

# Teacher

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## What have we gained?



*Jinny Sims, BCTF president, welcomes Shirley Bond, minister of education, to the BCTF building December 14, 2005. The minister and ministry officials met with BCTF representatives to discuss class size and composition and other concerns raised by teachers during our withdrawal of services.*

by Peter Owens

**B**efore our job action in October, the government claimed there were no problems in education and conditions in our schools were better than ever. Teachers were expected to accept zero improvements in students' learning conditions and no increase in pay. Teachers' voices were to be ignored or silenced.

By taking a stand and exercising our right to withdraw our services, we brought about a number of positive changes. The government has acknowledged in public that class size and class composition are problems that need to be addressed.

For the very first time, the government collected class-size data for every grade. The government has met at the Learning Round Table to explore solutions to problems teachers are facing in their classrooms. The Minister of Education has visited the BCTF building and met with BCTF representatives to discuss the concerns of teachers.

As well, teachers have developed a more assertive attitude about having input into how decisions are made in their schools. Locals signed off on decisions on spending the \$20 million allocated to the schools to alleviate class-size and composition problems. Teachers also signed off on plans to spend the money provided to the schools because of our strike. Teachers have expressed a sense of ownership over the funds being directed back to our classrooms.

Following is a brief update on some of the benefits that came out of our strike and our

courage to take a stand for public education. We know that this is only the beginning of the improvements we need to make to restore services for our students and ensure that there are no attempts to silence the voice of teachers in the future.

### **\$20 million for class size and composition**

The \$20 million agreed to in Vince Ready's recommendations ending our two-week strike has been allocated to schools to hire teachers, special education teachers, and learning assistance teachers to help with oversized classes and problems of class composition. The locals and school boards signed off on the best use of this money in each community. As a result, hundreds of additional teachers have been hired by districts and will be working with students.

### **\$40 million SIP rebate**

Cheques with rebates for teachers' Salary Indemnity Plan contributions have been mailed to members' homes. The rebate will cover SIP contributions for this school year.

The \$40 million is also part of the Ready agreement ending our strike and has been sent to teachers who were working in September 2005.

### **TOC payment and seniority**

The BCTF met with the BC Public School Employers' Association to negotiate TOC pay and seniority provisions provided by the Ready agreement. The parties agreed that we were far apart and needed to refer the matters to Ready for final and binding resolution.

### **\$40 million for grid harmonization**

We will meet with BCPSEA

and attempt to negotiate an agreement on the use of the \$40 million provided through the Ready agreement for grid harmonization. It is the intention of the BCTF to reduce the number of years it takes teachers to reach full salary. If no progress is made with BCPSEA, Ready will arbitrate a resolution.

### **Teacher bargaining structure**

The government had earlier appointed Ready as an Industrial Inquiry Commissioner to recommend changes to the dysfunctional bargaining structure. BCPSEA has yet to negotiate an agreement since it was mandated that responsibility in 1994. The BCTF has had to negotiate with government, or Ready in the most recent set of negotiations, in order to achieve agreements.

The BCTF is making the case with Ready that:

- The structure must be acceptable to both parties in order for it to work.
- We must be able to negotiate all the terms of our employment.
- We must have the right to strike.
- There must be a system to effectively address class size and composition.
- That local bargaining is the best method to meet the needs of students and teachers in different communities.

### **The Learning Round Table**

BCTF representatives have been participating in the meetings of the Learning Round Table. To date, representatives of administrators, trustees, and superintendents have resisted

the idea of firm class-size limits. This despite ministry information showing that there are over 9,000 Grade 4-12 classes with more than 30 students in them. However, at the primary level where there are firm limits, there are only 20 Kindergarten classes over 20 and 21 Grade 1-3 classes over 24. Specific classes over the limits are being grieved.

We are continuing to meet at the round table and insisting on firm class-size limits in the *School Act* to protect our students' learning conditions.

### **Meetings with ministry**

BCTF representatives are also meeting separately with the minister of education to discuss concerns about class size and composition. These meetings are a result of our job action and the Ready recommendations.

Minister Bond attended a meeting at the BCTF building on December 14, 2005, and was given a tour and explanation of the breadth of the work of the BCTF.

### **\$56 million "saved" by strike action**

The government has allocated \$50 per student to each school district and \$50 per student for schools to use to improve student learning. There is to be agreement between teachers, parents, and administrators for using the funds at the school level.

There is to be agreement between the school boards and locals for the use of the district funds.

*Peter Owens is assistant director, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division, and editor of Teacher newsmagazine.*

## President's message



Jinny Sims

As we begin 2006, teachers and students continue to face challenges in working and learning conditions. Teachers' courageous stand highlighted the critical need to address class size, class composition, and specialist support for our students so that every student can have her/his needs met. We have raised public awareness about the challenges faced in our classrooms and the need for additional resources.

Our actions led to over 539 additional teachers being hired to address the most egregious class-size and class-composition issues. This month, as I visited Prince Rupert, Terrace, and Kitimat I saw first-hand that we have achieved only minimal relief to these serious problems. When I met with teachers, trustees, principals, support staff, and parents, they all voiced the need for additional resources to address the challenges faced by our students and teachers. One school I visited could have used more than the entire additional staffing for the whole school district.

We are continuing to press for the necessary changes at the Learning Round Table, and next month we will host a major conference entitled "Every kid counts! A call to action on class size and composition." We need action now. In addition, we are meeting with Vince Ready and urging him to recommend to government the restoration of full-scope bargaining, including the legal right to strike.

You will have received your SIP fee rebate cheque—a direct result from our actions in the fall. This is a fee rebate for 2005–06. Even though your fee will continue to be deducted each month you are being rebated in the form of a cheque from the \$40 million in Ready's recommendations. Teachers' unity, courage, and professionalism brought us through a very difficult period and we've emerged stronger than ever. We must continue to pull together and hold this government accountable for implementing the changes so sorely needed in our classrooms and our communities.

Thank you for the amazing work you do every day.

*Jinny*

## Congratulations

I've just finished devouring the latest edition of *Teacher* about the strike. I want to congratulate you and all those who contributed for the colourful and comprehensive coverage. I was out of the country from mid-September to early November so I missed all of the action. The photos, quotes from the front line, and informative articles added greatly to my admiration for the stand teachers took. I particularly liked the response of a teacher to a reporter's question about the action of the BCTF—"I am the BCTF." It was also good to hear from students and student teachers.

My only disappointment is that I was not around to walk the line. It's the first provincial action I've missed since participating in the 1971 pension strike.

**Ray Worley**  
Retired, Vernon

## Gains not worth effort

This letter is in response to the Nov./Dec. 2005 *Teacher* newsmagazine. I attended the rally in Victoria. I listened, I sang, I chanted, I believed. I believed it when I heard, "As long as it takes this time." I believed Jinny Sims and I believed Jim Sinclair of the BCFed. Now, I don't understand how Ms. Sims, *et al*, can reconcile the rhetoric at the rally, during interviews, and in print and the cave-in only days later.

I agree with Glenn Bullard that, "...many teachers are still confused about the way the strike ended, and uncertain about what they achieved for their efforts." Well, not uncertain. We're certain we got next to nothing. The Ready recommendations are a cynical exercise in how the government can spend some of the money they saved while we were on strike. Any gains we got came on the backs and from the pockets of working teachers. This is not what we walked the line for.

Nancy Knickerbocker gushes over the "united and fearless Executive Committee" during the strike. These committee members attended local meetings before the vote, expressly to convince our members to vote Yes. Jinny Sims even dropped her conditional support of the Ready recommendations and supported them unconditionally. What brought about such a drastic and thorough about-face?

**Larry Nelson**  
Gulf Islands

## Stand restored pride

For the first time in my teaching career, which began back in 1969, I have read the Nov./Dec. 2005, *Teacher*, from cover to cover. Each article was a collective and supportive pat on the back, for a job well done.

We may not have achieved the goals we set out before us on October 7, but I realize now, that on a personal level, I have achieved far more. I have a renewed sense of pride in myself, and my profession, for standing up for what I believe is morally correct. We demonstrated, what we often try to teach, the essence of democracy. I have a deepened feeling of camaraderie and collegiality within my staff, as I was finally able to talk to other staff members for an extended length of time, out there on the picket lines.

And finally I know, without any question of doubt, that I am appreciated by our students, parents, and community. The honks, waves, food, drinks, and time

spent joining us on our picket line attests to that.

I am going to retire in June, after 35 years of teaching, on a real high. The job I have been doing all these years is valued.

**Marg Harkness**  
Prince George

## Time to move on to round two

I have reached factor 88 and am at max on a scale that is above the provincial average. I contributed to long-term SIP for 33 years and fortunately never had to use it. I have no problem with the Executive Committee decision for distribution of the SIP "rebate." I do not expect to be rebated for payments I have not made. When we negotiated parenting leave, many of us felt it should be retroactive but when the employer did not agree, it did not prevent us from accepting it in contract.

Perhaps teachers entering the profession will never have to pay SIP dues again without receiving rebates or tax laws will be changed so we don't have to play stupid games and can negotiate SIP as a paid benefit. I will be retiring June 30, 2006, foregoing many anticipated future benefits. Ready's recommendations are inequitable as are most negotiated benefits including percentage salary increases, early retirement incentive plans, and maternity top-up to Employment Insurance.

I happen to belong to the minority who believe that we should not have accepted Ready's recommendations. The vast majority voted to accept and time may prove them right. Let us move on to round two.

**Bill Gorkoff, president**  
Kootenay Columbia Teachers' Union

## Benefits for the future

Our Executive Committee engaged in a thoughtful debate to decide on a fair distribution of the \$40 million in SIP funds. There is no solution that everyone will consider fair and equitable to all.

As a collective, we made significant gains for most of our members with our job action. I am happy with that and do not think it constructive to compare how much or how little I personally gained in comparison with other BCTF members around the province. I participated in job action to make gains, now and into the future, for the collective good of the teaching profession and our students.

At the 2003 BCFed convention, Ken Georgetti said, "...we walk on bridges that others have built for us, that is why we must in turn, build new bridges for those who are coming behind us."

During my teaching career, I have benefited greatly from the stand taken by teachers who preceded me, and I know that the stand we collectively took in October will benefit future generations of teachers. I feel proud to take my turn to "build new bridges" for younger teachers.

In its December 2004 decision in favour of the Sooke Teachers' Association, the Human Rights Tribunal succinctly described the balance between individual and collective rights for trade union members when it stated:

"Membership in a trade union involves, at its core, a number of trade-offs. In return for gaining the financial and other advantages of collective bargaining, members agree to be bound by the collective decision-making of the union. Instead of individual workers bargaining directly with

their employer about the terms and conditions of their employment, their union is given the right, and the employer the obligation, to bargain with one another. The member also gives up the right, with some exceptions, notably a complaint under the Human Rights Code, to take individual action against their employer about workplace issues, and instead gains the right to use the grievance procedure established under the collective agreement. The member is, in turn, given the right to participate in the democratic decision-making of the union about the goals and objectives and workplace strategies which it will adopt."

Our democratically elected leaders on the BCTF Executive Committee put their minds to a fair method for distribution of the \$40 million in SIP funds and made a decision that will have money in our members' hands as soon as possible.

Let's not get lost in minute calculations of individual benefit, but keep our focus on the broader picture. The benefits we gain from belonging to a collective far outweigh any minor "inequities" we may presently perceive.

**Yvonne Wai, president**  
Central Coast Teachers' Association

## Vote could divide teachers

I was disappointed by the 77% vote October 22 and 23, in favour of returning to work. I voted to support the action plan put forth by the BCTF Executive Committee to walk out on Friday October 7. I was proud to take a stand for students in my class and proud of teachers in our province standing together. The three goals were clearly identified before we voted (fair and reasonable salary increase for all teachers, restoring stripped language on class size, support for students with special needs, and non-enrolling teachers, and restoring collective bargaining rights. Individual teachers also spoke up for the goals in media interviews from the picket line.

When Vince Ready made his recommendations, I studied them, discussed them with my colleagues, and attended our local meeting where Bill Fite, member of the BCTF negotiating team answered our questions.

I was shocked by the vote because the recommendations did not resolve any of the three issues that we stood up for. By voting to return to our work, we did not restore our collective bargaining rights, we did not restore vital language on class size or non-enrolling teachers, and we did not achieve a fair and reasonable salary increase for all teachers. The salary harmonization benefits some teachers, but not all. Most teachers in my district will receive 0% and 0%.

In closing, I have three questions: (1) If we were going to accept recommendations that don't meet any of our three objectives, why did we go on an illegal protest and lose two weeks pay? (2) Did those districts and individuals who voted to accept the recommendations understand that some teachers would not receive a salary increase and that there were no firm commitments in the recommendations on class size? (3) Why vote to accept recommendations that don't meet any of our three objectives?

In the end, this vote may more effectively divide teachers in our province than any action by the BC government ever could.

**Karen Fraser**  
Peace River South

## Nepal Library Foundation

My wife and I are teachers who took a deferred salary leave in 2000-01, which we used to travel. We spent two months in Nepal trekking through the Langtang and Annapurna regions witnessing the impoverished state of education and lack of access to reading material for children. Being there makes one want to do something to help.

In Kathmandu I made contact with the head librarian of Tribhuvan University and between us came to an agreement to facilitate the development of libraries in Nepal. A chance encounter with a like-minded Nepalese seismic engineer in Vancouver led to the formation of the Nepal Library Foundation.

Our groundwork came to fruition last March when the Nepal Library Foundation was granted charitable status enabling donors to claim tax exemption on any donation.

As you may know Nepal is in desperate straits, with an ongoing insurrection taking a terrible toll on the economy and everyday life in the countryside.

As teachers we feel that literacy and access to information is ultimately necessary for the development of the country and we hope that our efforts will in small part contribute to a better life for the people of this unique place.

For more information, visit our web site at [www.nepallibrary.com](http://www.nepallibrary.com).

**Paul Bird**  
Burnaby

## Charles Dickens Heritage Project

The alumni and community members invite you to participate in the Charles Dickens School Heritage Community Project. We will be hosting regular meetings at the school to record stories and collect photos and memorabilia. The old school will be replaced in 2007 and we want to acknowledge the importance of Charles Dickens School in the history of our community.

A DVD of the history of the school will be created and if you have something to share or would like to participate in creating this project, please contact Shirley North at 604-432-6144.

**Shirley Brunke**  
Vancouver

## Apologies

In the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher*, "Support from teachers organizations across Canada," we missed the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers. QPAT President Francoise Stake spent 24 hours on a round-trip to attend the rally in Victoria on October 17. Our sincere apologies to QPAT and many thanks for your support, as well as your contribution to the Teachers' Hardship Fund.

On page 13, we ran a photo of Debbie Strohmaier wearing a picket sign on her wedding day and it should have read Kamloops, not Kelowna.

We also thank the many members of other unions who sent supportive messages, visited our picket lines, and attended rallies in support of BC teachers and public education.



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## New teachers' conference

March 24 & 25, 2006

Radisson President Hotel & Suites, Richmond, BC

Cost: \$70 (teachers)  
\$35 (students)

Registration: February 1 to March 10 on a first-come, first-served basis. Conference details

and registration forms will be available on our web site February 1, 2006. Printed information will be mailed to all schools and universities on January 31, 2006.

This conference is for new teachers (five years or less experience) and student teachers.

## Strike pay

A number of members have written the BCTF regarding the issue of strike pay and wondering if we are going to find a way to pay it to members who participated in the October protest action.

The BC Supreme Court ruling forbids any such payment. In its ruling the court made it clear that any attempt to circumvent this decision would be viewed as a significant action of contempt and would be dealt with accordingly. The BCTF cannot circumvent this decision of the Supreme Court.

## February is Black History Month

"The labour movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic, and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old age pensions, government relief for the destitute, and above all new wage levels that meant not mere survival, but a tolerable life. The captains of industry did not lead this transformation; they resisted it until they were overcome."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Illinois AFL-CIO Convention, October 1965

## Special needs tribunal

A recent human rights judgment could have a profound impact on the provision of services to students with special needs in BC. A Human Rights Tribunal ordered compensation for the family of a North Vancouver student with a severe learning disability, but went much further and directed the

ministry and the school district to make significant changes in providing services.

The compensation for the family includes cost of a tutor, tuition at private schools that specialize in learning disabilities, transportation to the schools, and the cost of expert advice for the Human Rights hearing. The tribunal also ordered the ministry, within one year, to:

1. make available funding for SLD students at actual incidence levels [this refers to a cap on the number of high incidence, low cost that would be funded under the old targeted special education funding system].
2. establish mechanisms for determining that the support and accommodation services provided to SLD students in the province are appropriate and meet the stated goals of the *School Act* and the Special Needs Student Order.
3. ensure that all districts have in place early-intervention programs so that SLD students can be identified early and appropriate intensive remediation services provided.
4. ensure that all school districts have in place a range of services to meet the needs of SLD students.

The tribunal ordered the North Vancouver School District to have the last three of these items in place within a year.

These orders apply specifically to severe learning disabilities. However, if this judgment is upheld in expected appeals to the courts, one could expect that parents of students with many other special needs might seek the help of human rights tribunals in getting adequate supports in the public schools for meeting their child's special needs.

— Larry Kuehn

## BCTF Day at SFU



L-R: Paul Shaker, SFU dean of education; Jinny Sims, BCTF president, and Miguido Zola, director, SFU Faculty of Education Professional Programs.

Simon Fraser University education faculty and students hosted a BCTF Day on Tuesday, December 6. BCTF President Jinny Sims was the keynote speaker and provided background and a summary of our job action and thanked them for their support. Sims received a standing ovation from the 400 education students.

Dean of Education Paul

Shaker thanked Sims and pointed out to the students the importance of standing up for public education. Shaker also noted that teachers need a social-justice union like the BCTF to help them defend public education as they will be facing powerful and well-financed opponents.

Education students had the opportunity to attend BCTF workshops for the day.

# Walking the picket line: Powerful professional development



by Mike Lombardi

When I was visiting the picket line at a Coquitlam elementary school in October, I realized that, in addition to taking a stand for their students and their rights, those teachers were engaging in powerful professional development. On return visits during the job action, I saw teachers engaged in individual and collective professional learning as they reflected on their actions and on their conversations with colleagues and members of the public.

Teachers know that powerful professional development is teacher-directed, needs-based, goal-focused, experiential, sustained, and undertaken individually and collectively. Effective PD also requires time for critical reflection and engagement. Powerful PD can be even more unifying when it engages the heart and the mind.

Walking the line during the job action was certainly teacher-directed. The teachers' courageous decision to leave their classrooms and to stand up for their students, their rights, and their profession followed school- and local-based meetings. The goals of the job action were to improve students' learning conditions, to restore teachers' collective bargaining rights, and to achieve a fair and reasonable salary increase. The goals were based on needs the teachers identified.

The job action was experiential and sustained. During many

hours on the line, teachers talked with colleagues about ideas and strategies for handling the challenges facing their students. Lesson ideas, teaching strategies, learning resources, and many other practical ideas were shared and discussed on the line. Teachers had the time to engage in a sustained dialogue about professional issues, something that rarely occurs in the busy and fast-

*Teachers had the time to engage in a sustained dialogue about professional issues, something that rarely occurs in the busy and fast-paced reality of school.*

paced reality of school. Teachers also had an opportunity to learn about the interests and passions of their colleagues. New friendships were forged as teachers and support staff walked and talked about their hopes, dreams, and challenges.

The picket line also allowed teachers to engage in critical reflection on the challenges facing public education and the teaching profession. Class size, education funding, the role of the media, working and learning conditions, and the politics of education were passionately discussed. The dialogue took place while teachers enjoyed the endless supply of donuts and coffee provided by supportive

students and parents.

The job action engaged the hearts and minds of teachers. They were inspired by the leadership of BCTF President Jinny Sims, and by the generosity and support of students, parents, retired teachers, members of other unions, and members of the community. The food vouchers from the Federation of Post Secondary Educators, the creation of the BC Teacher Hardship Fund by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and other acts of generosity were truly inspiring. Acting together, teachers courageously demonstrated their resolve to bring about improved learning conditions for students. That engagement of the mind and the heart reminded teachers that teaching is a calling and that many become teachers to make a difference in the lives of children.

While teachers are now once again focused on teaching and learning activities in their schools, the experience of the job action created a firm resolve to exercise professional rights and responsibilities. The experience of walking the line should inspire teachers to advocate for time and resources for professional development and to ensure that PD continues to be teacher-directed, needs-based, goal-focussed, experiential, and sustained.

Mike Lombardi is an assistant director in the BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division, on educational leave until June 30, 2006.

# Looking back

## 70 years ago

Nazi leaders are demanding that Jews should be eliminated from the teaching profession as incapable of comprehending the constitution and conception of the German state. While in 1932 there were about 4,000 Jewish students in German universities, the number was reduced to 223 in 1934. In Bavaria and elsewhere Jewish children are no longer admitted to the Youth Hostels that have become so important a feature of young Germany. This is justified on the grounds that "It is impossible to require a German child to sleep under the same roof with persons belonging to a foreign race." The extermination of an unpopular minority was common enough in barbarous days. It has remained for modern Germany to try the experiment of murdering a people's soul.

— January 1936, *The BC Teacher*

## 50 years ago

Too many of us are prone to point out that teachers in this

day and age are enjoying a "soft touch," high salaries, too many holidays, and a superannuation plan for the security-minded. On the other hand, a good percentage of us, once we were backed into a corner in the argument, would quite readily admit that we wouldn't take on the job of attempting to control 30 or 40 young Canadians as a daily chore, and at the same time try and instill in them the educational requirements as laid out in the curriculum, for double the salary.

— January 1956, *The BC Teacher*

## 30 years ago

Examinations, as Desmond Morris has said, are a modern version of primitive tribal initiation ceremonies, complete with ritual, isolation from parents and external sources of help, mental trauma, and final ceremonial initiation into the secrets of the tribe. Clearly, they are institutions designed for the selection of certain people for more and more "advanced" levels of education, higher qualifications, better-paid jobs.

Because the reality of this situation is that most people don't get advanced education, higher qualifications, and better-paid jobs, examinations become instruments for the exclusion and rejection of the majority.

— Jan./Feb. 1976, *The BC Teacher*

## 10 years ago

In 1987, Bill 20 removed administrative officers from the definition of teacher and prohibited their membership in the bargaining unit. The courts have now decided that AOs are due "compensation." A decision has not yet been made as to the amount, but we expect to hear soon. Sitting through the final court proceedings was upsetting and discouraging. It's hard to look at AOs, with the salary and benefit levels they have achieved through the efforts of the BCTF, and view them as a disadvantaged group who deserve compensation from teachers.

— Jan./Feb. 1996, *Teacher*

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

# Why not just talk to teachers?

by Ken Novakowski

The agenda for public education in this province has always been a matter of public policy. The elected representatives of the citizens of BC, both provincially and locally, have determined the framework for the provision of a public education to the province's children. This is the only way a true public education system can function effectively in a democratic society. The system must be established by representatives of the public and those representatives must be accountable to the public for the system they create, the programs they implement, and the services they provide.

*In education, a teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions.*

But, there have always been other factors and principles to be considered in the construction of a positive learning and teaching situation in our public schools. One of those is free collective bargaining and with it the right of employees who work in the public school system, to have a direct say in determining the conditions under which they will work and in providing the educational services for which they are employed. In education, a teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions. If you improve one, you improve the other. It is that simple. To teachers this is more than common sense—it is their classroom reality.

Historically, teachers have been clear about what they believe belongs in public policy and what should be a matter of collective bargaining. Issues like class size, class composition, hours of work, and staffing ratios all have a direct effect on teacher workload. Naturally teachers want to have a direct say in exercising some control over these issues. The most effective way to do this has been through negotiating provisions into an enforceable collective

agreement. As teachers, we will continue to advocate for that right and to work toward its achievement.

On other public policy matters like curriculum development, implementation, and assessment, teachers have consistently advanced the view that active consultation of government and school boards with teachers and others involved in education is the appropriate process for decision making. The teaching profession in BC has been well represented provincially by the BCTF in putting forward ideas and directions for building a strong and stable public education system. We have had some influence in shaping educational directions with governments in the past. Perhaps the most notable example was the development of the primary program in BC, which emerged from the Royal Commission on Education in 1988 and became the cornerstone of the Year 2000 initiative. The relative success of the primary program is due in large part to the influence of classroom teacher representatives through the BCTF in structuring the program.

Politicians too often look for the "neat and nifty" things to do when they get into office and they are often more influenced by fads and trends being advocated by those with political/ideological agendas than by serious dialogue with

*It will be a smart politician who comes along and realizes that the best advice they can get on what to do in education is from the people who have dedicated their working lives to it.*

the teaching profession. Art Charbonneau (1993–96) and Christy Clark (2001–04) were education ministers for two very different governments but they both implemented educational changes that the teaching profession strongly advised against. Those politicians are no longer around but the teachers and the education system must live with the unfortunate legacy of their initiatives. Politicians seem to want to make their mark by changing things in the education system. It will be a smart politician who comes

along and realizes that the best advice they can get on what to do in education is from the people who have dedicated their working lives to it. Does this sound like a fairy tale? It shouldn't. In fact, the citizens of BC consistently rate classroom teachers as the people they consider the most credible on education issues. Again, it only makes sense.

The absurdity of the current government "achievement"

*Teachers want to spend more time teaching and less time measuring.*

agenda was driven home recently when government allocated additional one-time resources to schools and to school districts as a result of monies saved during the teacher job action in October 2005. These additional funds were to be expended between January 3 and March 31, 2006, and districts and schools were required, in a short time frame, to develop spending plans that must, "Demonstrate how the funds will contribute to improved student achievement in their (district, school) and describe the measures used to monitor the improvement." It is a good move by government to allocate these resources to the classroom, but the requirement of measuring improvement in achievement as a result, points to an agenda obsession that is counterproductive. Can anyone doubt that the learning situation will improve in a classroom that now has textbooks? Teachers want to spend more time teaching and less time measuring. The achievement agenda has us buying into a lot of unproven assumptions about what learning is all about. It is time we insisted that learning be the agenda for public schools in BC and that governments take their lead from teachers about what is best for the students they teach.

Only when government accepts that the BCTF does indeed represent teachers, and sits down with BCTF representatives to work together on improving education in this province, will BC students enjoy the best education we are capable of providing.

*Ken Novakowski is executive director of the BC Teachers' Federation.*

# The problem with flexibility

by Anne Jardine

Flexibility means that the school principal and sometimes the school staff (if the principal has a democratic character or if the staff has asserted its rights) get to decide how the school's inadequate resources will be distributed. Things they typically might decide are: How many library blocks will be lost in order to make class sizes more equitable? How many learning assistance blocks can be provided by increasing class sizes? Can the school afford to offer a music program? Will the art supply cupboard have 10 colours of paper or only 6? Can the school get along for one more year with its rickety furniture? or Will there be a bus for the Grade 7 field trip? They essentially get to decide how to trim the school's aspirations so they can fit into a drastically inadequate budget.

*The trade-offs that are made in the name of flexibility are rarely educationally based.*

The principals are still thinking that their decision-making role will somehow be crimped or hindered if the *School Act* limits class sizes. How does the right to set class enrolments over 30 improve the system? How does it make the school better?

The trade-offs that are made in the name of flexibility are rarely educationally based. How can one who reduces a school library program in order to accommodate a learning assistance class claim to be exercising educational leadership? How can flexibility to advance one essential program and diminish another essential program be educationally justified?

Secondary schools have to have certain small classes in order to sustain important programs such as senior

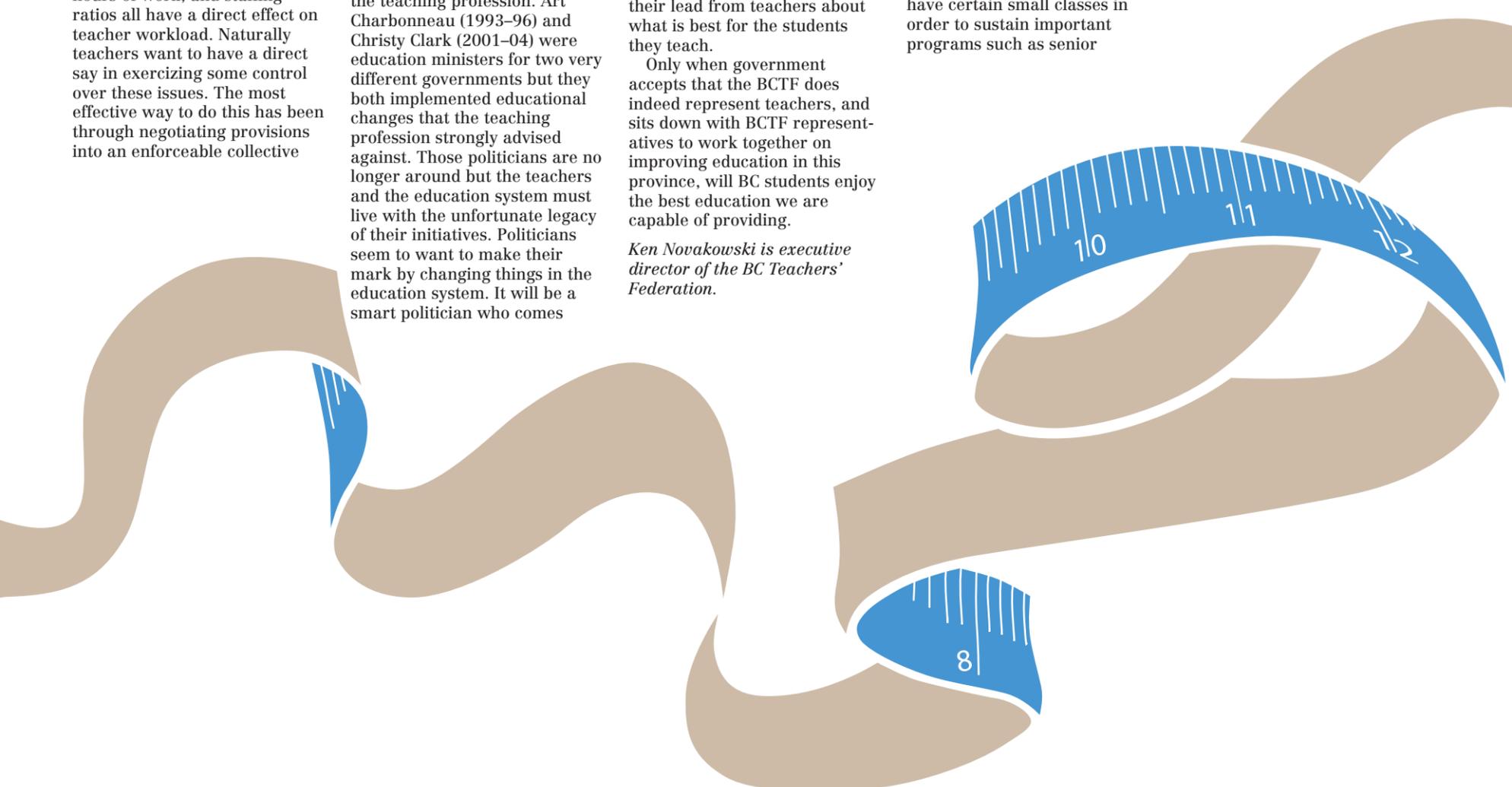
physics, chef training, or photography. These programs should not be offered—as they have been in far too many instances—at the expense of the effectiveness of the core courses such as math, social studies, or English. The core courses in many secondary schools seem to be the shock absorbers of the timetable. They are often enrolled in early September at 30 pupils and then by October,

*The core subject classrooms are often bursting with 30 or more students who are required to complete the courses in order to graduate.*

attrition takes them down to the high 20s, or flexibility pumps them up into the 30s.

The core subject classrooms are often bursting with 30 or more students who are required to complete the courses in order to graduate. Many of the students are not happy or co-operative about mandatory subjects. This means that the management and motivation of students becomes the main priority for the teachers. Classroom atmosphere is often tense with distractions, power struggles, and behaviour issues. The actual delivery of curriculum is often compromised, and artistry and enjoyment are often lost entirely. This daily tension— together with the efforts necessary to keep up with individual needs, planning, marking, evaluation, and reporting—can be extreme when the teacher's total student enrolment typically exceeds 100 pupils.

To insure that students have the best opportunities to succeed in their required courses, the courses need to have



comfortable and effective learning environments. The teachers need to have adequate preparation and collaboration time. The students who have learning difficulties need to have appropriate, timely assistance.

The sanity of classroom teachers who deliver the fundamental courses should not be sacrificed on the altar of "flexibility," or traded off in favour of specialized elective programs. Those are not educationally sound trade-offs. In fact, when choices like those have to be made, the school's overall educational balance is lost. It is not fair or healthy that some teachers have to bear the burdens of impossible workload to accommodate the existence of important school programs. If the programs are important, then they are worth funding in their own right. The funding should not be taken from math or English. It needs to be fully covered.

The school's plan should allow for small numbers of students in those special electives as well as reasonable class sizes (low to mid-20s) in the core academic

***If the programs are important, then they are worth funding in their own right. The funding should not be taken from math or English. It needs to be fully covered.***

courses. Such planning makes educational sense. It makes sense in terms of mental health for both students and teachers. It will save counseling time. It will save administrative time by reducing stress-related behaviour problems. It leaves a bit of space in case a new student joins the class.

The kind of flexibility that allows management to routinely assign class sizes in the upper reaches of the 20s and into the 30s is not educationally sound. Over a period of years, this kind of flexibility normalizes an atmosphere of anxiety and tension, and it drags down the school culture and the staff morale.

The kind of flexibility that expects schools to use library

and counselling as flex programs to balance class sizes and solve timetable problems is not flexibility at all, but educational irresponsibility. Library and counselling are central services that need to be available to all

***Let's recognize such flexibility for what it is, a flesh-eating disease.***

students when they need them, not just when they can be worked in.

Let's recognize such flexibility for what it is, a flesh-eating disease. The current ministry thinking is dominated by a poverty mentality that uses flexibility as a means of masking inadequate resources. The starved system feeds upon its own flesh and the educational leadership continues to wave the tattered flag of flexibility. By lowering everyone's expectations, our government has succeeded in convincing both the public and the educational leadership that flexibility is a worthy goal. Flexibility, as it has been used in recent years, means making the kinds of choices that poor people have to make about whether to buy the groceries or pay the landlord. Well, this just in: we are rich enough to do both!

If the educational leaders will not demand that we fully fund the reasonable service levels that the system so clearly needs and the children of British Columbia so dearly deserve, then the teachers of this province will continue to make that demand. We hope that parents and communities will add their voices to call for the two new F-words: Fair Funding!

*Anne Jardine is president of the Windermere Teachers' Association.*

***The starved system feeds upon its own flesh and the educational leadership continues to wave the tattered flag of flexibility***

## I'm voting yes for affiliation

by *Jinny Sims*

Three years ago, the BCTF decided, through a member vote, to join the BC Federation of Labour for a three-year trial period. Affiliation requirements determine that we need to decide this year whether or not we wish to continue that affiliation and in so doing, extend it to include affiliation to the Canadian Labour Congress. I voted "yes" for the three-year trial period and I support the BCTF's ongoing affiliation to the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. I do so for three reasons.

First, public education is a public-policy agenda item that is significant provincially and is increasingly important federally. Within the BCFed and the CLC we have, and can muster, support for our positions on public education funding and other important education policy issues. That is why the three major teacher unions in Ontario, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation have all joined the Canadian Labour Congress. Along with them, we would be a formidable force in the CLC and help to ensure that public education was given a prominent place in deliberate discussions at the national level. When you look at our experience over the past three years in the BCFed, it is clear that this is where we find allies committed to a quality publicly funded public education system. The only one of our education partners that stood up for public education in our recent dispute with the provincial government

was CUPE and the BC Federation of Labour supported us big time. BCFed support forced the government to introduce Ready into the process during our action and it engaged virtually every union in this province in supporting us in one way or another. Having the support of the BCFed and its affiliated unions was critical to our

***Having the support of the BCFed and its affiliated unions was critical to our ultimate success and our ability to win broad public support for our goals.***

ultimate success and our ability to win broad public support for our goals.

Second, by being members of the BCFed/CLC, we are part of an organized labour movement that includes working people across the country. We have a voice in influencing the direction of progressive policy development as shaped by the labour movement. We are on the inside, trying to work with others for a better BC and a better Canada. Yet, we continue to maintain our independence and our autonomy as a union of professionals. Whether the issue is dealing with international trade agreements or basic collective bargaining rights, we have natural allies in the labour movement; allies that will support us as we support them when we have common causes. Last June, I attended the CLC convention in Montreal as an observer, and was impressed by the gathering of so many people from such a broad range of work situations—industrial, craft,

professional, service, public, and private—in a meeting where they were collectively determining policy directions for the labour movement and for Canada. I was also impressed by the extent of the international development work that the CLC does with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. I believe we limit our effectiveness as an organization if we choose to operate outside of this milieu.

Third, we belong in the BCFed and the CLC because we are working people. Yes, we are professionals but, we are employed professionals. And because we are employed professionals, we have an employment relationship with our employers that leads to collective bargaining. We cannot and do not set our own conditions of employment as do many self-employed professionals. Like other working people we bargain for many of the terms and conditions of our employment. And because we are professionals, we have a significant degree of autonomy in the delivery of our services, we can and do bring to the labour movement a different perspective on issues and approaches to strategies in debates and discussions that we engage in. And because of the strong democratic nature of our union and our historically inclusive culture, we also can contribute positively to the future development of organized labour in this country.

We should be in the BCFed and the CLC because that is where we belong. I commit my passion and energy to advocate for our continued affiliation.

*Jinny Sims is president of the BC Teachers' Federation.*

## Let's make affiliation official

by *Susan Fonseca*

In March 2003, BCTF members voted 58.1% in favour of a trial three-year affiliation with the BC Federation of Labour. This spring, members will be asked to vote on making a more permanent commitment to the BCFed. Ultimately, teachers will decide whether to end the long engagement period and walk away or to tie the knot with our labour allies. Solidarity for three years, or forever?

Teachers will be asked to determine whether our trial affiliation has been valuable in terms of advancing our professional concerns and issues to a broader community. Has membership given us a more effective voice and a broader audience? Have we derived support from others in our coalition who share common problems, interests, and concerns? Have we gained a better understanding of their workplace issues? Have we been able to gain access to alternative communication networks and shape the BCFed's education policies? Have we been able to advance our professional concerns and gain the kind of public influence we do not have working alone?

As a delegate to two BCFed conventions and the New West District & Labour Council, I can attest that the answer to all of these questions is a definite yes. We were given a standing

ovation three years ago when our delegation appeared in our blue and white T-shirts, which read "Proud to be a Teacher. Proud to be Affiliated." And this year, Jinny Sims, the first delegate to take the mike, was given a resounding standing ovation for her courageous leadership of our successful job action.

There is no doubt that Sim's consistent and strong leadership inspired our sisters and brothers in the labour movement, or that the solidarity and defiance of individual teachers all around the province earned their respect. But the question we should be asking ourselves is: Would we have had the success in standing up to the provincial government on our own without the committed support of our labour allies? The answer to that question really is the litmus test for our next ratification vote.

Think back to the picket lines and consider the support offered by members of so many other labour unions including HEU, nurses, postal workers, Telus workers, firefighters, and of course, CUPE. It was the BCFed that took our responsibility for the rally in Victoria, and it was the actual walkouts or threat of walkouts by other unions around the province in support of teachers that got the government to call Vince Ready to mediate. When the courts prohibited our strike pay, it was the Federation of Post-

Secondary Educators' Association who set up the Feed the Teachers fund. And in Langley, Telus workers who had been locked out for three months, offered eight boxes of groceries for our local food drive for teachers and CUPE workers.

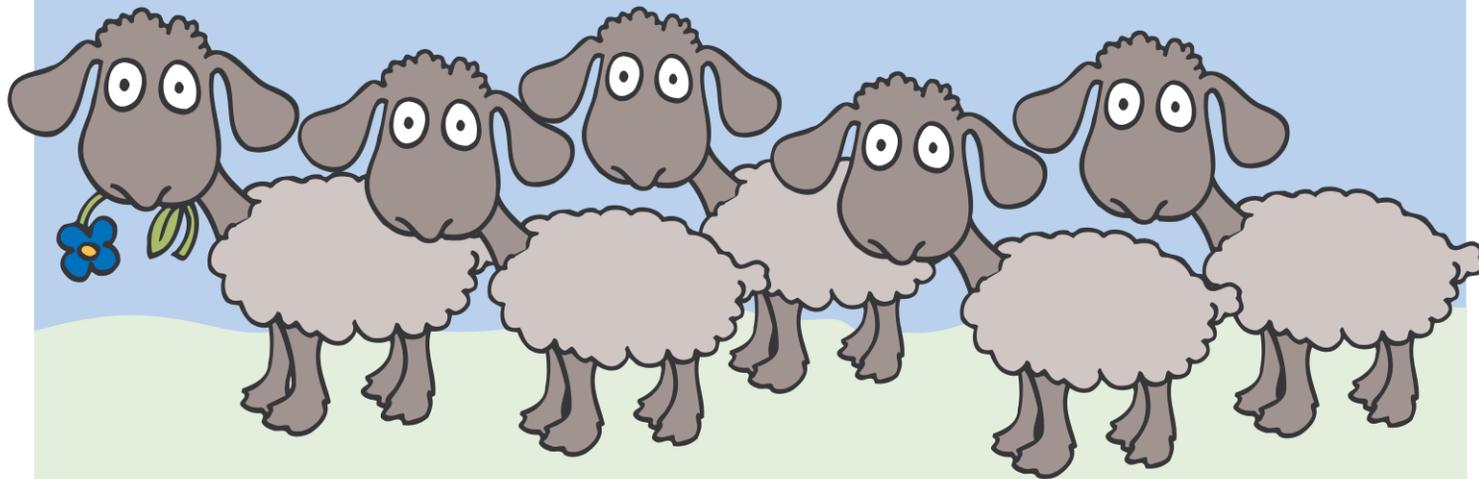
This broad support was both nourishing and uplifting and showed that solidarity is not just an abstract concept.

It's hard to imagine after our experiences of the past three years, that teachers would vote to withdraw from the BC Federation of Labour. I hope teachers will acknowledge the solid support we've been given by our fellow affiliates with an overwhelming vote to stay right where we belong. Let's make it official this time.

*Susan Fonseca is vice president of the Langley Teachers' Association.*



*Carol Gillis, one of 122 BCTF delegates to the BCFed convention, November 2005.*



# The promise and peril of high-stakes accountability

by Sandra Mathison and E. Wayne Ross

*Educators today are besieged by a movement that demands higher and higher scores on standardized tests. Anyone who has looked carefully at these tests knows that they are loaded with trivia—questions that most successful adults cannot answer and would indeed scorn to answer. Our children are being fed intellectual junk food, and we would do well to insist on a healthier educational diet.*

—Nel Noddings, “War, Critical Thinking, and Self Understanding,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004.

The high-stakes-accountability road has been taken in many countries, especially the USA. Changes are occurring that suggest Canada is headed down the same road (for example, the Fraser Institute report card on schools, the Ontario School Secondary Literacy Test as a graduation requirement, provincial tests of reading, writing, and math at the elementary and secondary levels, and a media that implicitly supports high-stakes accountability). While there is great promise offered by the rhetoric of high-stakes accountability there is also great peril. We should take advantage of what is known about the false promise and the unanticipated perils of high-stakes accountability, and map an alternative route.

*Treating everyone the same all the time does not constitute fairness.*

What is high-stakes accountability? It is most often manifest in systems of accountability called bureaucratic-outcomes-based accountability. These are systems in which students, teachers, and/or administrators are accountable to a central government authority for demonstrating success on a small set of common indicators of student performance. And there are tangible consequences at the individual and school level for failure.

## The promises of high-stakes accountability

There are a number of promises and assumptions that are part of the rhetoric of high-stakes accountability:

- Teachers will teach all children and have uniformly high expectations.
- Outcome measures will motivate teachers to teach well and students to learn well.
- Achievement differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, and first language will be eliminated.
- Students not well served by public schools will be.
- School credentials will be more meaningful.
- Meaningful schooling outcomes (at the individual and organizational levels) can be captured by annually administered census standardized tests.
- High school graduates will meet workplace expectations.
- National and international market competitiveness will be enhanced.
- Measurement techniques and technology are up to the task.

This last point is important because faith in educational measurement assumes that single standardized tests are valid for the purpose, that the important outcomes of schooling can be captured with a standardized test, and that the scoring and reporting of scores are trustworthy.

## The perils of high-stakes accountability

The perils of high-stakes accountability, in large part, stem from the underlying assumptions of the promise of high-stakes accountability.

- Treating everyone the same all the time does not constitute fairness.
- External motivation (based largely on punishment) is not the only, or the best way, to get people to change, and in fact diminishes a love of learning.
- Consequences, rewards, and sanctions have unanticipated and undesired impact—like defining the curriculum as that which is tested, increasing drop-out rates, increasing

the number of kids in special education.

- The professionalism of teachers is diminished because it is assumed they cannot be trusted to do the right thing or a good job.
- Uniform and single measures of learning are just bad evaluation practice.
- Annually administered standardized tests capture only a fraction of academic expectations (the curriculum cannot be covered in a one-shot test).

*Uniform and single measures of learning are just bad evaluation practice.*

- Annually administered standardized tests capture nothing about other important schooling outcomes (citizenship, social development, work habits, antiviolence).
- When social indicators are used for important decision-making there is a high likelihood the indicators and the uses of those indicators will be corrupted.

## Authentic accountability: An alternative

There is an alternative to high-stakes accountability—authentic accountability—a more locally based although still public system of accountability where schools are accountable to parents and the public for how well a school is educating its students and about the quality of the social and learning environment through the use of authentic and multiple indicators.

There are four basic principles of authentic accountability:

1. *Improvement.* Use of a wider range of strategies to improve the quality of schools and learning, such as professional development.
2. *Equity.* Closing the race, ethnicity, and class achievement gaps and overcoming the consequences of poverty and racism, through the provision of health and social welfare care as well as academic care.

3. *Democracy.* Control over and responsibility for schools must be grounded in sound principles of participatory democracy, such as informed involvement of local stakeholders.

4. *Informing the public.* Providing accurate information about the functioning, successes, and problems of public education, such as information about libraries, health care, availability of enough and current textbooks, clean and equipped bathrooms, and so on.

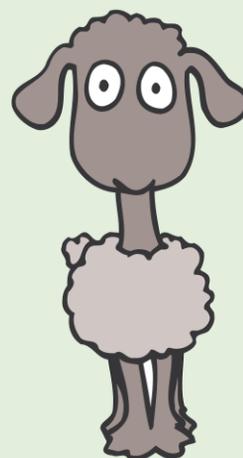
Authentic accountability is characterized by:

- local authentic assessments.
- school quality review model.
- low-stakes standardized testing in literacy and numeracy.
- annual local reporting by schools to their communities.
- consequences at the school level, not the child or teacher level, for failure.

The rhetoric of outcomes-based accountability is appealing—who wouldn't want all kids to succeed and high-school graduation to be meaningful? It is imperative that teachers, school administrators, trustees, parents, and students work together to champion authentic accountability, an accountability based on shared democratic responsibility and not on simplistic signs like test scores.

Sandra Mathison and Wayne Ross are professors in the Faculty of Education at UBC.

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## Teachers seeking teachers

*Sleepless in BC looking for a rare find! PQT, 20 something, seeks motivated, young-at-heart, fun-loving partners to share adventures in AR, should enjoy energetic conversation, talks on the beach, reflective dialogue, reading, and writing. An attractive PD opportunity for hardworking, good-humoured teachers. Looking for like-minded professionals? Call... Let's see what happens!*

by M. Louise Herle

Intrigued by this notice? You may wish to participate in Action Research. Action research (AR) projects with the BCTF Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) represent a growing trend in the education profession. Action research provides opportunities for teachers to direct their professional development, investigate innovative strategies to meet their needs, and develop research skills.

*The last decade has shown a shift in educational research away from quantitative research methodology and toward qualitative social research.*

Originally formulated by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1947, action research is a disciplined method for intentional learning from experience. The last decade has shown a shift in educational research away from quantitative research methodology and toward qualitative social research. As educational inquiry designed and implemented by and for teachers, AR provides a framework for experiential investigations in classrooms.

Action, growth, change, and engagement in practice, implies that participants including teachers contribute to the research, investigation, or study, by being actively involved in the project. AR occurs in a cycle that has four key components: plan, act, observe, reflect (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).

Action researchers develop a plan, the key part of which is a focused question. The following are examples of action research questions that have been addressed in BCTF projects:

- What techniques support at-risk learners in the classroom?
- Do students who listen to Baroque music while writing produce higher quality journal entries?

- How can students safely and promptly arrive at school without assistance?
- What reading instruction methods are most effective for Grade 4 boys?
- Are students who leave the classroom during core hours for extra instruction stigmatized, and if so, how could this be reduced?

*Emphasis on the sharing of ideas results in greater respect for colleagues and each other's abilities.*

- How can physical education be taught in ways that improve middle school girls' self esteem?
- How can teachers help parents support their child's reading?
- Do reading incentives help?
- How can teachers support gender equity in the classroom?
- What are effective teacher adaptations to an open-area learning environment?

Once the plan is decided, teacher-researchers *act*, implementing data collection techniques such as student profiles, inventory, documents, journals, questionnaires, surveys, interviews, photographic evidence, checklists, running commentary, anecdotal records, diagnostic assessment, attendance records, pre- and post-tests, standardized test scores, video and audio recording, and transcripts.

The next stage in the cycle provides the teacher-researcher an opportunity to analyze the data and *observe* the effects of action in context. Interpretation at this stage incorporates looking for patterns and surprises, as well as organizing the data to reveal the story. The fourth element in the cycle, *reflect*, prompts writing, conversation, dialogue, and sharing about research findings. AR can be presented in a variety of ways: publications, descriptive narratives, quilts, recordings, and poetry. Subsequent plans and action begin the cycle anew.

Through the Program for Quality Teaching, and many other initiatives, the BCTF has been committed to teacher professional development since 1983. The BCTF defines professional development as a process of continuous growth through involvement in programs, services, and activities designed to enable teachers, both individually and collectively, to learn and grow professionally in order to enhance teaching and learning. Professional development incorporates a wide repertoire of teacher collaboration, mentorship, action research, workshops, course work, reading, peer coaching, and reflection. (*Members' Guide to the BCTF*, 2005)

Action research participants benefit from increased job satisfaction due to access to current, relevant skills and resources to perform duties, and supportive professional relationships in a collegial environment. Emphasis on the sharing of ideas results in greater respect for colleagues and each other's abilities. Action research may well be considered one of the most rewarding teacher professional development opportunities.

*Action research may well be considered one of the most rewarding teacher professional development opportunities.*

For further information about Action Research, PQT training, and grants, please contact Nancy Hinds, [nhinds@bctf.ca](mailto:nhinds@bctf.ca) or 1-800-871-2283.

*Louise Herle teaches at Davis Bay Elementary School, Sunshine Coast.*

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# Peaceful (and just) resolutions for teachers in the new year

by Derrick O'Keefe

As an education student at UBC, this fall's strike was a tremendous learning opportunity. Dozens of incipient teachers felt very strongly about joining our already-employed brothers and sisters on the picket lines and at the rallies against Bill 12.

A number of us student teachers even made the trip over to Victoria for the mass rally at the legislature on October 17. Without question, among the highlights of the rally were the greetings of international solidarity. It was exhilarating to hear speakers inform us that there was a support action being held at the Canadian Embassy in Mexico; it was electrifying to hear another speaker read the words of South African Education International President Thulas Nxesi, who compared Bill 12 to the sort of retrograde legislation that had been imposed under the notorious Apartheid regime.

The world-wide support that the teachers of BC received during their strike should not have come as too much of a surprise, because for decades the BCTF has taken leadership in terms of the labour movement's efforts at international solidarity. In addition to being a moral imperative in such an unequal world, solidarity across borders is essential to building a movement that can compete with the global reach of neo-liberalism and corporate power.

*In 2006, those of us in Vancouver and British Columbia have a unique opportunity to contribute to the global anti-war movement, as hosts of the World Peace Forum, June 23-28.*

In some of my precious spare time away from completing assignments and lesson plans for my student teaching, I am a volunteer co-chair for the *StopWar.ca* coalition in Vancouver. That's one reason why I'm so excited to be joining a union with a proud history of putting a global perspective on

the old slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all."

The past several years have seen the emergence of an increasingly explicit and brutal policy of war and empire building. The United States government has led this process, driven by its lust for oil and the need to project military power in an effort to hold off current and future rivals, such as Europe and China. The consequences have been made clear in Iraq: tens of thousands of civilians dead, 2,000 American troops dead and thousands more maimed and wounded, zero weapons of mass destruction, zero stability, and thousands of potential recruits for the most brutal variety of political Islamists inspired by El-Qaeda's reactionary agenda.

It is wrong, however, to complacently believe that the Canadian government stands aloof, independent of these policies of Empire. As educators, in particular, it is incumbent on us to think critically about our own country's complicity in war. Let us take just three concrete examples of war-making from north of the 49th parallel.

#### War resisters

Already a number of members of the United States' armed forces have fled to Canada, and are seeking permanent residency and citizenship as refugees from an illegal and immoral war in Iraq. As yet, the Liberal government has failed to follow the precedent of the Vietnam Era, when upwards of 50,000 Americans were allowed to come north to avoid participating in the slaughter of Vietnam.

#### Afghanistan

Extending far beyond the parameters of the original stated mission, 2,000 additional Canadian troops are being deployed to Afghanistan, where this country's Special Forces are already involved in combat operations. Top Canadian military officials like General Rick Hillier have made bellicose comments to prepare the public for increased Canadian casualties in occupied Afghanistan.

#### Haiti

In a brazenly imperial action, Canada, along with France and the United States, supported the February 29, 2004, coup d'etat that ousted the democratically

elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The subsequent occupation and regime change has claimed thousands of victims; summary execution or incarceration are the order of the day in Haiti for supporters of the ousted president. The Canadian government has thus far gotten away with its overthrow of democracy in the western hemisphere's poorest country.

In 2006, those of us in

*On Saturday, March 18, StopWar.ca will organize the Vancouver leg of an international weekend of protest on the third anniversary of the war on Iraq...*

Vancouver and British Columbia have a unique opportunity to contribute to the global anti-war movement, as hosts of the World Peace Forum, June 23-28. The BCTF will hold a concurrent Peace Education Conference, and obviously I'd encourage all teachers to take part. I would also urge teachers to join in ongoing efforts against war and Empire. Expert guest speakers are available to address teachers and students alike about important issues such as Haiti, justice in the Middle East, and the case of the war resisters.

On Saturday, March 18, *StopWar.ca* will organize the Vancouver leg of an international weekend of protest on the third anniversary of the war on Iraq, culminating in a 1:00 p.m. rally at the Art Gallery. Speaking for the many anti-war activists who were proud to join the teachers' rallies and picket lines in October, we'd like nothing better than to march side-by-side with you again, this time together with millions around the world for peace and justice.

For more information on ongoing anti-war activities, email [contact@stopwar.ca](mailto:contact@stopwar.ca) or check out [www.StopWar.ca](http://www.StopWar.ca).

*Derrick O'Keefe is a student teacher at the University of British Columbia.*

## BC teachers making a difference, globally

Many teachers are engaged in projects that reach well beyond their classroom, with a global focus.

Every winter and summer holiday, a group of BC teachers goes to Cuba to offer workshops on teaching English. The BCTF International Solidarity Program supports projects that encourage female teachers in Central America to take leadership positions in their unions. The BCTF works with other teacher unions on issues related to globalization and trade agreements.

Individual teachers sponsor

projects to take students to less developed countries to work on development projects. Many secondary schools have global justice clubs that help students engage with social justice ideas and projects.

Every summer several BC teachers take part in Project Overseas, the Canadian Teachers' Federation program, that offers extensive professional development workshops for teachers in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

If any of these interest you, consider attending the "BC Teachers Making a Difference, Globally" workshop on Saturday,

February 18, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the BCTF building in Vancouver.

The program will tell you about BCTF international solidarity projects and the global education resources and workshops that have been developed by BC teachers, as well as share ideas on how to bring internationalism into your own classroom.

There is no cost for the workshop, but please pre-register. For further information or to register, contact Larry Kuehn, [lkuehn@bctf.ca](mailto:lkuehn@bctf.ca) or Anne Field, [afield@bctf.ca](mailto:afield@bctf.ca).



# Yours for the asking



*Salmonpeople* dives into the issues around living in a sustainable way, while being a steward to the local watershed and caring about your community.

## Teaching global citizenship

*Sharing the Harvest* is a ready-to-use activity guide designed to encourage the development of world perspectives and global citizenship in youth. Produced by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in conjunction with Classroom Connections, this resource provides transformative learning opportunities that explore concepts such as resource inequities in the global village, international human rights, fair trade, and global interconnectedness. The materials are free to classrooms and youth organizations in Canada and are designed for use in Grades 4 to 8, offering excellent curriculum connections in social science and social studies.

The resource is divided into three sections. "Gathering Crops" focuses on the interconnections we share, what it means to be a global citizen, and the development of global perspectives. "Supporting Growth" examines the rights we hold as global citizens and looks at how the actions of individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments can affect the rights and lives of others around the world. "Sowing the Seeds of Tomorrow" builds awareness and understanding of global issues and of the ways that each of us can make a difference. It encourages youth to imagine the range of futures possible for our world and the personal actions they can take to help create the future they envision.

*Sharing the Harvest* is the final resource in the Cultivate Your Commitment to Canada trilogy. The series aims to empower youth with the concepts, understanding, and skills they need to be responsible, caring, and active citizens, both in Canadian society and within the global community.

The first resource in the series, "Planting the Seeds," explores the concept of personal citizenship, while the second guide, "Nurturing Growth," expands that understanding to include what it means to be an active Canadian citizen.

All materials are available for download at [classroomconnections.ca/en/ccc.html](http://classroomconnections.ca/en/ccc.html) and hard copies can be ordered at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizen/belonging/onlineform.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizen/belonging/onlineform.html).

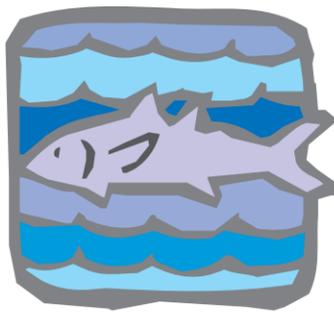


## Global education project

"Earth: A Graphic Look at the State of the World" has just been published by the Global Education Project, a non-profit foundation in BC. [www.theglobaleducationproject.org](http://www.theglobaleducationproject.org). This comprehensive resource, available online and as a printed poster, summarizes the conditions of the world's ecology and humanity and how they effect each other. Visually and factually stunning, this publication is a valuable tool for anyone teaching about or striving to understand the world's complex environmental and humanitarian challenges.

This 27"x36" wall poster showcases an unparalleled collection of over 100 charts, 15 maps, and explanatory text, all rigorously referenced to reliable sources. It is an extraordinarily holistic and integrated overview, connecting a maze of apparently disparate issues such as wealth distribution and climate change, oil supply and food production, global warming and global fisheries.

Information, maps, and graphics from the poster are accessible on the web site at [theglobaleducationproject.org/](http://theglobaleducationproject.org/).



## Stream to sea education program

For the past 25 years, teachers around BC have been incubating salmon in the classroom and taking children on field trips to local streams. Now Fisheries & Oceans Canada is bringing the ocean to the classroom too!

If you are interested in bringing "Stream to Sea" to your classroom, please contact Joanne Day at 604-666-6614 or e-mail [dayj@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:dayj@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca) to access resources, lesson plans, or help from DFO staff in your geographic area of BC.

If you are attending the Children's Festival in Vancouver this May, Peter Donaldson is bringing his *Salmonpeople* play for four performances. Order tickets at [www.childrensfestival.ca](http://www.childrensfestival.ca).

## Teachers' tips Sponsor teaching

by Robert Whiteley

Being a sponsor teacher for new teachers is a critically important piece of work teachers engage in. Not only is supervising student teachers a "duty" as included in the *School Act*, teachers have a moral responsibility to mentor, assist, and report on the suitability of prospective members of the profession. Section 47 of the *Members' Guide to the BCTF* provides sponsor teachers with Federation policy with respect to working with student teachers and university faculty/supervisors.

Working with pre-service teachers provides the opportunity for a sponsor teacher to reflect on one's own practice, to discuss emerging and established educational theories, to model effective teaching

strategies, and to become a mentor and guide.

The first question one must ask prior to accepting a student teacher is why. Why are you accepting a student? What benefits may accrue to the student teacher, your students, you, the school, and public education? Are you taking a student because your principal asked you to, others recommended you, or for professional development reasons?

Teaching and learning is all about the kind and quality of relationship established between teachers, students, parents, administrators, and other educational support personnel. This is also true of the student/teacher/sponsor relationship. Research clearly informs us that the relationship between the sponsor teacher and the student teacher is one of the most critical determinates of

a successful practicum experience.

Your relationship with university personnel must be collegial and collaborative. One major complaint of student teachers and supervisors interpret documentation differently. It is very important that all documents pertaining to the practicum experience be read, questions prepared, and clarification sought. Respectful communication is key.

Establish boundaries with the student—both professional and personal. Maintaining professional objectivity is key, as it is difficult to criticize a friend. If you have questions or concerns, discuss them with the student teachers. In public schools, student teachers are bound by the *BCTF Code of Ethics*. Remember, confidentiality is important but seeking advice from colleagues or the university supervisor is always helpful.

*Robert Whiteley is on leave from the Nanaimo School District.*

## On being well Volunteerism is social wellness

by Julia Johnson

"The British Columbia Teachers' Federation is a union of professionals that represents and advocates for the social, professional, and economic goals of teachers, and promotes a quality, pluralistic, public-school system through leadership and advocacy, professional development, collective bargaining, and other services for members." The teachers of British Columbia walked their talk during the recent civil protest. What is not readily apparent to those who have little or no direct interaction with the BCTF Executive, is that the teachers' walk was strengthened by our elected executive working in partnership with volunteer local executives and professional development associates. In the words of Jinny Sims, "...it is the front-line work of volunteers in each school district that keeps us all connected, as they wrestle with local issues and provide professional workshops that seek solutions to issues. Each BCTF volunteer keeps this professional union grounded, so the face and the voice of the Federation is representative of its 38,000 teachers."

The mandate of the BCTF is to serve the teachers of this province. As a union of professionals, the BCTF meets the

needs of teachers and students through those who volunteer. This was evident at the BCTF summer conference held at UBC, in August, for PD associates and local executive members. However, the public (and many teachers) are unaware of how volunteerism is an integral part of our teachers' union. Through BCTF volunteers, teachers are able to access support for their professional and personal issues, and further their professional development. Using the model, "Teachers Teaching Teachers" the BCTF embodies the social-wellness domain of the wellness paradigm.

Volunteerism is fundamental to the social fabric of a just and caring society. Through volunteers faith and hope is restored to those who see no solution to their despair or their devastation.

When I became a PD wellness associate, five years ago, it never occurred to me that I was becoming a volunteer for the BCTF. I saw my work with the wellness cadre as a way to pursue my interest in this topic and as part of the bigger picture of my work, in the same way a PE teacher views coaching.

A volunteer is someone who chooses to do something with no promise of compensation. In this sense, all teachers volunteer when they participate in school-related activities that are

separate from their teaching mandate. It is worthwhile for teachers to be aware of this fact as the choices they make regarding their work can greatly affect the time, energy, and personal well-being they have to give to the job they have been hired to do. It would also be worthwhile for teachers to respond with "I will volunteer to do that," when asked, "Who would like to do this?" Responding with "I will volunteer" makes it clear that you are choosing to do something that is not part of your job. Parents and students need to know the extra things teachers do are adjuncts to the job, and are not mandatory.

In naming this extra work what it is, teachers become role models for volunteerism; they teach that volunteering is an essential component of a humane society, and they demonstrate the meaning of social responsibility. This action creates a greater awareness by the public of volunteerism and its connection to social responsibility, which translates into a more socially well society.

*Julia Johnson, a learning resource teacher at Red Bluff School, in Quesnel, is a BCTF PD wellness associate and a member of the Teacher Neumagazine Advisory Board. [johnsonj@abccom.bc.ca](mailto:johnsonj@abccom.bc.ca)*

## Global action week Every child needs a teacher

This year, Global Action Week is April 24–30, 2006. Teacher organizations and other groups such as Oxfam will unite around the world, demanding that governments of rich and poor countries work together to ensure there are enough qualified teachers, to ensure every child has a quality education.

Over 100 million children wake up every day without the hope that education offers. These children know AIDS, poverty, hard labour, and hunger but some will never know a teacher. There are simply not enough teachers to ensure every child can get a quality education.

The United Nations estimates that at least 15 million more teachers are needed for the

universal primary education goal alone.

There is a desperate need for more qualified teachers—many low income countries currently save money by hiring teachers with little training and pay them poorly.

Teachers are under pressure, coping with enormous classes, poor living and working conditions, and many are affected by HIV/AIDS. Yet good teachers are essential for children to learn, female teachers are particularly important for helping girls stay in school.

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) will be watching politicians, to ensure they keep their promises of enabling every child to go to school and be taught by a qualified teacher. GCE is demanding rich countries increase aid and cancel debt, support countries' long-term

education plans including teacher salaries, and end harmful donor conditions that prevent countries employing sufficient numbers of professional teachers.

GCE demands that poor countries increase public spending on education, ensure quality teaching by training teachers to a professional standard, pay teachers a living wage and give them a say in education policy-making, and reduce class sizes and improve classroom conditions.

Five million campaigners came together in 2005. Join us in 2006 to put pressure on politicians to provide money and leadership in achieving "education for all."

For more information, visit [www.campaignforeducation.org/action/action\\_take\\_action.html](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/action/action_take_action.html)  
— Canadian Teachers' Federation

# How music came to the world



Mary Filleul, a learning and development consultant, Vancouver School Board, with the new curriculum and CD package.

Who doesn't love a good story? Produced by Mary Filleul, this new curriculum and CD package is an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural resource for Grade 8. It uses stories and music from around the world to teach and reinforce reading comprehension strategies.

The enhanced CD is the work of Valerie Dare, teacher-librarian at Britannia, and features 12 lively and provocative stories about musical instruments from around the world, performed by top Vancouver world music artists and storytellers. Short video clips of musicians playing the instruments as well as information about the origin of the instruments help to build students' understanding of the universal experience of music in cultures ranging from the Ivory Coast to China. The liner notes are detailed and offer the history and significance of each of the unusual instruments featured on the CD. The stories themselves are powerful, moral and mythic tales, which have been passed down through a grand oral tradition, which again is a universal cultural characteristic.

For eight of the twelve stories on the CD, extensive curricular activities are presented which introduce and reinforce the following essential reading skills: predicting, questioning, visualizing, sequencing, making inferences, summarizing, perspective taking and responding.

While this curriculum is geared to an average Grade 8 class, many of the activities will be most suitable to those teachers who are working with struggling and/or reluctant readers. Because the stories are from diverse places in the world, this multicultural unit would be very appropriate for a culturally mixed classroom.

This unit is based on the author's dozen years of experience working with inner-city youth in a multicultural secondary school setting. Because of a myriad of reasons from poverty to popular culture to second-language issues, students frequently do not practice the thinking skills required to process and understand texts. They have short attention spans, require constant changing stimuli and sigh that everything is "boring." They have learned to "fake read," that is, to pretend a level of understanding that is limited to literal comprehension at best. Engagement as the meaning making act of reading has become the challenge for teachers across the curriculum as students who struggle with reading generally experience little success in the secondary content areas.

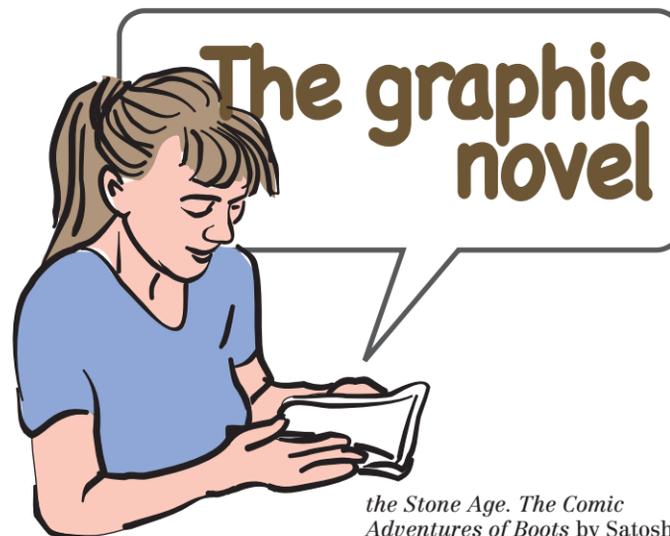
Engagement will definitely be heightened as students will listen to the best local storytellers while they follow along in their text version of the story, included in the photocopy ready package. That modeled fluency will teach and reinforce students' own ability to make meaning from text, and build context vocabulary skills. During reading, good readers use comprehension habits to mentally organize ideas and information from the text to the readers own experience and then generate connections to new ideas. *How Music Came to the World* is based on the explicit teaching of these strategies, which are culled ideas from a body of sound reading research. Richard Allington (2002) asserts that the key strategies for reading comprehension instruction can be reduced to "six Ts" and represent the common features of all exemplary reading teachers. This unit is designed with these strategies at the core.

They include maximizing the time spent on the task of reading, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies, talk around texts and meaning making, texts that are connected to students own lives, tasks that are challenging and stimulate thinking, and testing practices geared to improvement rather than achievement. All of the foregoing will serve to maximize students' success, particularly in an inner-city environment.

Diverse learners bring a variety of experiences to the classroom and have different ways of viewing the world. Teachers need to create background knowledge, academic language skills, and vocabulary strength in order to increase their students' understanding and retention of reading strategies and texts (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). This unit includes many visual aids that assist in organizing text information as well as showing connections and structures in varying texts.

Finally the strategies themselves, which form the core of the reading instruction in this unit have been generated from a wide body of research (Allington 2004, Robb 2002, Tovani 2002, Tarasoff 1998, Tierney and Readence 1985) and the author's own classroom trial and error practices. These tried-and-true techniques are not unknown practices to most teachers. However, what is essential for students' engagement of any text, is that these practices be modeled, be made explicit, be practiced, and be applied across the curriculum. *How Music Came to the World* offers the very entertaining and engaging opportunity for students and teachers to begin this experience.

*How Music Came To The World* CD and reproducible teachers resource is available for \$40 by ordering directly from Shani Danzig, Britannia Secondary School, 1001 Cotton Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5T 4P9. Phone: 604-713-8266. Fax 604-713-8265. Proceeds go to Britannia Secondary.



by Darinka Popovic

"I don't want to read."  
"Reading is boring!"  
"There is nothing in the library that I like."

Do you hear this from your students? Unfortunately these are the type of comments drifting through every school library, classrooms, and in many homes. So move away from the traditional novel and try introducing a graphic novel!

Graphic novels are a combination of illustrations and words that are designed to appeal to the reluctant reader or the lover of comic books. Think of the graphic novel as the still version of a video clip with closed captioning.

There are three groupings of graphic novels. Most of us are familiar with the first type, a comic strip that has been compiled into a book. These include titles such as *Calvin and Hobbs*, *Garfield*, and *Peanuts*. Then there is the true graphic novel, a story with a continuous plot, which is supported by graphics and captions. The Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman, which relates to the Holocaust, brought the graphic novel into the mainstream in 1991. The third format is the Japanese manga style of graphic novel, which is read from right to left. There are thousands of manga titles, often featuring a superhero.

Graphic novels are both educational and fun, but they can be very complex to decode. It is important that the reader take the time to look, absorb the images and then read the words that are presented. Children must read the words, and through the sequential artwork decode the meaning behind the illustrations and special effects such as the word bubbles. Illustrations can be colourful or are produced in black and white. The visual stimulation creates a situation where the reader must focus on the page to decode the necessary information. If a child or adult is having difficulty focusing on the coloured graphics try a novel that has black and white illustrations.

Teachers are able to use the graphic novel to encourage reading and writing in the school. You are able to use the graphic novel to teach literary techniques, create writing assignments and build bridges to the classic novel. For the child who desperately wants to read *The Hobbit* but is daunted by the length and readability, the graphic novel version opens a new world.

Though titles may be limited, there are graphic novels for every age group. For the younger child check out the books by Raymond Briggs such as *The Snowman*, *Father Christmas* or *Ug: Boy Genius of*

*the Stone Age*. *The Comic Adventures of Boots* by Satoshi Kitamura and *Little Buggy* by Kevin O'Malley will appeal to children aged five and up.

The following titles will appeal to children ages nine and up: *the Bone* series by Jeff Smith, the *Ultimate Spider-Man* series by Brian Michael Bendis, the *Akiko* series by Mark Crilley, and *Leave It to Chance* by James Robinson. Delight the girls in your household with Jimmy Gownley's *Amelia Rules!*, *Amy Unbounded: Belondweg Blossoming* by Rachel Hartman, and *WJHC: on the air* by Jane Smith Fisher.

If you want your child to delight in the joy of the classics then turn to copies of *The Hobbit*, *Wind in the Willows*, or *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

For the older student check out the following titles: *The Hobbit* by David Wenzel, *The Tale of One Bad Rat* by Bryan Talbot, *The amazing true story of a teenage single mom* by Katherine Arnoldi, *Persepolis 1 & 2* by Marjane Satrapi, *Meridian 1 & 2* by Barbara Kesel, *Promethea 1 & 2* by Jeromy Cox, *The Books of Magic* by Neil Gaiman, and *Ghost World* by Daniel Clowes.

The world of non-fiction is also available in a graphic novel format. A couple of examples included Jay Hosler's, *Clan Apis* that tells about the world of bees or the biography by Raymond Briggs' parents, *Ethel and Ernest: a True Story*.

Visit your teacher-librarian to see the wide array of product available for students of all ages. Graphic novels are available in a wide variety of genres such as science fiction, fantasy, historical, science, superheroes, and social studies. As you browse through the collection you need to be aware that not all graphic novels are suitable for the younger reader. Most graphic novels produced are geared for teenagers and adults. The material may be excessively violent, language may not be appropriate, and some books have an adult content. To assist the public, some publishers have a ranking system that is listed on some of the books. Age suitability may be listed but be aware, that there is no standardized method of rating material.

Looking for information on the web for children's graphic novels? There is a site specific for the review these materials is called *Sidekicks* (for the younger reader) and *No Flying No Tights* (for the teen reader) at [sidekicks.noflyingnotights.com/core.html](http://sidekicks.noflyingnotights.com/core.html).

Remember, the best way to raise literacy, is to expose your students to the wide variety of materials available. Have them read whatever interests them. Graphic novels might just do the trick!

Darinka Popovic is a teacher-librarian at Rock Heights Middle School, Victoria.



## Health and safety

### Mount Baker disaster need not be repeated

by Mark Keelan

It is hard to decide which is more disturbing. Is it that the number of Mount Baker Secondary School teachers who are ill and have tested high for heavy metals, including mercury, is up to 13 and climbing? Or is it that the Southeast Kootenay School District appears to have such disregard for the health and safety of their staff and students?

In her article, on page 20 of this issue of *Teacher*, Nancy Knickerbocker does a wonderful job of highlighting the struggles faced by the teachers who are ill. So let us look at the school district's health and safety record.

In April 2001, the WCB conducted a comprehensive inspection of Mount Baker Secondary School as part of a district-wide audit. Coincidentally, the inspection took place exactly in the middle of a four-and-a-half month period where staff and students were unknowingly exposed to an open container of mercury in a box that had been brought to the physics lab from the basement. Some of the inspector's observations include:

- Training for health and safety committee members is not adequate.
- Inspections are not effective at identifying health and safety issues.
- preventative maintenance and assessment of the ventilation system is not adequate.
- There are no blood borne pathogens procedures.
- Instruments containing mercury were observed without the benefit of spill kit or procedures.
- There is a lack of WHMIS education and training.

**Members must insist that good, functioning joint committees are present in our workplaces.**

The district neglected to follow through on many of their obligations and delayed implementation of others. Because of their recalcitrance, in October 2004, the WCB

imposed a \$15,000 administrative penalty on the district. WCB summarized the reasons for the penalty:

1. The district violated the same section of Part 3 of the Act or the Regulation on more than one occasion.
2. The district violated different sections of Part 3 of the Act or the Regulation on more than one occasion where the number of violations indicated a general lack of commitment to compliance.
3. The district failed to comply with a previous order within a reasonable time.
4. The board [Workers' Compensation Board] considers that the circumstances warrant an administrative penalty.
5. The board considers that an administrative penalty is necessary to motivate both the employer receiving the penalty and other employers to comply with the Act and Regulation.
6. The district failed to exercise due diligence to prevent the violation to which the penalty relates.

Lessons can be learned from the ongoing tragedy in Cranbrook. Clearly the administrative penalty imposed on the Southeast Kootenay School District was meant, in part, to be an encouragement to other employers to comply with the law. BCTF members have a role to play. We must, if necessary, educate our employers. We must exercise our health and safety rights, and we must hold employers accountable by insisting that they comply with the *Workers Compensation Act*.

The *Workers Compensation Act* Section 115, requires that employers ensure the health and safety of all their employees and of all other workers present at their workplaces. Sections 125–140 outline the rights and responsibilities of joint health and safety committees. Rights include:

- Management members cannot outnumber worker members (s.127).
- The unions decide who the worker members will be (s.128).
- Committees make recommendations to the employer about health and safety matters, participate in investigations and inspections, and ensure that investigations and inspections are carried out (s.130).
- Committees make their own rules of procedure (s.131).
- The employer must respond to committee recommendations,

and if the committee is not satisfied with the response, it may seek assistance from the WCB (s.133).

As with all other rights, health and safety rights are useless to workers unless they are enforced. Members must insist that good, functioning joint committees are present in our workplaces. Committee members must understand their role, function, and rights, and must not allow themselves to be co-opted by the employer. They must insist on being part of inspections and investigations. They must make recommendations to the employer regarding health and safety in the workplace and, if the employer refuses to implement the recommendations, must not hesitate to contact the WCB.

**Committee members must understand their role, function, and rights, and must not allow themselves to be co-opted by the employer.**

Teachers from Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook would encourage their colleagues to be squeaky wheels when it comes to advocating for health and safety. At the same time they would advise caution—beware of toxic grease.

Mark Keelan is the BCTF's health and safety officer for prevention.

### WCB claims and occupational disease

The cause of a disease, by its nature, is often more difficult to determine than a personal injury. Determining the extent to which a worker's employment played a role in producing the disease becomes a critical issue.

There are many factors used to determine compensation entitlement under the *Workers' Compensation Act*. In addition there are policies respecting this in the Rehabilitation Services and Claims Manual. It is a complex issue.

If you have reason to believe that you have contracted an occupational disease in the course of your employment, please contact: Gail Montgomery, BCTF WCB Advocate, direct line 604-871-1890, toll free 1-800-663-9163 (local 1890), [gmontgomery@bctf.ca](mailto:gmontgomery@bctf.ca).

## Victory for bullied student sends message to schools

On October 25, 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada refused to allow the North Vancouver School Board leave to appeal in the human rights complaint brought by Azmi Jubran. The decision of the BC Court of Appeal siding with the harassed youth is final and binding. The ruling states that school boards have a duty to make significant efforts to provide students with a "discrimination-free school environment." It sends a strong message to schools across the country and requires them to take action to address bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans-identified (LGBT) students.

**The school took disciplinary punishment following each incident, but failed to address the problem in a systemic or pro-active fashion.**

In June 1996, Azmi Jubran, a student at North Vancouver's Handsworth Secondary School, filed a complaint with the BC Human Rights Commission. Year after year, he had been incessantly taunted and teased by his peers, bombarded with homophobic slurs like gay, faggot, and queer; he was punched, pushed, and spat upon, and had various objects thrown at him. Jubran wasn't actually gay, but was harassed as though he was.

The school took disciplinary punishment following each incident, but failed to address the problem in a systemic or pro-active fashion.

The BC Human Rights Tribunal initially sided with Jubran and against the school board. That decision was appealed and overturned by the BC Supreme Court because Jubran was not actually gay. On April 6, 2005, the BC Court of Appeal reversed the BC Supreme Court's decision and restored the initial decision by the tribunal. In its decision, the BCCA confirmed that it is not good enough for school boards to wait for bullying to occur and then discipline the bullies afterward.

"Schools must take action so that they are no longer breeding grounds for intolerance and hatred," said Gemma Hickey, president of Egale's board of

**"...School boards must play an active role in providing a safe learning environment, free from harassment."**

directors. "This court decision underlines the continuing problem of homophobic bullying in schools, its significant and detrimental impact on all students, and the challenges of addressing it. School boards must play an active role in

providing a safe learning environment, free from harassment." In addition to her position as president of Egale, Hickey is project co-ordinator for a youth outreach project in Newfoundland and Labrador, aimed at countering the negative messages youth receive around sexual orientation and gender identity.

"Canada's school boards need to sit up and take notice of this precedent setting case," stated Egale education committee co-chair and BC teacher James Chamberlain. "They can no longer ignore the plight of any student who is targeted for harassment based upon their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. If they do so, it will be at their own peril and could involve expensive litigation."

"School boards need to address bullying when it happens," said GALE BC's Steve LeBel. "Whether or not the victimized student is gay is irrelevant."

"There are school boards in BC taking action against homophobic and transphobic bullying, notably Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince George," added Mr. LeBel. "It's time for school board trustees to speak up."

"What happened to Azmi Jubran is deplorable," said Gilles Marchildon, executive director of Egale. "Egale is committed to ensuring school boards across the country take action to provide a safe school environment for all students."

**"There are school boards in BC taking action against homophobic and transphobic bullying, notably Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince George."**

The link to the BCCA judgment is [www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/ca/05/02/2005/bcca0201err2.htm](http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/ca/05/02/2005/bcca0201err2.htm).

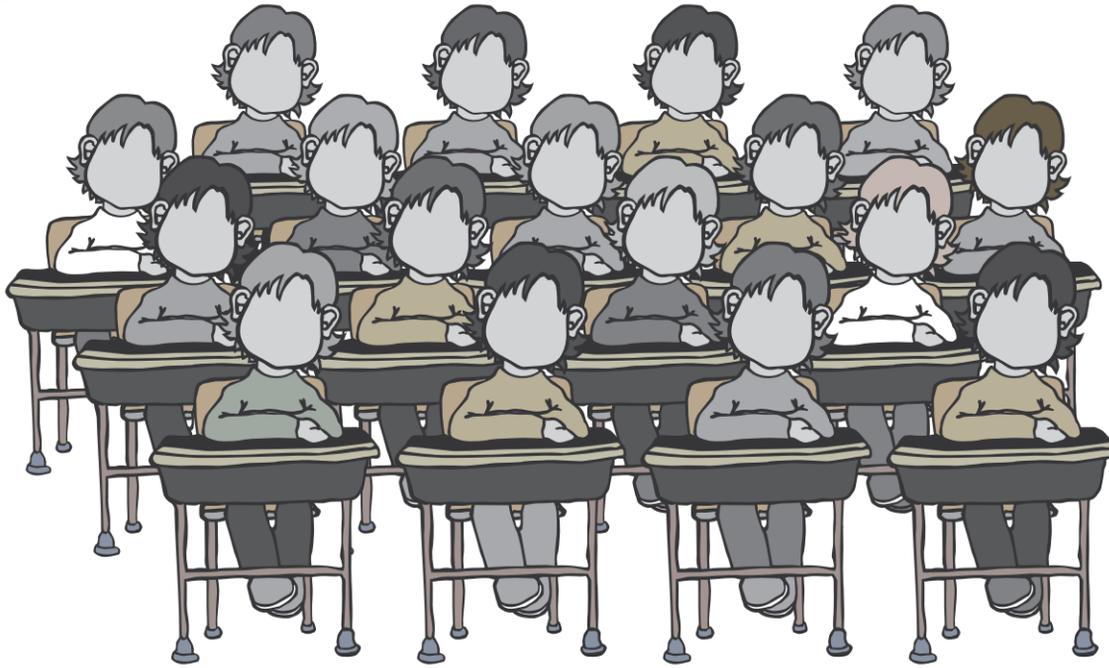
For more information and resources on homophobia and heterosexism, visit [bctf.ca/social/homophobia/](http://bctf.ca/social/homophobia/).

Egale Canada advances equality and justice for LGBT people, and their families, across Canada. Founded in 1986, Egale has over 4,000 members including people in each and every province and territory of Canada. Its work includes political action, legal interventions, and public education and awareness.

GALE BC is a provincial group advocating for change in the educational system that will result in a positive environment for LGBT people in education, whether they are students, educators, or family members.



# Grey-area students



by Beth Sparks, Ray Myrtle,  
and Saima Fewster

The focus of the October 2005 BCTF teachers' strike was the decline in learning and working conditions due to class-composition and class-size issues. The ensuing public debate raised consciousness about the increasing number of students with diverse special needs in BC classrooms. It was apparent, however, that the term *special needs* was used by both parents and teachers as a general descriptor for students who are not meeting expectations. In contrast, the term special needs in ministry policies restricts identification to criteria in 12 designated special-needs categories. We argue that most of the children who parents and teachers worry about will be missed by limiting discussions to designated students with special needs. Most students not meeting expectations are non-designated grey-area students.

## Inclusive education

Section 15(1) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* contains two basic equality rights particularly relevant to inclusive education. Every individual, therefore every child, in Canada is entitled to:

- the right to equal protection of the law; that is the right to equality of opportunity and equality of results.
- the right to equal benefit of the law; that is the right to unequal distribution of resources in the case of unequal need.

These fundamental charter rights are constitutional and as such, have primacy over all provincial or federal legislation. In addition to the charter, both federal and provincial *Human Rights Codes*, guarantee that an individual shall not be discriminated against. This means that all children have the right to educational equality. In the recent Jeffrey Moore case, the BC Human Rights Tribunal gave the BC Ministry of Education a year to ensure that funding for students with severe learning disabilities reflects the number of children who need help and to set up a system to make sure that school districts are delivering the services. In addition to legal rights, it is an economic

necessity that all students have a successful educational experience in order to develop their potential and to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

The decision to provide an inclusive educational system to which all children are entitled is, however, not based on law or economics, but on values. What values do we have as Canadians? What kind of people are we? What kind of society do we want for ourselves and our children? Inclusion is a value system that holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. Inclusive education honours diversity and focuses on supporting the gifts and needs of every student.

If as a society we believe in the value of inclusion we need to:

- recognize the barriers that block access to appropriate educational experiences for some students.
- provide the services that support equitable access to learning by all students.

In a typical BC classroom, there are students from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, students whose first language is not English, and students with a variety of learning needs:

- 10% of students are identified by the Ministry of Education as having special needs. There are 12 special-needs categories in which students are identified and designated (67% do not receive targeted funding for support service—learning disabled, moderate behaviour, gifted, and mild intellectual disability categories).

- 20% of students do not fit within a designated special needs category but are, nevertheless, not meeting expectations. These "grey area" students include slower learners as well as those with diverse social, emotional, or other learning issues affecting performance, and students who have not yet been identified as having a special-needs designation.

There are 640,000 students in BC public schools and 128,000 of them are in the grey area. There are *twice* the numbers of grey-area students as

designated students with special needs but with no official recognition these vulnerable students fall through the cracks. This is an unbearable personal loss, an incalculable societal loss, and an intolerable educational loss.

## Teaching to diversity

The combination of diverse class composition and reduced levels of specialist teacher support is a major stress factor for classroom teachers. Almost 90% of classroom teachers report stress associated with grey-area students in their classes. A likely cause for this stress is the knowledge on the one hand, that grey-area students do not have neurological problems that give rise to life-long learning disabilities and can, therefore, be brought up to grade level with intensive, relatively short-term intervention; and the realization on the other hand, that such intervention is unlikely.

## *The teachers' strike and the Ready recommendations confirmed that support for struggling students is inadequate...*

Learning assistance teachers (LAT) entered the BC education system 35 years ago to support grey-area students. As our schools became more inclusive, however, LAT caseloads became heavy with high-incidence students with special needs who *do* have serious, life-long neurological disabilities requiring long-term support. As a consequence, the unmet needs of this large group of grey-area students cause teachers stress.

The problem is *not* that we don't know who the grey-area students are. One of every five children in Kindergarten are at-risk for literacy failure and we know from research that grey-area students fall farther behind as they progress through school. Intermediate teachers track grey-area students in the not-yet-meeting columns of Grade 4 and 7 FSAs. Grey-area students drop out of high schools and swell the ranks of welfare, social services programs, and prison systems. The problem is *not* that

we don't know how to prevent reading failure. Research identifies effective teaching methods. Additional, early, intensive, explicit teaching, in small groups for 40 minutes a day produces average percentile scores in most children.

## Legislative and contractual changes to specialist support for inclusive education

The problem is a lack of political will to provide the services that support timely, equitable access to learning for grey-area students. Through legislative and contractual changes in 2002, school districts were no longer required to hire specialist support teachers. BCTF research in 2002-03 in Nanaimo and Coquitlam, reports the stress, concern, and disillusionment of specialist teachers. Naylor notes that specialist FTE was reduced while workloads increased. Specialists became generic resource personnel assigned to work outside their qualifications. Piecemeal careers became commonplace. For example, each week one of our colleagues with a Special Education Diploma teaches learning assistance for 1 1/2 days, life-skills resource for 2 days, ESL for 1 day in another school, and works as a cashier in a grocery store the other half-day a week. Another specialist remarked she would not stay in the role and "bear the brunt of trying to prop up an inclusionary education system that received only minimal specialist support."

The impact of legislative changes and contractual policies on the role of the specialist support teachers are considerable, Naylor emphasizes, and it should be of great concern to district and provincial policy-makers if such policy-makers have any interest in maintaining the province's inclusionary policy.

Inclusion needs specialist-support teachers who understand the philosophy and practices of inclusion, so that they can directly teach students and support the work of classroom teachers, while also carrying out roles in assessment, collaborative planning, and communication with parents. Provincial government decisions that have a negative impact on the specialists' ability to perform these roles mean that less inclusion will occur.

## A framework for success

The diversity in our inclusive BC classrooms poses both challenges and opportunities for students, parents, teachers, and the community. It challenges us to examine what we do and how and why we do it. It provides an opportunity to provide a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies. To that end, we suggest the following five principles as a framework for success for all students:

1. All students are entitled to effective classroom programs informed by current research and practice.
2. All students are entitled to manageable class sizes to ensure they receive attention from the classroom teacher.
3. All students not meeting learning expectations or outcomes are entitled to prompt assessment.
4. All students not meeting learning expectations or outcomes are entitled to additional daily support that may include in-class, individual, or small-group remedial strategies, according to the specific needs of the students.
5. All students not meeting learning expectations or outcomes are entitled to support directed by specialist teachers.

## Conclusion

The teachers' strike and the Ready recommendations confirmed that support for struggling students is inadequate, and the Human Rights Tribunal confirmed that although school districts can justify a lack of services because of extreme hardship, it is nevertheless illegal to deny services to people with disabilities as a way of saving money. The BC government set up a round table to discuss class size, class composition, and other issues related to learning conditions. We hope our words on grey-area students will contribute to the deliberations.

*Beth Sparks, president, Learning Assistance Teachers' Provincial Specialist Association, Ray Myrtle, president, Intermediate Teachers' Provincial Specialist Association, and Saima Fewster, president, Special Education Teachers' Provincial Specialist Association.*

References available on request

# Not-for-profit child care needed

by Sylvia Bishop

For 25 years, child and youth advocates have worked tirelessly to establish a national childcare program that is licensed, accessible, not-for-profit, and regulated. In that same time period, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of mothers with young children who are in the work force as well as an increase in the depth of poverty and the number of working poor. Families most in need of universal child care have waited a long time to see this program established.

The federal government's announcement that more than \$600 million will be given to BC for the establishment of childcare services is welcome. However, the announcement also raises several issues and concerns.

## *Families and their children need stable quality child care for the full working day.*

With the expanded mandate of the Ministry of Education to now include early learning, public libraries, and healthy schools, there is a concern that federal childcare dollars will be used to fund these and similar programs such as early literacy.

Another concern is early childhood learning and child care being split between two ministries. The announcement by the premier of cabinet assignments in June 2005, established the Ministry of Education responsible for early learning and the Ministry of Children and Family Development responsible for child care.

Dividing the services into two ministries demonstrates the government's misunderstanding of how early learning and child care are fundamentally intertwined. This is a shift from a holistic approach of early childhood development to one with a very narrow focus.

Quality child care is early learning whether delivered in preschool, family, or centre-based childcare settings. Research supports what early childhood educators and school teachers already know—the way to support children is to encourage them to develop socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Young children learn through play and a narrow focus on “academic readiness” is not the way to go.

At issue is the notion that early childhood preschools and childcare centres have a different focus—one on care and one on learning. This notion is wrong. BC's licensed preschool programs are delivered by early childhood educators who have the same training and qualifications as those who work in licensed childcare centres. The main difference is that preschools are part-time programs that children attend for a few hours, two or three days a week. To suggest that preschools are about learning while child care is about caregiving is false and misleading.

Another issue is the focus on preschools to the exclusion of older children also needing care. Families and their children

need stable quality child care for the full working day. In 2003, more than 126,000 BC mothers whose youngest child was under the age of five were in the paid labour force. Labour force participation rates are higher for mothers of school-aged children. Preschools are an important part of a comprehensive range of childcare services in a community, however, they do not meet the needs of most working families.

Childcare advocates are sending four key messages to government:

1. Federal funds should be used for a publicly funded system and not a user-fee system.
2. Childcare planning should be accountable and credible, and the community should set the priorities for new growth and development.
3. BC needs to end the divide between early learning and child care.
4. BC needs to restore the provincial childcare funding cuts and make investments in licensed school-aged child care the top priority for these funds.

As teachers, we understand the importance of the whole child. We know a child's social, emotional, and intellectual development is fostered in those early years of her or his development. We can confidently support quality accessible licensed child care because we know the positive affects it will have.

The BCTF, working jointly with the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC, is calling upon all levels of government to ensure that federal monies for child care be used for licensed, accessible, not-for-profit, and regulated child care, and that no money from this fund be used to fund any programs as part of the expanded mandate of the Ministry of Education. The BCTF will continue to work with childcare advocates to keep the pressure on this issue.

## *In 2003, more than 126,000 BC mothers whose youngest child was under the age of five were in the paid labour force.*

Teachers can support this work by writing to their MLAs stating their support for childcare dollars being used for child care, attending local community meetings to raise awareness of the issues, working with community childcare advocates, and using every opportunity available to keep this issue in the forefront. Our Advocacy in Action page, [bctf.ca/action/advocacy](http://bctf.ca/action/advocacy), contains contact information for MLAs, MPs, radio talk shows, and other ideas to help members in their advocacy work. Additional information on this issue is available at [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca) and at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org).

Sylvia Bishop is an assistant director in the BCTF's Communications and Campaigns Division.



La classe de français intensif d'Ed Stringer à Surrey.

# Le français intensif : un programme à considérer !

par Wendy Carr

Les élèves de l'école primaire au Canada apprennent le français dans un contexte de français de base (2 ou 3 leçons par semaine) ou d'immersion française (toute l'instruction en français) : approximativement 95 % et 5 % respectivement. En 1997, une nouvelle approche à l'étude du français qui s'appelle le français intensif a été présentée à Terre-Neuve et au Labrador et se trouve maintenant à Surrey, Colombie-Britannique. Certaines des raisons de présenter une nouvelle approche peuvent être liées à la recherche pour une meilleure façon d'enseigner le français. Une telle recherche s'est démarquée avec l'étude nationale du français de base (1990) un projet de recherche de neuf ans qui a mené à un changement de méthodologie s'éloignant de la concentration sur la grammaire et se servant plutôt de la langue comme outil de communication. Les changements recommandés par cette étude n'étaient pas universellement implantés et étaient basés sur deux conditions qui sont fortement problématiques : l'instruction quotidienne et les professeurs bilingues et entraînés. La difficulté de répondre à ces conditions a fini par une exécution inégale du français de base à travers le Canada.

Récemment, le gouvernement fédéral a établi comme but de doubler les diplômés bilingues en 2013. Ceci a provoqué de l'intérêt et du financement dans le secteur de l'enseignement du français comme langue seconde, et l'emphase est maintenant sur les programmes qui peuvent fournir des résultats. L'immersion française s'est déjà prouvée comme un programme efficace ; le français intensif pourrait en être un deuxième. Dr Joan Netten, Memorial University de Terre-Neuve, et Dr Claude Germain, l'Université du Québec à Montréal, ont développé le français intensif comme solution au problème du français de base au Canada. Le programme, originalement appelé *Le français de base intensif* et maintenant *Le français intensif*,

se trouve à travers le Canada et, depuis septembre 2004, à Surrey en Colombie-Britannique. Son succès jusqu'ici est dû aux solides recherches et aux résultats impressionnants grâce au temps, à l'intensité, et aux stratégies de littératie fournies par les professeurs entraînés et bilingues.

En Colombie-Britannique, seulement un sur dix élèves inscrits dans un programme de français de base continue jusqu'à la 12e année. Presque la moitié de ces élèves disent qu'ils ne peuvent pas comprendre la langue parlée. Un communiqué de presse récent de l'ACPLS/CASLT a déclaré que l'inscription dans des programmes de français de base diminue par 3,6 pour cent ou 61 000 élèves au Canada par année. Il faut des innovations pour arrêter cette tendance.

*“Student retention and success in French as a second language will only improve with the development of alternative and innovative teaching practices and programs. Newfoundland has taken the initiative in piloting programs such as intensive and extended French. These programs increase the proficiency expectations that exist in most courses.”* (Susan Forward, Communiqué de presse, ACPLS/CASLT, le 12 nov. 2004)

Le français intensif est différent du français de base parce qu'il y a beaucoup plus de temps et d'intensité, et le français devient la langue de communication en classe. Le français intensif est différent de l'immersion française parce que les élèves ne suivent pas le programme d'études de sciences, de sciences humaines, etc. en français ; ils suivent un programme d'études basé sur une approche de littératie autour des thèmes de communication, par exemple, la famille, les animaux, les loisirs, le voyage, etc. Les élèves suivent le programme d'études de maths régulier pour la 5e ou la 6e année en anglais pendant toute l'année. Ils suivent le programme d'études régulier de sciences, de sciences humaines et d'arts langagiers pendant la deuxième moitié de l'année ; on appelle ceci le programme

d'études « compressé ».

Le français intensif est basé sur un modèle de l'anglais intensif des années 70 où les nouveaux immigrants ont appris l'anglais dans un bloc intensif de temps, se concentrant principalement sur la langue plutôt que le contenu. Le français intensif est défini par ses créateurs, Joan Netten et Claude Germain (2004), comme étant un « enrichissement du programme français de base offrant de 3 – 4 fois le nombre d'heures régulièrement programmées pour FLS dans une période concentrée (cinq mois) à la fin du cycle d'école primaire (en 5e ou 6e année) ». En fait, cet enrichissement de français de base est bien plus prononcé (6 – 7 fois) en Colombie-Britannique où les élèves de la 5e ou 6e année reçoivent généralement deux leçons de français de 40 minutes – approximativement 1,5 heure par semaine – comparé aux élèves du français intensif de Surrey qui reçoivent entre trois et quatre heures par jour pendant la première moitié de l'année (le semestre intensif) et une heure par jour pendant la deuxième moitié de l'année.

Le français intensif est un programme de choix offert par le conseil scolaire dans les écoles où il y a de l'intérêt dans la communauté ; cette année il y a 5 écoles à Surrey et d'autres conseils scolaires s'intéressent au programme. Suivez bien le programme de français intensif car les élèves de ces premières classes seront les diplômés de 2013 !

Information : [www.mmecarr.ca/ICF/ICF.html](http://www.mmecarr.ca/ICF/ICF.html)

Wendy Carr, Coordonnatrice, programmes de formation des maîtres en français, Université de Colombie-Britannique.

**Synopsis:** Surrey is piloting a new program called Intensive French. This program has been very successful in eastern Canadian provinces and should be carefully considered as a means of achieving the goal that the federal government has set, namely to double the number of bilingual students graduating in Canada by 2013.

# BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2005

## President's comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2005 have been prepared in accordance with the by-laws of the Federation and the provisions of the Society Act. They reflect the stewardship of the Executive Committee over the resources of the Federation and the committee's accountability to the membership for the effective management of those resources.

On a combined (all funds) basis, expenses exceeded revenues (a deficit) by \$5.3 million for the 2004-05 year compared to a surplus of \$474,000 for the 2003-04 year. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures in the Public Education Defence Fund (PEDF) in 2004-05 to support the commitment to public education campaign.

The General Operating Fund deficit of \$761,000 for the 2004-05 year compared to a surplus of \$628,000 for the 2003-04 year. This deterioration in operating results was due mainly to higher meeting costs and accrued costs related to staffing reorganization.

The Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) deficit was \$34,000 for the 2004-05 year compared to a surplus of \$1.1 million for the 2003-04 year. The decrease in operating results was due to lower fee revenue as a result of a reduced fee allocation to the fund in 2004-05 and increased legal expenses. Reduced by the transfer of \$5 million to the PEDF as approved by the Representative Assembly, the CBDF balance decreased from \$19.7 million at June 30, 2004 to \$14.6 million at June 30, 2005.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund surplus was \$30,000 for the 2004-05 year which increased the fund balance of \$100,000 at June 30, 2004 to \$130,000 at June 30, 2005.

The PEDF deficit of \$4.6 million was offset by the transfer of \$5 million from the CBDF which increased the fund balance from \$165,000 at June 30, 2004 to \$548,000 at June 30, 2005.

At their January 2006 meeting, the Executive Committee will be considering the Finance Committee 2006-07 total fee recommendation of 1.42%, which represents a 0.04% fee increase from 2005-06 (1.38%).

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund reflect a surplus of \$8.8 million for the 2004-05 year compared to a surplus of \$3.6 million for 2004-05. The improvement in operating results was primarily due to lower claim expenditures. The fund balance has now increased from \$10.4 million at June 30, 2004 to \$19.2 million at June 30, 2005 (based on the market value of investments the fund balance would be \$52.3 million). The Income Security Committee is recommending a fee reduction of 0.16% from 2.00% in 2005-06 to 1.84% for 2006-07 which the Executive Committee will be considering at their January 2006 meeting.

Jinny Sims

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2005, and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2005, and the results of its operations and the changes in its financial position for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe, Chartered Accountants, November 1, 2005

## Management Responsibility for Financial Statements

The accompanying financial statements and all other information contained in this annual report are the responsibility of the management of the Federation. The financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Preparation of financial information is an integral part of the ongoing operation of the Federation. A system of internal accounting controls is maintained to ensure that transactions are accurately recorded on a timely basis, are properly approved and result in reliable financial statements.

The Finance and Audit Committee reviews the financial statements and recommends them to the Executive Committee for its approval. In addition, the Finance and Audit Committee meets with the officers of the Federation and the external auditors, and reports to the Executive Committee.

The financial statements have been examined by the Federation's auditors who are engaged by the Executive Committee on recommendation of the Finance and Audit Committee and whose appointment was ratified at the Annual General Meeting. The auditors have free access to the Finance and Audit Committee, without management present, to discuss the results of their audit work and their opinion on the adequacy of internal accounting controls and the quality of financial reporting.

Ken Novakowski, Executive Director

Rob McLaren, C.A., Treasurer

## STATEMENT 1 Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash	\$ 3,942	\$ 9,453
Marketable securities (Note 3)	12,296	12,444
	16,238	21,897
Membership fees and other receivables	3,313	2,891
Inventories and prepaid expenses	317	296
	19,868	25,084
<b>Due from Salary Indemnity Fund</b>	324	420
<b>Capital Assets (Notes 5 &amp; 6)</b>	15,461	15,751
	<u>\$ 35,653</u>	<u>\$ 41,255</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 2,292	\$ 3,644
Employee future benefit obligation	1,975	833
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1,036	1,094
	5,303	5,571
<b>Members' Funds</b>		
<b>General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets) (Schedule 1)</b>	14,628	15,389
<b>Internally Restricted Funds:</b>		
<b>Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)</b>	14,644	19,678
<b>Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)</b>	343	284
<b>Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)</b>	130	100
<b>Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)</b>	548	165
<b>William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund (Schedule 6)</b>	51	57
<b>Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund (Schedule 6)</b>	6	11
	30,350	35,684
	<u>\$ 35,653</u>	<u>\$ 41,255</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee





## STATEMENT 2 Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended June 30

	2005		2004						
	(in thousands)								
	General Operating Fund		Internally Restricted Funds						
	Operating	Invested in Capital Assets	Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	Contingency Fund	Provincial Bargaining Fund	Public Education Defence Fund	Other Funds	Total	Total
<b>Balance, beginning of year</b>	\$ (362)	\$ 15,751	\$ 19,678	\$ 284	\$ 100	\$ 165	\$ 68	\$ 35,684	\$ 35,210
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	136	(897)	(34)	59	30	(4,617)	(11)	(5,334)	474
Purchase of capital assets	(607)	607							
Transfers between funds			(5,000)			5,000			
<b>Balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (833)</u>	<u>\$ 15,461</u>	<u>\$ 14,644</u>	<u>\$ 343</u>	<u>\$ 130</u>	<u>\$ 548</u>	<u>\$ 57</u>	<u>\$ 30,350</u>	<u>\$ 35,684</u>

**STATEMENT 3****Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees	\$ 26,780	\$ 26,910
Net investment income	616	758
Donations	—	46
	<u>27,396</u>	<u>27,714</u>
<b>Operating expenses</b>		
General Operating Fund (Schedule 1)	24,373	22,645
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	1,535	1,193
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	363	1,222
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	553	584
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	5,414	1,124
Other funds (Schedule 6)	492	472
	<u>32,730</u>	<u>27,240</u>
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses</b>	<u>\$ (5,334)</u>	<u>\$ 474</u>

**STATEMENT 4****Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	\$ (5,334)	\$ 474
Items not affecting cash:		
depreciation	898	999
employee future benefits	1,142	833
	<u>(3,294)</u>	<u>2,306</u>
<b>Changes in non-cash working capital items</b>		
Membership fees and other receivables	(422)	197
Inventories and prepaid expenses	(21)	27
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund	96	818
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(1,353)	2,310
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	(58)	165
	<u>(1,758)</u>	<u>3,517</u>
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Building revenue	—	(358)
Purchase of capital assets	(607)	(219)
	<u>(607)</u>	<u>(577)</u>
<b>Change in cash and marketable securities</b>	(5,659)	5,246
<b>Cash and marketable securities,</b>		
beginning of year	21,897	16,651
<b>Cash and marketable securities, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 16,238</u>	<u>\$ 21,897</u>

**Schedule 1****General Operating Fund  
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance  
for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 23,776	\$ 23,520
<b>Divisional operating expenses</b>		
Management	2,932	2,329
Communications/Campaigns	4,048	3,708
Finance and Administrative Services	2,384	2,084
Research and Technology	1,961	1,882
Income Security	316	362
Professional and Social Issues	3,997	3,835
Field Service	2,481	2,277
CA Protective Services	2,293	2,240
	<u>20,412</u>	<u>18,717</u>
Grants to Locals	3,961	3,928
	<u>24,373</u>	<u>22,645</u>
Net interest expense	164	247
	<u>24,537</u>	<u>22,892</u>
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses</b>	(761)	628
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	15,389	14,761
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 14,628</u>	<u>\$ 15,389</u>

**Schedule 2****Collective Bargaining Defence Fund  
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance  
for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 777	\$ 1,363
Net investment income	724	967
	<u>1,501</u>	<u>2,330</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Support to locals	692	685
Legal costs over GOF budget	516	196
Bargaining rights/structures	326	—
Legislative intervention response	2	74
Third party dispute	(1)	129
Bill 37	—	99
Protest day GOF fees	—	10
	<u>1,535</u>	<u>1,193</u>
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses</b>	(34)	1,137
<b>Transfer to Public Education Defence Fund</b>	(5,000)	(260)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	19,678	18,801
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 14,644</u>	<u>\$ 19,678</u>

**Schedule 3****Contingency Fund  
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance  
for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 388	\$ —
Net investment income	34	26
Forest fire relief donations	—	46
	<u>422</u>	<u>72</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Legal costs over GOF budget	230	360
Bills 50 and 51	68	712
Tsunami relief	50	—
Citizens' inquiry/Canada US relations	5	—
ESEUR (Russia) relief fund	3	—
Caribbean hurricane relief fund	3	—
Sooke Happy Valley donation	2	—
PSAC job action	1	—
Cuban Teachers' Union	1	—
Forest fire relief grants	—	110
Marysville Education Association	—	10
Ferry & Marine Workers' Union	—	10
Citizens for Public Power campaign	—	5
Save the Coquihalla Coalition	—	5
United Steelworkers of America	—	5
Canadian Federation of Students	—	5
	<u>363</u>	<u>1,222</u>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	59	(1,150)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	284	1,434
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 343</u>	<u>\$ 284</u>

**Schedule 4****Provincial Bargaining Fund  
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance  
for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 581	\$ 584
Net investment interest	2	4
	<u>583</u>	<u>588</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Provincial negotiations	553	584
	<u>553</u>	<u>584</u>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses</b>	30	4
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	100	96
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 130</u>	<u>\$ 100</u>

**Schedule 5****Public Education Defence Fund  
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance  
for the year ended June 30**

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 777	\$ 974
Net investment income	20	8
	<u>797</u>	<u>982</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Commitment to public education	4,332	263
Support for teaching and learning	433	134
BC Federation of Labour	304	298
Public education advocacy	285	388
Charter for public education	60	41
	<u>5,414</u>	<u>1,124</u>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(4,617)	(142)
<b>Transfer from Collective Bargaining Defence Fund</b>	5,000	260
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	165	47
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 548</u>	<u>\$ 165</u>

**Schedule 6**  
**Other Internally Restricted Funds**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	W.R.Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund	Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund	Total 2005	Total 2004
<b>Revenue</b>				
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 450	\$ 31	\$ 481	\$ 469
<b>Expenses</b>				
Grants	456	36	492	472
<b>Deficiency</b> of revenue over expenses	(6)	(5)	(11)	(3)
<b>Fund balances</b> , beginning of year	57	11	68	71
<b>Fund balances</b> , end of year	<u>\$ 51</u>	<u>\$ 6</u>	<u>\$ 57</u>	<u>\$ 68</u>

**Notes to Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended June 30, 2005**

**1. BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF COMBINATION**

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the BCTF or the Federation) is incorporated as a society pursuant to the Society Act of British Columbia, and is a trade union pursuant to the Labour Relations Code of B.C. and the Public Education Labour Relations Act. The Federation is exempt from income tax.

The financial statements of the Federation include the results of the seven funds described below.

**General Operating Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to meet the goals of the Federation through program expenditures planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly. This fund also holds the investment in capital assets.

**Collective Bargaining Defence Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to pay costs directly related to strikes, lockouts, the honouring of picket lines in third-party disputes, and contract enforcement in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Contingency Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to meet, without delay, special or emergent expenses that could not reasonably have been anticipated and to promote the cause of public education by providing the financial means to respond effectively to any crisis in education. Expenditures from the Contingency Fund are made in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Public Education Defence Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to ensure adequate resources are available to effectively respond to the attack on public education launched by the government and to support the implementation of the Federation's Public Education Advocacy Plan. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Provincial Bargaining Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to pay costs related to provincial contract negotiations. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

**William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to improve public education in developing countries.

**Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to promote socially responsible teaching practices.

The **Salary Indemnity Fund** is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident. The total fee allocated to the Salary Indemnity Fund was 2.0% of gross salary for the 2004-05 membership year (2003-04 was 2.0%). Any fund deficiency is the responsibility of the Federation. The financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

**2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

**a. Fund Accounting**

The Federation follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees whereby fees are allocated to each fund on the basis approved annually at the Annual General Meeting.

**b. Revenue Recognition**

Membership fees are recognized as revenue of the appropriate restricted fund as received or receivable. Investment income from the Federation's investments is recognized as revenue as earned and is allocated to the appropriate restricted fund based on the investments held for the fund.

**c. Marketable Securities**

Marketable securities are originally recorded at cost. If there is an other than temporary decline in value, these investments are written down to provide for the loss.

**d. Inventories**

Inventories of lesson aid materials are valued at cost or net realizable value, whichever is the lower.

**e. Capital Assets**

Capital assets are recorded at cost. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:

Building	30 years	Furniture & equipment	3-15 years
Renovations	9-10 years	Computer hardware &	
Tenant improvements	10 years	software	3-10 years

**f. Employee Future Benefits**

The Federation maintains a defined benefit registered pension plan for all support staff of the Federation including casual and temporary employees and any administrative and excluded staff who are not eligible to join the Teachers' Pension Plan.

The pension expense and plan funding requirements are determined tri-annually by independent consulting actuaries. The cost of pension benefits earned is determined using the projected benefit method pro-rated on service and is charged to expense as services are rendered. Adjustments arising from plan amendments, changes in assumptions, experience gains and losses, and the net pension assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated average remaining service lives of the employees.

In addition, the Federation provides non-pension benefits to qualifying retirees consisting of supplementary health insurance benefits. The cost of post-retirement benefits other than pensions is recognized on an accrual basis over the working lives of employees. The expense reported in the current year, based on tri-annual independent actuarial assessment, is an allocation of estimated future benefits under these plans related to the service of employees in the current year. Future obligations for these benefits are funded when they occur.

**g. Use of estimates**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires the Federation to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates and would impact results of operations and cash flows.

**3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES**

The market value of marketable securities at June 30, 2005 was \$12,485,000 compared to a carrying value of \$12,296,000 (June 30, 2004 market value—\$12,333,000; carrying value—\$12,444,000).

**4. MEMBERSHIP FEE**

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2005 was 1.38% of the gross salary of each member.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:

	2004-05	2003-04
General Operating Fund	1.25%	1.23%
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	0.04	0.07
Contingency Fund	0.02	—
Provincial Bargaining Fund	0.03	0.03
Public Education Defence Fund	0.04	0.05
	<u>1.38%</u>	<u>1.38%</u>

The General Operating Fund allocates 1.86% of its fee revenue to the William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund. In addition, the fund allocates \$1 per member per year to the Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund.

**5. CAPITAL ASSETS**

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2005 Net Book Value	2004
			(in thousands)	
Land	\$ 4,430	\$ —	\$ 4,430	\$ 4,430
Building	12,736	(3,775)	8,961	9,436
	<u>17,166</u>	<u>(3,775)</u>	<u>13,391</u>	<u>13,866</u>
Renovations	763	(233)	530	411
Tenant improvements	740	(327)	413	384
Furniture and equipment	495	(296)	199	140
Computer hardware & software	1,594	(666)	928	950
	<u>\$20,758</u>	<u>\$(5,297)</u>	<u>\$15,461</u>	<u>\$15,751</u>

**6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS**

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

	2004-05	2003-04
	(in thousands)	
General Operating Fund	\$ 8,677	\$ 8,614
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	6,784	7,137
	<u>\$15,461</u>	<u>\$15,751</u>

In 2000, the Representative Assembly authorized a loan of \$8,400,000 from the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund to the General Operating Fund to finance the purchase of the remaining interest in the Federation's building. For presentation purposes, the inter-fund loan payable and receivable are eliminated in the combined statement of financial position.

The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principle and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2005. Loan interest for the year 2004-05 was \$244,182.

**7. EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS**

The following tables pertain to the Federation's employee future benefit plans, and provide fair value of plan assets, benefit obligations, and funded status for the year ended June 30, 2005:

	Pension	Non-pension	Total
	(in thousands)		
Fair value of plan assets	\$ 24,465	\$ —	\$ 24,465
Accrued benefit obligation	(19,003)	(6,971)	(25,974)
Funded status—plan surplus (deficit)	<u>\$ 5,462</u>	<u>\$(6,971)</u>	<u>\$ (1,509)</u>

The net expense for the Federation's future employee benefit plans is as follows:

	Pension	Non-pension	Total
	(in thousands)		
Plan (recovery) expense	<u>\$ (584)</u>	<u>\$ 1,726</u>	<u>\$ 1,142</u>

The actuarial determinations were based on the following assumptions during the year:

Discount rate	6.5%
Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets	7.0%
Rate of compensation increase	2.5%

The assumed healthcare cost trend rate at June 30, 2005 was 10%, decreasing to 5% after five years.

**8. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

**a. Fair Value**

The Federation's financial instruments include cash, membership fees and other receivables, due from Salary Indemnity Fund, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, and due to Provincial Specialist Associations. The fair value of these financial instruments approximates their carrying value. The fair value of marketable securities is disclosed in Note 3.

**b. Interest Rate Risk**

Financial risk is the risk arising from changes in interest rates. The Federation is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed by both management and professional investment advisors.

**9. SALARY INDEMNITY FUND**

A summary of the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund is as follows:

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
Total assets	<u>\$186,919</u>	<u>\$178,676</u>
Total liabilities	167,687	168,233
Fund balance, end of year	<u>19,232</u>	<u>10,443</u>
	<u>\$186,919</u>	<u>\$178,676</u>

A summary of the revenue and expenditures is as follows:

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
Total revenue	\$ 51,816	\$ 51,924
Total expenditures	<u>(43,027)</u>	<u>(48,273)</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ 8,789</u>	<u>\$ 3,651</u>

# Salary Indemnity Fund

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Salary Indemnity Fund as at June 30, 2005, the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance and changes in cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

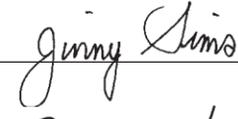
In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2005, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe  
Chartered Accountants  
November 1, 2005

## STATEMENT 1 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash	\$ 581	\$ 721
Accounts receivable	4,804	4,245
Investments (Note 3)	180,918	173,012
Capital assets (Note 4)	616	698
	<u>\$186,919</u>	<u>\$178,676</u>
<b>Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 477	\$ 463
Due to General Operating Fund	324	420
Provision for claims (Note 5)	166,886	167,350
	<u>167,687</u>	<u>168,233</u>
Invested in capital assets	616	698
<b>Fund balance</b>	<u>18,616</u>	<u>9,745</u>
	<u>19,232</u>	<u>10,443</u>
	<u>\$186,919</u>	<u>\$178,676</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee


## STATEMENT 2 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Revenue, Expenditures and Fund Balance for the Year Ended June 30

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees (Note 1)	\$37,830	\$37,208
Teachers' share of employment insurance premium reductions	1,726	1,758
Investment income	12,260	12,958
	<u>51,816</u>	<u>51,924</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Short term claims paid	9,094	9,212
Long term claims paid	26,955	27,313
	<u>36,049</u>	<u>36,525</u>
(Decrease) Increase in actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5)	(464)	5,182
Total claim expenditures	<u>35,585</u>	<u>41,707</u>
Excess of revenue over claim expenditures	16,231	10,217
Administrative expenses	6,612	5,842
Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6)	830	724
	<u>7,442</u>	<u>6,566</u>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures</b>	8,789	3,651
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	<u>10,443</u>	<u>6,792</u>
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$19,232</u>	<u>\$ 10,443</u>

## STATEMENT 3 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended June 30

	2005	2004
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 8,789	\$3,651
Items not affecting cash (Decrease) Increase in actuarial valuation of provision for claims	(464)	5,182
Depreciation	111	112
	<u>8,436</u>	<u>8,945</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	(559)	(1,496)
Accounts payable	14	75
Due to General Operating Fund	(96)	(818)
	<u>(641)</u>	<u>(2,239)</u>
	\$ 7,795	\$6,706
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(29)	(17)
Increase in investment portfolio	(7,906)	(5,304)
	<u>(7,935)</u>	<u>(5,321)</u>
<b>Change in cash</b>	(140)	1,385
<b>Cash (Bank indebtedness), beginning of year</b>	721	(664)
<b>Cash, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 581</u>	<u>\$ 721</u>

## Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2005

### 1. BACKGROUND AND FEES

The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident.

The membership fee for the year ending June 30, 2005 was 2.0% of the gross salary of each member. For the year ending June 30, 2006, the 2005 Annual General Meeting approved a fee of 2.0% of the gross salary of each member.

The financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The Federation is a trade union pursuant to the *Labour Relations Code of B.C.* and the *Public Education Labour Relations Act*. The Salary Indemnity Fund is part of the Federation and is therefore exempt from income tax. The financial statements of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

**a. Fund Accounting:** The Salary Indemnity Fund follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees.

**b. Revenue Recognition:** Restricted membership fees related to the Fund are recognized as revenue of the Fund in the year they are earned.

Investment income on the Fund's net resources is recognized as revenue in the year it is earned.

**c. Investments:** Investments are originally recorded at cost since they are held as long-term investments. In the event of a permanent decline in market value, the investments are written down to reflect the decline in market value. The resulting balance is known as the carrying value. The carrying value is not increased to reflect any subsequent increase in market value.

**d. Capital Assets:** Capital assets are recorded at cost. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:

Furniture and equipment	5 to 15 years
Computer hardware and software	3 to 10 years
Renovations	10 years

**e. Use of Estimates:** The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates and would impact future results of operations and cash flows.

### 3. INVESTMENTS

The market value of long-term investments as at June 30, 2005 was \$214,608,000 compared to a carrying value of \$180,918,000. (June 30, 2004 market value—\$196,113,000; carrying value—\$173,012,000).

### 4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2005 Net Book Value	2004 Net Book Value
			(in thousands)	
Furniture & equipment	\$ 174	\$ (74)	\$ 100	\$ 98
Computer hardware & software	549	(223)	326	378
Renovations	320	(130)	190	222
	<u>\$1,043</u>	<u>\$ (427)</u>	<u>\$ 616</u>	<u>\$ 698</u>

Depreciation expense for the year ended June 30, 2005 was \$110,748 (2003—\$111,713).

### 5. CLAIM EXPENDITURES AND PROVISION FOR CLAIMS

The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims is based upon an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2005 performed in accordance with standards established by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries using data supplied by management of the Plan. This valuation uses standard claims tables modified to reflect Plan experience. In subsequent periods the accrued liabilities and provision for claims are adjusted based upon actual Plan experience. These adjustments can be significant. The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims for the individual segments of the plan are set out below:

	June 30 2005	June 30 2004
	(in thousands)	
Short term claims	\$ 4,373	\$ 4,286
Long term claims	162,513	163,064
Total provision for claims	<u>\$166,886</u>	<u>\$167,350</u>

As a result of the current period's actuarial review, adjustments were required for claim benefits and pension contributions attributable to prior periods. These adjustments are included in the operations of the current period.

	June 30 2005	June 30 2004
	(in thousands)	
Decrease related to current period	\$ (5,189)	\$ (4,533)
Increase related to prior periods	4,725	9,715
Total change in provision for claims	(464)	5,182
Opening provision for claims	<u>167,350</u>	<u>162,168</u>
Closing provision for claims	<u>\$166,886</u>	<u>\$167,350</u>

### 6. INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRUST COMPANY EXPENSES

The investments of the Salary Indemnity Fund are managed by independent investment management firms in accordance with investment policies and restrictions as established by the Federation and the Trustees' Act (B.C.) and are lodged for safekeeping with a trust company.

### 7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

**a. Fair Value:** The Fund's financial instruments include cash, accounts receivable, accounts payable and due to General Operating Fund. The fair value of these financial instruments approximates their carrying values. The fair value of investments is disclosed in Note 3.

**b. Interest Rate Risk:** Financial risk is the risk arising from changes in interest rates. The Fund is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed by both management and professional investment managers.

# 10 New BCTF lesson aids

**1 LA 9932—Inclusive Education** by Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, 68 p. Fall 2005. This issue of LATA's *The Vital Link* journal, volume 10, number 2, focuses on how to best suit the needs of all learners. The articles include a number of different perspectives on what teachers, parents and students have to say about inclusive education. \$12

**2 LA 2042A—Earth Wall Chart** produced by the Global Education Project, ©2005. This folded coloured wall chart, 68 cm x 92 cm, is a graphic look at the state of the planet. The chart includes 15 maps and 99 charts which provides one big picture. The Earth chart presents essential data and commentaries on the condition of the world's environment, both natural and human. Ecology topics include fresh water, climate change, pollution and toxics, biomes and habitat, ocean currents, biotechnology, species at risk and soil health. Humanity topics include population, health and lifespan, wealth and poverty, farming and fishing, oil, coal and gas, food supply, energy use and security. Grades 6–12 \$19.95. Also available laminated, **LA 2042B** \$33.95

**3 LA 2233—Children At Risk: Our Back Yard** produced by Lorraine Duske, ©2005, 24-minute DVD. This film is an insightful perspective of six individual children who survive daily on the streets of Vancouver, BC. It is a progressive documentary that reveals their stories through their own eyes. From these adolescence's point of view, the audience is taken into their makeshift home underground and onto the city streets. Their individual experiences are woven together with color, texture and music. They share with us who they are, how they ended up where they are today, what organizations/systems are working for them, and where they are still falling through the cracks. Their painful and much ignored existence is reflected upon, with the result of social solutions and their hope for tomorrow. The film-maker was personally moved by all six kids. Their experiences were presented with heart, soul, and insight. Grades 8 and up. \$31.95

**4 LA 2334—Kindness Counts: Empathy Unit** produced by the BC SPCA Humane Education Department, 60 p. ©2004. This primary curriculum-linked unit is designed to teach empathy, compassion, and respect for others, for animals and nature. Through participatory activities students will understand and demonstrate empathy by noting similarities and differences between people and animals. By examining their own feelings, students learn to recognize how their actions and words affect others and the world around them. An awareness and acknowledgement of how kind acts affect other people, animals and the environment is the result. Developing empathy skills works to reduce the acts of violence to all living things. The unit includes a hands-on guide for introducing the concept of empathy for others and animals. Materials also link the empathy concept to the care of nature. Master activity sheets for and general pet care information is also included. For a free copy of the unit visit [www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids) Grades K–2. \$7.95

**5 LA 2335—Friends for Life** produced by the BC SPCA Humane Education Department, 58 p. ©2004. This intermediate level unit is designed to teach responsibility and empathy. Empathy, a skill essential for pro-social behaviour and a prime indicator of the potential success of a child, can sometimes be difficult to teach. Incorporating animals as the subject gives students a neutral ground from which to start. Responsibility contributes to students feeling confident. It is important that students understand that their actions and words are their responsibility and affect others around them. Pet care responsibility is quite common for many students. By using pet care as a base to introduce responsibility, the concept can be extended to students' responsibilities as citizens within the community. The unit includes a teacher's guide and student worksheets. For a free copy of the unit visit [www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids), Grades 3–5

**6 LA 2336—Cluck! The Life of an Egg-Laying Chicken** produced by the BC SPCA Humane Education Department, 42 p. ©2003. This unit introduces young

people about farming practices, chicken physiology and behaviours, encourages students to think critically about where their food comes from, and teaches them respect for animals. The unit lessons go beyond animal welfare by ensuring young people understand the differences that can be made through informed consumer choices to help direct social change. For a free copy of the unit visit [www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/kids) Grades 3–5.

**7 LA 2337—Bite Free Kit—Dog Bite Safety Unit** produced by the BC SPCA Humane Education Department, 10-minute VHS video and 42 p. ©2002. This kit is a comprehensive, award-winning dog bite safety unit used extensively across North America. It includes a teacher's manual with lesson plans, dog communication information, master worksheets and more, plus the 10-minute entertaining and informative video "Bite Free: Playing It Safe with Dogs." Also included is "Tom and Luka Teach Bite Free," about how to present a dog bite safety lesson in a classroom. K–6. \$22.95

**8 LA 9175—More Novel Study Questions for Intermediate Students** by Tina Drewes, CD Rom, ©2005. The author of LA 9007, "Novel Study Questions for Intermediate Students", has produced a CD Rom with novel studies for 135 novels. The novel studies include chapter questions on looking for detail, general comprehension and critical thinking. Grades 4–7. \$5.95

**9 LA F9923—Au pays des gitans : Recueil d'outils pour intégrer l'élève en difficulté dans la classe régulier**, Martine Lederer, 242 p. ©2001. Au pays des gitans propose des pistes, des moyens qui nourrissent une vision de l'enseignement où la différence de chaque élève est acceptée, reconnue et considérée comme une contribution originale au projet de vie que s'est donné la classe. Ce livre incorpore également une banque d'adresses Internet et du matériel reproductible pour appuyer les enseignants. \$49.95

**10 LA F9924—Stratégies et compétences : Intervenir pour mieux agir**, Martine Peters et Sylvie Viola, 213 p. ©2003. Pourquoi enseigner des stratégies d'apprentissage ? L'acquisition de stratégies d'apprentissage permet à l'élève de construire des connaissances et de développer des compétences, favorisant ainsi sa réussite scolaire. Cet ouvrage comprend 15 stratégies, faisant des liens entre celles-ci et le développement des compétences, le rôle de l'enseignant et des situations d'apprentissages significatifs. M–6/7. \$39.95

More curriculum resources and information are available at [www.bcAlmer.ca](http://www.bcAlmer.ca).

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 Ave., Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 or telephone 604-871-2180 or toll free 1-800-663-9163, Local 2180, with a Visa or Mastercard. GST and postage/ handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail. Lesson Aids office and display room hours: 9:00-5:00 Mon. to Fri. from Sept. to June; 9:00-5:00 Tues. to Fri. during July and Aug.; 9:00-12:00 on Sat. during Sept., Oct., Jan., and Feb. [bctf.ca/LessonAids](http://bctf.ca/LessonAids).

## Janitors' Wal-Mart suit moves forward

A US federal judge ruled that a group of undocumented immigrants can move ahead with their lawsuit against Wal-Mart for making them work up to 70 hours a week without overtime and locking them in stores so they couldn't leave until a manager unlocked the doors.

At least 170 workers are involved in the case, a number

## Pension seminars 2005–06

Saturdays (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with a question period following). Seminars cover such topics as the Teachers' Pension Plan, purchase rules, pension options, online tools, and retirement issues. Pre-registration is NOT required.

Feb. 4, 2006	Richmond	Hilton Vancouver Airport
Feb. 11, 2006	Coquitlam	Executive Hotel & Resorts
Feb. 18, 2006	Vernon	Prestige Inn
March 4, 2006	Prince George	Coast Inn of the North
March 25, 2006	Kamloops	Campus Activity Centre, UCC
April 1, 2006	Delta	Delta Town & Country Inn
April 8, 2006	Nanaimo	Coast Bastion Inn
April 22, 2006	Vancouver	UBC Student Union Building
April 29, 2006	Williams Lake	Overlander Hotel
April 29, 2006	Penticton	Penticton Lakeside Resort
May 6, 2006	Nelson	BW Baker Street Inn

## Age + Service = 88? Don't wait!

If you are age 64, or your age and contributory service total 88, you *may* voluntarily withdraw from the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan: Long Term.

If you are age 65, or your age and service total 90, you are no longer eligible for long-term benefits, and you *should*

withdraw.

It is necessary to apply to withdraw—the forms are available from the Income Security Division (604-871-1920 or 1-800-663-9163), or online at [bctf.ca/pensions/salary/LT-WithdrawalForm.shtml](http://bctf.ca/pensions/salary/LT-WithdrawalForm.shtml).

that both sides expected to increase as more victims sign on to the case. The workers were employed as janitors in 21 states. Although a few worked directly for Wal-Mart, the court found that most were employed by outside contractors but Wal-Mart could reasonably be considered a joint employer.

The suit was originally filed in November 2003. Wal-Mart said that the suit should be thrown out because, as undocumented workers, the janitors were ineligible for protection under the US *Fair Labor Standards*

Act. The judge rejected that view.

Source: UCS/CALM

## Lest we forget

In February 1942, more than 22,000 Japanese-Canadians, multigenerational or otherwise, were stripped of all non-portable possessions, listed as security risks, and removed to security camps where they remained throughout the war.

Many had no active connection to Japan.

Source: CALM

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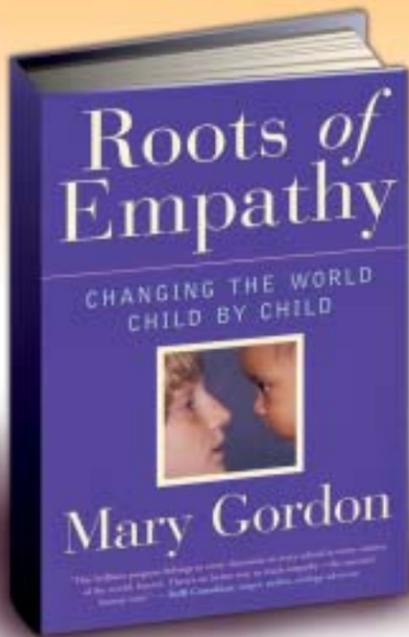
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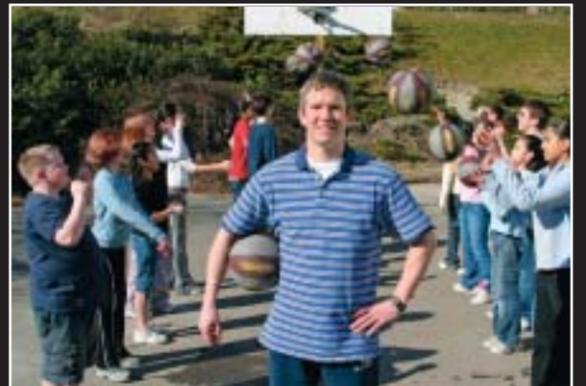
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**QUALICUM** July rental, 2 bd. home, 1.5 acres, all amenities, fully furnished, \$1000/mo. 250-752-7372.

**SUNSHINE COAST** Halfmoon Bay, waterfront cottage, fully equipped, sleeps 4. F/P, BBQ, W/D, 604-885-0651, e-mail: [fbishop@gmail.com](mailto:fbishop@gmail.com)

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**WHISTLER** Alta Lake, waterfront, 1 bd. condo, sleeps 4, 1 km to village, FP, TV/VCR/ DVD. summer/winter rates, 604-298-2070.

**WHISTLER GETAWAY**. Pinecrest Estates, 5 bd., 1400 sq.ft. cabin, sauna, deck with BBQ, fully equip. kitchen, DW, WD, wood stove (wood provided). Rates from \$175/nt. (seasonal) [glush@shaw.ca](mailto:glush@shaw.ca) or 604-936-3346.

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**WHISTLER** Village North, 2 bd. deluxe townhome. 604-531-6847. View at [www.whistlervacationhome.ca](http://www.whistlervacationhome.ca)

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**WHISTLER** Deluxe 1 bd., village, 2.5/bed, Creekside, rates \$69+, [alij@shaw.ca](mailto:alij@shaw.ca)

**WHISTLER** Townhouse, sleeps 8, fully equip. 604-985-7669 or Gary 604-669-7212.

**WHISTLER CREEK** townhouse for rent. View of Alta Lake. 2 bath., 3 bd., sleeps 6. 604-535-3447.

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## FEBRUARY 2006

**2-4** Conference 2006, Child Development Practices: A Decade of Change, sponsored by UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education, focussing on knowledge and progress over the past 10 years as it relates to early-childhood development. Abstracts accepted until May 31, 2005. Contact 604-822-2801, [ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca), [interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://interprofessional.ubc.ca).

**9** Richmond. Thinking Like a Historian Workshop and Dinner, using primary sources with your classes, Richmond Cultural Centre, 3.45 to 7 p.m. Call 604-231-6427 to register.

**16-17** Richmond. Conférence de l'Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme francophone (APPICP), De fil en aiguille... le français se tisse, conférencière-invitée, Annie Bourret, linguiste, Hotel Executive Airport Plaza. Sophie Bergeron, [sbergeron@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:sbergeron@sd43.bc.ca) ou [bctf.ca/psas/APPICP](http://bctf.ca/psas/APPICP)

**16-18** Richmond. Thinking Like a Historian Workshop and Dinner, using primary sources with your classes, Richmond Cultural Centre, 3:45 to 7:00 p.m. Call 604-231-6427 to register.

**16-18** Coquitlam. B.C. Art Teachers' Association (BCATA) 50th anniversary celebration. Glen Eagle Secondary School. Conference details and registrations forms are available at the web site: [www.bctf.ca/PSAs/BCATA/2006/](http://www.bctf.ca/PSAs/BCATA/2006/)

**16-18** Chilliwack. Linking Literacy Through Language, Culture, and Spirituality, Joint Aboriginal Education Conference (including First Nations Education Association [FNEA]), Sardis Secondary South Campus & Skowkale Smokehouse. Registration through [lrudland@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:lrudland@vsb.bc.ca); f: 604-713-5244.

**17** Vancouver. Adult Educators' Provincial Specialist Association (AEPESA) Conference, Adult Educators: A Prime Location in Education, in partnership with Continuing International Education Vancouver School District Adult Educators, VSB office building. Focus on adult learning styles, adult teaching strategies, and cultural diversity in the adult classroom. Contact AEPESA President Leo Hutchinson, [lhutch@shaw.ca](mailto:lhutch@shaw.ca).

**17** Kelowna. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association Regional Conference, Inclusionary Practices: Building a Community of Learners in Our Classrooms, with Vianne Timmons, Ph.D. Contact Alan Peterson, 250-377-2226, or e-mail [lataconference@hotmail.com](mailto:lataconference@hotmail.com).

**17** Coquitlam. B.C. Social Studies Teachers' Association (BCSSTA) Conference, Canada's Role in the Global Community, Pinetree Secondary School, 3000 Pinewood, Coquitlam. Register online at [www.bcssta.ca](http://www.bcssta.ca).

**17** Victoria. GVPE (Greater Victoria Physical Educators) P.E. in Action. Educate, Motivate, Participate at the 3rd Annual Conference at Spectrum Community School. Keynote address by Dr. Bruce Howe. Contact: [gvpe@shaw.ca](mailto:gvpe@shaw.ca).

**17-18** Kelowna. Orchestrating Success Series: Orchestrating Success in Reading, Orchestrating Positive and Practical Behaviour Plans, and Orchestrating Success by Adapting and Modifying Programs, presented by Dawn Reithaug at the Best Western Inn, Kelowna. Call 604-921-8660, e-mail [learningwithoutlimits@yahoo.com](mailto:learningwithoutlimits@yahoo.com).

**17-18** Burnaby. B.C. Music Educators' Association (BCMEA) provincial conference, Upbeat 2005, Burnaby Secondary School. Includes workshops, keynotes, industry displays, five provincial honours groups, and a stream for non-music teachers. Contact [sandraennis@shaw.ca](mailto:sandraennis@shaw.ca), [upbeat2005.ca](http://upbeat2005.ca).

## MARCH 2006

**2-4** Vancouver. SFU Faculty of Education Conference, Teacher Development: The Key to Education in the 21st Century, SFU's Faculty of Education celebrates 40 years of educating teachers to touch the future. An international conference featuring Stephen Lewis, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Kenneth Zeichner and Rob Tierney, Hyatt Regency Vancouver Contact Josh Coward at [jcoward@sfu.ca](mailto:jcoward@sfu.ca) or 604-291-4344.

**2-4** Vancouver. International Conference on Teacher Development: The Key to Education in the 21st Century. Hyatt Regency Hotel. Hosted by SFU's Faculty of Education. Presenters: Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Ken Zeichner, Rob Tierney, Stephen Lewis, and more. Flyer online at [www.tdevconference.ca/sept16flyer.pdf](http://www.tdevconference.ca/sept16flyer.pdf), Conference web site: [www.tdevconference.ca](http://www.tdevconference.ca).

**3** Prince George. Educational Spring Fling 2nd North Central Conference. Keynote Speaker: Carol Boothroyd. Partially supported by a grant from the BCTF. Contact Deb Vandal at [dvandal@sd57.bc.ca](mailto:dvandal@sd57.bc.ca), or 250-562-7214. Web site [web.bctf.bc.ca/locals/Local57/index.shtml](http://web.bctf.bc.ca/locals/Local57/index.shtml).

**9-10** Vancouver. Special Education Association (SEA) 31st Annual Cross-currents Conference, Western Bayshore Conference Centre. Hear entertaining, inspiring, and compassionate Anita Archer speak on the art and heart of education. Choose from 30+ sessions on meeting the challenging needs of diverse learners. For more information, contact [pfortier@sd57.bc.ca](mailto:pfortier@sd57.bc.ca), or visit [bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA](http://bctf.bc.ca/psas/SEA).

**24-25** Richmond. Radisson President Hotel & Suites. The conference is a PD opportunity designed specifically for new teachers (those in their first five years of teaching) and for student teachers. Registration Feb. 1 to March 10 on a first-come, first-served basis. Conference details and registration forms will be available on our web site February 1, 2006. Cost: \$70 (teachers), \$35 (students). Contact Ghislaine Varin, [gvarin@bctf.ca](mailto:gvarin@bctf.ca) or 604-971-1844.

## APRIL 2006

**20-22** Coquitlam. Encompass 2006 Conference, Celebrating Social Emotional Learning and Academic Success, with keynote speaker Roy Henry Vickers, featured speakers Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Shelley Hymel, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Gordon Neufeld, Lesra Martin, Marc Kielburger, Bruce Wellman, Raffi, and 50 to 60 related workshops, Terry Fox Secondary School. Registration information online February 2006. Contact Gerry Lush, 604-936-9971, [pd43@bctf.ca](mailto:pd43@bctf.ca).

## MAY 2006

**4-6** Vancouver. Second National Biennial Conference on Late Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Navigating the Rapids: Doing What Works in Practice—designing optimal environments for the social, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals with FASD, The Coast Hotel and Conference Centre. Contact Leanne Fuhr, 604-822-2801, [ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca), [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca).

**6** Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2006, 9th Annual Conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Call for Proposals—Share Your Classroom Inquiries. Submission deadline: March 10, 2006. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. Contact Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, [judy.paley@ubc.ca](mailto:judy.paley@ubc.ca), [www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/](http://www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/)

**11-13** Whistler. B.C. Science Teachers' Association Conference Catalyst 2006, with Dr. Joe Schwarcz, of McGill University and Discovery's Daily Planet. Contact David Barnum, [dbarnum@dccnet.com](mailto:dbarnum@dccnet.com), or visit [bcssta.ca](http://bcssta.ca).

**12** Whistler. Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association (PITA) Regional Miniconference in conjunction with the science teachers' association conference, with presenter Dawn Reithaug, \$85. Contact Ray Myrtle, 604-224-3388, f: 604-224-5754, [rmyrtle@canada.com](mailto:rmyrtle@canada.com).

## PSA PD Day October 20, 2006

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

Additions/changes? Contact Elizabeth Lambert, [elambert@bctf.ca](mailto:elambert@bctf.ca)

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# Mercury poisoning afflicts Cranbrook teachers

by Nancy Knickerbocker

**M**ercury: Who could forget a child's fascination with it? In Grade 5, I remember thinking, "Wow! Look how it splits into silver beads and scoots across the desk!" A metal that was paradoxically liquid, mercury seemed mysterious, seductive, poetic. It was so beautiful, who would have thought it was harmful?

*"We were all science teachers at MBSS and we were all sick."*

Think again. Elemental mercury, chemical name *Hg*, is a volatile liquid that gives off a colourless, odourless, toxic vapour at room temperature. According to Health Canada, "Mercury is a global contaminant because it is toxic, does not break down in the environment, and can build up in living things."

But teachers at Mount Baker Secondary School, in Cranbrook, are sounding the alarm about the dangers of mercury and its devastating impact on their health, careers, and lives.

Science teacher Ivan McKnight raced bicycles and ran road races all over Alberta and BC., but mercury poisoning put an end to his days as a competitive athlete. Indeed, it almost ended his life.

It all began in February 2001 when the school custodian brought a box of old science equipment up from the basement to Classroom 208, and asked McKnight if he wanted it. "I told him I didn't have time to deal with it, but he could put it in the corner."

Neither man knew that inside the box was a large broken barometer, a potent source of toxic mercury vapours. To make matters doubly bad, the classroom lacked adequate ventilation and the box was placed under the window near a heating vent, thus hastening vapourization of the spilled mercury.

Within months McKnight, who had been training for the triathlon, began to feel weak. "I had to sit down all the time." He became alarmed when a healthy student, a lifeguard at the local pool, suddenly fainted in class. "She just fell right off her lab stool." His worry intensified after a male student, another strong athlete, also passed out in his class.

In June 2001, McKnight finally took a look in the box that had been sitting in his room for the past five months. That's when he saw the broken barometer. "The mercury just gushed out."

Back at school in the fall, biology teacher Russ Reid, a 20-year veteran at MBSS, was also feeling terrible. One afternoon he came into McKnight's classroom and found him slumped in the chair with his head on the desk. Reid asked: "Do you ever wonder whether that mercury in your room had an effect?"

The two began researching on the internet and soon realized they were exhibiting classic signs of mercury poisoning: profound fatigue, headaches, joint pain, respiratory problems, tremors, weight loss, memory loss, insomnia, and irritability. Even more disturbing, numerous other teachers shared the same problems.

"We were all science teachers at MBSS and we were all sick. Why?" asked colleague Hugh MacPherson. They investigated numerous possibilities and finally decided to undergo testing for mercury, if only to rule it out.

"We fully expected mercury *not* to be the cause, but we got checked and found we had significant amounts," Reid said.

For home economics teacher Lynne Williams, the first shock came when her doctor told her she had lost 10% of her bone mass in the past two years. A healthy, active person who regularly worked out, Williams was also suffering exhaustion, headaches painful, stiff joints, and memory loss.

"Added together, all these symptoms were very worrisome," she said. A colleague encouraged her to be tested for mercury, but she was not prepared for the results.

Anything above level 3 is considered elevated, according to the scientific measurement for heavy metals such as mercury. McKnight's extremely elevated level of 30 was by far

*To date, 12 current and former teachers at Mount Baker Secondary have tested with high levels of mercury in their bodies.*

the highest among the group, until Lynn's results came back. Hers was a shocking 62.

"At first it was just a number to me. During the school week I was too busy to worry, but I had a couple of very rough weekends," Williams says. "No one knows the long-term health implications. You're doing a lot of thinking about how your life is going to change a lot."

How could this have happened?

Williams and other teachers

believe that the school's erratic and dysfunctional ventilation system is partly to blame. While the delicious aromas from her home economics kitchen sometimes wafted up to the science wing, more often the noxious scent of chemicals blew down the other way.

By contrast to McKnight's classroom, which had very poor air circulation, Williams had a persistent draft blowing through that even rustled the papers on her desk. "I'm sure that's where the contamination came from," she states.

All this from one broken barometer? No, not at all. The teachers found out about other mercury spills in the school, going back as far as 1955. "So we're looking at low-dose exposure over a long period of time," said Reid. "It builds up in your system. Once it's into the brain tissue, you're looking at about 30 years to get it out."

According to Environment Canada, about 80% of elemental mercury is absorbed when inhaled. "The critical target organ for elemental mercury is the adult and fetal brain."

The treatment for mercury poisoning is chelation therapy, which involves injections of chemicals that bond with heavy metals and draw them out of the body. The procedure is taxing on the kidneys and liver, and draining to the whole system. Some people can only take one treatment a month, others go every two weeks. McKnight endures daily treatments for weeks at a time.

Unfortunately no doctors offer chelation therapy in Cranbrook, so the teachers must travel to Kelowna or Calgary for treatment. In addition, because it's deemed an "alternative therapy," chelation is not covered by medical plans. The teachers are paying thousands of dollars out of pocket.

The cost of chelation is only one aspect of the issue facing Cranbrook District Teachers' Association President Chris Johns. A tenacious advocate, Johns has been indefatigable in urging the Southeast Kootenay School District to reimburse the treatment costs.

His pleas have fallen on deaf ears so far, but BCTF President Jinny Sims has also written to Education Minister Shirley Bond, urging her to provide a grant to the district to cover the cost of testing and treatment. "We want to do our utmost to help the members suffering from this occupational health disaster," Sims said.

To date, 12 current and former teachers at Mount Baker Secondary have tested with high levels of mercury in their bodies. Five are on full sick leave. More

than 30 other teachers have indicated they wish to be tested and about 60 have initiated claims with the Workers' Compensation Board.

Johns and the CDTA urged the board to immediately conduct proper indoor air testing and cleanup of the school to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. However, they met so many obstacles and needless delays they have filed a grievance claiming the employer failed to provide a hazard free workplace.

In the summer of 2005, the board hired an environmental firm to rid the science labs of asbestos. In the process they also removed mercury from the sinks and ventilation vents. The subsequent report declared all to be well, but the science teachers are skeptical, saying employees did not have adequate training or proper techniques to deal with a toxin as elusive as mercury.

*The mercury vapour levels found in science lab sinks in other schools were 20 times higher, and the firm recommends that remedial work be done.*

In December the same firm conducted tests for mercury vapour at seven schools in the district. "We express no concern with regard to exposure to mercury vapour levels within Mount Baker Secondary School," the firm concluded, even though some readings in McKnight's old classroom were more than four times higher than the level accepted by the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The mercury vapour levels found in science lab sinks in other schools were 20 times higher, and the firm recommends that remedial work be done.

All of the teachers interviewed want to see prompt responses from the board and health officials.

"I feel anger at the lack of action, anger that we've been poisoned at work and no one will accept responsibility," says MacPherson.

"It's been a five-year process already. Everyone is playing politics while our lives are being shattered," McKnight said.

Murray Quinn, a retired chemistry teacher with 22 years experience at Mount Baker blamed the inaction on a lack of knowledge about the risks of mercury exposure.

"Look, I was that way too, and I'm a chemistry guy," he said. "We are not sure things are okay at MBSS. I'd love to see the board hire totally professional independent experienced people who will do real tests and get real results everybody can live with. Then we will have the information required to take appropriate action."

The teachers are also worried that parents and community members are getting an all-too-rosy picture of Mount Baker Secondary School as a healthy learning environment.

"I get calls from parents saying they were so relieved to hear that the school is clean and safe," McKnight said. "Parents are saying how glad they are I'm feeling better, but where are they getting that from?"

Local president Johns is distressed that the chairperson of the Parent Advisory Committee refused to let him make a presentation to parents on teachers' experience and concerns about mercury exposure at MBSS. His request to send a letter home to parents was also denied by the PAC chair.

"The current debate is whether it's a safe school," Williams said. MacPherson agrees, saying he often wonders whether the building may have to be demolished.

Above all, they called for the school board to be partners with them in solving the occupational health mystery at MBSS.

"It's bad for people to take sides in this," Williams said.

*The teachers are also worried that parents and community members are getting an all-too-rosy picture of Mount Baker Secondary School as a healthy learning environment.*

"There's the truth and there's the smokescreen. We need to work together to find the truth."

The CDTA, the school district, and other stakeholders are planning to hold a public forum in January in Cranbrook on the issue.

*Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media relations officer*

