

Features

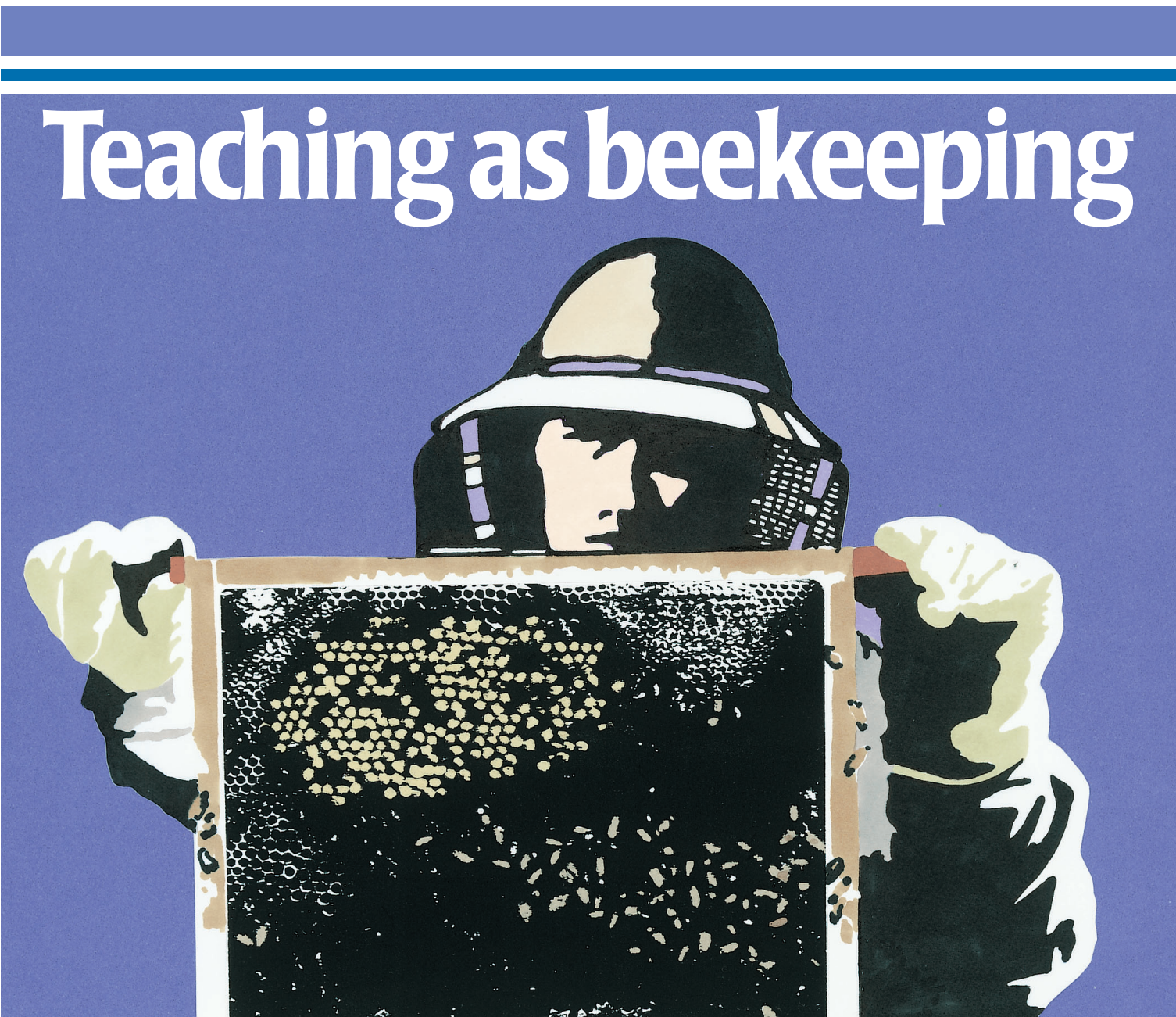
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Teacher



BETTY SOMMERVILLE

by Pat Clarke

Consider beekeepers. To be a proper beekeeper, you must have certain credentials. If you want to go commercial with your bees, you must have certification that indicates you are a properly trained beekeeper. Once you have that qualification, in order to continue as a beekeeper, you must follow certain rules enforced by an agency or a ministry of government. You may have a say in the drafting and implementing of the regulations governing beekeeping, but in the end they are government policy, and you live within them or find another trade.

...the work of a professional is sufficiently complex that practitioners are best able to govern the credentials, qualifications, and conduct of fellow practitioners.

Trade is the operative word. You are not a *professional* if you are a beekeeper. You are a tradesperson or craftsperson. The difference between a professional and other workers, such as beekeepers, is the public recognition that the work of a professional is sufficiently complex that practitioners are best able to govern the credentials, qualifications, and conduct of fellow practitioners. The job

is seen as one that has more to it than basic skills training. Also the nature of the work is varied enough and subject to such a vast array of circumstances that those practising the profession

Christy Clark's hijacking of the B.C. College of Teachers puts teachers in the same classification of worker as beekeepers.

are really the only people who have the knowledge required to judge conduct and performance. Beekeeping is an important and valuable trade. Teaching is an important and valuable profession. It is preposterous to suggest that there are similarities, unless, of course, you are the minister of education. Christy Clark's hijacking of the B.C. College of Teachers puts teachers in the same classification of worker as beekeepers. Evidently the provincial government sees teaching as an occupation where the primary public concern is regulation. As such, teaching can be controlled or governed by anyone. As far as the government in Victoria is concerned, since teaching is mostly about following rules, people not affected by the rules therefore best control it. So we now have a *college* of teachers under the control of a minister of education who can have anyone she wants in the majority. Think of it as more like a marketing board.

The minister may claim that the majority on the new *college* board will be educators just not members of an odious union. The problem is, most of the members of the college are members of that union. Most of the members of the college are classroom teachers in public schools. For a college to have effectiveness or credibility with its members, it must have a degree of responsibility to them. They must respect it. This *college* will be neither responsible nor respected. It will be viewed for what it is: a political setup.

As professional practitioners, public school teachers know the circumstances they work in. They know what constitutes effective teaching; they know the nature of teachers work in public schools. To have a governing body for the profession controlled by a group whose position is determined by a minister who has limited understanding of the real work of teachers, is akin to putting

This college will be neither responsible nor respected. It will be viewed for what it is: a political setup.

airline passengers in charge of air control—democratic in theory, disastrous in practice. The most insidious effect of this *regulatory* categorizing of teaching is that it deprofessionalizes teaching. Teaching, in the eyes of regulators, can be about only what they understand. To be effectively

governed by regulators, the work has to be observed and assessed on their terms, ones they understand. So teaching becomes less and less a creative undertaking, less and less a teacher-to-student relationship determined by individual needs. (Creativity and individualization are not receptive to regulation.) Teaching starts to look more like a trade, and teachers more like line employees than professional workers.

Creativity and individualization are not receptive to regulation.

So who cares? Teachers should! And parents and the public should pay attention, too. The beekeeper model will not improve teaching. It will not make schools better. Deprofessionalizing teaching by setting up a watchdog agency that is about following rules will not make teachers more responsive to their students and creative in their classrooms. It will do the opposite. It will make us more wary. It will discourage *creative risk*. It will stultify the joy of teaching, the spontaneity, the energizing thrill of the teachable moment.

Who is watching? How might this be misunderstood? Will that get me into trouble? Those will be the questions that will direct our teaching, not *What is best for this child?* Who is the real loser then?

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

President's message



Neil Worboys

As we begin this new school year, we are facing another significant challenge in countering legislation imposed by the B.C. Liberal government. Two years ago, our challenge was defending our bargaining rights. This year, it is upholding our professional rights.

With Bill 51, the Campbell Liberals have seized control of the College of Teachers. Clearly, they intend to impose a punitive and antiprofessional agenda.

This year, we must unite as never before to regain democratic control of the college and assert our rights to professional autonomy and self-regulation. At present, ours is the only mandatory college in British Columbia that is not governed by an elected majority of practitioners of that profession.

It is heartening to know that colleagues across Canada are with us in this struggle.

In a unanimous decision, delegates at the AGM of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, adopted a resolution strongly condemning the government of B.C. for political interference in the college.

"The legislative changes to the B.C. College of Teachers reduce the democratic, self-regulatory College of Teachers to an undemocratic, partisan tool of the Ministry of Education," said CTF President Terry Price. "These changes will demoralize professional educators and will harm students' learning opportunities in that they will create instability and turmoil in schools and communities."

We have seen the same story in Ontario, where the Harris Tories created a politicized college, and the Eves government has perpetuated its regime of teacher testing and mandatory recertification. Ontario teachers have been strong and united in their resistance to the spurious demands, and we have much to learn from them.

I hope you have had a chance to read the special issue of *Teacher* covering the range of issues provoked by the Liberal coup against our college, and I hope you will speak out and take action to help regain a truly democratic professional body.

If we all act together, we cannot be defeated!

Neil

Home schooling questioned

Home-schooling programs have become the fashion since the Liberal government increased the amount school districts receive for every student registered for distance/electronic learning. Before last year, the government provided \$3,500 per pupil (it is now \$5,308) and allowed only 18 of 60 districts to offer the program, with province-wide registration capped at 2,200 students. The restrictions were put in place by the NDP government in 1997 to evaluate the program before allowing mushroomlike growth.

A recent issue of *Teacher* (as noted in *The Vancouver Sun*, August 18, 2003) said that "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 distance learning is really educationally sound for most students compared with participating in a classroom." Is the situation not already a fiasco?

Public schools came about because Egerton Ryerson and other school promoters in the mid-18th Century sought to instill democratic principles and non-sectarian viewpoints in school-age children. Ryerson, superintendent of public schools in Ontario from 1844 to 1876, built a model of education emulated by other provinces in Canada. The very practice of home schooling is a step back in time, a long step back.

In many school districts, students are now being offered access to a wide range of educational resources and tutorials that my own students, who integrate with the rest of society, are being denied. Local media have reported that some districts are offering free computers and cash for learning resources to attract out-of-area students.

The Surrey School District, where I work, recently heralded in a local newspaper advertisement its *New Home Learner Program*, replete with "fieldtrips, author visits, parent workshops, daily tutorial drop-in times, assessment of basic skills, success maker software package (retail \$300), online courses (Grades 8-12), [and] free educational resources."

I know that parents of home-schooled children question the value of a standard school-based educational experience, many wishing to provide their own form of indoctrination, usually of a religious nature. The framers of the house beside mine included two middle-school-aged boys who worked full time with their father. Their home schooling is proving lucrative, but like other forms of child labour, in the very least it deprives them of academic preparation and broad societal experience.

It is surprising that governments and school boards—to say nothing of parents themselves—are willing to condemn children to an impoverished, friendless,

and segregated learning environment. Brenda LeClair, the deputy superintendent in Langley School District, proclaimed in an interview with *The Vancouver Sun* (August 18, 2003): "We believe [home-schooling parents] have valuable contributions to make to public education." While the contribution they make is more money for school districts, they also participate in what can be perceived as a form of child abuse.

Jim McMurtry
Surrey

Thanks for Teacher

As a retired teacher of two years, having taught for 27 years in B.C. and now retired back home to Australia, I just want to express my thanks for the complimentary copies of the *Teacher* newsmagazine.

I have fond memories of my teaching career in B.C. and involvement in the Federation and local associations. The receipt of the newsmagazine each month is always a welcomed touchstone.

Thank you, and good luck with your ongoing endeavours on behalf of the teachers and education system in B.C.

Michael T. Duffey
Australia

More supervision a diversion

I am appalled to learn that the Minister of Education is now advocating increased supervision by principals and vice-principals of dedicated and hard-working teachers. Who appoints principals and vice-principals? Lay school trustees, many of whom have hidden or partially political open agendas.

Is it not time to review the process of principal and vice-principal appointment?

I was privileged, at separate times to sit on the two sides of the bargaining table—as long-time teacher and BCTF employee and later as short-time school trustee.

John Church
Vancouver

Progressive paper not wanted

I am writing in response to Brian Lavery's letter in *Teacher*, April 2003.

I believe that the BCTF should continue to increase assistance to teachers who are having a difficult time in their schools and districts, instead of spending money on "progressive" newspapers and other "progressive" issues. It would be far better for the BCTF to expand support to the overwhelmed and under-appreciated educators who face a hostile or apathetic public.

The existing support comes in the form of peer-support programs, the Internal Mediation Service, the mentoring programs, and legal support, as well as a myriad of very useful committees designed to support members.

These are but a few of the services that the BCTF provides and should enhance. I want my union to spend my dues strengthening my fellow teachers.

The Vancouver Sun was correct when it suggested that the BCTF shouldn't be be "sticking its nose where it doesn't belong." Certainly Lavery wants the BCTF to uphold his many favourite "progressive" causes such as condemning the invasion of Iraq, yet I don't believe any of this benefits us.

I want the BCTF to continue to support B.C. teachers and B.C. children. When I read that someone is pushing for the establishment of a "progressive" newspaper, the red flags go up for me. I suspect that Brian Lavery's politics are not aligned with the majority of our members. I don't want my BCTF, of which I am a proud member, to go there.

I suggest that Lavery spend his evenings and weekends advocating for his "progressive" causes and let the BCTF increase support for B.C.'s teachers and children.

Mondy Challmie
Central Okanagan

Heart-health study

Here is an opportunity to become actively involved in your own heart health. Persons in midlife (age 45-64) who live in the Fraser Health Authority Region have the opportunity to participate in the Cardiovascular Health Best Practice Project (CHBPP), a research study offered jointly by Simon Fraser University and the Fraser Health Authority.

This project uses report cards and telephone-based lifestyle counselling (no travel required) as tools to motivate participants to improve their heart health through lifestyle change.

According to one participant, a former teacher, "the heart health's report card is a fantastic motivator that has given me a clear picture of where I am, and has made me take ownership of my own health." The CHBPP intervention has assisted this individual in addressing several lifestyle-related risk factors. Since joining the project last year, he has quit smoking, lost 30 lbs. of excess body weight, become physically active, and gained control of his diabetes.

Additionally, he has saved \$2,000 by walking to the bank daily to deposit the dollars he would previously have spent on cigarettes!

Currently, the project has 400 participants and is aiming to recruit another 400. For more information about volunteering for this project, call 604-412-6492 or go to "volunteers needed" at www.harbour.sfu.ca/gero.

Minda Chittenden
Simon Fraser University

Teacher newsmagazine wins award

Teacher newsmagazine won an award for a series of articles exploring the pitfalls of commercializing public education. Golden Leaf Awards were presented by the Canadian Educational Press Association for the following articles in the Educational Issues Reporting category:

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of," by Constance Rulka, Sept/Oct. 2002

"B.C. Liberals push boards to market education," by Larry Kuehn, Nov/Dec. 2002

"Teacher gives business a lesson about blueberries," by Jamie Vollmer, Nov/Dec. 2002

"What's wrong with commercialization of public education?" by Larry Kuehn, March 2003

"Coquitlam trustees approve district business company," by Kathleen Thomson, April 2003

"Principles can protect students," by Jim McMurtry, April 2003

Congratulations to the writers. CEPA's membership is composed of communicators from teachers' organizations across Canada. This is truly an award by our peers.

— Peter Owens



Maxwell A. Cameron Awards

The B.C. Teachers' Federation grants an award to the student completing the final year of the bachelor of education degree in secondary and elementary teaching who, in the opinion of the dean of the Faculty of Education and of the director of the division concerned, is the outstanding student in the graduating class.

The following people received the Maxwell A. Cameron award in 2002-03:

Jennifer Charbonneau
University of B.C.

Kelly Dunn
Simon Fraser University

James Fleischmann
Malaspina University College

Andre Gogol
University of Victoria

Darcie Hook
Simon Fraser University

Trena Phenix
University of B.C.

Alexandra Ulmer
University of Victoria



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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.

School district business companies

by Larry Kuehn

Privatization of public schools is taking place in B.C., with the creation of school district business companies as one of the tools. Education Minister Christy Clark sees education as one big market, with students and parents being consumers who make choices. She told students in Cowichan on the day school opened that “we need to provide choices for kids just like they do in private schools.”

When one thinks of school as a private market rather than as a community good, priorities shift. This can be seen in the decision of secondary schools in North Vancouver not to accept students from their neighbourhood because places were reserved for paying international students.

Making business success the basis of providing needed funding to support public education will exacerbate social inequities in our province.

It can also lead to what might be called the “X-filing” of the B.C. curriculum. Vancouver was the setting of the filming of the *X-files* for five years, but Vancouver was always disguised as various American cities, because the U.S. was the primary market for the show. Similarly, during the consultations on the new B.C. graduation program, one of the submissions urged that decisions not be made that would make B.C. less attractive to international students.

In a two-tier system, with some “customers” paying high fees, those customers can drive the system.

The private-market view of schools was reflected by the B.C. government when it encouraged school districts to get into “entrepreneurial activity”—go

into business. To facilitate profit-making, it even passed special legislation (Bill 34) creating “school district business companies.”

The B.C. public schools do need more money to maintain our high quality of education. But rather than provide it in the form of provincial funding, the government is saying go out and earn profits in the market.

The ministry of education has already identified 20 private schools that could be run as B.C. schools in Japan, Taiwan, and China. School districts that have set up business companies are invited to apply to run those schools. Those schools will be operated as B.C. schools, using the B.C. curriculum and teachers who have B.C. certificates for public or independent schools and charging high tuition—as much as \$35,000 a year for Grades 11 and 12 in a proposal considered by West Vancouver.

What is it that we have to offer that would be attractive? Education Minister Christy Clark told the legislature that students “can perhaps earn a Dogwood Certificate, which is an internationally recognized commodity.”

If you want to think of education as a commodity, B.C. does have a number of things to offer. Students in B.C. ranked near the top in the recent OECD international PISA exams. Those positive results were achieved in schools that are much more multicultural than schools marginally ahead of B.C.’s scores. Of course, the success of B.C. 15-year-old students was built on schools that had the level of educational service provided in the 1990s, not the worse conditions that have been created over the past two years.

Again, in commodity terms, the Dogwood Certificate provides an advantage in getting access to the quality post-secondary institutions we have in B.C. And, of course, we offer our program in English, what Korean Teacher Union official Lee, Dong-Jin calls “the language of globalization.”



It's a matter of inequity

So if we have a high-quality education and we can offer it at a profit, what's wrong with that?

The job of the market is not to create social equity—and it never does. But in a democracy, one of the roles of government is to seek equality of opportunity. One of the key ways to do that is to ensure that finances are distributed to give extra support necessary to even the playing field for those who come to school with fewer of the opportunities that can be provided by families that are financially well off.

Making business success the basis of providing needed funding to support public education will exacerbate social inequities in our province. Further, running elite private schools in other countries will create more social inequities there as well.

Already in B.C. we see significant differences in the amount of supplementary funding available from the tuition charged international students in our classrooms. West Vancouver, the district with the highest socio-economic status in the province, also makes the most money from international students—money then available to subsidize the educational program in the district. The *London Times Education Supplement* has commented on the irony of a public system in B.C. financing its education by

selling elite private education in other countries.

The inequities created by this creeping privatization led the 2003 BCTF Annual General Meeting to adopt a policy of opposing the creation of school-district business companies.

Is anyone else setting up business companies?

No other province has moved to set up business companies run by school districts. Legislation in Britain to allow school authorities to run businesses was rejected in a vote, and an English court ruled that it is inappropriate for schools to run businesses because it is outside their mandate.

...districts have jumped at the promise of revenue, without examining the down sides or the alternatives.

In B.C., once some school boards adopt an entrepreneurial mode, they seem to be as concerned about innovation in business as in the old-fashioned task of educating public school students in their own neighbourhood schools. Business operations under development include online learning, software sales, learning resource marketing, property management, and contracting services such as speech and hearing specialists and psychologists. The Coquitlam district has created an international college through a subsidiary company of its school district business company; it is a private college to offer English programs to international students.

The Nanaimo board directed senior staff to prepare business plans for offering carpentry products, information-systems services, vehicle maintenance, print-shop services, and bus rentals to the community. If it moves, sell it, seems to be the philosophy.

The New Westminster School District Business Company bought Open School from the government, in partnership with a private company, and plans to make money by selling distance-education resources both in B.C. and internationally.

Business companies are beyond accountability

For a public body such as a school board, an important element of accountability to the public has to be based on open

access to information. The legislation authorizing school district business companies makes no mention of a requirement for the company to be covered by the freedom of information laws; although it requires that the company must have on its board at least one elected school trustee or the district secretary-treasurer (presumably to ensure that the board can get information about what the company is doing). However, after only a few months of operation, a school trustee in one district has initiated a freedom-of-information request in order to get full details of the district company's operation.

Even more troubling is the creation of subsidiary companies by school district business companies. They are like the numbered companies created by construction firms so that liability for leaking buildings or other problems rests only with the subsidiary and not with the actual owners.

The government lawyer who drafted the business company legislation has confirmed that the creation of subsidiary companies was not contemplated. Subsidiary companies are another step beyond control of the public board. Directors have no necessary connection to the school board and are responsible to the business company, not to the school board. Programs such as Coquitlam's international college have been created as subsidiary companies.

It is indicative of the lack of concern about public accountability that of the few districts that have created business companies, none has first held a public meeting so that all the issues around the companies can be discussed. Because of the reduction of real levels of funding for our schools, the districts have jumped at the promise of revenue, without examining the down sides or the alternatives.

Public education is opened to the GATS

The World Trade Organization is currently the venue for negotiating trading rules for public services, including education, under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The Canadian government claims that it plans to exempt Canadian public education from coverage under the GATS. However, when a public institution operates as a private-education provider, as is the case with school district business companies, the case for exemption—ambiguous in the first place—becomes untenable.

Breaking down the distinctions between public and private accelerates the loss of the commons, the public space that operates for democratic social purposes, rather than for private interests and profit. Viewing public education as a commodity to be chosen through the market breaks apart the bonds that have contributed to our society's moving toward the elusive goal of equity. Just as tax breaks primarily for the rich increase social inequality, making resources for education dependent on the market also takes us further from the democratic goal of equity.

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

LOOKING BACK

70 years ago

A good building and a good curriculum are useless if you have not got the good teacher. A good teacher will do excellent work with a bad curriculum and no curriculum. I urge all the time the improvement of the teacher. Attract to the teaching profession the best people, raise the standard of the profession, improve its status, demand higher and higher attainments. Let the teaching and the teachers status be the last thing to be scaled down in a stingy fashion.
— *The B.C. Teacher*, September 1933

50 years ago

With the death of Mrs. Rolston on October 12th, British Columbia lost its popular Minister of Education. One of our last official contacts with Mrs. Rolston was the receipt of the following message: “During the past school year the people of this province expended some 16 millions of dollars in building

and equipping new schools and additions to existing schools. In doing this the people have shown their faith in the values of education. It is however, largely the teacher and the curriculum that determines the true worth of the educational process.”
— *The B.C. Teacher*, Sept./Oct. 1953

30 years ago

Prior to television, outside, entertaining distractions available for pre-school or school-age children were relatively few. And within school, teachers seldom confused entertainment with learning. Schooling, moreover, was generally structured so as to require patience, preparation, practice, attention and concentration on the part of the student. No one ever promised him[her] that learning would be easy. In this atmosphere the child was, so to speak, “prepared” for the fact that teachers would and should make intellectual demands upon him[her], and that a certain

amount of dull, tedious, but eventually rewarding activity would be required of him[her].
— *The B.C. Teacher*, Sept./Oct. 1973

10 years ago

Bill 78. The government quickly passed legislation implementing some of the Korbin recommendations. The main elements of the Public Sector Employers' Act are: the establishment of a high-level public-sector employers' council (PSEC), and the establishment of a new employer's organization in the public schools, with a mandate to “co-ordinate collective bargaining objectives” and help PSEC carry out its “strategic directions.” All school boards must belong, and government must also be represented.
— *Teacher Newsmagazine*, September 1993

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

A day to celebrate

by Jim Sinclair

Once a year, we set aside a day to celebrate the contribution that unions make in our workplaces and communities. It's called Labour Day, and it's a reminder that unions make all the difference.

Think about it for a minute. The eight-hour day, pension plans, the abolition of child labour, pay equity, universally accessible public healthcare and education—these are just some of the contributions credited to the determination of union activists.

Those gains did not come easily. Each one involved intense campaigns in both the community and the workplace, often stretching over many decades.

Many involved mobilizing pressure both at the bargaining table and on politicians. It wasn't enough that improvements were secured for a few. The Labour Movement's real successes have always come from sharing the gains with a broader community through better laws and higher public standards.

...the current government in Victoria has overseen a steady rise in unemployment, a bloating of provincial debt, and a squandering of billions on a tax-cut strategy that has rewarded a few at the expense of us all.

The struggles never moved forward in a straight line. Major breakthroughs in one decade often became the focus of attack in the next. To paraphrase an old union activist, "working people never won anything without a fight and they never held on to it without continuing to fight."

In B.C. today, it's clear that we have our hands full trying to keep the line moving forward. Despite promises of "hope and prosperity," the current govern-

ment in Victoria has overseen a steady rise in unemployment, a bloating of provincial debt, and a squandering of billions on a tax-cut strategy that has rewarded a few at the expense of us all.

...chief executive officers managed to squeeze a 36% increase in their salary last year, compared with 3.6% for the average employee in the province.

B.C.'s unemployed now number close to 200,000; 8.7% of the workforce can't find work, up from 6.7% when the B.C. Liberals took office in May 2001. Smaller communities, especially those in the Central and Northern Interior regions, are struggling with unemployment rates often double those in urban centres.

The B.C. Liberal's main economic strategy, tax cuts, has been a complete bust. B.C.'s economic growth continues to underperform the rest of Canada and is miles off the original course set by Finance Minister Gary Collins when he detailed the tax cut strategy in July 2001.

B.C.'s working families have paid the price for tax cuts with dramatic cuts in public programs, hefty increases in user fees, regressive taxes, and greatly diminished access to critical services in health and education.

The Social Planning and Research Council of B.C. (SPARC) predicts that child and family poverty in B.C. will increase in the coming years because of the provincial government's failure to decrease unemployment and protect the services and benefits to low-income families. The SPARC report also notes that B.C. Liberal policies such as lower employment standards, less access to union representation, and a greater emphasis on part-time, contingent work will further erode family incomes, forcing even more into poverty.

The shift in political direction has been matched by an equally hard-edge approach in B.C.'s employer community. At

negotiating tables around the province, the employer's demand for concession is pervasive. Public or private sector, resource or service industries, large company or small, the demand for rollbacks in benefits, wages, and employment security is constant.

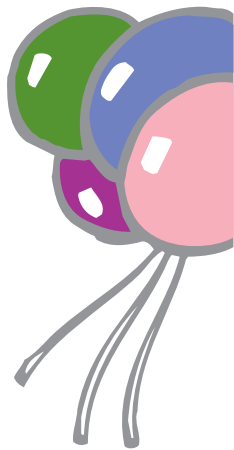
There are limits, of course, to how far the concession demand is pushed. A recent survey by *Business in Vancouver*, of B.C.'s top 100 publicly traded companies shows that chief executive officers managed to squeeze a 36% increase in their salary last year, compared with 3.6% for the average employee in the province. According to the survey, the number of CEOs earning a million dollars or more doubled between 2001 and 2002.

And you wonder why workers balk when managers or politicians say we have to do more with less.

Adversity is nothing new to our movement. We've faced tough odds before and prevailed. Just ask the folks in Kamloops who stared down Premier Campbell's plans to privatize the Coquihalla. Or ask activists and seniors in Revelstoke who have rallied to save their long-term care facility, Moberley Manor, from a similar fate. Or ask workers and rail communities from North Vancouver to Fort Nelson who are prepared to tough it out to stop the sell-off of B.C. Rail.

The answer you get is the same one you will hear at Labour Day picnics around the province. Workers standing together with their communities are a powerful force. We make a real difference.

Jim Sinclair is president of the B.C. Federation of Labour.



Diagnosis: Ministeritus?

by David Schreck

Since the Campbell government came to power, B.C. lost 11,000 K-12 students, 3,000 teachers, and 91 schools. If you listen to the Minister of Education, Christy Clark, doing the talk shows during the first week back to school, you might hear her say that funding is increasing in spite of decreasing enrolment. That is what economists call "money illusion." If

... "ministeritus"—that means that one thinks that being appointed as a government minister automatically makes one more knowledgeable than everyone else.

prices increase but budgets increase by less, then there are fewer real resources even though there is more "nominal money." In the case of education, enrolment has gone down by 2% since the Campbell government came to power, but the number of teachers has been cut by 10% (those numbers come from the Ministry of Education web site: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/k12data/reports/course_reports.htm).

It sounds like a lot when Christy Clark says there are 11,000 fewer students, but according to the ministry figures for public schools, there were 589,913 full-time-equivalent students on September 30 for school year 2000-01, and 580,406 full-time equivalent students on September 30 of school year 2002-03—a drop of 1.6%. Relative to those big numbers, Clark's talk about fewer students is put into its proper small scale. The

ministry's figures also show that the number of full-time equivalent teachers dropped from 36,113 in 2000 to 33,900 in 2002—a drop of 6.1%. The precise numbers aren't out yet for 2003, but media report that there are another 1,000 fewer teachers and 2,000 fewer students—that means much larger class sizes, 2% fewer students, and 10% fewer teachers in Campbell's New Era.

It must be irritating for teachers who worked hard to earn a teaching certificate to listen to Minister Clark who, according to the published résumés, didn't complete a university degree. According to the B.C. Progress Board's indicator number 11 (www.bcprogressboard.com/about.html), in 1992 only 15.2% of B.C.'s population had completed a university education; in 2001 that had risen to 20.1%. A university degree doesn't necessarily make a person smarter, but it has been noticed by many political observers that some cabinet ministers suffer from a disease sometimes called "ministeritus"—that means that

...those who are concerned about education should focus on hard data rather than on ministerial opinions and trial balloons.

one thinks that being appointed as a government minister automatically makes one more knowledgeable than everyone else. Others will have to determine whether Christy Clark suffers from that affliction. Meanwhile, those who are concerned about education should focus on hard data rather than on ministerial opinions and trial balloons.

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BCTF forest fire relief fund

The BCTF Executive Committee has established a forest fire relief fund to help colleagues and students, and their families. Like all British Columbians, teachers have been horrified to see the catastrophic forest fires raging throughout our province this summer, threatening so many homes and communities.

To help that sum grow, we're encouraging local teacher associations, individual members, and retired teachers to also contribute," BCTF President Neil Worboys said. "We've already heard about many creative fundraising efforts teachers are launching in their communities."

The fund will be used to offer a gift of \$200 for each student affected by the forest fires to

help purchase school supplies and other necessities.

"Students and their families face extremely high expenses this month, especially with the cost of school supplies and course fees going up all the time," Worboys said. "We'll be setting up support committees in the fire-stricken communities to help parents of the thousands of affected students to access the fund."

The BCTF Forest Fire Relief Fund also provides grants of \$5,000 for teachers who have lost their homes to fire and \$1,000 for those who were evacuated.

"It's an old saying in the union movement that 'an injury to one is an injury to all,'" Worboys said. "We're trying to express that support and solidarity with

our colleagues and students who have been hurt by these disastrous fires."

Teachers will also be working with parents and other community members to help children overcome the trauma of being uprooted. Members of the B.C. School Counsellors' Association and the BCTF Social Justice Advisory Committee have prepared tips for parents and teachers to support children as they deal with the impact of the fires. They are posted on the BCTF web site, www.bctf.ca.

Donations to the BCTF Forest Fire Relief Fund are welcome:

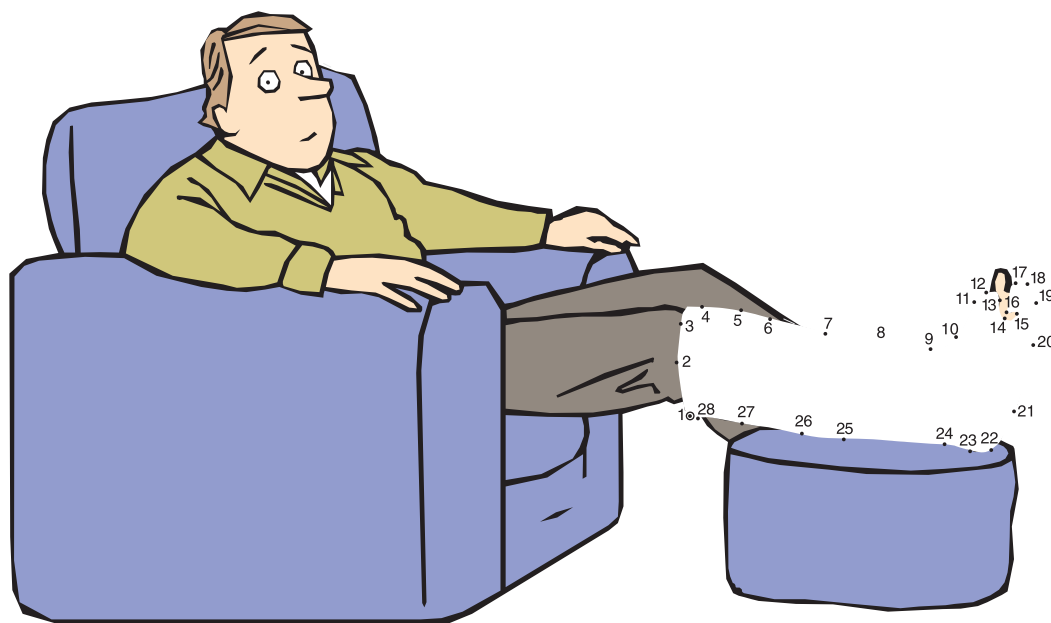
BCTF Forest Fire Relief Fund
Rob McLaren, Treasurer
550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

Save the children



Jessye Labaj and Marc Kielburger after his presentation at the BCTF Summer Conference. Kielburger and his brother Craig organized Free the Children and work around the world to end child labour. Kielburger expressed concern that Campbell's Liberals intend to introduce legislation to allow children as young as 12 to work.

Health & Safety



Connect the dots

by Maureen L. MacDonald

HELP WANTED: Opportunities abound in all regions of the province for members interested in improving the workplace health and safety of their colleagues, their students, and themselves. No experience necessary. Qualifications: Use of most, if not all, of the five senses. Sixth sense also an asset. Duties: Be on the lookout for existing or potential dangers such as mouldy spots, musty smells, dirty carpets, slipping and tripping hazards, chemical storage, violent incidents, etc., and make recommendations for correction. Positions are voluntary. Start as soon as possible, and set your own hours. Rewards are high: Better working conditions and better learning conditions.

Good start

The health and safety program got a welcome jump-start this year. For the first time ever, each local was invited to send its Health and Safety Rep to the annual BCTF Summer Conference at UBC. Over 50 enthusiastic reps spent a hot day in August attending workshops. The rookie H&S reps studied the BCTF/Worksafe Basic Committee Training program's five components: Occupational Health & Safety Program, Joint Health & Safety Committees/Worker Representatives, Safety Inspections, Incident Investigations and Reports, and Refusal of Unsafe Work. The experienced reps had a choice of two of Violence Protection and Prevention, Indoor Air Quality, and our newest workshop, Ergonomics in the Classroom. The H&S reps then joined over 500 other colleagues who are local-elected officers, social justice, professional development, bargaining, and TOC reps. The local teams had two days of integrated training, case studies, problem-solving, and advocacy skills. The knowledge gained, skills learned, and friendships made will have positive effects throughout the challenging year ahead.

It's up to you

The *Workers' Compensation Act* and the WCB Regulation entitle you to know about dangers in the workplace, to participate in workplace health and safety activities through the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee, to refuse

unsafe work, and to no discrimination. Know your rights, and use them. Your elected representatives need every member to be alert to working conditions and to report circumstances that warrant investigation or remediation. Be vocal about your concerns. It's up to you.

Connect the dots

Scenario #1 WCB is not involved

1. Unhealthy or unsafe condition at work.
2. Member made sick or injured on the job.
3. Member uses sick leave for the period of recovery.
4. Member returns to work.
5. Member then gets sick or injured off the job.
6. Sick leave is used.
7. Sick leave runs out.
8. Member applies for benefits from the Salary Indemnity Plan.
9. All members, through the BCTF fee, financially support the member who is not able to work.
10. Salary Indemnity Fund is depleted unnecessarily because member used sick leave instead of filing a WCB claim for the work-related illness or injury in the first instance.

Scenario #2 WCB Compensation saves the BCTF money

1. Unhealthy or unsafe condition at work.
2. Member made sick or injured on the job.
3. Member files a claim for WCB compensation.
4. WCB claim is accepted, and members' own sick leave is not used for the period of absence for recovery.
5. Member then gets sick or injured off the job.
6. Sick leave is used.
7. Member has enough sick leave available to cover the absence.
8. Member applies to the BCTF for Salary Indemnity and is covered by the plan for the very reasons it was established.

If we connect the dots, we see that the valuable resources of the Salary Indemnity Plan (members' own money, not

government subsidized) should be used for helping members who get sick or are injured outside of work, and whose sick leave, provided in the collective agreement, has run out.

Connecting the dots again, we see why applications for SIP coverage now require a member to file a WCB claim if appropriate. Not reporting occupational illness or injury is a violation of Section 53 of the *Workers Compensation Act*.

In a report called "The Professional Development of Teachers," written for the BCTF in 1980, Tony Flanders drew attention to "the interconnectedness of everything to everything else." That phrase resonates. If school boards had to pay increased premiums for WCB coverage because the number and seriousness of reported incidents was up, perhaps money would be spent on prevention. Everyone is a winner when occupational diseases and injuries are avoided.

Local presidents and H&S reps will help you

Each local has several people who have information about the process members need to follow to get results on health and safety concerns. Ask your president to steer you in the right direction.

Training is a must

You may be eligible to attend the annual eight-hour release-time health and safety training for all members of all worksite joint occupational health & safety committees in your district. Has training been scheduled yet for this year? The BCTF has 10 H&S trainers, who travel the province to provide the WCB-authorized workshops for committee members—and who also give School Union Rep Training (SURT) workshops.

Make sure that you receive the WHMIS training that employers must provide annually to all employees. Knowledge of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System could save your life. Have a safe and healthy new year.

Maureen L. MacDonald is the prevention officer in the BCTF Health and Safety Department.

To join the BCTF occupational health & safety e-mail list, bctf-oh&s, please write to Peggy Wilson at pwilson@bctf.ca

Helping children leave the nest

by Gary Direnfeld

With all the attention on where your kids are going, little may have been said about where they are leaving. Each year, thousands of children leave home, some for the very first time.

Parents would do well to remember their first experience of leaving home. For many, it came easily, but for some, it was accompanied by stress, and for others, conflict. In remembering their own experience, parents next have to consider the experience they want their son or daughter to have.

The experience of leaving home is important psychologically for the young adults and their parents. The experience can set the tone for the next stage of family development: the adult-to-adult relationship with the child. Remember, they will likely be married some day and you will want to see your grandchildren.

So no more telling your child what to do. After managing through adolescence, parents are faced with the fact that their child is a young adult. Long gone are the days of parental authority. Coming to terms with this fact lies at the heart of the leaving home experience and can impact on your son's or daughter's sense of adult security and your future relationship together.

Perhaps it is not so much that the parents must reassure their children that they will be all right but that the parents must reassure themselves and not let their concerns impede the

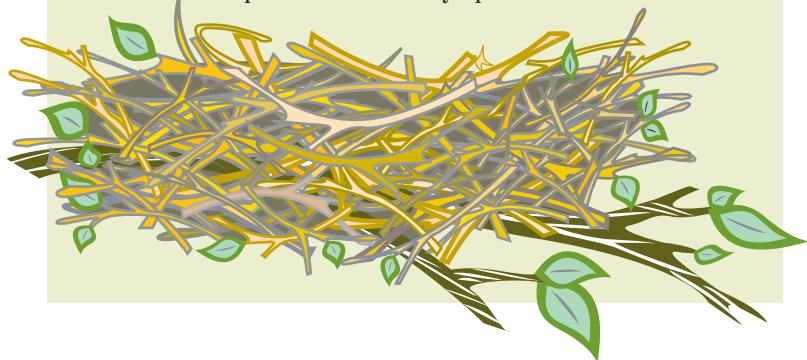
children's departure. Let them leave in peace, and do not try to cram in all the lessons left untaught. Some lessons are gained only by leaving home.

For a better leaving-home experience consider these suggestions:

1. Talk with your son or daughter about the feelings about leaving home. Don't push on whether he or she will miss you, though, as this feeling might actually be your own. If it doesn't come up, then maybe the thought hasn't crossed their mind in the excitement of the experience.
2. Reminisce about his/her growing up and the pleasures you have had along the way. Marvel at growth and accomplishments and your anticipation of future accomplishments.
3. Plan well for the departure so the actual moment isn't fraught with last-minute errands or conflicts. Offer your help, and be prepared to stand back or jump in—only as requested or discussed. Your hand is no longer attached to the bicycle seat, and you have to let go.

If you follow these suggestions, you may experience a smoother transition to an adult relationship with your son or daughter. This kind of experience can repair past conflicts with your child and improve the odds of having a great relationship as adults.

Gary Direnfeld is a social worker, child-behaviour expert, and author of *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane (Secrets of the Trade, 1992)*. gary123@sympatico.ca



The monster in the mountains



by John Grain

The children, their fear now slightly tempered by the absence of open flame and smoke, speak timidly of the "Monster in the mountains." The great fire of Kelowna has raged past, yet still tramples through the nearby hills, leaving a trail of destruction and terror in its wake. Many Okanagan residents, like thousands of others in B.C., have endured life-altering experiences as a result.

The fire-storm was a living creature that assaulted every sense. The acrid smoke, mixed with the stench of burning rubber and vinyl siding, was nauseating. The roar of the conflagration as it raged down the hillside faster than a person could run, was deafening. From over a kilometre, the heat could be felt and a blizzard of cinders and incandescent ash pelted earthward, singeing bare skin, and melting plastic lawn furniture. Trees unfortunate enough to be in the path of the relentless onslaught, shimmered a ghostly white before suddenly exploding like bombs, the flames often shooting hundreds of feet into the air.

To most of the tens of thousands of residents, the memory of the catastrophe will fade. But for hundreds of children and families left homeless, the "monster" will remain forever. Memories of the choking smoke and gritty taste of soot are not easily erased. Already the nightmares have started. Children and adults alike recoil unnaturally at the blare of sirens and air horns. Occasionally they are imaginary, figments of the mind, created by fear and tension; auditory hallucinations. In morbid fascination, school children dwell on the fire, unable to concentrate or focus



Canadian troops help fight the forest fires in Kelowna and a 25,000 ft. smoke plume is visible on the outskirts.

on their work.

Yet from the ashes, the stories of compassion, sacrifice, and kindness are those that emerge most vividly. Front yards and public places of all forms are festooned with signs, posters, and yellow ribbons thanking the emergency personnel and volunteers for their dedication and bravery. Citizens have opened their homes, hearts, and wallets to evacuees, disaster relief funds, and food banks.

The BCTF and teachers of British Columbia, as usual, also came to the aid of their colleagues and communities. Grants and loans, made possible by the generosity of our members, were made available to teachers and their families who were victimized by the fire. Locally, teacher-union leaders organized emergency school supplies, food, and other relief

for needy children. The impact of teacher involvement became especially noticeable when school started and teachers returned to their classrooms on September 2. The sudden absence of teachers diminished the volunteer ranks so drastically that, being unable to function properly, the emergency evacuation center was forced to make an urgent public appeal for help!

And so, life goes on, and although we will never forget the "Monster in the Mountains," neither will we forget how people of all walks of life came together in a time of need. We will remember the heroes and the bravery and when people stood united and reached out to help their neighbours.

John Grain teaches at KLP Secondary School, Kelowna.



BCTF teacher workshop leaders at the Summer Associate Institute at UBC in August. This year marks the 25th anniversary of "Teachers Teaching Teachers."

Teachers should consider attending an AGM because...



Robin Abra, Prince George

The AGM is an eye opener into the workings and procedures of the BCTF and into the different needs and concerns of the locals. Although we are one body, we (the locals) have different opinions and concerns regarding the business at hand.

It is a unique experience to see the "political machines" and coalitions that form during the AGM. Candidates are very vocal and then seem to stop the grandstanding after the elections are held.



Michelle Bryant
Queen Charlotte

The AGM is informative, and it gives teachers an understanding of how decisions within the BCTF are made.

I especially encourage First Nations teachers and new teachers not only to attend the AGM but also to become active in their local unions. At the AGM, teachers voice their concerns about how the BCTF is operated, and they vote on how the BCTF will carry out further business.

As there is a need for more First Nations teachers in the classroom, there is also a need for more First Nations teachers to become active within the BCTF. In light of the government's attack on public education, new teachers should attend the AGM as a learning experience, for they may hold positions as AGM delegates, local representatives, or local presidents someday.

The AGM is also a place to network, meet teachers from other locals, share teaching experiences, and form friendships. I encourage all teachers to attend at least one AGM of the BCTF.



Patricia Carrico, Victoria

Teachers should consider attending an AGM because we do not engage in our profession in isolation. We are fortunate to be part of an association with a long history of providing multiple areas of support to its members and to the community. I became a teacher four years ago after a long career in the private/non-union sector, where "benefits" often came at the largesse of the boss and from diminishing provincial and federal legislation. The AGM provides an immersion course on the business and direction of the BCTF. Perhaps more important, however, it gives members an opportunity to discover where they can make a contribution to the profession.



Nadene Guiltner
Cariboo-Chilcotin

An AGM is an excellent way to see just how complex our organization is. During this year's AGM, members heard discussion on a wide variety of issues. Speakers made points with both reason and passion. Quite a number of new delegates spoke about topics that were of special concern—the debate on TOC issues was one of the liveliest parts of the meeting. After being immersed in that environment for four days, I am beginning to understand and appreciate some of the logistics involved when almost 700 people gather in one place to make decisions that will affect over 40,000 of their colleagues. I urge any member who wishes to know more about the functioning of our organization to put his or her name forward for the 2004 AGM.



Bill Hood, Vancouver

Participating in the AGM gives teachers an opportunity to see themselves and their profession more clearly.

You witness lively reflection on, and education of, both what we do every day in the classroom and, more important, why we do it. This experience comes to us in the voices, and through the stories, of people from all parts of the province.

The effect helps me remember, on a profound level, that none of us is alone, wherever we currently find ourselves in the education system.

At the same time, each delegate becomes a part of a more caring and supportive society that we strive to create in both our classrooms and our communities—a place where each voice is not only respected and valued, but empowered.

It is impossible for me to express the inspiration I feel in a large assembly where thoughtful and assertive people express a wide diversity of opinions and where speakers are encouraged and supported in the expression of their opinions.

My trip to the AGM feels very much like a visit to an exciting future—to a world that I, along with many teachers, students, and parents hope to inhabit some day in all parts of our lives.

One of the speakers at this year's AGM said, "Teaching is the greatest act of optimism a person can be involved in." Another said, "Teaching is a supreme act of solidarity with the next generation." These quotes give voice to some of my deepest feelings about my work. Come to the AGM, and visit the future.

PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

by Anita Chapman

Much of our job satisfaction in teaching comes from exercising our professional judgment in order to meet the diverse needs of our students. The professional autonomy of teachers to exercise their judgment and act on it is an important source of strength in a public education system, and as such, should be valued by the broader society as well as by members of the profession.

Changes to the College of Teachers' legislation in Bill 51 are a serious threat to the professional autonomy of teachers, but it is not the first threat. Teachers are already experiencing many limitations and threats to their professional autonomy.

School Act and Regulations, Ministerial Orders, ministry policies

The *School Act* and Regulations, Ministerial Orders, and ministry policies put some parameters on teacher professional autonomy.

Teachers are required to teach the curriculum as defined by the learning outcomes and assess student performance in relation to the learning outcomes, but we have professional autonomy about how to do that, what instructional and assessment strategies to use.

Our collective-agreement language on professional autonomy generally recognizes restrictions with wording such as "within the bounds of prescribed curriculum."

School-board decisions, policies

School boards often pass motions that curtail teachers' professional autonomy. Teachers may not be as vigilant as they might be about such board actions because the ramifications for professional autonomy of specific board motions are not always immediately obvious.

Many school boards have mandated local report cards

B.C. Performance Standards are voluntary resources. Usually, there is no local board requirement to do them either. If teachers do not question such directives and draw them to the attention of their local union, professional autonomy is further curtailed.

The majority does not rule on matters of professional autonomy; it is an individual right we have under the collective agreement.

Classroom teachers are usually clear on what is being required of them (for example, with report cards) but they may be unclear whether it is required by a Ministerial Order, a local board policy, a principal's preference, or colleagues' decision. Teachers therefore do not always have the information they need to make a judgment about how much professional autonomy they have in a situation. That ambiguity tends to further curtail professional autonomy.

Most of the current incursions into teachers' professional autonomy are in assessment and evaluation.

Principals' decisions

Principals often tell teachers that certain things are required. Teachers generally assume these are provincial requirements or board policies. However, the requirements are sometimes simply decisions of the individual principal, based on his or her opinions about best practice. In addition, principals' decisions are sometimes based on their own misconceptions about provincial requirements and board policies.

For example, many elementary principals tell teachers that they are required to include previews with their report cards. That is not, and has never been, a provincial

requirement, nor is it generally in board policy.

Teachers often need help from their school union reps and local unions to determine if something is truly a requirement and by whom, or if teachers in the local have professional autonomy in the matter in question.

Colleagues' decisions

School staffs and departments sometimes make decisions or develop "policy" that curtails the individual professional autonomy of teacher colleagues. For example, a staff may decide to implement EBS (Effective Behaviour Support) school-wide, or a department may decide to have a final exam in a course. There is no problem with such decisions if they are unanimous, but to protect professional autonomy, there should be some provision for dissenters, if any, to opt out. Teachers who exercise their professional autonomy in such situations are sometimes viewed as obstructionists by other staff members. Colleagues may be harshly critical, believing that the "majority rules." The majority does not rule on matters of professional autonomy; it is an individual right we have under the collective agreement.

Professions that have professional autonomy are characterized by the ability of members to make decisions about the work they do...

There is a dynamic tension between individual professional autonomy and the fact that the most powerful locus of educational change is the group, school, or department, and not the individual teacher. This is a right-versus-right dilemma that does not have a clear answer, so it is important that the issue of professional autonomy be an

integral part of staff development and staff decision making.

Public pressure

Public pressure can have an enormous impact on teachers' professional autonomy, especially with respect to learning resources in English language arts, as we saw in the Surrey book-banning case. Public pressure from the dominant community can trample the rights of minority communities (e.g., objections to

...larger class sizes and fewer resources have dramatically narrowed the range of teacher decision making.

the inclusion of First Nations' myths and ceremonies in the instructional program).

Most situations are resolved in ways that are satisfactory to the teaching profession. However, the level of conflict, the heated rhetoric, and the level of media attention have an overall dampening effect on teachers' willingness to take professional risks. They also make publishers of educational resources extremely cautious, so learning resources have become highly sanitized.

The "lighthouse" syndrome

School boards and district and school administrators often feel considerable pressure to look good or do well in relation to current ministry initiatives or flavour-of-the-year educational trends. Sometimes the pressure is obvious (e.g., Fraser Institute rankings or a visit from the deputy minister). Other times, the pressure is subliminal but no less powerful.

Currently, the government emphasis on accountability for

outputs, and the resultant data madness, is expanding the problem. It is common for schools and districts to claim increases in FSA results and provincial exam results that are not statistically significant, and teachers are under considerable pressure to have students do well on these tests.

Teachers no longer have professional autonomy about how best to teach the course; they have professional autonomy about how best to teach to the exam.

Hidden threats

Professions that have professional autonomy are characterized by the ability of members to make decisions about the work they do and by a work environment that encourages such decisions. Most of the current threats to teachers' professional autonomy are not direct attacks on the ability of teachers to make decisions about the work they do, but rather erosions of the work environment that effectively limit and discourage the exercise of those decisions.

The Liberal government did not strip professional-autonomy clauses from teachers' collective agreements the way it

...teachers are often deciding between using an outdated text or none at all, between having students share a text or have no text, between using inadequate resources or buying resources out of their own pockets.

stripped class-size language. But larger class sizes and fewer resources have dramatically narrowed the range of teacher decision making. Teachers still have the right to exercise their professional judgment about which textbooks they use in their classrooms; however, teachers are often deciding between using an outdated text or none at all, between having students share a text or have no text, between using inadequate resources or buying resources out of their own pockets. Exercising professional autonomy under such conditions is demoralizing.

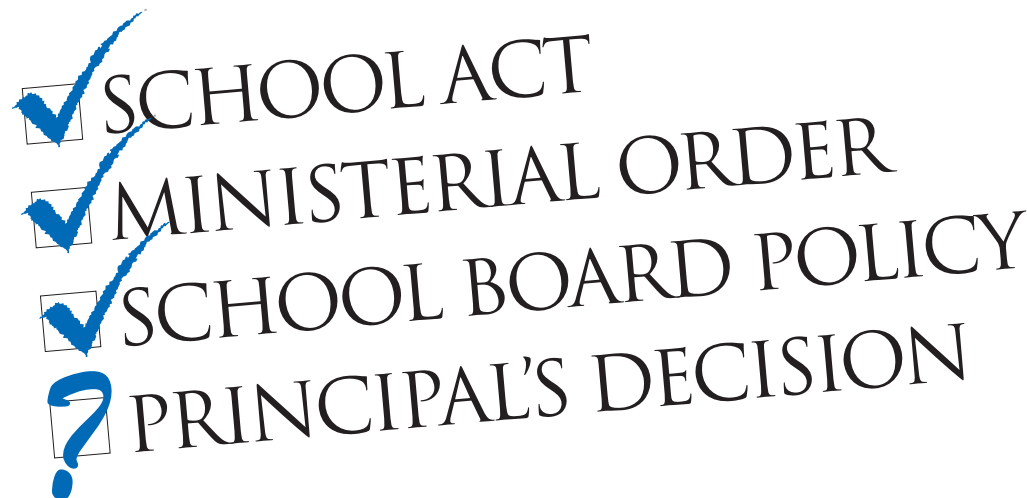
It is important for teachers to guard against all unnecessary restraints on our professional autonomy so that we can continue to work toward meeting the diverse needs of our students.

Anita Chapman is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.

...principals' decisions are sometimes based on their own misconceptions about provincial requirements and board policies.

that exceed the provincial requirements for report cards and therefore increase the workload of teachers.

Many principals have told teachers they have to do school-wide "writes" using B.C. Performance Standards in order to collect data for the school planning council or the district's accountability contract. There is no provincial requirement to do things of this nature; in fact, the





Americans spend more on healthcare and get less

The U.S. healthcare system spends over 300% more on administration than the Canadian system, a new Harvard Medical School study has found.

And researchers say the hundreds of billions in extra spending do not make patients healthier.

"Health [systems] with the highest administration costs tend to have the lowest clinical quality," said study co-author Steffie Woolhandler, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard.

The study was published August 21, 2003, in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

When hands-on medical costs

...your funding is too low but your system is very good," she said. "We have a systemic problem here.

were excluded, the cost of treating a U.S. patient in 1999

was US\$1,059, more than triple the Canadian cost of US\$307.

Dr. Woolhandler said the problem with the Canadian health system is that it does not spend enough on medical care, which results in long waiting lists for treatment. Americans spend about US\$5,600 per patient—83% more than is spent in Canada.

"From our point of view, your funding is too low but your system is very good," she said.

"We have a systemic problem here. There is lots of money sloshing around, yet we have 41

million people with no health insurance, seniors who can't

U.S. hospitals spent US\$315 per patient on administration, while Canadian hospitals spent US\$103.

afford medications, and multiple other problems."

For example, one of the biggest U.S. private health plans, WellPoint, looks after

10.1 million customers and has 13,900 administrative staff. By contrast, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan covers 11.7 million people with about 1,400 employees.

Insurance overhead eats up the lion's share of the U.S. administrative costs, at US\$259 per patient in 1999 compared with US\$47 in Canada. U.S. hospitals spent US\$315 per patient on administration, while Canadian hospitals spent US\$103.

Source: *National Post*, August 21, 2003

Teacher unprotected in Georgia

by Carol Rea

Itaught in the public school system in the southern U.S. state of Georgia last year. I'd decided that, because it would be for only one year, I wouldn't get emotionally caught up in the politics of the system; I had none of myself invested in that system, as I had here in B.C. after 40 years of teaching.

My beliefs regarding professional choice and treatment were challenged daily.

I soon discovered that I was unable to remain aloof from a system that, to my mind, dishonoured both teachers and students. The system harmed students in the way the curriculum was laid out, the methodology required of teachers, and the structure of the day. But that is all fodder for another article. In this space, I would like to address teaching in a system that does not allow unions and where the two existing professional organizations have no power to protect teachers.

My beliefs regarding professional choice and treatment were challenged daily. I'd like to enumerate the many abuses that I railed at in the system. The fact that they are abuses came as a surprise to many of my colleagues who know no other way. Here I've compiled a list of those challenging conditions that have remained uppermost in my mind:

- All teachers and para-pros (assistants) are required to do supervision duties before and after school, often up to 60 minutes a day.

- Children begin arriving at school at 7:10 a.m., stay in vehicles until 7:20 a.m., then enter the school to sit in grade-level rows on the gym floor with the P.E. teachers supervising.

- Teachers are required to start work in their classrooms at 7:30 a.m. to supervise students who arrive at school. Teachers must provide students with work until school starts, at 8:00 a.m.

- Teachers are not allowed to leave classrooms at any time for any reason unless they enlist the help of another adult. If the only person available is another teacher, that teacher has to float between the two classrooms. (I met one Canadian teacher who for the first few months took her whole class to the washroom with her when she needed to use it.)

- Because there are no scheduled recesses, if a teacher incorporates a recess into the class schedule, the teacher is responsible for supervising the students.

- Teachers are told at the beginning of the year that they are not to sit and converse with other adults while outside with classes.

- The lunch period of 25 minutes is shortened for teachers by the need to accompany students to and from classroom to lunchroom. Often administrators inform teachers early in the day, via the intercom, that there are no assistants available in the lunchroom and teachers are instructed to eat with their classes, effectively denying teachers any free time at all at lunch.

- Teachers ostensibly have daily planning blocks when students go to "specials"—gym, music, computer, library, and guidance. However, in reality, on one day every two weeks, a teacher doesn't get a block but receives two on an alternate day.

- When teachers of library and counselling are absent, no

substitutes are provided, and the teacher's planning time is cancelled.

- Teachers are instructed to use their planning blocks for grade-level meetings—three 15 minute meetings per week. The meetings are to be documented, listing those present and the ideas discussed, and then the minutes are handed in to an administrator. The meetings can't take place after school even if the grade-level team agrees to meet then. Administrators also want to be informed ahead of time about all meetings so that they can attend if they choose.

The lunch period of 25 minutes is shortened for teachers by the need to accompany students to and from classroom to lunchroom.

- TOCs are usually mothers of children in the school who are looking for part-time work. They are not teachers so they are given a couple of workshop hours on classroom management and school routines and allowed to spend several days wandering in and out of classrooms observing.

- At the beginning of each week teachers have to hand in copies of weekly lesson plans to

an administrator. At the end of the school year, teachers then hand in their completed plan and mark books, along with checklists of the curriculum objectives met.

- Teachers attend scheduled weekly after-school staff meetings. Many times, even as late as after teachers are outside on after-school car duty, they find that other meetings have been called.

- Teachers sign in to indicate attendance at all meetings. If in-service meetings are missed, teachers are required to make up the time during the summer months.

- Teachers keep, and hand in at the end of the school year, a complete list of all in-service hours they have attended, and that list has to total a certain number of hours for the year, or it has to be supplemented during the summer.

- Teachers attend every monthly evening PTA meeting, with attendance noted by administrators and parents.

The administrators of the school to which I was assigned were able to bully teachers on the staff because there was no organization to support teachers and monitor administrative behaviour. The only black teacher in the school was the recipient of much of that bullying. For the first three months, nearly every day, she was called to the office because of parental complaints or phone calls. The administrators did not take time to determine whether the complaints (about such

things as using cursive writing on her Grade 4 blackboard, asking the students to call her by her name rather than ma'am, questioning the fairness of the duty schedule, planning grade-level field trips) were well founded. Many of the things she was called on the carpet for, I was doing in my classroom down the hall. She wouldn't, however, allow me to accompany her to the administrator's office for fear of losing her job.

Teachers at this school were told that they could "walk" if they questioned administrators' decisions or plans on such

I realized how fortunate I had been to work in a system where the teachers could strive for optimal teaching and learning conditions through strong collective agreements.

things as the delivery of learning assistance and the regrouping of students to accommodate it. Input was sought from only a select group of preferred teachers. That led to the active encouragement of teachers to tattle on one another; yet, in April, all were asked to vote for the school's *Teacher of the Year*, an honour celebrated at a school assembly and through the use of a specially labelled parking spot right in front of the school!

What did I learn from my year in Georgia? I reaffirmed my belief that good teaching conditions need to be protected and that teachers need a strong union to be able to do that. I realized how fortunate I had been to work in a system where the teachers could strive for optimal teaching and learning conditions through strong collective agreements. And I learned how crucial it is to remain vigilant.

Carol Rea is a retired teacher from Howe Sound.

Quelle est votre culture de l'évaluation ?

by Paule Desgroseilliers

D'abord, précisons ce qu'on entend par culture de l'évaluation. *Vie pédagogique* nous propose la définition suivante : « C'est le fait d'examiner en équipe les résultats des élèves, de s'interroger sur les facteurs qui les ont conditionnés, de formuler des hypothèses d'action, de les réajuster en cours de route et même de dégager de cette activité systématique ses propres besoins de perfectionnement... » (2002)

L'évaluation est une réflexion sur l'effort et l'habileté de l'élève et permet à l'enseignant de questionner sa pratique pédagogique. L'enseignant a-t-il utilisé les stratégies les plus efficaces pour évaluer le progrès de chacun des élèves ; a-t-il présenté une gamme de stratégies pour rejoindre les différents styles d'apprentissage et les intelligences multiples ? L'enseignant a-t-il accordé assez de temps pour permettre à tous les élèves de pratiquer les nouvelles compétences afin d'assurer la réussite de tous et chacun ? Voilà quelques questions à se poser en début d'année scolaire au moment de la planification et à reprendre à la suite de la première évaluation formelle de l'année. Les réponses à ces questions permettront de faire un retour sur ses instruments de mesure, de prendre conscience de certaines lacunes et d'identifier

les moyens à sa disposition pour se perfectionner.

L'impact de l'évaluation est énorme. C'est une pression de plus qu'on ajoute aux élèves. Ces derniers perçoivent leurs notes comme un jugement de qui ils sont et celles-ci contribuent à l'image qu'ils ont d'eux-mêmes. Pour certains, les notes stimulent vers une plus grande concentration tandis que pour d'autres, les notes deviennent un outil de désespoir surtout s'ils ont mis beaucoup d'effort. De là le besoin de bien connaître ses élèves et de bien réfléchir aux commentaires émis lors des évaluations. Dans certains cas, les notes peuvent devenir un outil de harcèlement si celles-ci sont affichées ou annoncées à toute la classe.

Pour les parents, les notes sont une indication du progrès de leur enfant et certains, qu'on le veuille ou non, les utilisent pour comparer. Pourquoi, alors, ne pas offrir une séance d'information aux parents en début d'année pour clarifier le



What is your evaluation culture?

First, let us define what we mean by an evaluation culture in a school. *Vie pédagogique*, an educational magazine published for teachers in Québec, offers the following definition: It is the examination by teams of colleagues of students' results, the inquiry into the factors that have contributed to those results, the articulation of hypotheses for follow-up action, and the subsequent realignment of those actions. This systematic process often leads to the recognition of professional needs in the area of evaluation... (2002, free translation)

An evaluation is a reflection on the effort and ability of a student, and at the same time, it allows the teacher to question his or her practice. Were the most efficient strategies used to evaluate the progress of each student? Were various strategies offered to meet the different learning styles and the multiple intelligences? Was each student given enough time to practise the new skills in order to be successful? These are only some of the questions teachers need to consider when planning an instructional unit and when reflecting on the attainment of learning outcomes after a formal reporting period. Answers to these questions provide an opportunity to examine selected assessment tools, to recognize certain shortfalls, and to identify ways to hone assessment and evaluation skills.

Students view evaluation as an additional pressure imposed

on them. Marks contribute to students' self-image for they see their results as a judgment on who they are. Therefore, it is crucial to know one's students and to be very thoughtful of comments included in formal and informal reports. For some students, marks are an incentive to work harder; for others, marks are a weapon of despair especially if they have put great effort into their school work. In certain instances, when marks are posted or announced in class, some students use them to harass their peers.

Teachers hope that parents will view marks as an indication of the progress of their child and avoid using them to compare their child with other students. An information session for parents at the beginning of the school year to explain the purpose of different assessment and evaluation tools is always beneficial. Too many parents overrate the results of tests and exams and underestimate the value of other assessment tools such as projects, manual work, observation, and self-evaluation.

but et les objectifs des différents instruments d'évaluation. De nombreux parents ne valorisent que les résultats d'examens ou de tests et accordent moins d'importance aux instruments tels que les projets, les travaux manuels, l'observation et l'autoévaluation.

L'évaluation est une obligation professionnelle. Chaque enseignant est responsable du résultat de ses élèves. Cependant, il faut tenir compte de la réalité du milieu dans lequel on travaille et des facteurs externes qui influent sur l'apprentissage. De là l'importance d'avoir une équipe-école qui vise le même but : bien encadrer chaque élève afin d'assurer la réussite scolaire.

L'enseignant a une tâche complexe par rapport à l'évaluation : planifier ce processus éducatif et ensuite juger ce processus. C'est lui qui prépare les instruments d'évaluation et qui détermine la note. De ce fait, il est bon de se rappeler la portée de ses compétences en matière d'évaluation et en même temps les limites de ses compétences. De ces limites surgit le besoin de développer une analyse réflexive de sa pratique et de permettre à d'autres de questionner une pratique d'évaluation qui s'éloigne des référentiels qui guident la pédagogie courante. Le processus d'évaluation, c'est rendre compte à d'autres, mais c'est aussi rendre compte à soi-même.

Assessing and evaluating is a professional obligation. Each teacher is responsible for the results of his or her students. Having said that, a teacher needs to consider the reality of the social milieu of the school as well as other external factors that can influence learning in that particular environment (thus the importance of having a school team that shares a common goal: to structure learning in such a way that success is within reach for every child).

When teachers evaluate, they undertake a complex task: not only do they plan the educational process but they also judge the process. The teacher selects the methods of assessment and evaluation and determines the mark. It is important to remember the scope of one's assessment and evaluation skills as well as one's limitations in this regard. Cognizant of these limitations, a teacher will want to reflect on his or her assessment and evaluation practices and allow others to question a particular practice distant from current pedagogy. After all, the evaluation process means not only being accountable to students, parents, and the school system but also being accountable to oneself as a professional.

Paule Desgroseilliers is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division (French Programs & Services).

Yours for the asking

HeartSmart Kids

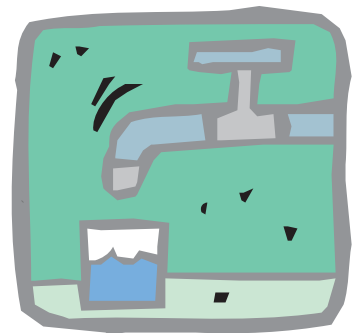
This Heart and Stroke Foundation curriculum program is approved by the Ministry of Education in the Grade Collection for Personal Planning. The HeartSmart Kids *K-3/bc.tobaccofacts* and 4-6 programs encourage children to make heart-healthy lifestyle choices in a fun, challenging, and engaging way within the main areas of heart facts, nutrition, active living, and being smoke-free. This free two-hour interactive workshop gives teachers with the opportunity to explore their own heart health and discover how to get the most out of the program for their students. Program materials are distributed at the workshop. The HeartSmart Kids programs are FREE and available in English and French.

Contact Victoria Hozeph, 604-730-7364, 1-888-473-4636 (toll free), F: 604-736-8732, vhozeph@hsf.bc.ca

cuts and a teacher's guide. Materials in the kit are suitable for Grade 9-12, and some teachers have suggested that it is suitable for Grade 7-8 students too.

The educational kit is available in English or French for \$40/kit plus provincial and federal taxes. The fee is a cost-recovery price for MSF.

To order, send a money order or cheque to Director of Communications, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, A Refugee Camp in the City, 720 Spadina Avenue, Ste. 402, Toronto, ON M5S 2T9, www.msf.ca



Mission Nutrition* kits

This program supports teachers with curriculum-based lesson plans full of entertaining ways to explore healthy living habits with students. The new space-themed program takes students on adventures with the intergalactic Mission Nutrition* team.

The kits are free of charge and easy to order by visiting www.missionnutrition.ca or by calling toll free 1-888-453-6374.

A refugee camp in the city

In 2001, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada (MSF), Doctors Without Borders, sponsored a travelling exhibition, *A Refugee Camp in the City*, which was so popular that it was fully booked in most cities it visited. Many Canadian youth were unable to visit and experience refugee life in this unforgettable reproduction of an authentic refugee camp. MSF has developed an extension of the camp, in the format of an education kit for high school students.

It includes one video with four

Our water

Catalysta's *Our Water* combines multidisciplinary content and project-based learning to investigate the many social and environmental challenges water holds for humanity. Offered in 10 phases, *Our Water* integrates with most disciplines, not only the sciences, but the arts and humanities as well. *Our Water* presents the works of leading activists, artists, and performers and a framework for hands-on project development. Teaching materials are included.

Our Water is available as a CD-ROM or online between September 2003 and December 2004. For online participants, *Our Water* connects students worldwide for cross-cultural interaction. A limited number of programs are available in North America. Reserve this program for your classroom at www.catalysta.org, or e-mail participation@catalysta.org. Pricing details are also available on the web site.

Catalysta, 307 Prospect Place, Suite 1C, Brooklyn, NY, 11238, 718-398-0584, F: 718-398-9300.

Kidney patients, beware

If you've got serious kidney problems, you're more likely to die if you are treated in a private for-profit facility than if you are treated in a not-for-profit clinic.

That's the chilling conclusion of an article published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The report analyzed eight previously published studies involving more than half a million patients. The article disclosed that the death rate is eight per cent higher among patients in for-profit facilities.

Part of the reason seems to be that for-profit dialysis clinics often use technicians rather than registered nurses, and patients often spend shorter amounts of time during each dialysis treatment.

The study suggests that if Canada were to privatize its dialysis clinics, 150 more patients would die each year.

"For-profit healthcare providers cut corners and that drives up the death rate," said

Dr. P.J. Devereaux, who headed the study.

— SUNSpots/SUN/CALM

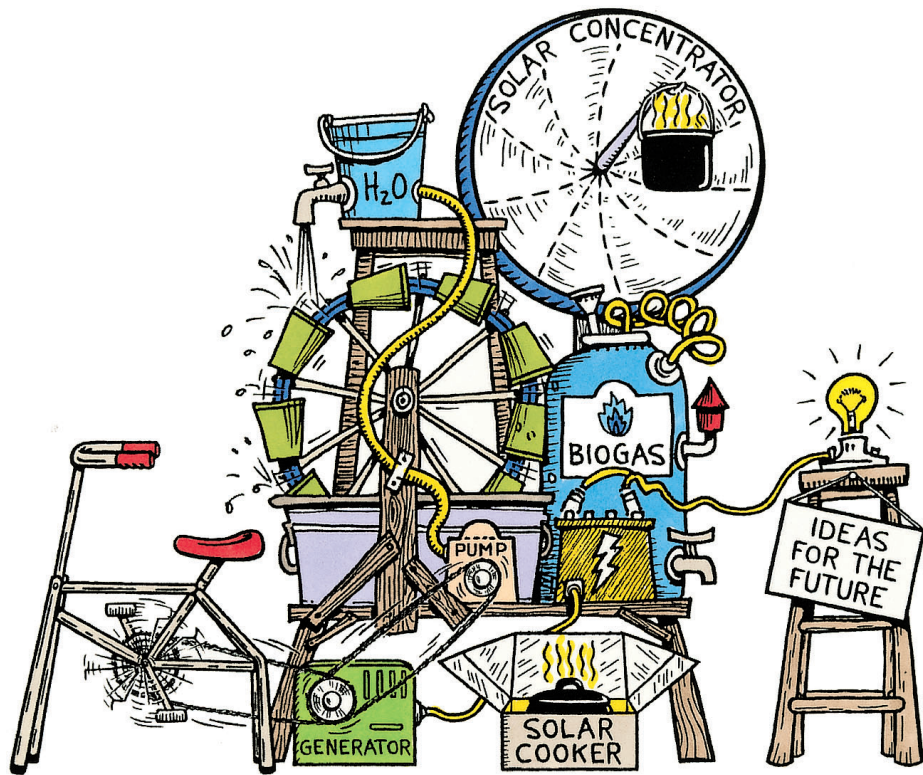
Give us the money, or else

Diagnosticare, an Alberta-based company that says it owns 120 private clinics in Ontario, last year demanded that three small towns in eastern Ontario provide subsidies to increase the clinics' profit margin to 23%, or the clinics would close.

According to the Canadian Association of Radiologists, they got \$12 million from the Ontario Government and closed the clinics anyway.

— SUNSpots/SUN/CALM





STEP into appropriate technology this fall

Imagine that a class at your local high school has been asked to work with a group of youth in Central America. Their challenge is to design and develop a prototype solar cooker capable of cooking daily meals for a family of six, using only the sun's energy. The device must be reliable, simple to build and repair, made with recycled materials, non-polluting, and appropriate for women in the community to use within their limited time. What a great way to learn about global citizenship, international development, and the wider issues such as technology, poverty, health and nutrition, and the global cooking-fuel crisis.

Such a challenge is a new learning resource, *Appropriate Technology for a Sustainable Future*, which helps teachers incorporate global perspectives

into their curriculum through a focus on the use of low-tech or appropriate technology as a solution to social and environmental problems in developing countries as well as here in Canada. The resource, available as a 48-page booklet, and on the internet at www.videa.ca/step1, includes curriculum connections to the technology-education IRPs and is also of interest for other subjects, such as social studies and science.

Appropriate Technology for a Sustainable Future is the first in a series of curriculum guides on sustainable technology that aims to engage students and teachers in global issues, encouraging them to become informed and involved global citizens.

The guide was produced by the Sustainable Technology Education Project, Phase 1

(STEP-1), a partnership between The Victoria International Development Education Association (VIDEA); The GAIA Project, a partnership between the Sierra Club of B.C. and the Salvadoran Centre for Appropriate Technology (CESTA); and John Eckfeldt, technology education teacher.

Funding for the project was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the BCTF's Global Education Fund; Ed May Social Responsibility Education Fund, Provincial Initiatives grant, and a local social justice grant.

Copies of this and other curriculum resources on global issues are available online at www.videa.ca or from VIDEA, at 250-385 2333.



The Appropriate Technology for a Sustainable Future learning resource helps teachers incorporate global perspectives into their curriculum through a focus on the use of low-tech solutions such as a bike-driven water pump or solar-powered ovens.

Defining summer

by Glynis McGarva

When people learn I am a teacher, I hear the refrain, "Two months off—must be nice!" Although I smile and nod, the comment is always hard to swallow. Yes, I do have two months away from my normal routine each year, but it's hard to consider it time off.

For one thing, I am not paid for July and August. For another, I doubt that I could keep up to the demands of interacting with over 75 students each school day without some time to recuperate and rejuvenate.

The two months go by quickly. I barely make a dent in the endless list of projects saved for summer. Instead, enjoying solitude and quiet find their way to the top of my priority list, edging out all busywork. And this summer, like many others, my entire "time off" became defined by three specific days. They are what I will really remember.

On a trip to Oregon in our truck and camper, my husband and I came across a spot where time stood still, and summer happened for me. A three-hour

drive from Portland, high in the semi-arid pine country of central Oregon, runs the Metolius River.

Rustic old cabins and spacious, wild campgrounds line the pristine spring-fed river. Quiet, except for the soft running of the river, abounds. The middle of the afternoon invites nothing more than napping in a hammock.

Narrow worn trails line the river for miles, and visitors gather in the afternoon at the general store. Gallons of ice cream and countless bottles of chilled wine are the mainstays as visitors head back to their cabins and campsites for the evening. Sitting on the banks of the Metolius, watching the deer graze for soft shoots at the water's edge and seeing the odd person flyfishing, is bliss.

Three days of camping truly made summer for me. I know that in the school year ahead, when it is dark before I reach home, pleasant thoughts of the Metolius River will be with me. Perhaps we can return next year. After all, two months off—sure is nice!

Glynis McGarva teaches at S.J. Willis Alternative Education, Victoria.



(Top) McGarva with her dog, Jackson, on the grassy banks of the Metolius River. (Bottom) Swinging seat invites visitors to enjoy the picturesque and peaceful river.

BCTF launches court challenge to Liberal takeover of College

We are using the highest law in the land to challenge Bill 51. After broad consultation with members, the BCTF launched its constitutional challenge in early July 2003.

"Teachers are united in the belief that we need to use all means to defend our rights as professionals and to protect the college from being completely politicized by government appointees," said BCTF President Neil Worboys.

BCTF has retained constitutional law expert Joseph Arvay, of the firm Arvay Finlay, to bring the challenge. Arvay is the lawyer who successfully represented the teachers in the Surrey book-banning case at the Supreme Court of Canada.

He explained that the challenge is being brought forward on the grounds that Bill 51 violates teachers' rights of freedom of association, freedom of expression, and liberty and security of the person.

The teachers' challenge states that Bill 51 also is unconstitutional because it requires teachers to divulge information that has been given to them in confidence and in some respects is even privileged at law, irrespective of the nature of professional misconduct at issue. A trial date is expected to be set for November 2003.

Bill 51 is the third round of Liberal legislation targeting teachers. It comes on the heels of Bills 27 & 28, which stripped teachers of hard-won collective-bargaining rights, and Bill 18, which imposed essential-service designation and limited teachers' right to strike.

"The teachers of B.C. have always worked to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct and expertise, and we will continue to do so," Worboys said. "We're confident that the Supreme Court will agree that we ought to continue as a self-regulating profession."

— Nancy Knickerbocker

10 New BCTF lesson aids

1 LA 2526 Imag1Nations: Exploring Personal, Cultural and National Identity Through the Arts. Barbara Cooper and Carolyn Elliot 11p. and 7 colour posters (30.5 cm x 45.5 cm) ©2003. This package shares lesson plans and illustrative examples of successful student art-based projects that explore the themes of personal, cultural and national identity. Includes a brief overview of the Imag1Nations project (honoured by the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence), and workshop contact and funding assistance information. Grades 4–12. **\$25**

2 LA 8082 Take It to Your Seat Centers—Literacy Centers, Grades K-1. Produced by Evan-Moor Educational Publishers 192p. ©2003. This book includes step-by-step teacher directions for making and using 12 centers to practice beginning reading skills, full-colour patterns to construct the centers and full-colour and reproducible student task cards. (The book is published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards.) Grades K-1. **\$19.95**

3 LA 8206 My First Map Book. Kelly Dixon 32p. ©2002 This fun-filled activity book uses animals and fairy tales to teach map skills. It introduces beginning readers to four fundamental mapping concepts: shape, symbols, position, and direction. Three concepts are taught using age-appropriate activities. Includes blackline masters. Grades K-2 **\$14.95**

4 LA 9139 Spelling: Moving Beyond Word Memorization by Jon Wheatley 79p. ©2002. This spelling program was written to teach late intermediate and middle school students to become consciously aware of how to effectively use spelling strategies and language patterns. It is an instructional approach that has gradually emerged from classroom teachings, through workshops and discussions with colleagues. Grades 6–8 **\$7.95**

5 LA 9141 Independent Minds, Independent Readers by Maryam Moayeri, 235p. ©2003. An educational resource for a student-centred reading program. Encourages reading by providing teachers with a large selection of book tests and answer keys that can be used to check on completion and comprehension of selected novels. The readability ranges from Grade 4 to university level to meet teachers' increasing challenge of stimulating students' different intellectual needs. Grades 5–12. **\$21.95**

6 LA 9770 Step Lively 3: Primary Dances. Marian Rose, 56p. book and 60-minute CD, ©2003. Includes a lively collection of 28 dances and singing games for use in the primary classroom, a glossary, dance formations and tips for teachers. Some of the dances are traditional, some are adaptations, and some are created by the author to teach specific folk dance skills. Grades K-3. **\$39.95**

7 LA 2098 The Challenge of Change by The Canadian Agriculture and Food Industry, 65p. ©2001. The focus of this learning resource is the changes in today's agriculture and food production. Includes 12 activities based on three themes—the environment, technology, and the economy. Suitable for teachers of social studies, science, technology, family studies and geography. Grades 7–10. **\$8**

8 LA 2066 Immigration in 20th Century Canada. The eight critical thinking challenges in this unit explore the historical and contemporary treatment of immigrant groups. After researching the most positive immigration stories in their own family histories, students analyze the uneven reception of immigrant groups from the early Europeans to present-day "economic" refugees. Students review hypothetical applicants to determine who to accept as landed immigrants, critique the current points system, establish an immigration quota and send a letter to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, presenting a balanced position on a topical issue. Grade 11. **\$15**

9 LA 1003 Media Connections: Learning about Balanced Relationships Using Systems Thinking. Holly Keon, 135p. ©2003. This unit is about media connections and balanced relationships and was developed to encourage synthesis, balance and harmony in life. The lessons in this unit are set up to enable students to provide the teacher with evidence that they have "learned" the concepts or skills taught. The lessons can provide increased self-awareness and potentially more poignant pieces for media arts students. Includes seven topics, unit rational, assessment, unit plan, prescribed learning outcomes for Grades 8–11, key concepts, presentations and field trips, setting up the unit, blackline masters, resource lists. Grades 8–12. **\$10**

10 LA 9970 Connecting Kids: Exploring Diversity Together. Linda D. Hill, 186p. ©2001. Designed to be an educational, inspirational, practical and fun guidebook to show how to guide children from different backgrounds to include each other in an atmosphere of safety, equality, choice and fun. A practical guidebook for anyone seeking to build community and connections between children of different ages, abilities and cultures. K-12. **\$31.95**

Many curriculum resources and information are available at www.bcalmer.ca/.

For a complete listing of over 1000 BCTF Lesson Aids, consult the catalogue in your school library or the Lesson Aids online catalogue. 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.

Managing your pension assets

Purchasing a leave of absence (Teachers' Pension Plan rules)

This is important information for:

1. young pension-plan members who have taken or may take a leave of absence.
2. members who have had a maternity or parental leave of absence.
3. older members who may retire before March 31, 2007.

What is a leave of absence?

A leave of absence is an employer-approved absence from work. A leave can be with full pay, with partial pay, or without pay. During a leave with full pay, you accumulate pensionable and contributory service as if you had continued to work. During a leave of absence with less than full pay, your contributions and pensionable service are reduced in proportion to your salary. For example, if you receive half your regular pay during a leave, you accumulate half the pensionable service but full contributory service.

During a leave without pay, you do not receive pensionable or contributory service.

If you purchase the unpaid leave, you will receive the pensionable and contributory service you would have received had you not taken the leave. This will increase your future pension benefits.

What are the different leaves?

Maternity leaves that ended on or after March 14, 1981, are eligible for purchase. Only the birth mother can purchase this type of leave.

Parental/adoption leaves that ended on or after March 22, 1991, are eligible for purchase. Birth mothers, fathers, and adoptive parents can purchase these leaves.

The maximum service you can purchase for maternity, parental, and adoption leaves is three years, with each term not to exceed one year from your child's birth or adoption date. You must show your child's birth certificate or adoption papers to your employer.

General leaves are leaves that you took for any reason other than those listed above, including extended maternity and parental leaves. You can purchase a maximum of five cumulative years for general leaves completed after December 31, 1991. There is no limit for purchase of leaves of

absence completed before December 31, 1991.

When can I purchase a leave?

- You must apply to purchase leaves that ended before April 1, 2002, by March 31, 2007, and while an active member.
- You must apply to purchase leaves that end on or after April 1, 2002, within five years of the end of the leave period or before you terminate your current employment, whichever occurs first.
- You may apply to purchase a current leave of absence during the leave.

Can I purchase periods of reduced pay (part-time work with part-time leave)?

If you work at less than your full assignment for a time, you may be eligible to purchase the difference between your full assignment and the amount you worked as a leave of absence. If you think this applies to you, contact your employer.

How do I apply to purchase a leave?

Fill out a Purchase of Service Application form (available from the website at pensionsbc.ca or from your employer). The application form has a calculation on the back that shows you how to estimate the cost of the leave. Alternatively, you may use the *Purchase of Service Cost Estimator* on the web site and print the estimate and attach it to your application form. Your employer must certify that the leave was an approved leave by signing the *Purchase of Service Application*. You must purchase the full leave period, unless the purchase will cause you to accrue more than 35 years of pensionable service. In such a case, you may be able to purchase a portion of the leave. If you do not plan to return to work after your leave ends, you can purchase the leave provided you apply before the end of the leave period. Use the *Personalized Pension Estimator* on the web site to show the effect on your pension of purchasing leaves of absence.

How is the cost calculated?

The cost of a leave of absence is based on your current salary multiplied by the length of the

leave period multiplied by:

- the current employee contribution rate (for maternity, parental, and adoption leaves for periods allowed under the Employment Standards Act), or
- the current employee and employer contribution rates (for general leaves or extended maternity, parental, or adoption leaves).

You will receive a statement from the pension plan outlining the cost, which you must pay by the due date on the statement in a single payment. You may pay by RRSP transfer, personal cheque, or a combination. A new calculation will be required if payment is not received by the due date.

You will receive a tax receipt if payment is made by other than RRSP transfer.

The *Purchase of Service Cost Estimator* on the web site gives you an estimate of the cost, which can then be printed and used as an application form.

Does purchasing service affect my RRSP contribution room?

For service after 1989, you need enough RRSP contribution room to allow the purchase. If this is applicable to you, the plan will send you a Past Service Pension Adjustment (PSPA) worksheet so you can determine if you have enough RRSP contribution room or PSPA over contribution room. If you wish to pay for any or all of your leaves of absence by cash, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency must certify that you have enough RRSP room or PSPA overcontribution room. If not, you will have to pay for your reinstatement by RRSP transfer. Only RRSPs that are in your name can be transferred for leave of absence payment. You may want to discuss with a qualified financial advisor how purchasing a leave will affect your situation.

If you purchase the leave prior to April 30 following the leave, you may pay by cash or RRSP. In this case, you do not need to have the purchase certified by Canada customs and Revenue Agency.

Calculating the cost benefit

First, use the online *Purchase of Service Cost Estimator* to get an estimate of the cost of the leave of absence (this estimate

Project Overseas

Sponsored jointly by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member organizations

Each year about 50 Canadian teachers are chosen to work, **without salary**, in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia to improve teaching skills and strengthen professional teacher organizations.

Requirements: Membership in a CTF member organization, an appropriate teacher's certificate, a minimum of five years teaching experience in Canada, Canadian citizenship, excellent health, evidence of flexibility and mature judgment.

CTF requires teachers for **Project Overseas**, July & August 2004 in English- & French-speaking countries.

Deadline: NOVEMBER 28, 2003

Information & applications: Leona Dolan

B.C. Teachers' Federation

604-871-2250, toll free 1-800-663-9163, Fax 604-871-2294

ldolan@bctf.ca

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may also be used as the application form), or use the estimate from the back of the Purchase of Service Application form.

Then, using the Personalized Pension Estimator the information from your most recent Members Benefit Statement will be provided so you can calculate a pension estimate for a specific retirement date.

Finally, go back and increase the pensionable and contributory service by the amount of each service that is being purchased, and recalculate your pension for the same retirement date.

This will give you the increase in your monthly pension due to the purchase of the leave of absence. Compare the increase in the monthly pension to the cost of the purchase. Divide the cost of the purchase by the increase in the monthly pension to determine the number of months it will take to recover your purchase cost.

Maternity and Parental Adoption leaves are always cost effective, as the employer pays its share of the contributions.

Contact Information

Teachers' Pension Plan
PO Box 9465 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC, V8W 9V8
Victoria: (250) 953-3022
Vancouver: 604-660-4088
Toll free: 1-800-665-6770
Fax: (250) 356-8977
Web site: www.pensionsbc.ca
E-mail: TPP.PensionCorp@pensionsbc.ca

BCTF
Income Security
100-550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
Vancouver: 604-871-1921
Toll free 1-800-663-9163
Web site:
www.bctf.ca/pensions/
E-mail: alambert@bctf.ca,
lwerklund@bctf.ca, or
dlauber@bctf.ca

— Dale Lauber, with extracts from Pensionfacts by the TPP

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 bctf.ca/pensions/salary/LT-WithdrawalForm.shtml to the BCTF Income Security Division.



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Dynamic Korea Essay Contest 2003



Secondary school students, grades 9-13, are invited to research and explore a Korea-related topic of their choice, and then submit an original written work (non-fiction only) in English 3-6 pages long.

Grand Prize: One all-expense paid one-week trip to Korea

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Deadline: October 31st, 2003

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NEW! In schools fall of 2003

The second resource in our Cultivating Peace series, Taking Action, will be delivered free to registered schools across Canada in the fall of 2003.

- Taking Action contains ready-to-use activities that encourage youth to recognize the power of their individual attitudes, behaviours and actions in supporting a culture of violence or building a culture of peace.
- Lessons are complete with student materials, full teacher instructions and suggestions for evaluation. Resources are aligned with grade 10-12 provincial Social Science, Civics and History curricula across Canada.

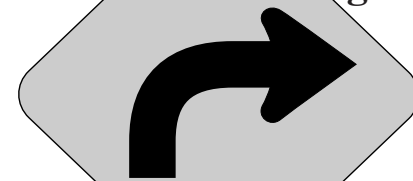
To get information, order resources, check school registration status or request an advance electronic copy of Taking Action, please contact us at info@classroomconnections.ca or 1-888-882-8865.

To find out more visit, www.cultivatingpeace.ca.



The Cultivating Peace project is an initiative of Classroom Connections, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting public education in Canada. www.classroomconnections.ca

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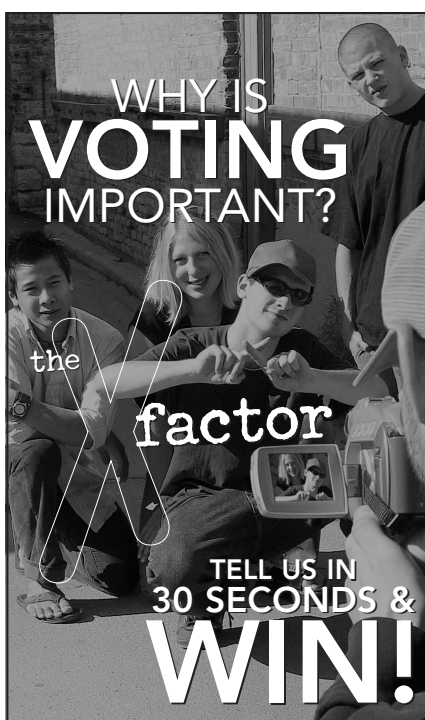
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OCTOBER 2003

9 Vancouver. Free Teacher Evening at Science World, 6:30-9:00 p.m., to preview exhibits, films, and programs. A tour of the galleries will include the featured exhibit, The Geeel in Genome, as well as a screening of Whales and Top Speed in the Omnimax Theatre. Food will be provided by WhiteSpot. To register, call 604-443-7500.

15–18 Toronto. Ontario Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference, The Art and Soul of Teaching: An International Conference Supporting Communities That Learn, International Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre. Contact Jennifer Jilks-Racie, jilks@netrover.com, ascd.ca.

17–19 Victoria. Awakening the Virtues Within: An Introduction to the Virtues Project, with certified facilitator Nancy Watters, Queenswood Retreat Centre. The Virtues Project teaches the simple elements of character honoured by all cultures and spiritual traditions. Learn five skills used world wide in classrooms, homes, and workplaces to reduce conflict and "create a culture of integrity." Contact 1-866-386-0253, p/f: 250-746-3626, info@VirtuesConsulting.com, VirtuesConsulting.com/registration.html.

18 Burnaby. Exchange Teachers' Orientation, 12:30-4 p.m., Schou Centre. \$10 per family. Contact Terri Maltais, 604-463-6621, tmaltais@telus.net. For Vancouver Island Orientation, October 19, contact Lenor Stieda, 250-652-0428, roleregiro@pacificcoast.net.

18–November 9, Coquitlam. Weekends, Emotions at Work, equip yourself to eliminate conflict. 30-hour emotions management course on the nine families of interconnected emotions (including shame) responding to developing legislation and calls to address workplace conflict and violence with accompanying costs from distress, depressions, and burnout. Contact Rose Marie Borutski. 604-931-1834, info@emotionliteracy.com, www.emotionliteracy.com.

23–24 Surrey. 23-24 Surrey. Computer-Using Educators of B.C. (CUEBC) Horizons/B.C. Business Education Association (BCBEA) Joint Conference, Two Towers in Education, Guildford Park Secondary School. Specific software applications, learning online, effective use of existing technology, and innovations with technology, for all teachers. Contact cuebchorizons.ca/fallconference.html.

23–25 Richmond. l'Association Provinciale des Professeurs d'Immersion et du Programme francophone de la Colom-

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bie-Britannique (APPIPC), with ACPI, Français Nouvelle Vague à la mode du Pacifique, Executive Airport Plaza Hotel. Contact Anne Louise McFarland, almcfarland@shaw.ca, acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca/colloque2003.

23–25 Whistler. B.C. Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT) Northwest Math Conference, Mathematics: A Peak Experience, Fairmont Chateau Whistler Resort, Delta Whistler Resort, and Whistler Convention Centre. Contact Ian deGroot, idegroot@shaw.ca.

24 New Westminster. Physical Education PSA (PEPSA) Conference, Douglas College.

24 North Vancouver. B.C. Dance Educators' Association (BCDEA) Conference. Carson Graham. Contact Judy Herridge, judy-g@telus.net.

24 Burnaby. Environmental Educators' PSA (EEPSA) Conference, SFU. Contact Nichole Marples, marplesn@yahoo.ca, or David ZandVliet, dbz@sfu.ca, bctf/ca/eepsa.

24 Burnaby. B.C. Technology Education Association (BCTEA) Conference, Cariboo Hill Secondary School Contact Mike Coutts, mcoutts@cariboo.sd41.bc.ca.

24 New Westminster. 16th Annual Teachers' Conference, Professional and Personal Development, K–12, Phys Ed, Wellness, Personal Growth, co-sponsored by Douglas College and the Physical Education Provincial Specialist Association (PEPSA), Douglas College and various off-campus locations, 8:45 a.m.–2:15 p.m. \$100. Contact Denise Rutherford, 604-527-5492, d_rutherford@douglas.bc.ca.

24 Richmond. B.C. Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML) Conference 2003, Learning Languages Opens Doors, Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel. Contact Dinah Lewis, 8438 East Boulevard, Vancouver, BC V6P 6N7, p/f: 604-732-7010, bctf.ca/bcatml.

24 Vancouver. B.C. Co-operative Learning Association (BCCLA) Conference, with Spencer Kagan, Vancouver Central Library. \$75. Contact Kim Latval, 604-533-5334, latval@telus.net or klatval@sd35.bc.ca.

24 Richmond. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA) Conference, with Deborah Butler, Successful Intervention for Children and Adolescents with Learning Disabilities, Vancouver Airport Marriott. Contact Brenda Bell, bellbg@shaw.ca.

24 Vancouver. Joint Conference of Educators Against Racism (EAR) and English as a Second Language PSA (ESLPSA), A Kaleidoscope of Learning, John Oliver Secondary School. Contact Jo-Anne Preston, 250-337-5730, f: 250-923-3625, jo-anne.preston@crn.net, bctf.ca/psas/ESLPSA.

24 Richmond. Association for Educators of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children in B.C. presents Gifted Ed 2003, featuring Karen Rogers, Re-Forming Gifted Education, Richmond Inn Hotel & Convention Centre, 7551 Westminster Highway. Contact Dave Halme, 250-748-1955, f: 250-748-5003, dhalme@shaw.ca.

24 Delta. B.C. Teachers of English Language Arts (BCTELA) Conference, Far from the Madding Crowd-Helping Students Dance with Words, North Delta Secondary School. Contact Ilene-Jo Greenberg, s: 604-596-7471, ilenejoand-joel@shaw.ca.

24 Burnaby. B.C. Social Studies Teachers' Association (BCSSTA) Fall Conference, Teaching Global Issues in Troubling Times, featuring Ian Hanomansing (CBC news commentator) and Lloyd Axworthy (Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues, UBC), Moscrop Secondary School. Contact Ellen Ellis, ellenellis@shaw.ca, conference@bcssta.ca, www.bcssta.ca.

24–25 Mission. Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association (THESA) Conference, Mission Possible, Heritage Park Secondary School. Contact Susan Armstrong, f: 604-820-4589, susan.armstrong@sd75.mission.bc.ca.

24–25 Richmond. B.C. Primary Teachers' Association (BCPTA) Fall Leadership Conference, keynote address by Regie Routman, Reading Essentials, Vancouver Airport Conference Resort. \$150 for BCPTA members. Miniconference component for teachers new to primary, Brain-Based Learning and Teaching, with Joy Paquin and Colleen Politano, \$60; students and TOCs \$40. Contact BCPTA conference registrar (tel/fax/message) 604-540-8309, www.bctf.ca/bcpta.

24–25 Victoria. Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association (PITA) Fall Conference, for Grades 4 to 9 teachers, Spectrum Secondary and Marigold Elementary schools. Contact Sandra McAulay,

smcaulay@shaw.ca, or Gary Garraway, gpgarraway@shaw.ca. Registrar: Carol Tirk, f: 250-443-3063, 1-877-733-7482, ctirk@sunshinecable.com, pita.bc.ca.

24–25 . B.C. School Counsellors' Association (BCSCSA) joint conference with B.C. Association of Clinical Counsellors, When the Smoke Clears: Dealing with Grief, Loss, and Trauma, with keynote addresses by Bruce Ramsey and Jessica Easton. Contact Connie Easton, ceaston@sd38.bc.ca, bctf.ca/psas/BCSCSA/conference.html.

24–25 Prince George. B.C. Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA) Conference, Libraries...A Renaissance, with keynote addresses by Monica Coney and Dianne Oberg, Coast Inn of the North. \$145. Contact www.sd57.bc.ca/ren2003.

24–25 Langley. B.C. Teachers for Peace and Global Education (PAGE) Conference Retreat, Hope and Humour in Global Education, Springbrooke Retreat Centre. \$150 includes PAGE membership for those eligible. Contact Beata Hittrich, 604-433-9765, Daniel Shiu, 604-322-7030, or Pummy Kaur, 604-581-2327, pkaur@netrover.com.

24–25 Vancouver. Association of B.C. Drama Educators (ABCDE) Fall Conference, Spellbound!, Lord Byng Secondary School. Registration includes ABCDE membership/subscription and Friday-night dinner. Contact Larry Bauer, lbauer13@hotmail.com, or Robert Morgan, rjpmorgan@hotmail.com.

24–25 Langley. B.C. Culinary Arts Specialist Association (BCCASA) Conference, The Organic Valley Experience, Walnut Grove Secondary School. Members \$125. Guest speaker Lindsay Babineau. Tour of Hazelmere farms, Domainede Chaberton Winery. Hot-air-balloon ride. Contact Dorothy Mufford, 604-534-9300, w: 604-882-0220, dmufford@uniserve.com.

NOVEMBER 2003

1–3 Whistler. Ninth Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education: Best Practices in Aboriginal Education, Whistler Conference and Convention Centre. Workshop proposals accepted until July 11. Contact Jennifer White, 604-925-6087, jenniferw@fnesc.ca.

13–15 Burnaby. TESL Canada/BC TEAL 2003 Conference, Connecting Communities: Inspirations and Aspirations, with Mary Ashworth, Carol Tator, and Rebecca Oxford, The Hilton Vancouver Metrotown. Contact 604-736-6330, f: 604-736-6306, bctéal@telus.net, www.bctéal.org.

JANUARY 2004

15–17 Richmond. Eighth Annual B.C. Student Activity Advisors Conference, Let's Celebrate, for all school leadership advisors, Delta Vancouver Airport. Contact Gloria Solley, 250-477-6945, gloria@bcasaa.bc.ca, www.bcasaa.bc.ca.

22–23 Vancouver. B.C. Alternate Education Association (BCAEA) Challenge and Change Conference. Contact D.J. Pauls, dj_pauls@sd34.bc.ca.

FEBRUARY 2004

12–14 Delta. B.C. Music Educators' Association (BCMEA) Annual Music Conference, Delta 2004—Music Meets the Challenge, Seaquam Secondary School. Keynote speakers are Allan McMurray and Jim Austin. Contact Kathy Fester, kathy@fester.ca.

19–21 Richmond. B.C. Art Teachers' Association (BCATA) Conference, Navigation, three keynote speakers, 60 workshops for primary, intermediate graduation, media, photography, lunches, evening socials, McMath Secondary School. \$150 early-bird registration. Contact Nicole Porter, 604-718-4050, nident@telus.net.

MARCH 2004

11–12 Vancouver. Special Education Association (SEA) Conference, Crosscurrents 2004, keynote address by B.J. Wise (Difficult Students: What's a Teacher To Do?), Westin Bayshore & Conference Centre. Contact Madeline Pohlmann, madelinep@fnesc.bc.ca. Registrar is Liz Sparling, sparw@telus.net.

PSA PD Day—October 22, 2004

Additions/changes? E-mail Debby Stagg, dstagg@bctf.ca

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

IMAGINATIONS: THE SEQUEL

by Barbara Cooper

Collaboration among teachers is a vital element in developing innovative ideas and bringing them to fruition. Two staff members at Fleetwood Park Secondary School, in Surrey, started playing with a concept that eventually grew into a school-wide program called Imag1-Nations. The event relied on staff involvement and decision-making at many stages, from project approval, timelines, curriculum development, use of professional development time, session participation, and involvement at the closing celebration. Collaboration with elementary teachers adds a new dimension to the award-winning project.

Imag1Nations was a unique month-long program in which students explored personal, cultural, and national identity through the arts. First Nations artists, designers, storytellers, writers, and musicians were invited to explain how they incorporate traditional heritage and culture into their contemporary works.

Students then examined their own culture and represented some aspect of it through visual or performing arts, technical design or writing in various curriculum areas.

Students participated in presentations, readings, workshops, demonstrations, and other hands-on activities. Students then examined their own culture and represented some aspect of it through visual or performing arts, technical design or writing in various curriculum areas. Their efforts were showcased in a celebration for the school and the community.

From the display, several works were selected to represent the project as posters in the Imag1Nations package. Rather than provide a recipe for replicating the Imag1Nations project, the project shares examples of outstanding student artwork and provides accompanying stand-alone lesson plans in a variety of subjects to help teachers who are looking for creative ways to introduce and explore cultural diversity and personal identity.

Their efforts were showcased in a celebration for the school and the community.

From discussions with secondary colleagues, as project organizers Carolynn Elliot and I, already knew the posters could be easily applied in a number of



Top: Sacred Circle: Monkeys; Middle: Designing a Button Blanket (composite); Bottom: Sacred Circle: Wolves; ABC of My Family (collage); Self-Portraits (composite)

subjects. Although the selected posters originally were designed for visual arts, information technology, and modern languages, teachers could also see application in social studies and CAPP and in conjunction with English language arts and ESL.

We wondered if the lessons could also be adapted for elementary students. Some teachers at Surrey's Creekside

Elementary School took up the challenge. In laying plans for the coming year, they readily identified numerous ways to connect all the Imag1Nations materials to the elementary curriculum.

Links to social studies were found at every intermediate grade with the posters *Cultural Symbols and Colours*, *Button Blanket*, and *Sacred Circle*. A surprising connection was the

use of *Sacred Circle* with the Grade 7 Early Civilizations unit on Mesopotamia, where the circle was invented. This poster can also be used at the same grade for representing the circle of life in the novel study, *Tuck Everlasting*, and to portray elements of mythology.

Although the *Alphabet Book* project was declared an excellent project for Grade 7 students as it stands, two other

possibilities were identified. It could be used as a natural jumping off point to teach all the things students need to learn in preparation for a "famous people" unit. A cumulative device, it could showcase what students have learned throughout the year about presentation, research, primary source quotations, and so on—a perfect addition for student portfolios.

As expected, the *Self-Portraits* poster is well-suited for introducing basic lessons on portrai-

Teachers working at different levels have much to offer one another...

ture in Grades 3 to 7. In art, students can focus on observation and experimentation with various media; in language arts they can develop descriptive language and identify likenesses, differences, and commonalities. The unexpected link was the application of all these skills to character studies in literature.

Creekside teachers also noted many opportunities to build among students a broader, stronger understanding of their own cultures and to develop closer cultural links with the community. They saw the Imag1Nations package as a vehicle to assist them in achieving one aspect of their school growth plan.

Teachers working at different levels have much to offer one another, especially when developing overarching curricular themes in broad areas like social responsibility and multicultural education. Collaboration that not only includes different grades and/or

Project developers are interested in learning about different ways other teachers used the Imag1Nations materials.

subject areas, but extends to support staff (such as the learning resources team/ESL, the teacher-librarian and multicultural contact person) can provide an even richer source of creativity and co-operation in the pursuit of mutual goals. We thank Chris Barber, Linda Hensel, Pat Milliken, Lakbir Badjwa, and Sonja Inkster for sharing their thoughtful ideas. Project developers are interested in learning about different ways other teachers used the Imag1-Nations materials. E-mail them at imaginationproject@hotmail.com.

The Imag1Nations Package is available from the BCTF Lesson Aids Service (LA #2526). Full details are available in the print and online catalogues. Imag1Nations is a not-for-profit venture.

Barbara Cooper is a retired Surrey teacher.