt it was important to duplicate that natural response at the provincial level, but a majority of members were not ready to contemplate the move.

The catalyst was the election of the B.C. Liberals and their subsequent attacks on our right to free collective bargaining along with the threats to our healthcare system and other public services. Through membership in the CLC, our members had become active in local labour councils and in community coalitions fighting to save their communities. We realized that no one union could withstand the onslaught on its own; we realized that we had to work in coalition with other unions and with community groups.

To work most effectively in coalition, we also realized that a formal commitment to the B.C. Federation of Labour was necessary. In making that commitment, nurses did not become less professional. We recognize the commonalities we share with other workers. We, as do other workers, exchange our knowledge and skills for wages from an employer. As nurses or as teachers we have sets of knowl-

As nurses or as teachers we have sets of knowledge and skills different from those of welders or cleaners, but we all exchange our knowledge and skills for our income.

edge and skills different from those of welders or cleaners, but we all exchange our knowledge and skills for our income.

We are also equally affected by the policies of the government. Cuts to minimum wage,

h the B.C. Fed



education, healthcare, women's services, legal aid, and the justice system affect all working people.

Our best chance to protect the way of life that we value is to work together with those who share those values.

In solidarity,
Debra McPherson

Teachers should take a good look at Fed

Teachers could use a few friends right now—even if they are electricians, government clerks, and longshoremen.

At the B.C. Teachers' Federation's annual convention, some 700 delegates voted overwhelmingly to hold a vote among the province's 45,000 teachers on whether or not to affiliate with the B.C. Federation of Labour.

The vote will be carried out among teachers in each school district across the province. But some teachers have already expressed concern that as professionals, they don't want to be affiliated with the same organization that represents the construction trades, among other blue collar working people.

Teachers had the same sentiment years ago when an attempt to affiliate with the B.C. Fed failed.

Maybe it's time for a change. Teachers make mortgage and car payments, get married and divorced, have kids, and volunteer in their communities. So do government workers, plumbers, electricians, office workers, hospital support staff, letter carriers, reporters, and pipefitters.

Teachers play an important role in the community; so do all of the above. What would a school be without light and indoor plumbing?

Furthermore, not every student is destined for the life of a career professional. Many students will likely join the 450,000 members of the B.C. Federation of Labour. When teachers refuse to be associated in the future with these students, it has the appearance of diminishing the students' worth in the eyes of the educators who profess to care about them.

Teachers would be wise to seriously consider affiliating with the B.C. Fed—at the very least, they'll have greater access to hard hats in their battle with the provincial government.

Reprinted editorial, *The Now Newspaper*, March 27, 2002

Affiliation health and safety

by Stewart Schon

The BCTF has shared a friendship with the B.C. Federation of Labour Health and Safety Program for 20 years. That has enhanced our ability to provide assistance and information for teachers across the province in their appeals to the WCB.

Organized Labour has led the struggle for changes in our worksites, and Labour has demanded health and safety changes such as asbestos removal and WHMIS. We, the BCTF, just rode along as the B.C. Fed achieved protections for all of us.

Injured and disabled workers have required the regular assistance of Organized Labour since unions were first created. In fact, health and safety has always been a rallying point in any major union drive to organize. Workers must help one another in circumstance of need. Out of necessity, workers have built strategies and expertise to seek the best protection for the victims of the workplace. For nearly 100 years Organized Labour has educated and defended the health and safety of workers.

I don't believe the BCTF should try to reinvent the wheel. The B.C. Fed offers courses and training in the defense of injured/disabled workers. The annual Labour Winter School provides education and training opportunities that we cannot ignore as we seek to protect teachers. I have attended that school—learning about WCB claims. It has been of value to many teachers through helping me provide successful advocacy at the WCB.

The B.C. Fed and its member unions have mounted campaigns for violence prevention, worker benefits, and disability pensions. They have marched to build and defend worker health and safety. Those are actions that B.C. teachers have and continue to benefit from. Out of Labour's work, we have prospered. We must take our place and make our valued contribution in the defence of workplace education in health and safety. We must support other workers by using our skills, our strengths, and our education. Teachers can give back, for advances made on our behalf, by affiliating with the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Vote YES on affiliation.

Stewart Schon is chairperson of the BCTF's Health and Safety Advisory Committee, and he is the Surrey Teachers' Association health and safety officer.

Class war

by Dan Blake

The Campbell Liberals are engaged in class warfare. Historically, class war has been understood as the struggles of working people against their employers for a fair wage and safe working conditions. In B.C., in the year 2002, big business and its representatives in government are dismantling the social safety net built up over the last 50 years by both social-democratic and free-enterprise governments. Business is doing this with energy and enthusiasm that borders on the pathological. Let's take a look at some examples.

The poor

- cut welfare benefits to single-parent families and all other recipients of welfare
- lowered the income threshold for childcare subsidies
- clawed back the increase in the Canada Child Tax Benefit for families on welfare
- required mothers of three-year-old children to either get a job or be cut off welfare

Women

- cut funding for transition houses
- cut funding to rape crisis centres
- proposed changes to the legislation on spousal assault that would make it more difficult to pursue spousal-assault charges

Human rights

- introduced legislation to eliminate the Human Rights Commission
- cut funding to legal aid

Seniors

- closed a number of long-term care homes for seniors and forced many to move to new

locations, in some cases separating lifetime couples

- increased Pharmacare and MSP premiums, which will impact heavily on seniors living on small, fixed pensions
- cut home-care services for seniors

The disabled

- required all people receiving a disability allowance to submit a new claim, which has caused untold stress and anxiety among disabled people
- proposed changes to categories of the disabled people so that a significant number of people may no longer be eligible for the disability payment and will be forced onto welfare
- cut funding for a program to help blind people get additional library services
- delisted certain therapeutic services.

We teachers will be confronted with the consequences of those decisions in our classrooms. Children living in poverty (in B.C. that's about one in five children) don't perform as well in school as other children. The disadvantage of living in poverty is now compounded by the decision of many school boards to cut services to students with special needs. Children living in poverty have a higher 'take-up' rate for the services of counsellors and special education teachers. We also know the false economy of not intervening when children are young to prevent vastly increased social and economic costs down the line.

We also know the false economy of forcing single mothers of three-year-old children to find cheap and unlicensed daycare because

they can't afford the more costly licensed daycare.

It's hard to believe that the Campbell Liberals are unaware of the cumulative effect of their dramatic cuts to vital social services. They said they know how to manage the economy. We can only conclude that the Campbell Liberals believe that the few hundred dollars they took from the mouths, and off the backs, of the 168,000 children under 18 who live in poverty to fund the tax breaks for the wealthy in B.C. made good economic sense. What do you think?

Dan Blake is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.

Take action to protect learning conditions

Sign our firm limits online petition to urge the B.C. government to return protections for learning conditions to the collective agreement.

When learning conditions were included in the collective agreement, students were in smaller classes and the support for students with special needs was maintained.

Effective July 1, 2002, the B.C. Liberal government removed learning conditions from the collective agreement. Since September 2002, the size of classes has increased and the services provided by specialist teachers such as librarians, counsellors, learning assistance teachers, ESL, and others have been cut. At the same time as the number of students in each class increased, supports for students with special needs were reduced.

Go to www.bctf.ca/firmlimits.

Time for tinkering is over

BCTF Education Funding Brief 2003

Change the plan—unfreeze the funding! That's the BCTF's key recommendation for next year's provincial budget. Presenting the BCTF's 2003 education funding brief to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on October 15, 2002, Federation President Neil Worboys pointed out that funding per pupil has declined by 4% over the last decade, slowly squeezing essential educational services provided by school districts. What's worse, we can expect an additional—and likely devastating—decline of at least 4% in real per-pupil funding as the freeze extends over the next two years.

The BCTF's education funding brief demonstrates what teachers already know: "This year we are seeing dramatic negative changes that show we have reached the end of squeezing without great harm to students and the school system." This fall, many students and teachers are experiencing larger classes, some surpassing 35. Boards that have managed to keep class sizes in check have had to cut other services such as library, special needs, counselling, and ESL. Teachers also report health hazards in the classroom resulting from reduced custodial services.

What can be done to remedy the situation? Specifically, the BCTF recommends that the British Columbia government:

1. Restore funding so that learning opportunities lost because of inadequate budgets this year are not lost in future years.
2. Fully fund the cost of employee collective agreements and other costs imposed by government so that learning opportunities are not further cut over the next two years.
3. Make the required investment in the education of our children to ensure strong future economic health for B.C.

The brief is available at bctf.ca/publications/edfunding/2003Brief/. To receive a print copy, e-mail Bev Humphries, bhumphries@bctf.ca.

—Anny Schaefer

Where do the mermaids stand?

by Pamela Quigg

This article germinated from a personal journal entry I made 10 years ago during an uncertain and troubled time in education. I have taught for 30 years in B.C., and I am saddened by the changes facing our schools this September.

I hope my words might refocus my colleagues on what I believe to be one of our overriding purposes in schools: to be advocates for children. When I entered teaching, I viewed it as a noble profession—indeed it is. However, we need, more than ever, to reclaim our status as respected teachers.

Author Robert Fulghum tells the story of organizing a game called “Giants, Wizards, and Dwarfs.” After agonizingly readying 80 children to play the game, explaining and re-explaining the rules, he thought the children were finally ready to decide whether their team was to be a giant, a wizard, or a dwarf. Fulghum felt a tug. The girl he found at the end of his sleeve asked, “Where do the mermaids stand?” Despite the fact that there clearly were not mermaids in the game, she hung on to her unwavering belief that she was a mermaid and needed to know her place in the game.

I love that story. It reminds me of the power of childhood. I return to that story at the beginning of each school year. I keep those words, “Where do the mermaids stand?” close to my heart. As I arrange my classroom for the year, I wonder who my mermaids will be this year. We take young children fresh from their summer fields of play and put them into classrooms, expecting them to listen carefully, to sit quietly all day, to behave, and to always do their “best” on every task at hand. But I know—with the joyous mixture of innocence, magic, and fun that is the privileged portion of childhood—that just last Thursday, perhaps, at least one of my students was a princess at a royal tea, while another was a pirate avenging honour and terrorizing the seas, and that still another was a pixie twinkling her magic during the day, the way fireflies do at twilight. And at least one was a mermaid.

The princesses, the pirates, and the pixies aren’t easy to spot that first day. They come

into my room in the usual jumble of arms, legs, bags of supplies, smiles and tears. Whatever their permutations of hair, skin, and emotional state, they are outwardly pretty much the same year after year—until they add *imagination!* That’s where the princesses dwell, pirates fight, pixies twinkle, and mermaids swim.

At some point during the year, I will ask the children to pretend they are butterflies. We’ll ready our wings and prepare for takeoff in a riot of colour. And I will feel a tug. At the end of my sleeve I will find a child who will inform me in a *Don’t-you-know-this* tone, that a butterfly has six legs, two wings, and antennae and that he is a boy with two legs, arms, not wings, and certainly no antenna, and therefore he can’t possibly be a butterfly. Those are the children I cry for—the children who too soon have lost their freedom to fly.

I have faith that, in spite of the external pressures, teachers will not stop honouring, respecting, and creating places for the mermaids in their classrooms.

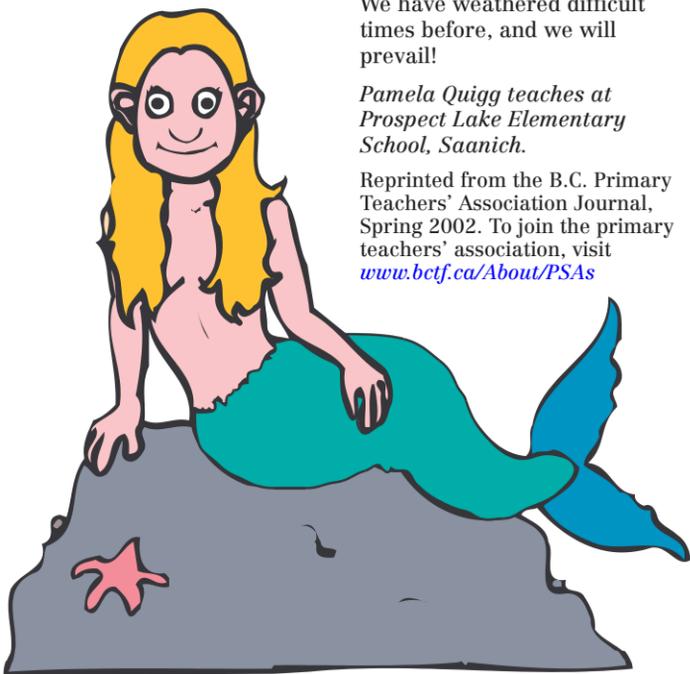
Each year in September, when I’m arranging my room for group work, making a place for children to talk, argue, discuss, behave, act out, sing, dance, laugh, and cry, when I’m creating a place where children will feel safe, secure, and able to take risks, I am really making a place for princesses, pirates, pixies, and mermaids. My job is to give them the freedom to fly; they already know how.

And if anyone asks me where the heroes should stand, I send them to the front of the room. I have always believed, the *teachers* are the heroes in the education system.

In these times of harmful political decisions, disrespect for teachers, and lack of basic funding, and facing larger classes, teachers will remain the true advocates for the children. I have faith that, in spite of the external pressures, teachers will not stop honouring, respecting, and creating places for the mermaids in their classrooms. We have weathered difficult times before, and we will prevail!

Pamela Quigg teaches at Prospect Lake Elementary School, Saanich.

Reprinted from the B.C. Primary Teachers’ Association Journal, Spring 2002. To join the primary teachers’ association, visit www.bctf.ca/About/PSAs



New “Infusions” for teaching a global perspective

by Marian Dodds

Inspired.

Looking through a new lens will take me and my students to new heights of understanding.

I now have a glimmer of hope for September and the dark days ahead.

I can honestly say this has been one of the best PD sessions I’ve attended.

Those are comments from teachers participating in a BCTF/CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) action institute: Educating for Global Democracy. Two dozen B.C. teachers came together for five days in August to reach a common understanding of the theoretical framework of global education. The diverse group—teachers of French immersion and English, males and females, and teachers at the beginning, middle, and end of their careers—met with the objective of developing, piloting, and ultimately publishing global-education lesson aids. Enthusiasm for infusing a global perspective into their work was the commonality.

The CIDA definition of *global education* was the starting point.

“Global education is a perspective (not a subject) that underlies and shapes the teaching and learning process in schools. Through it, students develop knowledge about, and critical understanding of, global issues, as well as skills to enable them to address those issues. Through it, they acquire values that give priority to ecological sustainability, global interdependence, social justice for all the world’s people, peace, human rights, and mutually beneficial processes of economic, social, and cultural development. Through it, they are enabled to develop the will and ability to act as mature, responsible citizens with a commitment to create acceptable futures for themselves, their communities, and the world.”

The participants began designing global-education lesson aids linked to B.C. IRP learning outcomes, B.C. Social Responsibility Performance Standards, and CIDA development themes (see sidebar). Funded by CIDA’s Global Classroom Initiative and the BCTF, the project will have as its final outcome the publication of global-education lesson aids that will be available both on-line and in hard copy through the BCTF.

Teachers are now piloting their lesson aids in classes ranging from Grade 3 French Immersion (Mange Tout!) to English 12 (Global Eyes). Here is a sample of what teachers and their students told us about their work:

• Bev McEwan’s students, at L.V. Rogers Secondary School, in Nelson, surpassed her expectations in researching,

writing, and producing newspapers about CIDA themes.

“We had a chance to work as a group, but also to work on our own and be able to share and teach what we learned to the rest of the group. This gave us a sense of responsibility and leadership and was well worth it.” (English 12 students)

“I found that it allowed us to escape from the high walls of our sheltered society, and get a feel for the rest of the world.” (Lauren Thast, English 12)

- Steve Naylor’s exploration of global issues with his English 12 class in Salmon Arm led to the publication of thoughtful comments in the student newspaper.

“Don’t get me wrong, I don’t believe Tommy Hilfiger to be the Hitler of the clothing industry, not by any means. They are just one corporation of many who do an exceptional job of exploiting workers in third-world countries and deceiving consumers. I won’t be deceived. Will you?” (Marcus Smith, English 12)

“Global education is a perspective (not a subject) that underlies and shapes the teaching and learning process in schools...”

- Shelley Jackson, of Kitimat, was buoyed by her students’ enthusiastic response to the global education approach. The summer institute provided me with a wealth of information that I have been able to share with my students, and that has made social studies very real and very important to them. They are constantly exclaiming: “I didn’t know that!” or “Why isn’t everyone talking about this problem?” or “We have to do something about this!” “We have no choice but to try to make the world a better place.”

- Joyce Bingham’s Chemainus Elementary Grade 7 students were preparing to share their hyper-studio presentation on Mali, West Africa, with their Grade 3 buddies. That was to be followed by a teleconference with students in Mali on the theme of drought and desertification.

- Mary Ellen Campbell’s Global Education class is focussing on activism and the theme of Freedom Fighters. As part of an exploration of the connections between people and events, the consequences of action globally through an examination of activists locally and globally, they are working on a documentary on a shelter in Nepal that they have been supporting.

- In Osoyoos, Rae-dene Lacey’s Social Studies 11 classes were learning geography through exploring the question of Canada’s foreign aid.

Elsewhere, teachers are collaborating with colleagues on their lesson aids and spreading their knowledge at conferences

and workshops. Institute participants will reconvene in January for peer feedback and editing of their lesson aids. Expect to see the exciting new lesson aids in the spring of 2003.

In the meantime, find out more about global education at these sites:

www.bctf.ca

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/gci (CIDA Global Classroom Initiative)

www.rethinkingschools.org (links to lesson aids and many excellent sites)

www.greenteacher.com (Lesson ideas and more great links)

www.icdr.com (Intercultural and community development resources)

www.un.org/rights (Universal declaration of human rights)

www.newint.org (New Internationalist site has many excellent links)

www.indymedia.com (Independent media, alternative views from around the world)

Marian Dodds is a teacher counsellor in Vancouver and a global-education consultant. Along with Vancouver Secondary colleague June Williams and BCTF staff members Larry Kuehn and Pat Clarke, she initiated, designed, and facilitated this Global Classroom Initiative.

BCTF Global Education Projects

Globalization presents new challenges. How can global perspectives be brought into the classroom? How do we help students understand their responsibilities in the global context?

Many teachers are developing their own approaches to those tasks, and the BCTF has supported both creating materials and making them available to teachers. With the assistance of funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), grants have been made for classroom and school projects. Projects are available on the BCTF web site as a way of sharing ideas and resources.

Grants of up to \$2,000 are available for classroom and school projects during the 2002–03 school year. The deadline for applications is December 13, 2002.

Find existing learning resources that you can use or an application for funding of new projects on the BCTF web site at www.bctf.ca/social/globaled.

CIDA development themes

- Basic Human Needs: Health and Nutrition, Basic Education, HIV/AIDS, and Child Protection
- Gender Equality: Empowerment, Equal participation in decisions,



Institute facilitators Marian Dodds and June Williams are caught up in the final reflective web activity.



Musician Pasipamire Gunguwo, originally from Zimbabwe, plays the mbira as he shares ways to use songs to educate youth. For world music lesson aids, go to www.bctf.ca/lessonaids

A Charter for Public Education

What is an educated person?

What is an educated community?

What are the principles of public education?

These questions and much more will be part of the province-wide initiative to create a Charter for Public Education. It kicked off this fall with moving presentations from students, teachers, parents, and even trustee candidates. Hearings have been held in the Sunshine Coast and North Vancouver, and are slated to take place in 30 communities throughout the province.

"With education now at a crossroads, we are keen to hear from British Columbians about their concerns for our public schools and their passion for education," said The Reverend Margaret Marquardt. "It is important that we find consensus on the fundamental principles to guide us as we continue to develop the finest possible education system for B.C. students."

An Anglican priest, Rev. Marquardt is chairing the Charter panel. The other members are: Dr. John Moss, a former superintendent of schools and a member of the Board of Governors of Malaspina University College; Kathy Whittam, a step-parent of a student with special needs; George Watts, former president of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council; and David Chudnovsky, past-president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

Rev. Marquardt emphasized that the panel members are particularly eager to hear from students, so the first part of each session will be reserved for input from children and youth. "We're encouraging people to be as creative as they like. Certainly you can make a written submission or an oral presentation, but we'd love to see student's art or even dramatic or musical presentations as well," she said.

For more information, please go to www.charter.publiced.ca or contact us by e-mail at

charter@publiced.ca. Written submissions can be sent to: Charter for Public Education, 1530 East 22nd Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5N 2P1.

Tentative schedule of upcoming hearings

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| November 20 | Nelson/Creston |
| November 25 | Prince George |
| November 26 | McBride/Valemont |
| December 4-5 | Queen Charlotte Is. |
| December 10 | Princeton/Merritt |
| December 11 | Kelowna/ Penticton/Vernon |
| January 8 | Salmon Arm/ Revelstoke/Armstrong |
| January 9 | Kamloops |
| January 15 | Langley |
| January 16 | Chilliwack/Hope |
| January 22 | Howe Sound |
| January 23 | Maple Ridge/Mission |
| January 27 | North Island |
| January 28 | Campbell River/Comox |
| January 29 | Victoria |
| February 5 | Coquitlam |
| February 6 | Richmond/Delta |
| February 11 | Alberni |
| February 12-13 | Surrey |
| February 17-18 | Vancouver |

L'est rencontre l'quest

by Ghislaine Varin

En mai et juin dernier, mes élèves et moi avons vécu une expérience inoubliable—un échange avec de jeunes Québécois, pour la plupart, unilingues. Le tout s'est déroulé pendant treize jours, dont six à Kamloops et sept à Montréal. Ce projet s'est réalisé grâce aux efforts des parents de Kamloops et des deux enseignantes impliquées.

À la mi-mai, nos vingt-huit nouveaux amis de l'école Le Plateau de Montréal arrivaient à Kamloops. Pour plusieurs parmi eux, c'était leur baptême de l'air. Ils furent immédiatement éblouis par la beauté naturelle de notre province, telle qu'on la vit à Kamloops. Ils ont pu admirer la splendeur du centre de plein air du lac McQueen et ont participé à des excursions dans nos forêts et dans le parc Wells Gray. Payer en canots voyageurs fut un apprentissage inoubliable ainsi que rencontrer des autochtones qui ont partagé leur musique et leur art. Les jeunes se sont promenés à cheval pendant leur visite au ranch historique Hat Creek et ont participé à un lavage de l'or à la batée.

Le séjour à Kamloops était parsemé d'activités sportives telles que la natation, les quilles et une danse familiale. Les jeunes invités ont vécu en

famille et furent émus par la gentillesse des gens qui les ont accueillis.

Une semaine plus tard, ce fut à notre tour de nous envoler vers Montréal pour découvrir la culture urbaine et québécoise de cette métropole. Quelles sorties excitantes et éducatives on a faites pendant nos sept jours ! On a navigué sur le Saint-Laurent, on a visité longuement les installations du Cirque du Soleil, le biosphère ainsi que l'insectarium et le biodôme. On s'est rendus en banlieue pour visiter le centre spatial. Et que dire du plaisir fou qu'on a eu à la Ronde et lors d'une danse et d'un souper familial. On a goûté à la poutine, on a appris de nouvelles chansons et on s'est promenés en métro. Personne ne s'est perdu et personne ne voulait revenir. Quelle expérience pour nos jeunes de la Colombie Britannique !

Plusieurs élèves gardent contact avec leurs nouveaux amis québécois et certains parlent de revenir à Kamloops l'année prochaine. Tant qu'à moi, j'espère pouvoir accueillir de nouveau, Nancy, mon homologue de la 6e année de l'école de musique Le Plateau.

Ce projet représente beaucoup d'heures de travail pour les parents qui ont pris contact avec l'organisme SEVEC et complété la documentation requise et qui

ont organisé les levées de fonds et toutes les activités lors du séjour des jeunes à Kamloops. Ma collègue montréalaise et moi avons coordonné les travaux scolaires et le jumelage des élèves et avons pris charge des cinquante enfants pendant les treize jours de l'échange. Une tâche à vous mettre hors d'haleine et avec une lourde charge de responsabilités mais une tâche qui en valait mille fois la peine. Ce projet est un bel exemple de partenariat entre les élèves, les parents et les enseignantes. Mais il est essentiel que les parents assument pleinement les tâches organisationnelles. Sinon, un échange peut devenir une activité d'épuisement physique et professionnel. Pour moi, c'est un projet que je ferais de nouveau, sans aucune hésitation.

Ghislaine Varin, Enseignante à l'immersion 6-7, Ecole élémentaire Marion Schilling, Kamloops

Synopsis

Ghislaine's Grade 6 immersion class participated in an exchange with francophone students from Montreal, many of whom had never flown before, had never been in the West, and did not speak English. An extraordinary experience for all.

Gab youth services at the centre

Are you interested in developing gay youth services in your community? "Connecting with Pride" wants to hear from you.

Connecting with Pride: Enhancing the Health of Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered, Bisexual and Questioning Youth in B.C. aims to expand services and access to information and resources for lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual, and questioning youth in B.C. communities. The project is funded by the Population Health Fund through Health Canada. Urban Native Youth Association, Youthquest!, and Gab Youth

Services at The Centre are working together to bring two trainers to four B.C. communities where weekend workshops will be held for lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual, questioning (LGTBQ), and two-spirited youth and their adult allies.

Lyndsay Kay, of Youthquest!, and Tania La Salle, of Gab Youth Services, will be travelling to Prince George, Nanaimo, Kamloops, and Trail to facilitate the training workshops and deliver the two-spirited needs assessment. Kay and La Salle are hoping to draw LGTBQ and two-spirited youth from those communities to participate in

the on-site trainings. They would also like to connect with teachers and service providers interested in participating in the workshops or in developing working relationships between LGTBQ youth and regional service agencies.

You can e-mail connectingwithpride@yahoo.ca, or phone Lyndsay Kay, 604-523-9115, 1-800-NOT-ALONE, or Tania La Salle, 604-684-4901 for more information. UNYA, Youthquest!, and Gab look forward to working with people across the province to help make B.C. communities safe for LGTBQ and two-spirited youth!

- Human Rights, Equal Access
- Infrastructure Services, including transportation, environmental soundness, information systems, health, economic development, and quality of life
- Human Rights, Democracy, and Good Governance, including rights and respect, peace-building, and conflict

- resolution, civil society, security, and freedom of the press
- Private Sector Development, including small business, training, technical support, and marketing
- Environment, including desertification, deforestation, climate change, and protection for the environment.



One copy of the Teachers care poster has been sent to each staffroom. If you wish to order a copy for your classroom, contact Bev Humphries at the BCTF, 604-871-1875, toll free 1-800-663-9163 (local 1875) or bhumphries@bctf.ca. The posters cost \$2 each.

Yours for the asking

Request for student art

The Public Education & Outreach Office of the Legislative Assembly is asking for student artwork to celebrate the 105th anniversary of our Parliament Buildings in 2003. The artwork will be on display throughout the spring.

The theme is "Legislature in the Year ____." Students choose the year they wish to draw: past, present, or future. Guidelines: artwork must portray the theme, 8.5"x11" white paper, child's name and school clearly printed on the back.

The deadline for submissions is December 31, 2002. Submit artwork to: Public Education & Outreach, Legislative Assembly of B.C., Rm 144, Parliament Bldgs, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4. 250-387-8669, PEO@leg.bc.ca.

Discover your legislature

This multimedia educational resource, produced by the Public Education & Outreach office, is a comprehensive overview of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The people, place, and purpose of the legislature are conveyed through text, visual images, archival photographs, graphics, videos, and interactive games together with a history section and glossary.

Discover Your Legislature has been distributed to every public and independent school throughout the province of B.C.

This resource meets the required learning outcomes as outlined by the ministry for Social Studies 4, 5, 10, and 11, as well as First Nations 12, History 12, and Law 12.

Discover Your Legislature is also available through the Legislative Assembly's web site, www.legis.gov.bc.ca. Additional CDs may be purchased for \$10 each; place an order online through the web site.

For more information, contact Karen L. Aitken, Public Education & Outreach office, PEO@leg.bc.ca or 250-387-8669.

Lessons on treaty making and self government

In September 2000, the Treaty Commission provided to Social Studies 10 and First Nations 12 classes across British Columbia the *What's the Deal with Treaties?* video and handbook. This October, the Treaty Commission provided the *From Time Immemorial Teacher's Guide* to every elementary school in the province for use by Social Studies 4 teachers. The guide, produced by Pacific Edge Publishing and recommended by the Ministry of Education, has been expanded to include lesson plans on treaty making and self government.

Contact the BC Treaty Commission at 1-800-665-8330 or info@bctreaty.net to request the *What's the Deal with Treaties?* kit, free of charge. Or visit the "Education" section of

the Treaty Commission's web site, www.bctreaty.net, to view the handbook and the video.

Additional copies of the *From Time Immemorial Teacher's Guide* and copies of the accompanying text may be purchased by contacting Pacific Edge Publishing at 1-800-668-8806 or orders@classroomresources.com

Holocaust education centre online exhibit

Open Hearts—Closed Doors: The War Orphans Project is an online exhibit that chronicles the lives of a group of young Jewish orphans as they emerged from the events of the Holocaust into displaced-persons camps and eventually to new lives in Canada. This multimedia web site uses the orphans' own words and artifacts as well as primary documents and photographs to provide viewers with a powerful learning experience about the Holocaust and the broader history of Canadian immigration during the 20th century.

The bilingual site provides support for teachers and students with its teacher's guide, web links, maps, and pop-up glossary terms, which can be browsed online or downloaded as printable classroom materials.

www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Holocaust_orphans or VHEC web site www.vhec.org.

10 New BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 2047 Not So Natural Disasters. Produced by Co-Development Canada 94p. ©2002. This global education resource book is a teaching unit on the links between natural disasters and climate change, environmental degradation and global inequality. The resource is aimed at secondary teachers and is designed to help students explore the human factors in natural disasters, including their causes, impacts and solutions, and to empower students to identify solutions and take action. The text includes student handouts for photocopying as well as teacher information and background materials. Grades 8–12. \$20.95

2 LA 8433 First-Grade Math Minutes by Creative Teaching Press, Inc. 114p. This resource book features 100 "minutes" to help students build basic skills, increase speed in math operations, and strengthen problem-solving skills. Each minute consists of 10 problems of varying degrees of difficulty that incorporate a variety of skills. Each 10-problem reproducible can be used as a learning or testing tool. Published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards. Grade 1. \$13.95

3 LA F8236 Le Canada par les cartes 1 (2e-3e année) George Quinn 41p. ©2000. Par l'entremise d'activités reproductibles et de la carte du Canada, l'élève se familiarise avec la géographie physique du Canada. Ces activités ont pour but d'aider l'élève ayant un niveau de lecture de la deuxième à la quatrième année, à améliorer ses compétences de base et à acquérir une meilleure compréhension de la géographie du Canada. Les 34 activités à l'intention de l'élève sont auto dirigées et ont été conçues pour améliorer les compétences de base suivantes avec les cartes : reconnaître les formes, interpréter les symboles, déterminer les directions et nommer les formes de relief et les nappes d'eau. Un questionnaire et les réponses sont inclus. Les activités encouragent l'apprentissage autonome, par exemple, au centre d'apprentissage de géographie. \$14.95

4 LA 2308 Mind Works—The Communications Course by Julie Thomas 218p. ©2002. This resource provides classroom-tested strategies designed to enhance students' self-awareness while giving them skills to improve communications and interactions with others. The course has 20 components requiring approximately 30 hours of instructional time. Each component includes lesson plans and strategies designed for intermediate/middle school aged students. The communications course content covers interactions with others, listening skills, expanding self-awareness and effective communication techniques to enable students to listen effectively, to independently process their thoughts, to access their feelings, to be more compassionate, and to find alternative solutions to problems that arise in day-to-day interactions with others. Grades 5–9. \$51.95

5 LA 2625 Racism for Reel: Media for Change. Produced by Access to Media Education Society, 21-min. videocassette, ©2002. This video was developed by a diverse group of British Columbia youth, who equipped with cameras, set out to expose the realities of internalized and systemic racism and find ways to help dismantle and overcome it. Featuring vignettes both comical and disturbing, *Racism for Reel* is a fast-paced and candid examination of racial biases expressed through the media and in everyday life. This video is part of the AMES Peer Perspectives by and for youth series. Grades 7–12. \$45.

6 LA 533 Salmonids in the Classroom—Primary (K-3) by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 150p. ©2002. For 20 years teachers around the province have been raising salmon in the classroom and taking children on field trips to local streams. This classroom resource that supports this program has undergone a complete revision. Each unit in this resource book, which is organized around the salmon life-cycle, contains at least one strong science-based activity and many suggestions for language arts and fine arts. Assessment strategies are provided,

including links to the B. C. Ministry of Education's IRPs. Includes a full-colour, 46cm x 91cm salmon life-cycle poster (\$34). \$79.

7 LA 539 Salmonids in the Classroom—Intermediate (4-7) produced by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 200p. with fact sheet inserts ©2002. Updated Salmon habitat theme that can be integrated across the curriculum. Based on focus groups with B.C. teachers and field-tested by 116 teachers in B.C. and the Yukon. Beautiful illustrations, student worksheets and a home connections section are included. Organized to accommodate lesson planning. Grades 4–7. \$74.

8 LA 9430 Fourth-Grade Math Minutes by Creative Teaching Press, Inc. 114p. This resource book features 100 "minutes" to help students build basic skills, increase speed in math operations, and strengthen problem-solving skills. Each minute consists of 10 problems of varying degrees of difficulty that incorporate a variety of skills. Each 10-problem reproducible can be used as a learning or testing tool. Published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards. Grade 4. \$13.95

9 LA 4015 Einstein's Special Relativity: Discover it for Yourself by Ernie L. McFarland, 114p. ©1998. This resource is written for anyone who wants to understand Einstein's special theory of relativity but doesn't want to take the crash course in physics. High school algebra and a calculator are required to work through Einstein's special theory of relativity. Answers are included. Chapter topics include What is Relativity?, Einstein's Relativity, Relativity of Time, Relativity of Length, Relativistic Energy, Relativity of Velocity, The Future of Relativity, and two appendixes include The Constant Nature of Transverse Length and Derivation of Lorentz-Einstein Transformations. Grades 11–12. \$9.95

10 LA 9137 Grammar and Punctuation: Grade 6. Produced by Evan-Moor Educational Publishers, 114p. and a dual-platform CD-ROM ©2002. This resource book includes rule charts, activity sheets, and a dual-platform CD-ROM with printable PDF of the book, a review in a test format, a student record sheet, a reproducible student rulebook, and an answer key. Grammar and punctuation rules are presented on 25 full-page charts, which can be made into transparencies or used with the animated, full-color charts on the CD-ROM. Published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards. \$19.95

For a listing of BCTF Lesson Aids, consult the catalogue in your school library or the Lesson Aids online catalogue. www.bctf.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.

Check out the web site for the B.C. Association of Learning Materials and Educational Representatives at www.bcalmr.ca/ for a source for contacts for many curriculum resources and information.

Notice

BCTF Lesson Aids are primarily intended to provide support for teachers in the development and teaching of units and lessons. They are not "school materials" as described by the February 12, 2002, Representative Assembly.

The RA motion covers the purchase of materials that should be the responsibility of a school district. Those would include materials used by students such as class sets of books, paper, drawing materials or other stationery supplies. Resources such as those provided by the Lesson Aids Service of the BCTF, which are of assistance to teachers in their preparation for teaching are not covered by the motion. We encourage members to continue to share materials, lesson aids, and resources with one another.

5 Southeast Kootenay

Janice Caulfield
Allan Green
John Kovak
Karen Larsen
Gary Roberts
James Vallance

6 Rocky Mountain

Tom Brown
Ann Ederer
Pauline Haltman

8 Kootenay Lake

Regina Day
Mark Fisher
Alanda Greene
Leslie Jensen
Barbara Lindsay
Mary Mawson
Leroy Mowery
Steven Tarasoff
Stanley Woods

10 Arrow Lakes

Joseph Kabatoff
Ernie Knecht
Patricia Knecht
James Scown
James Turner
Paul Whalen

19 Revelstoke

Heidi Funk
Paul Hills
Alan Macleod
Elmer Rorstad

20 Kootenay Columbia

Martha Bishop
Kathryn Bourdon
Verna Chernoff
Virginia Clover
Denise Comba
Trina Dudley
Marion Kozier
Maureen Krohman
Paul Medvedeff
Hedy Oleski
Maria Pini
Gordon Player
Joyce Player
Joan Sang
Maurice Toporowski
Peter Zetsoff

22 Vernon

Barbara Brennan
Marilynne Calver
Janie Crockett
Joan Davidson
Pat Douglas
Wayne Emde
Gregg Erickson
Helen Glennie
Patricia Godwin
Dale Grover
Wayne Humphries
Doug Jones
David Kimble
Judy Lapiere
Lucille Lovitt
Carole Lyons
David Madison
Judith Maglio
David Main
Joanne Main
Ted Melanson
Shirley Reid
Doug Salmon
Sanford Ugreen
Terrence White
James Wiebe

23 Central Okanagan

Edith Arnold
Blaine Bachynski
Donald Case
Wayne Cooksley
Robert Corkin
Victoria Crompton
Greg Dean
Mary Durose
Larry Ellingson
Barbara Faris
Mary Forsythe
Heiderose Garnett
Andy Gfeller
Margaret-Ann Gfeller
Ken Gray
Fred Gubbels
Marilyn Guidi
Elaine Hatch
Margaret-Ann Hooper
Barry Kingsley
Arthur Lo
Frank Malone
Joan Mann
Glenna Metchette
Rosemary Nelson
Dorothy Picotte
Ralph Saunders
Paritha Siemens
Margaret Smith
Shirley Stuart
Raye Swanzey
Walter Swarchuk
Bella Taylor
Roha Thompson
Judy Waaga

27 Cariboo Chilcotin

Brian Blanchard
Walter Chernoff
John Lord
Isabel Rikley

28 Quesnel

James Caughlan
Linda Davis
Douglas Jamieson
Helen Jamieson
Charles Mobley
Victoria Nelson
Susan Pelkey
Brian White
Lynn Wright

33 Chilliwack

Karen Davidson
Donald Forbes
Naomi Gibson
Shirley Graham
Sandra Hornsby
Barbara Looper
Carroll Lum
Margaret Trachsel
Andres Wingren

34 Abbotsford

Eric Andrew
Ann Ah Loy
Ann Anderson
Eric Andrew
Wayne Anthony
Allan Asselbora
Susan Clifton
Joan Davidson
Ray Dencer
Rick Doell
Mona Dyck
Ron Germaine
Margrett Hunter
Judith Keller
Richard Kirk
Don Macdonald
Hugh Morrison
John Nelson
Carol Portree
John Shewan
Ernie Sloboda
John Whitelaw
Peter Woo

35 Langley

Duane Bates
Janet Bohl
Janet Brown
Kathlynn Fowler
Roberta Kane-Gandall
Kim Kyu
Barbara McPherson
Lynn Powell

36 Surrey

Helen Biljan
Elizabeth Bryson
Marie Castex
Marianne Clarkson
Donald Freeman
Edward Gill
Donna Girling
Marie Gyenese
Erika Hadi
Jacqueline Hepler
Wendy Heuberger
Morley Johnson
Barbara Mason
Margaret McLean
James Mecham
Patricia Miles
Olivia Planidin
Robert Redford
Rosemary Richardson
Helen Smith
Heinz Senger
Sharon Swetnam
Denise Webb
Wallace Wong

37 Delta

Frithjof Akerblom
Shirley Arthur
Bernice Baril
Gerd Bartel
Cecil Beach
Keith Beale
Herbert Gale
Karin Gan
Ada Glustein
Margaret Graham
Margaret Gray
Jill Green
Teresa Gundersen
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Pharmacare costs for seniors could quadruple

British Columbians will be forced to shell out \$400 million to pay for added costs of the Campbell government's new Pharmacare scheme, CUPE, B.C.'s largest union charges. Drug bills will more than quadruple for seniors of modest means, and more than double for the average B.C. family with children.

Last week, Health Minister Colin Hansen was mum on the extent of change, but leaders of the Canadian Union of Public Employees say they've been able to dig up some of the details of the Liberals' plan to drastically overhaul B.C.'s prescription drug program. And they're shocked by what will be the fallout from the bid to implement income testing to determine the degree of coverage.

"This is an outrageous move that will hurt our elderly and families in communities right across the province," says Barry O'Neill, president of CUPE B.C. "It will put lifesaving drugs beyond the reach of many British Columbians," he charges.

For example, says Chris Allnutt, spokesperson for the Hospital Employees' Union, annual drug costs for a single elderly male (average income \$28,394) could balloon to \$1,136, an increase of \$861. A single female (average income \$24,000) faces a hike of as much as \$685. And for a family with children (average combined income \$71,000), costs could rise by more than \$1,800.

Currently, Pharmacare benefits are based on universal deductibles of \$275 for seniors and \$1,000 for families. But Victoria wants those deductibles to increase to between three and four percent of individual or family total income.

"Few British Columbians will escape this latest Liberal effort to offload additional healthcare costs onto the backs of low and middle income people," says Allnutt.

Here are some of the other key features of the Liberals' plan obtained by CUPE:

- Between 40 and 50 income bands will be established, each with its own deductible amount.
- Every British Columbian will have to register to be eligible for Pharmacare benefits and sign a legal waiver to give the Campbell government access to personal tax information.
- An agreement in principle has been signed with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency to facilitate Victoria's access to confidential records.
- Those who fail to register will be assigned the highest deductible level.
- The Campbell government is preparing a slick PR campaign—which may include another round of television ads—to try to minimize the political fallout from the changes.

According to Liberal government budget documents leaked in March, Pharmacare is targeted for cuts of \$406 million, of which \$395 million will come from reductions in benefits through the income-testing scheme.

"It's conceivable," says O'Neill, "that a senior making just over \$16,000 a year will be hit by a huge increase in drug costs. However, we've been told that a maximum deductible level has been set so that the Liberals can cushion wealthier British Columbians from the impact of the change."

With millions of British Columbians required to sign formal documents to be eligible for coverage, Allnutt predicts that Victoria will need to establish a permanent registry to oversee the testing scheme. "It will spawn a new and unnecessary bureaucracy and bloat administrative costs for Pharmacare," he says.

Meanwhile, the Liberals' move away from universal coverage will also set off a tidal wave of cost pressures on existing pension and workplace benefit plans. "Many of these plans," says O'Neill, "are struggling to deal with higher medical premium taxes imposed earlier this year, and have been forced to pass on higher costs to seniors and workers."

The move isn't about controlling rising drug costs, says Allnutt, "It's about offloading responsibility for who pays. If Victoria truly wanted to contain drug costs, then it would embark on an entirely different set of measures."

CUPE's plan for more progressive solutions includes:

- a national pharmacare program.
- changes to drug patent laws that are a source of huge profits for multinational drug companies.
- expansion of the former NDP government's reference-based pricing and bulk-buying schemes.
- addressing the problem of overprescribing drugs—especially for seniors.

This latest government scheme is just the most recent in a series of moves by the Liberals in the last 11 months in which almost \$1 billion in healthcare costs and user fees have been offloaded onto the backs of British Columbians.

For more information, contact Ron Verzuh, CUPE 604-785-1422, Stephen Howard, HEU/CUPE 604-240-8524, Background on Pharmacare cuts. ©2002 CUPE BC. All rights reserved.

Pharmacare cuts will affect retired teachers

The governments' proposed cuts to Pharmacare will mean additional costs to the Teachers' Pension Plan Group EHB plan. Since funding for the retired teachers' group EHB plan is a set amount, the downloading of costs from Pharmacare must be passed on to retired teachers. The potential changes to the EHB plan may be an increased deductible and/or a premium charge for participation in the group-health benefits.

Both employees and employers pay a percentage of current teacher salaries to the Inflation Adjustment Account. The Teachers' Pension Plan pays the cost of retired teachers' group health from the employers' contributions to the IAA. Because of income tax rules, the employees' contribution cannot be used to fund group-health benefits and can be used only for indexing pensions. If the costs of the group-health benefits exceed the set amount available, then the benefits must be reduced, or premiums must be charged for participation. When the government reduces the coverage from Pharmacare, the retired group EHB plan cannot pick up the additional costs.

Also, the more the employers' contribution is used to fund retired teachers' group-health benefits, the less is available for indexing of pensions.

Active and retired teachers can access the BCTF web site, www.bctf.ca/fax/ to fax MLAs and express concern over the proposed cuts to Pharmacare.

— Dale Lauber

Salary Indemnity Fund vanishing surplus

If you have an investment portfolio, you'll appreciate the plight of the Salary Indemnity Fund.

The 1990s were very good to our fund. The bull market, combined with our funding formula, resulted in a fund balance that grew steadily every year. The fund balance was \$94 million in January 2000.

Because of that, the Income Security Committee recommended to the 2000 AGM that the Salary Indemnity Plan fee should be reduced from 1.3% of salary to 1.2% for the 2000-01 school year; there it has remained. The committee knew the fee allocation was insufficient to fund the plan, but, as the balance was large, we felt that we were in a good position to reduce the members' fees, as well as manage the demographic bulge that increased claims.

Then, three things happened. First, the bottom fell out of the IT industry. What began with a run on Nortel swept the industry. By June 30, 2001, our fund balance was \$84 million.

Then, September 11, and finally, the little confidence that remained in the markets was eliminated by the Enron and WorldCom scandals.

The SIP fund balance, as at June 30, 2002, was an estimated \$45 million.

The actuary tells us that it's imperative that the Salary Indemnity Plan maintain a minimum balance of \$25 million. That amount provides three things:

1. Protection against market fluctuations.
2. Provision of benefits for the increased number of claimants in an aging workforce.
3. Funding for the Teacher Rehabilitation Program.

The good news, according to the new Salary Indemnity Fund actuary, Harry Satanove, is that we have the "luxury" of several months before B.C. teachers have to make some hard decisions. The plan is fully funded for the coming year. But, what then?

Realistically, we have two options: we can increase fees, or we can reduce benefits to disabled teachers.

The 2003 AGM will make the decisions. Watch for more on this issue in *Teacher* news magazine over the coming winter.

— Patti McLaughlin

Group RRSPs

All BCTF members have access to group RRSPs. Members may again enroll and change investment options in January.

BCTF Group RRSPs have four distinct advantages:

- They allow contributions at source, which is a convenient

2002-03 Retirement planning seminars

All teachers age 40+ should plan to attend one of the retirement-planning seminars listed. There is no pre-registration, nor fee. Seminars are on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The agenda includes what retirement is, the Teachers' Pension Plan, legal issues, retirement experiences, pension calculations, and personal advice. Make sure to bring a calculator and your most recent pension statement. Younger teachers are welcome.

| Date | Location |
|-------------------|---|
| November 23, 2002 | Burnaby, Radisson Hotel Burnaby |
| November 30, 2002 | Langley, IWA Canada |
| January 11, 2003 | North Vancouver, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites |
| January 18, 2003 | Nanaimo, Coast Bastion Hotel |
| January 25, 2003 | Coquitlam, Westwood Plateau G&C Club |
| February 8, 2003 | Vancouver, Plaza 500 |
| February 15, 2003 | Delta, Town and Country Inn |
| February 15, 2003 | Courtenay, The Villas @ Crown Isle |
| March 1, 2003 | Prince George, Coast Inn of the North |
| March 8, 2003 | Kelowna, Ramada Lodge Hotel |
| March 8, 2003 | Nelson, Prestige Inn |
| March 29, 2003 | Kamloops, U. College of the Cariboo |
| April 5, 2003 | Dawson Creek, George Dawson Inn |
| April 5, 2003 | Port Hardy, Airport Inn |
| April 12, 2003 | Cranbrook, Heritage Inn |
| April 12, 2003 | Victoria, Holiday Inn |

way to invest.

- No tax is paid on the monies invested, so there is no waiting period for getting the tax deduction.
- Funds invested earn interest through the year.
- The plans available to members offer a variety of investment options and some funds that are not regularly available.

Check with your local as to which group plan is available to you, or phone BCTF Income Security at 604-871-1921 or 1-800-663-1963 (local 1921).

— Arnie Lambert

Teaching experience in Alberta?

If you taught in Alberta and left your pension contributions in the pension plan, the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) now has your pension information online. You may request a PIN and password to view your individual information. If you are eligible for a pension, you may calculate a pension estimate for various retirement dates. That calculation can help you determine if you should take a pension from Alberta and B.C. or if you should transfer your Alberta service to the B.C. Teachers' Pension Plan.

You are eligible for a pension from Alberta if you left your contributions in the ATRF, are 55 years of age, and have one of the following:

1. Five years of pensionable service after August 31, 1992.
2. Five years of pensionable service that includes some service in each of the 1991-92 and 1992-93 school year.
3. Ten years of pensionable service.

You may request a PIN and password from the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund, 600 Barnett House, 11010-142 St., Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1, 1-800-661-9582, www.atrf.com, or www.atrf.com/contact_frm.asp.

Pension credit for maternity and parental leave

Pension plan members eligible to purchase a maternity leave of absence that terminated on or after March 1981 or parental leave of absence that terminated on or after March 1991 should make application to purchase now. Purchases are always cost effective when the employer is required to pay the employers' share of the pension contributions.

All leaves of absence, including general leave, completed before April 1, 2002, must be purchased by March 31, 2007, and leaves of absence completed after April 1, 2002, must be purchased within five years of the completion of the leave.

For more information, review the BCTF web site, www.bctf.ca under Pensions and Income Security, or phone Income Security at the BCTF.

— Dale Lauber

88? Don't wait!

Teachers who have reached the age of 64 or the factor 88, age plus contributory service with the teachers or municipal pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan: Long Term. If you have reached age 65 or factor 90, you are no longer eligible for long-term benefits and should withdraw. It is necessary for you to apply to withdraw.

Send a completed form (available from Income Security, local presidents, or online at www.bctf.ca/pensions/salary/LT-Withdrawal/Form.shtml) to the BCTF Income Security Dept.

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ROOTS & SHOOTS VICTORIA ADVENTURE

The National Geographic IMAX Theatre and the Crystal Garden Conservation Centre have created a school program based on Jane Goodall's "Roots and Shoots" program.

Inspire your students with the IMAX film Wild Chimpanzees. Next, at the Crystal Garden see how Jane's message of conservation can be brought home!

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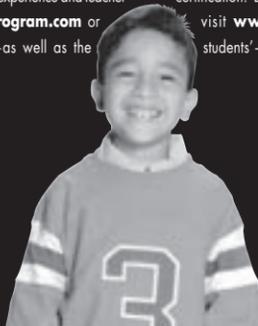


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PD CALENDAR

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JANUARY

10–12 Surrey. Climate Change Institute for educators and facilitators who have participated in a Wild BC Climate Change workshop at Camp Alexandra, 2916 McBride Street. Contact Wild BC, 250-356-7111, 1-800-387-9853 ext. 4, f: 250-952-6684, Wild@gems5.gov.bc.ca, www.hctf.ca/wild.htm.

17–18 Vancouver. BCTF New Teachers' Conference, Coast Plaza at Stanley Park. \$50. Contact Paule Desgrosseillers, 1-800-663-9163 (local 1844), 604-871-1844, www.bctf.ca/NewTeachers.

23–24 Vancouver. Alternate Education conference, Challenge and Change, Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. Contact D.J. Pauls, 604 859-3015, dj_pauls@sd34.bc.ca, or visit www.bctf.ca/bcaea.

29 Vancouver. Point Grey Sty-Wet-Tan Secondary School/First Nations Education Association Conference, Strengthening Tomorrow, Museum of Anthropology, UBC. Contact Erla Calahasin, c/o 5350 East Boulevard, Vancouver, BC V6M 3V2, http://pointgrey.vsb.bc.ca/conferences/Bio_Page.htm.

31–February 1 Prince George. Blended Structures and Styles in Writing, with Susan Augustyn, meeting the needs of both criteria-based assessment and new ministry performance standards, for teachers eager for their students to achieve excellence in writing, Learning Difficulties Centre. Contact Richard Skinner, richard.lidcentre@telus.net.

FEBRUARY

13–14 Surrey. Speech-Language Conference, Language and Literacy: The Reading, Writing and Spelling Connection, with Kenn Apel, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Conference Centre, SD 36 (Surrey). Contact Carol Westdal, 604-507-5716, westdal_C@fc.sd36.bc.ca, <http://slpconference.sd36.bc.ca>.

13–14 Vancouver. Teaching the Holocaust, Third Biennial Shafraan Teachers Conference, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. Contact Frieda Miller, education co-ordinator, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 50-950 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 2N7, 604-264-0499, f: 604-264-0497, fmiller@vhcc.org.

13–15 Courtenay. B.C. Art Teachers' Association (BCATA) Conference. Contact Helene McGill, 250-334-5502, f: 250-334-4472, hmcgill@sd71.bc.ca.

13–15 Surrey. B.C. Music Educators' Association (BCMEA) Conference, Sullivan Heights Secondary School. Contact Bob LaBonte, 604-597-2301, f: 604-597-6481, labonte_r@fc.sd36.bc.ca, or Gordon Keller, 604-588-3418, f: 604-588-7245, keller_g@fc.sd36.bc.ca. Register online on a secure site: bctf.bc.ca/bcmea.

21 Victoria. Greater Victoria Teachers' Association Social Justice Conference. Contact GVTA, 250-595-0181; gvta@gvta.shawbiz.ca.

21 Abbotsford. 4th Annual Shared Learning Conference, featuring Dr. David Walsh (Raising MediaWise Kids: Character Education in the Media Age), Ian Jukes, and Donna Gordon (Guided Reading and Literacy Centers K-3); 65 workshops for educators and support staff. Contact Julia Holland, 604-852-2366 local 225, julia_holland@sd34.bc.ca.

19–22 Montreal. DreamCatching Conference, hosted by the Native Access to Engineering Programme, for teachers of Aboriginal students in math, science, IT integration, and cultural connections, Concordia University. Contact Samy Agha, 514-848-7824, f: 514-848-4596, Nativeaccess@nativeaccess.com, www.nativeaccess.com.

21 Kelowna. B.C. Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT) Interior Math Conference, Mount Boucherie Secondary School. Contact Chris Van Bergeyck, 250-766-2734, f: 250-766-0271, cvanberg@sd23.bc.ca.

21–22 Vancouver. FAS and Other Drug-Related Effects 2003: Doing What Works, (pre-conference workshops February 20), Coast Plaza Hotel. Contact 604-882-4965, f: 604-822-4835, elaine@cehs.ubc.ca, www.interprofessional.ubc.ca.

27–March 1, Vancouver. TEAL 2003, 35th annual conference, Reflective Teaching and Reflective Deliveries, Global Village English Centers, 888 Cambie Street. Contact Alison McBride, TEAL, 220-3195 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3K2, 604-736-6330, www.bctel.org.

MARCH

7–9 Prince George. Math with Manipulatives, Level Two (Advanced), with Marilyn Wardrop (CATT), Learning Difficulties Centre. Contact Richard Skinner, richard.lidcentre@telus.net.

13–14 Vancouver. Special Education Association (SEA) Crosscurrents Conference, Westin Bayshore. Contact Martha Tatman, 250-962-7634, matatman@mag-net.com.

APRIL

2–4 Saskatoon. Eighth National Congress on Rural Education, Designing Our Future...Making the Right Decisions (policy, practice, research), Centennial Auditorium. Contact Joe Zolkavich, SELU, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Rm. 30763, 28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1, f: 306-966-7916, selu.info@usask.ca.

3–4 Vancouver. Violence and Women's Health 2003, Coast Plaza Hotel. Contact Elaine Liau, 604-822-4965, f: 604-822-4835, elaine@cehs.ubc.ca, www.interprofessional.ubc.ca.

3–5 Vernon. B.C. Business Education Association (BCBEA) Annual Conference, Sharing the Passion, Clarence Fulton Secondary School. Contact registrar Ted Voykin, 250-545-1396, f: 250-545-1395, tvoykin@sd22.bc.ca, www.bctf.ca/psas/bcbea/conferenceandevents.htm.

4 Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA) Spring Conference, with Caren Cameron, of University of Victoria, on assessment (Knowing what counts: Setting and using criteria in assessment), Grand Okanagan Resort. Contact Janice Neden, f: 250-377-0860, jneden@sd73.bc.ca.

25–26 Calgary. Alberta Kodaly Association 20th Anniversary Reunion and Conference 20 Years: So Fa, So Good!, University of Calgary (Craigie Hall and The Rozsa Centre). Keynote by Lois Choksy; sessions by David Brummitt, France David, Jeanette Panagapka, Karen Taylor, Jan Taylor-Bilenki and other past AKA clinicians and Kodaly Summer Program faculty. Contact Trish McGillawee 403-270-0951, info@albertakodaly.ca, www.albertakodaly.ca.

27–29 Victoria. Focus 2003: Leaders and Healers, featuring Swil Kanim, Silken Laumann, Don Burnstrick, and Cherry Kingsley, Victoria Conference Centre. Contact Barbara Smith, 250-598-1039, f: 250-598-2368, barbarasmith@focusconferences.com, www.focusconferences.com.

MAY

2–3 Richmond. B.C. Science Teachers' Association Annual Conference, Catalyt 2003, Cambie Secondary School. Contact Tim McCracken, 604-668-6430, f: 604-668-6132, tmccracken@richmond.sd38.bc.ca, or Karen Morley, 604-592-4221, f: 604-592-4221, morley_k@fc.sd36.bc.ca, www.bctf.ca/BCSCTA/.

7–8 North Vancouver. Fast Forward Educational Media Showcase, bringing educational media buyers and sellers together, Capilano College Sportsplex. Before March 6: \$107 both days, \$85.60 one day; after March 6: \$136.10 both days, \$112.25 one day. Group rates also available. Contact Susan Weber (604) 323-5533, sweber@langara.bc.ca, www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd.

15–17 Burnaby. Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) annual national conference, Explore Beyond, Hilton Vancouver Metrotown. Educational techniques for people with Down syndrome. Keynote speaker Norman Kunc (Everything Worth Knowing, I Learned from Being Disabled). Contact Edwina Jeffrey 604-597-9639, edwina@jeffrey@shaw.ca, or Lynne Perreault 604-271-8170, lynnep@adsl.ingtergate.ca or www.lmdss.com.

The BCTF's PD Calendar web site includes these links:

Alberta Teachers' Association www.teachers.ab.ca/conference/index.html
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ASCD-Conferences www.ascd.org/
Justice Institute Training www.jibc.ca
National School Conference Institute www.nscinet.com
National Staff Development Council NSDC-Conferences, www.nsdcd.org/conference/
Phi Delta

Project overseas: Jordan



Clockwise from top left: Jordanian teachers busy at work; Chris and Penelope with the Princess of Jordan; Preparation of traditional Jordanian meal by two Jordanian teachers; a classroom hard at work.

by Chris Olsen and Penelope Kalopisi-Kennedy

Selected to participate in Project Overseas during the summer of 2002, we went to Amman, Jordan, to help teachers develop teaching strategies and improve the use of computers in the classroom.

The Jordanian participants were well-educated, well-trained, and eager to increase the academic achievements of their students. The Jordanian school system is similar to the Canadian system, with a few interesting exceptions: Grade 12 Math is pure calculus; special education is not inclusive; boys and girls have separate classes; male teachers teach boys and female teachers teach girls. Universities are co-ed, and the female students outnumber the male students, two to one.

Waking up at 4:30 a.m. to pray is not unusual for 10% of the world's population. The loud speakers on the spires of the mosques call Muslims to prayer five times a day. The times change as the seasons change and the amount of light varies. The five callings a day create their own rhythm, which sets the pace for the day.

The voices from the mosque rise with the sun, and a new day dawns on the deserts of Jordan. There is no hustle and bustle; people are either praying or

sleeping, and there is little traffic. The temperature will soon rise to 38°C and in anticipation, the people and the earth gently rustle and try to accomplish something before the heat of the day. By 8:15 a.m. we are on our way to Amman Baccalaureate School, a private

Project Overseas is a fantastic opportunity for teachers to share their wisdom of experience and to enjoy personal growth.

school so large we tour in the principal's car. The tuition is \$20,000 a year, and there are 1,000 students and 147 teachers. One leadership program requires the students to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro.

After two hours of instruction there is a 30-minute tea break when we have informal discussions with our fellow teachers while enjoying Jordanian pastries. At 1:30 p.m., after two more hours of instruction, the workshop is over. Soon it is time for the third prayer time. Rooms without air conditioning reach 35°C. Quiet time is between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.—it is too hot to do anything, and people remain in

the shadows. We use this time for lesson prep and then later we venture out into the city for yet another cultural experience.

On one occasion, we drove to a Palestinian Refugee Camp. Because it was late in the day, we couldn't enter the refugee schools, but we met a family of Palestinians and through a translator heard their story. The old man with bare feet, patched trousers, and a threadbare shirt told of leaving Palestine in the late 1940s when he was a teenager. He returned to Palestine but had to leave again in the 1960s. After that, he was shuffled from one camp to another. He lost his first wife and his sons. Now he has remarried and has four children. They have nothing; yet they shared bread and tea with us.

On another occasion, we went to the house of Smeilah Sabbey, one of the Jordanian teachers participating in the workshop. She had cooked a special traditional meal for us, Maqlub, which is made with rice, olive oil, chicken, and eggplant. Usually the men eat in one room and the women eat near the kitchen, but because we were guests, we all ate at the table. All the other women wore head coverings. We wore long sleeves and long skirts, but we didn't cover our heads.

The traditional village wedding will be long remembered. We arrived at a

large building and followed hundreds of women and children up a spiral staircase to the top floor. The music was loud and continuous, and an in-house, closed-circuit video system allowed the bride and groom to be seen clearly on all eight big screens set up around the room. The groom was the only male in the room, and whenever the bride went outside, she covered her face. All the other men were dancing and smoking downstairs. Not a

Sharing ideas and concerns with teachers from another country helps a person focus on the point of education: the student.

drop of alcohol was served during the entire celebration. Events ended at exactly 11 p.m.

Other outings included floating in the Dead Sea, visiting the ruins of Jerash, riding a camel in Wadi Rum, and snorkeling in the Red Sea. Another spectacular event was the three-hour ride out into the desert to see the castles. By the time everything was arranged, our van was filled with 14 people: the driver, four Canadian teachers, a couple

celebrating their 12th wedding anniversary, their five children, a neighbour, and their supervisor. The van raced along the desert road passing camels and the setting sun. When we reached the castle, a huge picnic appeared from the recesses of the van, complete with ice water. On our return to Amman, the radio was turned up and everyone was singing and clapping as the moon rose. It was a magic moment. We had shared an anniversary with two wonderful people. Happiness and contentment seeped through all of us.

Sharing ideas and concerns with teachers from another country helps a person focus on the point of education: the student. It really is of no concern what topics are covered or whether one uses chalk, paper, or computer. We need to care for our students and encourage them to strive for excellence. We need to show them how to learn so that they can help the world become a better place. These concepts are found not in books but within teachers. Project Overseas is a fantastic opportunity for teachers to share their wisdom of experience and to enjoy personal growth.

Penelope Kalopisi-Kennedy teaches in the Howe Sound School District, and Chris Olsen teaches at Mount Baker Secondary School, Cranbrook.

Children's festival needs teachers

As the new teacher liaison at the Vancouver Children's Festival, I need teacher input on how to make the festival best fit the needs of schools and educator associations. I hope to:

1. Hold information/focus sessions at Lower Mainland elementary & middle schools to discuss:

- 2003 shows and best audiences (age, ESL, drama, PE, social studies?)
- study guides—pre & post festival (curriculum connections)

- workshop possibilities/ideas—Prisma Fiesta face-painting, Aquascience
- youth for youth—young talent search
- school participation in theme days (first nations, asian cultures, literary, francophone)
- hands-on activity area (this year's plan and how could it work better)
- hosting an information session in November/December where participants get entered in our draw to win tickets for their class, get first choice for workshops, get one teacher's

ticket free for each 20 student tickets purchased.

2. Set up a B.C. Interior and Vancouver Island teacher e-mail network to discuss:

- all of the aforementioned activities
- sleeper partners (Maritime Museum*, H.R. MacMillan Space Centre*, The Vancouver Museum*, Science World, Vancouver Aquarium (*free festival site-access)
- outreach opportunities and travel funding

3. Hear from teachers at Lower Mainland secondary schools

- career program co-ordinators and counsellors: We're looking for one or two career prep students to work with us at each school (and at our offices monthly) to assist us in recruiting and co-ordinating 2003's exceptional team of festival volunteers (especially for theme days where languages and some special skills, e.g., juggling, are an asset)
- ESL, drama, dance, visual arts, modern language specialists: Many of our shows and workshops are designated "all ages" and could be great educational tools and fun for

secondary school students and specialists in those disciplines. How can we make this work?

For more information, contact Diana Stewart-Imbert, education liaison & volunteer co-ordinator, 604-708-5655, F: 604-708-5661, edu@youngarts.ca

Ces renseignements sont également disponible en français.

