

Features

The word on the street	3
Teachers, curriculum, and the BCTF	3
FSAs can't judge our school	4
We'd rather be teaching	4
Creston conference on women's rights	5
Giving our past a future	5
Graduation portfolios	6
Sensible school planning	7
Clarifying alternative delivery	8
Individual complaints lead to individual solutions	8
Helping teachers in Lebanon and Oaxaca	10
International solidarity in Surrey	10
Sharing, fun and learning	11
Journees de perfectionnement professionnel	13
Project overseas: Sierra Leone	16

Columns

President's message	2
Readers write	2
Health and safety	9
On being well	9
10 New BCTF lesson aids	12
Yours for the asking	12
Pension seminars	13
Classified	15
PD Calendar	15

Canada Post Corp. Publications Mail
 Agreement No. 40062724
 Please return undeliverable
 Canadian addresses to...

B.C. Teachers' Federation
 100-550 West 6th Avenue
 Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2
 E-mail: newsmag@bctf.ca

Teacher

Building positive parent relationships



Word on the Street in Vancouver is an excellent opportunity for teachers to meet with parents and members of the public. Thousands of people visit hundreds of booths and enjoy readings and performances.

by Sylvia Bishop

Do you remember your first parent-teacher conference? The first phone call you had to make to a parent or guardian regarding their child? Are you facing any of these communications for the first time?

At the New Teachers' Conference held March 24–25, 2006, many delegates attended the workshop "Building effective communications with parents." They talked about feeling anxious and intimidated when meeting with parents. Participants wanted to do their best for their students. That includes giving parents and guardians insight into students' strengths and the challenges they face in the classroom. This sometimes creates feelings of anxiety. Sometimes parents are better acquainted with the situation than are teachers new to the school or grade assignment.

The BCTF offers support for building effective communications with parents through workshops, School Union Rep Training (SURT), and conferences. Locals may book SURTs through the Training Department of the BCTF. Local offices receive a booklet outlining the topics offered and may survey their staff reps on which topics are of interest or need. Outside of SURTs you will find the "Working together with parents is good for kids and teachers" workshop. In the last several years, the new teachers' conference has offered workshops focussing on building effective parent-teacher relationships.

These training opportunities are not just talk. The Federation 'walks the walk' with a number of different outreach activities that include parent participa-

tion. For several years the BCTF Public Education Conference has invited one parent per local to attend and covers the cost of their participation. The Federation also invites parents to be workshop presenters or facilitators on topics related to the conference theme. In February, a parent panel presented

The Federation 'walks the walk' with a number of different outreach activities that include parent participation.

"Parents as Advocates." At the October public education conference, the topic will be "What parents want for their children" with a panel presenting their point of view as parents of Aboriginal students, of ESL students, and of students with special needs.

The Federation has also invited parents to facilitate workshops at summer conference. This year, the topic was "How to talk to parents about hot topics in education." Delegates to the BCTF AGM may have seen the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils' (BCCPAC) display booth staffed by one of their executive members and heard greetings delivered by their president at the opening plenary.

Also available are six presentations that PACs may book free of charge for parents. In 2004–05, there were 162 presentations by teacher volunteers to approximately 2,000 parents. Feedback from the parents acknowledges the value of the presentations and an overwhelming number stated

appreciation for teachers taking the time to come and talk to them. Visit bctf.ca/parents to view the brochure.

The Federation has encouraged locals to identify a member to serve as the local parent contact. This member will work closely with the local executive on outreach activities with parents. It is important both to sustain and build on the good will and support parents extended to teachers last fall. Realizing this, one local is designating a parent contact in each of its schools. Another local is working with its DPAC to put a program together for a spring conference.

Parents tell us that these and other efforts build positive relationships. Many parents who stopped by the BCTF booth at Vancouver's Word on the Street, held September 24, 2006, thanked teachers for the work they do. We also heard this message from runners in Run for the Cure who stopped by the BCTF table.

BCCPAC provides support to their members on building effective communications with teachers.

At their workshops, parents often talk about feeling anxious and intimidated when meeting with the teacher. Sound familiar? Some of their questions are about how the teacher will view them as parents. Will their concerns be addressed? What will the teacher say about their child? They want to be acknowledged for the tough job they have as parents. They want to be respected and, above all, they want to be heard.

BCCPAC also invites teachers to participate in its activities. The BCTF is invited to send two guests to their annual fall conference and spring annual

general meeting. At the fall conference, participation in their workshops is welcomed. A display booth is available for distribution of materials. Parents stop by with questions and good conversation follows. Their annual general meeting is a policy-setting business meeting. Interested delegates have taken the time to discover the teacher perspective on some of their AGM resolutions.

It is interesting to note both parents and teachers share the same kinds of apprehensive feelings. They also share a desire to help the student be the best she or he can be. How can nervousness be overcome in order to better support the student? Here are some practical suggestions.

It is important to sustain and build on the good will and support parents extended to teachers last fall.

Effective communication is all about establishing a good relationship. Think about your friends. When you are with them you are probably relaxed, at ease, and open. You have a lot to talk about and stories to share. You listen to each other. When your friends come to visit, you are probably warm and welcoming.

Now think about your role as a teacher. How can you make parents feel relaxed when they meet with you, or talk to you over the phone? How can you make the meeting time comfortable?

President's message



Jinny Sims

There are so many issues facing us as teachers every day in the classroom and we have only begun to put our collective energies into setting things right. Early indications on the implementation of Bill 33 class-size and class-composition changes are mixed. There are definite improvements in some schools and districts, while in others we need to wait until the data is available by early November to make a reasonable assessment. Bill 33 is a baby step. What is interesting, is the feedback from many teachers that they are being consulted about class size and composition for the first time since we lost those provisions in our collective agreement. I and other representatives of the BCTF met with the Minister of Education on October 4. The minister appeared to want to include us in discussions of major education policy issues. It will be a challenge to have that happen because the BCTF, as the representatives of teachers, has been effectively excluded from the important role we should play in giving advice on educational matters. The minister affirms that the messages she hears from us in those meetings are the same messages she hears from teachers in her visits to schools and locals around the province. We all agree that we have an excellent education system in this province staffed by highly qualified professionals and ably prepared support workers. What we need to see the government do now is have an open and transparent discussion with all partner groups on what the priorities should be for education in this province. The *achievement is everything* bandwagon simply leaves out too much that is important about education, teaching, and student learning. Together we must continue to use every venue to advocate for our students' learning conditions and to raise our professional concerns around the bureaucratic testing that narrows teaching and learning.

Jinny

Dalai Lama lives his values

An opportunity was missed at the Vancouver public talks with the Dalai Lama on September 8 and 9. Absent from public discussion was a contextualization of his message of compassion in relation to his own life as a refugee, and as the leader of a nation and a people in crisis. This omission was particularly disturbing in the dialogue with high school students. The brief biography presented by the organizers of the event included the date and place of the Dalai Lama's birth, his move to Lhasa at age four, and then skipped ahead 67 years with the comment, "and now he lives in India." There was no mention that his move to India was an escape over the Himalayas on foot, fleeing the brutal invasion and occupation of his country by the Chinese government. Nor was it mentioned that over one million Tibetans have died due to the occupation, including many of the Dalai Lama's own friends and family. The youth were not told of the ongoing suppression of religion, the marginalization of

Tibetan people, or the destruction of the environment in Tibet. They were not told that each year the Dalai Lama meets three to four thousand new escapees from Tibet, most of whom are children, monks, and nuns seeking an education in which they will have freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and freedom of religion. In the years since the invasion and occupation, some Tibetan youth have appealed strongly to the Dalai Lama to change his stance and condone armed resistance against the Chinese government. He heard and understood their desire to help their country, but he has remained steadfast in his conviction that a non-violent, compassionate, and truthful approach is the only path to sustainable peace. Throughout his life, as leader of a people and a nation in crisis, the Dalai Lama has been forced to examine deeply the potential benefits of aggression, revenge, and retribution, yet still he maintains his commitment to non-violence in personal relationships and in international relations. Contextualizing the Dalai Lama's message not just as words spoken, but as lived convictions,

strengthened by his long struggle for the basic rights of Tibetan people, makes his message substantially richer, rather than simply academic banter. His struggle with implementing his values has been very real, personal, and human. Adults regularly tell youth to be kind, compassionate, honest, and fair, but rarely do youth hear that message from someone who truly and profoundly walks the talk. **Mati Bernabei Burnaby** **Not afraid to offer support** I'm moved to respond to Carollyne Sinclair's article, "It takes a whole village," *Teacher*, September 2006, mostly from the memories it has stirred, the shared concern, and to share this story that illustrates society has perhaps not changed in the ways we would hope. I grew up in White Rock, and your story brought to mind the story of a childhood friend and school mate who lost his life jumping from the pier at about age 16. As I recall the news on this story, he was jumping with

friends and just did not resurface after a jump. His friends thought he had played a joke on them and, in what I'm guessing was disbelief about what may have happened, didn't even alert authorities. What happened was discovered when the tide went out and his body was found. How very sad it is that he died this way, just not fully understanding the danger, as the water had, in this case, just become too shallow. There were likely adults around on the warm afternoon that this had been. Adults who may have had more experience to draw from and could have shared concern and care. This story is more than 20 years old, and I am no longer living in White Rock, so I am sad to hear in your story that there are still children taking a risk and jumping from the pier. At the same time, thank you for sharing your story, as it touched me and reminded me to not be afraid to live from my values and reach out in any situation where I see a need to gently offer my support and care as you did. **Katrina Kaneda Vernon**

Maxwell A. Cameron Awards

The BC Teachers' Federation grants an award to the student completing the final year of the bachelor of education degree in secondary and elementary teaching who, in the opinion of the dean of the Faculty of Education and of the director of the division concerned, is the outstanding student in the graduating class. The following people received the BCTF's Maxwell A. Cameron award in 2005-06: **Margaret Radigan Grant Sandeman-Allen** Malaspina University-College **Luke Campbell Bradley Reiben** Okanagan University College **Barbara Campbell** Thompson Rivers University **Jennifer Beugelink** Trinity Western University **Susan Mary Braverman John Devlin Cloutier Claire Elizabeth George** University of British Columbia **Jennifer Lynne Doinne Anita Maureen Kurjata** University of Northern BC **Jennifer Gruno Jillian Scarrow** University of Victoria

BCTF web site redesign

The BCTF web site will have a new look later this fall. The Federation initiated this project in response to feedback from members and local leaders about what they wanted to find

on bctf.ca and how the site could better serve their needs. As a result of the re-organization, the BCTF URLs cited in this issue of the *Teacher* may change when the new web site is launched in the fall. If you are not able to easily locate the information, please e-mail dbroome@bctf.ca for assistance.

Correction

In the "Benefits of our new agreement" article on page 3 of the September 2006 issue of *Teacher*, it stated that the signing bonus "will count for pension purposes." That was a mistake, it will not count for pension purposes.

The charter for public education network

In 2002-03, British Columbians shared their views on public education. An independent panel toured the province, received 620 submissions in 42 communities, and brought together thousands of people in passionate dialogue about public education. These questions were posed at each hearing:

- What is an educated person; what are their characteristics?
- Which of these characteristics are developed through the public schools?
- What is an educated community?
- What are the principles of public education?

 The result is a document that expresses the dreams, hopes,

and visions of these communities and their learners. The *Charter for Public Education*, published in 2003, is a starting point for dialogue and change in public education. The network, a non-partisan organization founded in 2004, is based on the principles of the Charter for Public Education (www.charter.published.ca). The network brings together individuals and groups committed to the principles of public education. Although still a new organization, the network is working hard to include teachers, parents, students, educational associations, and the community, and to take public education dialogue further. This is being done through panel discussions, articles, teaching tools, presentations, research, and media interventions.

Public Education Research Foundation

The foundation, the sister organization of the network, will seek partners and donors to fund new and innovative research and activities that will provide a catalyst for more dialogue and promote the principles of public education even further. Every donation made to the foundation is tax deductible. You can join or make a secure donation online at www.charter.published.ca/membership.html. The full charter is available to download at: www.charter.published.ca/charter.html. For more information, call 604-786-3055 or e-mail charter@published.ca.




Teacher
Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation
100 – 550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
871-2283, toll free 1-800-663-9163, F: 871-2289
news@bctf.ca bctf.ca/news



Editor
Peter Owens
Assistant editor
Kathleen Smith
Design consultant
Betty Sommerville
Copyeditor
Elizabeth Lambert
Proofreader
Bev Humphries

2006-07 Teacher Advisory Board
Susan Fonseca
Brent Hocking
Pamela Hachey
Julia Johnson
Debra Swain
Staff writers
Sylvia Bishop
Larry Kuehn
Mike Lombardi
Jane Turner

2006-07 BCTF Executive Committee
Jim Iker
Susan Lambert
Irene Lanzinger
Jill McCaffrey
George Popp
Fran Robinson
Jinny Sims
Kathleen Thomson
Linda Toews
John Wadge
Val Windsor

Volume 19
1 September 2006
2 October 2006
3 Nov./Dec. 2006
4 Jan./Feb. 2007
5 March 2007
6 April 2007
7 May/June 2007

Deadline
August 18
September 15
October 20
December 15
January 26
March 28
April 27

CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association
CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media
PRINTED IN CANADA BY MITCHELL PRESS LIMITED
 14 
Advertising information
bctf.ca/newsmag
or e-mail
news@bctf.ca

Articles contained herein reflect the view of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the BC Teachers' Federation. The BC Teachers' Federation does not endorse or promote any products or services presented in the advertising sections of the newsmagazine. All advertisements will be reviewed and approved by the BCTF. They must reflect BCTF policy and be politically, environmentally, and professionally appropriate.

PARENTS from page 1

Sometimes it can be as easy as a warm smile, sincere greeting, handshake, and eye contact. If you are meeting face to face, privacy is as important as the seating arrangement. When the teacher's desk is used to separate parent and teacher, distance is created. Instead, sit across from each other in a way that respects personal space while creating intimacy. On the phone, your tone of voice can have a huge impact. Take the time to check that this is a good time to talk. If not, arrange a mutually convenient time to call.

Make sure that the conversation provides both talking and listening time for everyone present. Everyone brings some expertise to the meeting. As a professional teacher, you can best speak to the learning strengths of the student. The parent knows the child outside of the school community and can bring valuable information to the discussion.

When you call a parent for the first time, or set up the initial meeting, you can set the stage for a strong and positive relationship that will support their child's/your student's success for another school year. Think of the parent as a friend and treat them the same way. It can make a huge difference to everyone.

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

The word on the street is: Thanks BCTF!

Hundreds of people came by the BCTF booth at Vancouver's 12th annual national book and magazine festival, Word on the Street (WOTS). More than 500 booths, exhibitors, presentations, and displays circled the Vancouver Public Library inside and out. The day bustled with families, kids, and adults of all ages under a warm September sun. The BCTF was present with a booth celebrating teaching and learning. Many brochures, literature, buttons, and other items were available free for anyone who stopped by.

Vancouver Canucks mascot Fin was on hand as the event had a hockey theme this year. Fin dropped by and proudly wore a Friend of Public Education button for the duration of the event.

As part of the WOTS treasure hunt, the BCTF gave away a small book and a coupon for Vancouver Kids Books, who partnered with us for the treasure hunt. Many families who stopped by to collect their gift thanked teachers for the incredible job they do. They recognized the many hours spent preparing lessons and the energy required teaching every day while building important relationships with students. One visitor emphatically stated, "They don't pay teachers enough for the important job they do!" Others commented

that they couldn't do the job—it is too demanding.

Several Washington State teachers stopped by and remembered the support BC teachers showed the Marysville teachers' strike several years ago. That strike was long and bitter but spirits brightened when the BCTF table officers showed up in solidarity and donated \$10,000 to their strike fund on behalf of BC's teachers. That support was reciprocated last October when Washington State teachers walked the picket line in solidarity with our members. One Washington teacher remarked, "I'd love to live and work up here.

"Our teachers are so awesome! They really encourage us to try different things like getting involved in the community."

You guys are so great and it's so beautiful."

Teachers who stopped by stocked up on materials such as buttons, calendars, and book-marks. "It's great to see us represented here," several teachers commented. Also flying off the table were the small sized Charter for Public Education posters, a perfect size for every classroom, library, and staffroom wall. Many teachers who stopped to chat had



PETER OWENS PHOTO

Hundreds of people stop by the BCTF booth at Word on the Street in Vancouver.

questions about the collective agreement bonus and Bill 33.

Several student volunteers, dressed in the red WOTS t-shirts came by to pick up the ubiquitous Friend of Public Education buttons. Their teachers encouraged them to participate in the event and the students were glad they'd taken the advice. "Our teachers are so awesome! They really encourage us to try different things like getting involved in the community."

One of the most heart-warming conversations took place with two young women who approached the booth. They had just graduated from their teacher education program and were starting out as teachers on call. They were friendly, bright, and intelligent but what they wanted to talk

about the most was the unionism and collective strength of the BC Teachers' Federation. "Thank goodness the BCTF exists to look after teachers," they said. "You guys did an amazing job last October. Who else would look out for us?" In their view, the BCTF makes a huge difference in the working and learning conditions of teachers and students. They were proud to be part of the union and ready to get involved.

So a day organized to publicly mark the importance of reading, writing, and publishing was also a day where many took the time to acknowledge teaching, learning, and unionism, and say Thanks BCTF!

Word on the Street is a national event held in five cities across Canada. Go to www.wordonthestreet.ca to learn more.

Historical perspectives Teachers, curriculum, and the BCTF

by Ken Novakowski

On September 8, 2006, the Dalai Lama participated in a dialogue on the topic of "Educating the heart" at the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver. In the audience were many teachers, including the Executive Committee of the BCTF. It was significant to hear from one of the world's foremost spiritual leaders that "educating the heart" was not the responsibility of the church or family, but that, indeed, it was a central responsibility of the school system. The education we provide in our schools should result not only in knowledgeable and learned individuals, but also in caring and compassionate citizens.

The Dalai Lama's message was an important one for Premier Gordon Campbell, who met with him earlier that day. Particularly important because the provincial government has chosen to focus the energies of the school system on the aspect of achievement, causing all manner of priorities and organization to be directed toward that goal. The result has been a school system overly burdened with testing, accountability contracts, and bureaucratic hoops that, in the final analysis, have little to do with education. The BCTF has long advocated for the education of the whole child, and following the Dalai Lama's dialogue, president Jinny Sims wrote the premier to tell him so: "Achievement is important, but it is only a part of the student learning process and should not

exclude other important discussions about education that need to occur. I would propose that we open up the dialogue on education in BC. This would include listening to all points of view and not narrowing the focus on teaching and learning to simply what can be measured on a standardized test."

"The narrow concept of education based on the impartation of skills and the acquisition of facts has long been abandoned and teachers have become imbued with the philosophy that it is their concern to educate the whole child..."

The BCTF has, from its inception 90 years ago, focused on the professional aspects of the lives of teachers in addition to its higher profile involvement in bargaining. Yet it has been through bargaining that we have succeeded in informing parents and the public of the central role of appropriate classroom conditions in creating successful learning environments in our schools. In a major submission to the Cameron Commission in 1945, the BCTF took on the issue of the direct relationship between educating the whole child and class size:

"The narrow concept of education based on the impartation of skills and the acquisition of facts has long been

abandoned and teachers have become imbued with the philosophy that it is their concern to educate the whole child. Our program of studies is based on the philosophy that we should be concerned with the development of the total personality and provision of individual differences looms large in the plan of school organization.

"How this modern philosophy is to be made to work in practice is beyond the understanding of many teachers who at the present time enroll classes of from 40 to 50 pupils."

The BCTF submission to the Cameron Commission covered all aspects of teaching and learning but that was not our first collective attempt to influence education policy in BC.

In 1924, after numerous submissions from the BCTF, the provincial government finally acceded to establish the Putman-Weir Commission to examine all aspects of education in the province. In December of 1924, a BCTF committee chaired by G.A. Fergusson pulled together a comprehensive accounting of the views of BC teachers on everything from curriculum to educational governance and from education finance to teacher training and tenure. In its opening statement on general comments, the BCTF committee expounded this view on the very new and young BCTF:

"Since its inception, the Federation has constantly urged upon its members the great importance of increasing their professional efficiency—by every possible means, and particularly by taking a keen interest in the

modern movements that have brought about so many changes in the conception of the aims of education, in the theory and practice of teaching and in the methods of administration."

Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the BCTF lobbied governments for an increased role of the teaching profession, as represented by the BCTF, in curriculum and other professional matters controlled by the then Department of Education. In October 1946, the BCTF Executive Committee affirmed that "any request by the Department of Education for teachers to assist in curriculum work be channeled through the Federation." By the 1960s things had moved in that direction. In an analysis of the BCTF role in curriculum revision and

BC primary teachers have written extensively in Teacher newsmagazine about the negative impact of the data-collection frenzy on the program.

development through the 1960s, John Church, a long time, now retired member of BCTF professional development staff wrote positively about the model that gave teachers a significant role in the process. The BCTF had gained direct and shared sponsorship of curriculum revision.

"The central role of teachers defining the direction for education and the curriculum

was established once again in the ensuing changes that occurred following the 1988 Commission on Education. In particular, the new primary program was created and developed by primary teachers and focused on the development and education of the whole child. It became a program that garnered interest and attention around the world and helped a generation of BC students establish a successful understanding of not only subjects, but of themselves and their role in the school and the broader community. The program, indeed, addresses the development of the whole child."

Now even this remarkable educational achievement of the last decade is under threat from the all-consuming "achievement/testing/accountability" scheme of the current government.

BC primary teachers have written extensively in *Teacher* newsmagazine about the negative impact of the data-collection frenzy on the program.

It is time for BC teachers to heed the call of the 2006 AGM and begin once again to assert our right as professionals to have an appropriate and significant role in determining the curriculum, classroom conditions, the educational program and, indeed, the priority focus of our schools.

Our failure to do so will allow the further bureaucratization of our public schools to completely remove the joy from teaching and learning. We cannot let that happen. And we won't.

Ken Novakowski is the BCTF's executive director.

FSAs can’t judge our school

This letter from Maureen Ireland was sent to Education Minister Shirley Bond in May 2006 and some of her students’ letters are also excerpted here.

My Grade 4 students spontaneously decided to write letters in response to this year’s FSA tests. Although you will note that similar sentiments are expressed, the children were not coached. There was very lively and heated discussion as the letters were composed. Our school, Dormick Park Elementary, was described on the front page of our local newspaper as “ranked worst of the elementary schools in Abbotsford.” The children have communicated personal feelings about the tests and responded to what they view as the inaccurate and unjust labeling that our school community has been forced to endure. Another local newspaper also featured these rankings and a

colleague and I have written letters to the editors of these papers. I enclose copies of these articles, along with an article written by a citizen who has had personal experience with our school. This was the first year in which I have administered the tests and the process did indeed live up to what educators and children alike have described as a demeaning and debilitating experience. The BCTF sent a bulletin listing concerns about FSA testing on teaching and learning. My students and I experienced many of these negative aspects:

- loss of instructional time
- teaching to the test
- less interesting instructional practices
- less varied assessment strategies
- test anxiety
- less successful students giving up on themselves and learn-

ing (this was most alarming to me as an educator). The administration of this test has demoralized my students and me. Our school community has suffered humiliation. We deserve a response that is not a form letter hastily posted by one of your office administrators. It is hoped that your office and offices of The Fraser Institute, will take pause to consider the very real children and school communities who suffer for your cause. Future leaders and voters await a meaningful reply. *Maureen Ireland, Dormick Park Elementary School, Abbotsford.*

Student letters

“I don’t think the FSAs tests are right! All the government is doing on it is judging! I promised I would never be in the government because I don’t want kids hating me. One kid in my class was crying! I bet you

don’t like to see kids cry. There is no reason for this test. If they want to see how we are doing, send them a copy of our report card! We are just learning all the stuff just for the test! I was wondering could you help me? Help all of us. You can help by not making everybody take this dumb test! How do [you] think it makes us feel about people writing bad stuff about us in the newspaper? I hope we made a point! Please help us.” “We don’t like FSAs!! It makes me feel tired. I asked my Grandma if I could stay home because I hate FSAs and once she said ok, but I was lucky that time. All the other times it was no, no, no. FSAs are boring. It takes time out of work and fun. Sometimes people go home sad, mad, and it makes them want to die. That’s what it makes others feel. So stop this FSA test.” “Why do we have to do FSA tests? When you were little, did you do FSA tests? If you did, did you like doing them? There was a kid in our class that started crying. Do you want kids to cry? I think Dormick Park is the

kindest school ever. We’re non-judging and loving. Dormick Park is a virtuous school! We have no bullies, great rules, caring kids and teachers, and we persevere!” “We are tired of FSA tests. They make me feel like crying. I feel dumb and embarrassed.” “I didn’t like the FSAs. Well it wasn’t really the test, it was what you were doing with the test that bugs me. At least half of my class doesn’t like FSAs and there are 31 of us.” “I felt like I was the worst of all and there were butterflies in my stomach and I felt nervous. I don’t like the FSA tests. I really don’t.” “I thought that there was no point in making children and teenagers do the FSA because all it does is make us worried and stressed. It also made one of the kids in our class cry. These are all of the feelings it gave me—upset, frustrated, dumb, unintelligent, confused, tired, angry, and worried. FSAs can’t judge our school because the people that run it haven’t been to Dormick Park.”

We’d rather be teaching

by Yvonne Eamor

When you think of university students writing exams, you may have an image of a gymnasium full of stressed-out young people poring over reams of paper. Now imagine that same gymnasium but this time, consider that those stressed-out students are nine and ten years old.

Veteran teacher Rob Taylor says it hurts to see kids so young being herded into the gym for exams.

Welcome to Grade 4 FSAs at Nesika Elementary in Williams Lake. Veteran teacher Rob Taylor says it hurts to see kids so young being herded into the gym for exams. “If that’s not stressful for nine-year-olds, I don’t know what is,” he says. “Our kids are stressed out going into the exams. It’s a completely foreign atmosphere for them. And this goes on for an entire week.” Taylor also takes issue with the lack of direction teachers are permitted to give to students who are having trouble finding their way through the exam. For a profession that’s been highly trained to help guide young minds, FSAs prohibit teachers from performing that vital task. Taylor says, “There are kids who come up in tears because they didn’t understand the set

of directions for math. You can’t help them. All you can do is tell them to do their best. It’s frustrating beyond words. A student asks for your help and you have to turn them away. Standardized testing means every kid has to receive the same direction—it’s horrible what that’s doing to kids’ psyche.” In a small town like Williams Lake, there’s another issue with FSAs: rankings. Taylor says his biggest concern is that rating a school means rating a teacher. “There may be just one Grade 4 class in town. The ranking the FSA provides reflects immediately back to the teacher.” Teachers know it’s easy to skew the rankings, simply by exempting some weaker students from the exam. In a recent Fraser Institute report card, Taylor says one of his district’s schools rated highest for French Immersion, and it doesn’t even have a French Immersion program. A student took French Immersion at one school but wrote the FSA at another and that threw the data out of whack. Taylor also says the FSAs do nothing for kids who are barely meeting expectations. He says they are just another way of making them feel inadequate. And it doesn’t help, he says, to know that the exam results produce no meaningful data for teachers so there is no benefit to the kids. “The students are reduced to being a number and the schools are reduced to being a score.”

Taylor says teachers don’t need FSAs to know how their students are performing, and that sentiment is echoed by Surrey teacher, Penny Kelly. She says FSAs, “undermine our professionalism. We see the child almost 200 days of the year. We know their achievement level. The test is redundant and I view it as an attack on teachers’ professionalism.” Kelly and Taylor agree that FSAs are not a true benchmark of what kids are about. “An FSA is one shot given over the course of a week,” says Taylor. “Parents get a bar with a black line that

shows them where their child is. But that shows them only where the child was on that day, on that test.” ***Standardized testing means every kid has to receive the same direction—it’s horrible what that’s doing to kids’ psyches.*** Kelly points out that many things are not factored into the result, such as what was going on at home that morning or the evening before, whether the child was healthy or happy, and she further points out that results are meaningless. “So the following year, the parents get a note attached to a report card about their child’s reading level. Well, I can tell them about it today, right now. But these tests are telling teachers that our assessment is not to be trusted.”

Kelly says another serious drawback to the FSAs is the lack of follow-up action. “The scores are just numbers. They don’t tell you which particular kid should receive learning assistance. There is no follow-up other than to say a particular group of kids did not do particularly well.” Kelly has other issues, as well. “Erma Stephenson Elementary School is in an affluent and culturally-mixed community in which pressure is placed on kids to do well on the exams. People put a lot of pressure on their kids so that the schools rank high in the Fraser Institute scheme. I’ve had parents thank me for doing such a good job, because the school ranking is allowing them to sell their home for \$20,000 more than they had initially planned.” Kelly says, “That’s not why I’m here.” *Yvonne Eamor is the BCTF’s media relations officer.*

Letter to Premier Campbell

I am writing to engage your government in a discussion about the priority focus for BC public schools. On Friday, September 8, 2006, I had the opportunity, along with all other members of the BCTF Executive Committee, to participate in the dialogue with the Dalai Lama at the Orpheum. Lorne Mayencourt spoke at the event on behalf of the provincial government and expressed your government’s commitment to

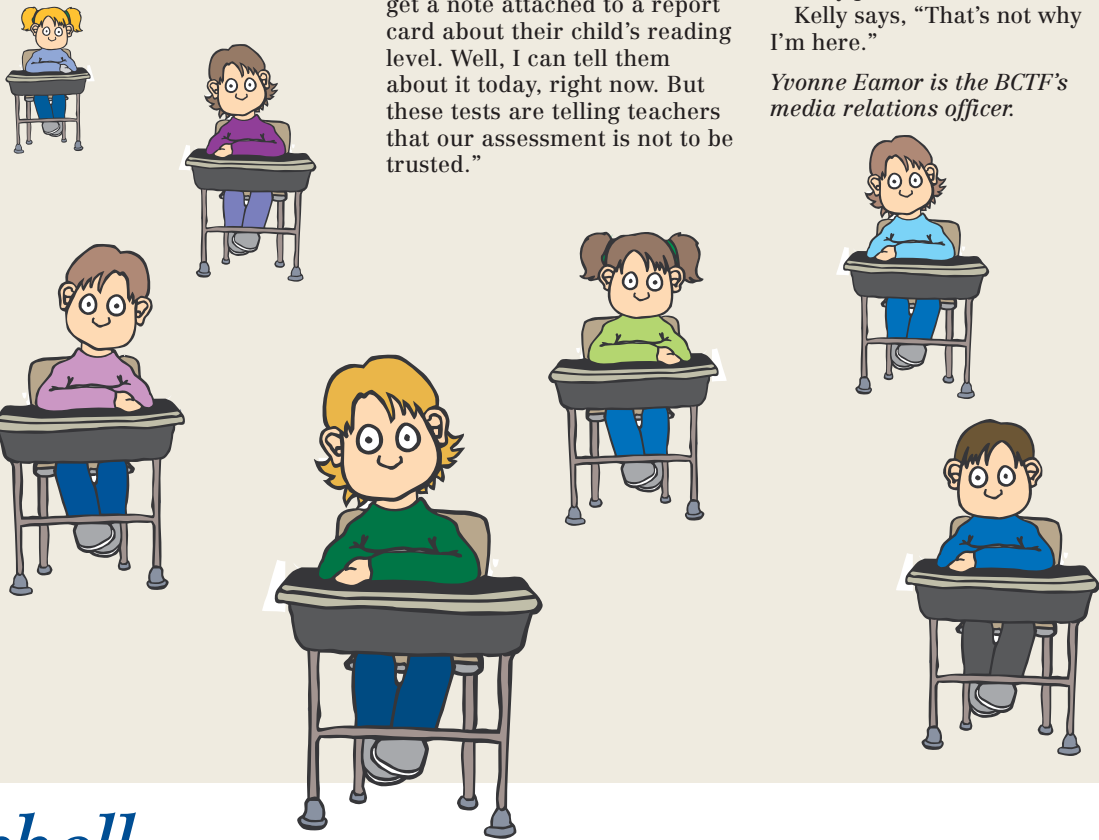
many of the themes of the dialogue. MLA Mayencourt referred to the meeting that you participated in with the Dalai Lama earlier that day. I was pleased to hear that your government is concerned about the education of the whole child. The dialogue stressed the importance of the social aspects of education that are essential to ensuring a society of caring and compassionate citizens.

The Ministry of Education has made student achievement the focal point of most of its initiatives. It would seem that the objective is to increase or improve student achievement through a variety of accountability measures that include frequent testing of student knowledge. However, what the “achievement” agenda lacks is any emphasis at all on the social aspects of learning. Achievement is important, but it is only a part

of the student learning process and should not exclude other important discussions about education that need to occur. I would propose that we open up the dialogue on education in BC. This would include listening to all points of view and not narrowing the focus on teaching and learning to simply what can be measured on a standardized test. We should welcome the visit of the Dalai Lama as an oppor-

tunity to broaden the dialogue on education; to begin to look at all aspects of educating the whole child. I have written to you because I know you are committed to making BC the most literate jurisdiction on the continent and because of the remarks made by Mr. Mayencourt on your behalf at the Orpheum. I am most willing to meet with you to discuss these matters further.

– Jinny Sims



Creston conference on women's rights

Remembrance Day will take on an added dimension this year through the BCTF Status of Women conference in Creston, BC, on November 10–11, 2006. Conference participants will remember the men and women who sacrificed their lives so that those of us who live in Canada can enjoy our current level of security and rights. We will meet in Creston to ensure that those sacrifices were not made in vain. It is up to all of us to defend and extend the rights that cost so many so much. The Status of Women conference, *Remembering Our Rights*, will bring activists together from diverse backgrounds to discuss and analyze contemporary women's rights.

The quest for women's rights is not over. There is currently a battle being waged by conservative forces to change the laws and culture of Canada back to pre-feminist conditions. Since the election of the provincial Liberal government and the federal Conservatives, feminist organizations that work to protect and extend women's rights have had a more difficult time getting funding, support, and recognition from government agencies. Funding for women's centres was cut provincially under the BC Liberals. Currently, Status of Women Canada is not responding to many women's organizations that have applied for funding. This will result in those organizations closing their doors as they won't be able to pay the rent.

Anti-feminist organizations like REAL Women of Canada (www.realwomenca.com) are lobbying Stephen Harper's government to try to ensure that the Conservatives live up to their commitment to change the way things are done in Ottawa and in the country. According to the REAL Women web site, they were surprised when they received a letter in early June 2006 from Bev Oda, the Minister for the Status of Women who wrote that, "This government is committed to promoting women's human rights and eliminating barriers for women. Canada has made some progress in advancing equality for women through our constitution and laws. However, there is still

work to do to make sure women can enjoy full equality in their day-to-day lives." Real Women responded by writing, "We were furious... the change in government on January 23rd has not in any way altered the policies of the Status of Women and that the policies of the Liberal party are to continue on their feminist trajectory." Interestingly, women's organizations that expected to receive government funding from Status of Women Canada have not had any response from that agency since the meeting with REAL Women of Canada took place.

REAL Women support the government's child payment plan, erroneously referred to as a child-care plan. They support tax breaks for two adult, one-income families by encouraging the government to approve income splitting. That is helpful if one person earns over \$70,000 per year and the other partner stays at home. Given the state of single parents and child poverty in our country, surely the government could choose better ways to spend tax dollars than to put more money into the pockets of the high-income earners.

However, this is a government that slashed \$1 billion from its budget on September 25, 2006, despite having a \$13 billion surplus. It's no surprise that \$5 million was cut from Status of Women Canada's budget. At the same time, Harper's government announced it was going to spend more money on a U.S.-led program to build a multibillion dollar stealth aircraft. It's clear where his priorities are.

There is a battle being waged over women's rights and like those who fought so bravely for our rights before us, we need to stand up to ensure those rights aren't lost. We hope that feminists and activists from all local associations, other unions, and the community will join the Status of Women Action Group in Creston on November 10–11, 2006. To find out more information and to register for the *Remembering Our Rights* conference, go to bctf.ca homepage, or www.sporg.com (Event 58211), or contact Jane Turner at jturner@bctf.ca.

– Jane Turner

More women than men are getting their BAs

The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences does an annual audit of the proportion of women in post-secondary education in Canada. Since 2001, they have collected data from Canadian Association of University Teachers and Statistics Canada to measure trends in women's participation in university level education.

The results show that although more women are now getting degrees than men—61% of first degrees were for women in 2003—women are still underrepresented at the higher levels and among faculty. Only 42% of doctoral degrees went to women and women make up only 31.7% of university faculty.

– News Bulletin/UNA/CALM

Women still earning less than men

Women's incomes still lag behind men's, according to a recent report from Statistics Canada.

"The average earnings of employed women are still substantially lower than those of men, even when they are employed on a full-time basis," Statscan said. For example, in 2003, average earnings in Canada for full-time employed women were \$36,500 a year, or 71% of what their male counterparts earned.

Women are much more likely than men to be considered low-income. In 2003, 31% of single women were in that category."

– News Bulletin/UNA/CALM

Historica Secondary Teachers' Institute Giving our past a future

by Kirk Longpré

Before I left home almost everyone I spoke to told me that I would be inundated by heat and humidity and pestered by black flies and mosquitoes. They predicted that my time in Winnipeg was likely to be more of an ordeal than a pleasurable and enlightening experience. How wrong they were.

As I flew over the Rockies on my way to Winnipeg, I began to reflect on the Six String Nation guitar that was unveiled and played at the Canada Day ceremonies held in Ottawa the previous day. The Six String Nation is a movement to connect people from all regions of Canada through music and by sharing our icons, images, and stories. Little did I realize how analogous that event would be to my experiences over the following week as I attended the Historica-Foundation-sponsored Secondary Teachers' Institute at the University of Winnipeg.

Gazing out the window of my hotel room, I was struck by the diversity of the city. I saw the Golden Boy glistening atop the Manitoba legislature buildings to the south, the world's oldest incorporated trading company across the street, and the lonely corridor of Portage Avenue to the east. Winnipeg is located at the crossroads of the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers, gateway to the west, the biggest small town in North America, and populated by a diverse mix of Ukrainian, Jewish, British, Scottish, French, Métis, and native peoples. Winnipeg's intriguing cultural and social diversity as well as its historical significance began to reveal itself.

On Monday, after welcoming remarks from representatives of the University of Winnipeg and the Historica Foundation, keynote speaker Ken Osborne, Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba, kicked off the teachers' institute by offering a simultaneously translated overview of the meaning of citizenship, its connection to historical mindedness, and how history can enrich our understanding of what it means to be human. Participants then broke into study groups to create an original teaching scenario

examining a specific aspect of Canadian history. Our group agreed to use the Six Nation Guitar as a catalyst for examining the elements that bring us together and make up the Canadian identity. Each project created by the groups was showcased on the final day of the institute. Some projects may eventually be chosen to appear on the Historica Foundation web site as an inspiration to teachers from across Canada. The day concluded with workshops in both languages outlining Historica Resources and Youthlinks, a collaborative online learning program that connects secondary school students with their peers across the country to discuss Canadian cultural and social issues.

I came away with a better understanding of the complexities and commonalities of teaching shared by colleagues from across the country.

On Tuesday, we were scheduled to have a presentation by filmmaker Paula Kelly about her documentary *The Notorious Mrs. Armstrong*, a principal organizer of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. At the last minute, the institute organizers were notified that she was unable to attend. Fortunately, Professor Nolan Reilly stepped in to provide an overview of the Winnipeg General Strike followed by a bus tour that allowed us to visit a Ukrainian Labour Temple, dine at a Ukrainian restaurant, and visit other historic sites associated with the General Strike of 1919. The day's activities ended with a musical performance by 16-year-old Métis fiddler Sierra Noble at a reception hosted by the Honorable Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, at the Manitoba Legislature. Prior to entering provincial politics three years ago, Mr. Bjornson was an award-winning secondary school history teacher as well as a past Historica Institute participant. He even took time to give us a guided tour of the Manitoba legislative buildings.

Imagine having an education minister who has been an educator! What a progressive concept.

The remainder of the week was jam-packed with activities. We discovered our Canadian past through digital history case studies from the Virtual Historian program and studied the First World War through the Lest We Forget Project. We broadened our object literacy in a workshop combined with a private tour offered by the Manitoba Museum. Some of us scrutinized the use of power in a competitive society through simulation gaming while others were offered insights into a teacher-organized educational partnership with Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site in Selkirk. One of the highlights was a tour of Musée Saint-Boniface combined with a historical theatrical production in the cemetery adjacent to the Saint-Boniface Basilica, where Louis Riel rests. Coincidentally, a discarded beam from the Musée Saint-Boniface was used as a major component of the Six String Nation guitar.

Contrary to what I was told before I left Victoria, I encountered limitless blue skies, blazing sun, and clean breezes bringing fresh air off the prairies. As well, I experienced intellectual stimulation and enlightenment. During the evenings, informal socializing provided opportunities to engage in convivial but respectful dialogue with other participants. I came away with a better understanding of the complexities and commonalities of teaching shared by colleagues from across the country. I also made some wonderful new friends. I now look at Canada through a different lens. For me, the Historica Secondary Teachers' Institute was truly transformational.

On the flight home, the waves of prairie grain rolled on for miles and miles. I knew that I would arrive home with much more than a Louis Riel t-shirt.

You can find out more about Historica Teachers' Institutes by visiting their web site at www.HISTORI.ca.

Kirk Longpré is a teacher-librarian at Mount Douglas Secondary School, Victoria.



GRADUATION PORTFOLIO



An unprecedented shambles

by Noel Herron

Mid-summer postponement of controversial graduation portfolio for secondary students leaves a trail of uncertainty. Since being appointed minister of education over a year ago (this is our third education minister in three years) Shirley Bond, has been called many things, from six-gun Shirley to flip-flop minister, because of her repeated pratfalls.

But nowhere has this pratfall-prone education minister been more vulnerable than in her handling of the mid-summer postponement of the BC Liberals' much-touted graduation portfolio program for secondary students.

Imposed on school boards and their secondary schools three years ago (yet another Christy Clarke initiative gone awry) this controversial program was meant to showcase students' non-academic achievements. Students were required to write summaries of their experiences in areas such as personal health, community involvement, and information technology. The portfolio was to be a graduation requirement starting in the 2006–07 school year.

However, Bond and her authoritarian deputy minister, refused to heed the numerous and repeated warnings of many critics about both the scope and direction of this mandatory program.

Now, with the official, mid-summer postponement we have an unprecedented shambles on our hands.

As the cheerleader-in-chief over the past year, Bond assured

one and all that everything would be fine with this planned addition to the Grade 12 curriculum, despite the ongoing controversy. The ministry's new program, she stated, would strengthen and enhance Victoria's provincial graduation plan.

We were told that it would heighten the awareness of secondary students to the need for better planning about their futures. (What better example of good planning than a mid-summer deferral?) Indeed, it was all part of the BC Liberals Great Goals (capitals are the provincial government's) for public education in this province.

The abrupt postponement until the 2007–08 school year of the much-vaunted graduation portfolio tells a different story.

Lastly, a postponement, pending a review, if the latter is what you have in mind, of this badly executed program is the last thing we need. It should in fact, given your recent experience with the grass roots revolt by trustees, teachers and parents, be promptly dumped in the dustbin of failed education initiatives.

Hoping to sidestep further controversy by announcing this deferral in the dog days of late July when schools were out and school boards would not return to work until September, Bond only added to the brouhaha with her inept handling of the issue.

With her own words she slammed the very program, which only a year earlier she was lauding as a major provincial initiative.

Listen to what the minister had to say in *The Vancouver Sun* in early August about Victoria's graduation portfolio program in order to justify her most recent flip flop: "Over the last number of months, I've visited 17 school districts across the province and I can't name one where this (provincial graduation portfolio) was not an issue."

The minister went on to echo the exact same criticisms previously leveled at this program when she stated, "There was a lot of concern addressed about the number of tasks, the hours it took to complete, the expectations, and the language involved."

Right on Shirley. So why were you and your deputy not listening when critics correctly labeled this program nothing but a burdensome, make-work project drenched in jargon and dumped on the 160,000 plus unsuspecting Grades 10, 11, and 12 secondary students?

Now with the opening of schools, secondary schools and school boards across this province are left to clean up the scheduling mess from this bureaucratic boondoggle. Never mind the wasted time, energy, and resources.

You, as the minister responsible and your out-of-touch ministry staff, owe thousands of senior secondary students, along with their parents, who laboured conscientiously for three years on an ill-conceived plan, a public apology. These students are in an educational limbo having worked for years on mandatory portfolios that are going nowhere.

In April, a thousand students in Churchill Secondary School in Vancouver signed an online petition to dump portfolios.

Add to this the difficult barriers that portfolios raise for many ESL kids and kids with special needs, and then throw in last year's new Grade 10 add-on exams (by our testing-obsessed ministry) and you have a potent mix with serious equity issues emerging.

But the uncertainty surrounding your mid-summer announcement has far from disappeared.

Rather it only deepens as people recognize that your postponement is simply a carefully crafted strategy designed to ease the pressure on you, as education minister.

And when you visited the 17 school districts, as part of your recent provincial tour, and were confronted, in person, with the strong reaction, not to mention resentment, from parents about the unnecessary layers of check lists and forms imposed on their kids, postponement was deemed an acceptable political way out of this faltering initiative.

Lastly, a postponement, pending a review, if the latter is what you have in mind, of this badly executed program is the last thing we need.

It should in fact, given your recent experience with the grass roots revolt by trustees, teachers, and parents, be promptly dumped in the dustbin of failed education initiatives.

Noel Herron is a former Vancouver School Board trustee and elementary school principal.

Portfolio equity an impediment for some

by Larry Kuehn

The portfolio requirement for graduation raises some important issues of equity. Think about it this way:

Student A comes from a home with a computer and broadband internet access—maybe even

The point to consider in relationship to portfolios is that the impact of social class on students is likely greater outside of the school than in the school itself.

has her own laptop with wireless so she can work most anywhere on her portfolio. She lives in a home where she has her own bedroom with lots of storage area to keep any of the physical aspects of the portfolio over the three-year period. Through her family connections, she has access to a wide range of options for community work. With her access to the family car and a healthy allowance, she has access to a range of sports.

Student B lives in a two-bedroom apartment, sharing a bedroom with two siblings, with only one drawer to hold his clothes and any other material, such as the physical aspects of the portfolio. His only access to a computer is at school or at the public library, 10 blocks from where he lives. Both of his parents work at minimum wage jobs, but neither gets a full week of employment. Together they earn less than the poverty cut-off point for a family of five, so there is no money for any

activities by the student that require a fee.

Both of these students are marginal in their performance in school. Any one problem with courses and credits will make graduation with a Dogwood unlikely, at least in the time frame that the province uses to determine the school completion rate. Which of these two marginal students is more likely to be able to finish the three-year portfolio and graduate?

The evidence is overwhelming that social class is an important factor in

The more school credits depend on activities outside the school, the more likely social class will make a difference.

differences in school performance on an overall basis. Not every individual student's performance and future is determined by social class, of course. Some resilient young people are able to overcome incredible obstacles, while others with every advantage do not turn those into success. However, on an overall basis, social class is shown again and again to be an important factor.

Schools and teachers can ameliorate the impact of social class. In fact, on an overall basis, the social class differences shown in the PISA international test results are, for example, less in Canada than the US. Some of that is likely a result of more equitable school funding and school practices in Canada. Some of it is a result of factors outside the school, such as less segregated housing patterns in Canadian cities than those in the US.

The point to consider in relationship to portfolios is that the impact of social class on students is likely greater outside of the school than in the school itself. The more school credits depend on activities outside the school, the more likely social class will make a difference. That is why a portfolio requirement will be a bigger impediment to graduation for some students than for others.

The Deputy Minister of Education Emery Dosdall has expressed concern that after decades of graduation rates increasing, the rates in BC have hit a plateau and stayed steady for two years. These, of course, are the years in which the Liberal government and Dosdall have been setting the conditions in the schools. If the portfolio as a requirement—and other changes to the graduation requirements, such as the provincial tests for Grades 10 and 11—are not changed, in the future he is likely to have to ask himself why graduation rates have not just hit a plateau, but have actually declined for the first time. And it will have happened on his watch, with graduation policies that he has promoted and the government has adopted.

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

PORTFOLIOS

Concerns raised

On July 25, 2006, Minister of Education Shirley Bond, announced that the graduation portfolio would not be mandatory for Grade 12 students graduating in the 2006–07 school year.

Grade 12 students who do not complete their portfolios this year will be given an SG (Standing Granted) instead of a letter grade, and receive four credits. An SG does not carry a percentage or a letter grade and does not affect the student's GPA (grade point average). Grade 12 students who opt to complete their portfolios can choose whether to have the per cent and letter grade on their final transcripts, or an SG (Standing Granted). Grade 12 students who choose to take an SG for grad portfolio do not have to complete their 30 hours of work or volunteer experience.

Some schools and districts are trying to keep the portfolio mandatory for their Grade 12s this year, although graduation requirements are a matter of provincial policy and Dogwood graduation certificates are awarded by the province. Others are strongly “encouraging” students to complete their grad portfolios. It is important that districts, schools, and teachers communicate to this year's Grade 12 students and their parents, in an honest and straightforward manner, that they have the option of not completing the portfolio, taking Standing Granted, and getting four credits.

There has been no change to the Planning 10 course and the ministry expects Grade 11 students to continue working on their portfolios. Staffing that is freed up as a result of the portfolio not being mandatory for this year's graduates should be used to reduce class size and address class-composition issues.

Bond further announced that ministry staff would be reviewing the portfolio program from September to November 2006. Contact your local for information on these meetings.

When the grad portfolio was first proposed as a grad requirement, the response was overwhelmingly negative. Teachers were very much in favour of portfolio assessment, but very much opposed to a cross-curricular or extra-curricular portfolio becoming a graduation requirement. The main reasons for the opposition were:

- the complex and unwieldy nature of the portfolio
- the lack of funding for implementation
- the potential barrier to graduation for our most vulnerable students, which is an equity issue.

Concerns were also raised by other educational partner organizations including principals, superintendents, school boards, parents, and students.

For more information go to bctf.ca/education/graduation/FAQGradPortfolio.html.

How to become a BCTF-endorsed candidate for the College of Teachers' Council

The next round of elections for the BC College of Teachers' Council under the new provisions of the *Teaching Profession Act* will take place in April/May 2007.

The BC College of Teachers is the regulatory body of the teaching profession in BC. The college has a focused mandate: teacher education, teacher certification, and member discipline. Responsibility for governing the College rests with the 20-person council. Twelve

of 20 council members are elected by the membership. Eight council members are appointed by the minister of education.

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

Elections are held in four of the 12 geographic zones each year. This year, elections will be held in the following college election zones, Zone 4 Kootenay, Zone 5 Okanagan, Zone 6 Upper Fraser Valley, and Zone 11 South Coast. The term of office is for three years, beginning August 1 and ending on July 31.

The BCTF has established a policy that provides for the

zonal selection of a BCTF-endorsed candidate in each zone where an election is being held. Only active BCTF members are eligible for BCTF endorsement as candidates in BC College of Teachers' elections.

Each local has the right to select one nominee. This nominee must be endorsed by an executive, delegate assembly, or general meeting of the local. Each local nominee must undertake to abide by the endorsement process. Once a local has nominated a candidate, the name of the candidate will be forwarded to the BCTF staff co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that each local in the zone conducts a vote to determine the zone's BCTF-endorsed candidate by secret ballot in accordance with BCTF procedures.

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

If you are interested in being considered as your local nominee for the BCTF-endorsed candidate in one of the college zones where an election is being held, please contact your local president as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about BCTF procedures for endorsing candidates, please contact Mike Lombardi, mlombardi@bctf.ca, 604-871-1849, toll free-1-800-663-9163 local 1849.

– Mike Lombardi

Sensible school planning

by Sylvia Bishop

Delegates to the BCTF 2006 AGM voted overwhelmingly in favour of withdrawing from participating in school planning councils, the formulation of accountability contracts, and school-growth plans. Here are some of the reasons why:



Background

When school planning councils were first legislated in 2003, BCTF members raised several concerns. There was inequity in representation with three parents, one teacher, and the school principal serving on the school planning council. School support staff who work so closely with students, were not represented at all. Employees of school boards were not allowed to serve on SPCs, effectively discriminating

Students have become a number reported on a test score rather than recognized for their unique gifts and accomplishments.

against BCTF and school support staff union members with children in school. Concerns were also expressed about the role of the school planning council discussing allocation of staff and resources in the school. Also, teachers were concerned about the amount of time needed to participate. There was no provision in the legislation to fund meetings.

In spite of these concerns, in 2003, the BCTF AGM decided teachers were willing to try this new structure. They saw the opportunity to communicate their vision and goals to parents and to address the real needs schools face in order to provide the best learning experiences for students. The BCTF

developed guidelines and support materials for teachers to use in their role as the SPC representative.

Current context

The promise of school planning councils developing school-growth plans that address the real needs of students, has not been realized. Instead, what we have seen in the last three years is a shift away from providing the best teaching and learning conditions possible to a bureaucratic focus on testing, ranking, and narrow achievement measures. Students have become a number reported on a test score rather than

Valuable teaching time and learning experiences are replaced with prepping for tests, teaching to tests, and practicing for tests.

recognized for their unique gifts and accomplishments.

School-growth plans around the province commonly identify numeracy, literacy, and social responsibility as their three goals. This is part of the accountability contract school boards must sign with the ministry. Gone is the opportunity for individual schools to work their own goals as they have in the past. Local presidents, responding to a survey in 2005, reported the frustration felt by many schools in setting school-growth plans. For example, the opportunity to focus on other curricula is not deemed appropriate for a school-growth plan.

In order to show improvement from year to year, it is required to measure student achievement. This has driven school planning councils to use FSAs, standardized tests, and other inappropriate testing tools in an



effort to report achievement. Valuable teaching time and learning experiences are replaced with prepping for tests, teaching to tests, and practicing for tests. Already scarce resources are used in this relentless pursuit of data collection and testing. The bureaucracy of testing and reporting takes away from valuable teaching time.

There is a better way

Teachers are not participating on school planning councils. This doesn't mean we have stopped planning for student growth and school improvement. Nor does it mean we don't want to include parents in the discussions. It does mean that we want to focus on what matters.

When you get together to talk with parents about student success and school improvement, consider some of the following points:

1. *Start with what you value.* The tendency is often to start with data. Instead, talk about what you want for the school and then look at the data. The centre of the discussion is focused on doing the best we



can do for students to achieve their full potential.

2. *Start with what you know.* Teachers' professionalism, education, and experience is a strong foundation to build on. Our students are not just another number, but real people with real potential. Our relationship with them as teachers fosters their growth.

3. *Teachers use a wide variety of assessment methods and tools to determine student achievement.* These multiple sources of data are more reliable than a single test score. Observation, letter grades, and performance standards levels are three examples.

4. *Outside sources of data can be helpful.* These do not need to be a standardized test.



How to get started

The school community offers many occasions during the school year for parents and teachers to meet formally and informally. Your staff might want to talk about how these occasions can be used to invite parents into a discussion about school planning. The staff might decide to host a meeting with parents to start the conversation. The uniqueness of each school will guide your decisions.

Your staff might want to talk about how these occasions can be used to invite parents into a discussion about school planning.

Information regarding the accountability scheme and school planning councils is available at bctf.ca. Check *School Staff Alerts* faxed to your school and *BCTF News* mailed to staffrooms for additional information. Support materials are available on line. Check with your local president or ask your staff rep to get copies.

Teachers have always set school goals supporting student learning long before school planning councils were introduced. Providing the best learning opportunities for students is at the heart of our profession.

Discussing student needs with parents provides an opportunity for teachers and parents to listen and learn from each other.

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

Opinion

Parents cannot “opt out” of provincial curriculum: clarifying alternative delivery

by Glen Hansman

In my opinion, a significant part of this year’s settlement reached in *Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education)*, which had been before the *BC Human Rights Tribunal* for a number of years, addresses the confusion around the Ministry of Education’s Alternative Delivery Policy and so-called “sensitive content” in the prescribed learning outcomes.

“Sensitive content” is a vague descriptor with the potential to encapsulate a whole range of issues—not just provincially mandated curriculum in sexual health, diverse family models, or child-abuse prevention. A lot depends upon the community one teaches in. Well-meaning administrators and teachers have been known to excuse students from curriculum in music, physical education, social studies, art, science, and discussions dealing with same-gender families just to avoid conflict with parents and an uncertainty about what the *School Act* and Ministry of Education had to say on this practice.

A few years ago in *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District* book-banning case, the Supreme Court of Canada’s Chief Justice McLachlin wrote:

“Learning about tolerance is...learning that other people’s entitlement to respect from us does not depend on whether their views accord with our own. Children cannot learn this unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home.”

It is this tension between views at school that may differ from the views taught at home that has placed teachers in an untenable situation of having to determine what might or might not be “sensitive content” while teaching the prescribed learning outcomes as set out by the Ministry of Education.

The ministry’s letter

Can students be unilaterally excused from parts of the provincial curriculum? The simple answer is no.

As part of this year’s settlement in *Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education)*, a letter clarifying the true nature and limited reach of the Alternative Delivery Policy has gone out from the Ministry of Education to all school boards in British Columbia, the BC School Trustees Association, the BC School Superintendents’ Association, the BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association, the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, and the BCTF.

The Ministry of Education’s letter clarifies that:

- there is no provision in the law or ministry policy for parents in public schools to excuse their children from any of the prescribed learning outcomes in the IRPs.
 - schools or school districts *do not* have the authority to omit addressing or assessing any part of the prescribed learning outcomes.
- In other words, mandated provincial curriculum is just that—mandated for all students and all schools.
- Alternative delivery**
- What is available to families are certain provisions under the Alternative Delivery Policy that apply *only* to the prescribed learning outcomes in the health curriculum organizer in the following IRPs: *Health & Career Education K–7* (which is replacing the old *Personal Planning K–7* IRP), *Health & Career Education 8 & 9*, and *Planning 10*.
- For the health curriculum organizers in these three IRPs, families who wish to address the health curriculum organizers by means other than instruction by a teacher in a regular classroom setting may do so. The alternative delivery policy provides students, with the consent of their parents or guardians and in consultation with their school, the opportunity to arrange agreed-upon alternative means for addressing these learning outcomes. This might include home instruction

with an agreed-upon package from the school, registration in a distributed learning course, self-directed studies, or other means suggested by the school, parents, or student involved.

This does not excuse students from having to meet the learning outcomes in the health curriculum organizers. The Ministry of Education expects that these students will be able to demonstrate to the school that they have learned the prescribed learning outcomes, and that the school will handle this assessment. *The policy does not apply to any other curriculum organizer in the above-mentioned IRPs, nor does it apply to any other British Columbia provincial curriculum.*

An example

For example, the topic of healthy eating falls under the health curriculum organizer for Grade 4 *Health & Career Education*. A child’s mothers inform the school that for personal reasons they would like their son to receive alternative delivery of the healthy eating prescribed learning outcome. The mothers consult with the school about the range of topics covered under that prescribed learning outcome, borrow some resources from the school, and the student receives instruction at home from his mothers on the topic of healthy eating. Afterward, the child is assessed by his

teacher to make sure he has learned the prescribed learning outcome on healthy eating. Perhaps the same assessment used with the rest of the boy’s class could be used, or he could demonstrate his knowledge to the school by some other means.

However, content in the career curriculum organizer in *Health & Career Education K–7* is not covered by the alternative delivery policy, nor is any other elementary IRP so the scenario described above would not apply.

Upcoming changes to the IRPs resulting from the Corren settlement will be geared toward making the curriculum more inclusive and representative of the constituencies our schools serve, including same-gender families, as stated in the *BC Human Rights Act*. These IRPs will go through the usual public review process utilized by the Ministry of Education.

Teachers should not have to apologize or feel undue stress for teaching the curriculum or for promoting inclusive classrooms.

The full text of the Alternative Delivery Policy and of the IRPs, including the new *Health & Career Education K–7*, are available online.

Glen Hansman is third vice-president, VESTA and a member of the Vancouver School Board Social Responsibility & Diversity Team.

Individual complaints lead to individual solutions

by Jane Turner

Like so many things in life, there are great ironies in the Murray and Peter Corren settlement with the provincial government ensuring that public education

does not discriminate against gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered people.

It seems that those who oppose homosexuality are outraged that two individuals have the right to review curriculum to ensure it is

diverse and inclusive. Why should two individuals have all of this power, they piously intone? The Correns actually don’t have “all this power,” but that’s not what they are really upset about. They are unhappy that public education is finally

going to be inclusive and non-discriminatory toward homosexuals.

Ironically, it is the change the provincial Liberals made to the human rights complaint process in British Columbia that produced this kind of an outcome. The Human Rights Commission was disbanded by the Liberals and replaced with the Human Rights Tribunal. The difference between the commission and the tribunal is significant. The commission could receive class action complaints (groups of people could lodge a human rights complaint about a particular issue or action that affected groups within society). The tribunal can only receive complaints from individuals about an individual loss of rights. Under the tribunal, when a complaint is heard and resolved, the resolution can only be for the individual(s) who filed the complaint. There can be no general, class resolution to a complaint as classes of people can’t file complaints—only individuals can file a complaint. You can see where this is going.

When Murray and Peter Corren first raised the question with the then-NDP Minister of Education as to why sexual orientation wasn’t part of Appendix C of Ministry IRPs (Appendix C being the list of things that curriculum and resources had to be aware of in order to be inclusive and represent the diversity of learners in the province) and asked if sexual orientation would be included, they were told “no.” The Correns officially complained that Appendix C was

discriminatory as it left out sexual orientation. All that had to happen to resolve this problem was to include sexual orientation in the long list of isms that existed—sexism, racism, ageism, ableism, political activism, etc. In its wisdom, the government thought it would be easier to get rid of the list instead of adding two words, sexual orientation, to it. It eliminated Appendix C from the IRPs.

The government did not reckon on the Correns. Murray and Peter continued their complaint, this time under the aegis of the Human Rights Tribunal. An individual’s complaint received an individual resolution. The resolution is that the ministry “will draft internal review guidelines...to ensure that every draft IRP incorporates consideration of equality and respect for all learners...and respect for diversity with respect to sexual orientation and other grounds of discrimination...” and the ministry will consult with the Correns about this process. This is pretty much where we started 10 years ago.

This shouldn’t have been about the Correns. It should have been about all teachers and learners respecting children and families no matter what their composition or orientation, sexual or otherwise. However, the change to the human rights process in BC made this about individuals. Life is full of ironies.

Jane Turner is an assistant director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division.



Health and safety

Compromising the historic compromise

by Mark Keelan

For many BCTF members, the Workers' Compensation Board, or WorkSafeBC as the WCB now prefers to refer to itself, is something of a mystery. What is this organization, where did it come from, and how is it straying from the principles on which it was founded?

Across North America, governments are buying into the same arguments that were rejected by Meredith...

The late 19th century saw Canada's rapid industrialization. An increasing number of workers were being injured or killed on the job. There was no provision for compensation for these workers except through the courts. For a variety of reasons, most workers were hesitant to sue their employers; they could be fired, there was no guarantee that the lawsuit would be successful, and lawsuits took a long time to be heard, during which time the worker was without any kind of financial support. An additional barrier for workers was that if the courts determined that a worker was even minimally responsible for the injury, there was no right to compensation. At the same time employers were worried. A few were genuinely concerned about the plight of their injured workers but, because a court occasionally ordered a significant judgment in favour of a worker, most employers were afraid that if a worker's action were successful it could potentially ruin the company.

Workers and employers began to look toward Europe, where some countries had devised laws to deal with the problem of compensation for workplace injuries. In Britain, employers were held individually liable for injuries suffered by their employees. Germany took a different approach where groups of industries were collectively liable for the injuries of workers employed by any of the companies within the group.

Shockingly, the City of New York, whose workers were on the front lines of the rescue work, is challenging virtually all of their workers' claims.

In 1910, the government of Ontario appointed a Royal Commission headed by Sir William Meredith to examine the issue of compensation for workplace injuries. Meredith delivered his final report and recommendations in 1913. The last two sentences of his report summarize the attitude he brought to his investigation and, disturbingly, could have been written today:

"That the existing law inflicts injustice on the workingman is

admitted by all. From that injustice he has long suffered, and it would, in my judgement, be the gravest mistake if questions as to the scope and character of the proposed remedial legislation were to be determined, not by a consideration of what is just to the workingman, but of what is the least he can be put off with; or if the Legislature were to be deterred from passing a law designed to do full justice owing to groundless fears that disaster to the industries of the Province would follow from the enactment of it."

Ontario passed legislation in 1914 based on the principles established by Meredith's Commission:

- collective, rather than individual liability of employers
- the system would be fully funded by employers
- benefits for workers guaranteed in legislation
- the "Historic Compromise"—workers gave up their right to sue their employers in return for the workers' compensation system

As with education policy, the current British Columbia government is borrowing liberally from the United States' failing ideas when it comes to workers' compensation policy.

- the system would be "no-fault"—benefits would be paid whether or not the worker's actions contributed to the injury
- an independent body would administer the system with equal representation from employers and labour
- the board would have judicial-like authority, decisions could not be appealed in the courts.

British Columbia's workers' compensation law passed in 1917 and was based on both Meredith's recommendations as well as the recommendations of a 1916 Royal Commission headed by Avarad Pineo. One of the Pineo Report's major recommendations, which was accepted by the legislature, was that a system of accident prevention be added to the British Columbia legislation.

Over the past 90 years, the law has continued to evolve. New occupational diseases have been recognized, more industries and workplaces are covered, and prevention initiatives have been expanded to address the needs of the diverse types of workplaces in the province, to name a few of the changes.

It is interesting to speculate about whether or not Meredith and Pineo would be happy with how their plans have turned out. In fact, some recent trends probably would give them cause for concern.

Across North America, governments are buying into the same arguments that were

rejected by Meredith, i.e., that the current system is putting them at some kind of an economic disadvantage. According to "Workers' Compensation: A Cautionary Tale," a report by the New York-based Center for Justice and Democracy, workers' compensation laws are under attack across the United States. Several states have enacted laws that reduce benefits, narrow eligibility requirements, and limit the length of time benefits are payable. In Missouri, for example, no

Many areas of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, the rules that guide prevention efforts, have been eliminated or weakened.

benefits are payable unless an x-ray or similar test proves an injury. Thus, compensation for soft-tissue injuries is eliminated. Also in Missouri, benefits are reduced by 25 to 50% if the injured worker did not follow a workplace safety rule. In New York City, there are more than 10,000 claims related to rescue work at the World Trade Center disaster. Employers are challenging the majority of the claims. Shockingly, the City of New York, whose workers were on the front lines of the rescue work, is challenging virtually all of their workers' claims. These changes fly in the face of many of Meredith's principles.

As with education policy, the current British Columbia government is borrowing liberally from the United States' failing ideas when it comes to workers' compensation policy. Wage-loss benefits have been cut from 75% of gross salary to 90% of net. For a worker earning \$40,000 per year, the change amounts to a cut in benefits of about \$225 per month. Previously, pensions for permanent disabilities were paid for life, now most end at age 65. Many areas of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, the rules that guide prevention efforts, have been eliminated or weakened. Last year, there were 188 workplace deaths in BC including 49 in the forest sector and 39 in construction. And, the Workers' Compensation Board has not put a stop to the increasingly aggressive challenging of claims by employers. The result is that the non-adversarial system envisioned by Meredith is often extremely adversarial and one in which employers hold the advantage over their workers in terms of time and resources.

It is essential that BCTF members continue to advocate for strong laws and regulations designed to prevent workplace injuries and when our prevention efforts fail, advocate for just compensation for workers injured.

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



On being well

Wellness is being grateful

by Julia Johnson

This has been an historic summer. War raged in the Middle East. In Canada, an international AIDS conference was held in Toronto and Vancouver hosted an International Peace Forum. Each of these events poignantly reminds us that many inhabitants of this world live with daily devastation that, to us, is incomprehensible. As we begin a new school year it is easy to become immersed in the daily routines of living and teaching, where the diverse issues that demand our response consume our emotional energy. In these frenzied beginnings it is easy to forget that there is much we have for which we can be grateful.

When we live a life of gratitude, we are given the gift of accepting life as it is...

In the book, *The Psychology of Gratitude*, edited by Robert A. Emmons, Philip Watkins, author of a chapter on gratitude and well being, describes a study he conducted on the emotional benefits of grateful experience. He found that gratitude is a significant component of well being and "that a practice of gratitude actually increases various positive emotional states." He suggests that, "a practice of gratitude should consistently [remind] one of how good their life really is."

To this end, I am grateful that I am alive and that I was born in a peaceful country where fresh air, clean water, and green space are abundant. I am grateful that the land upon which I live provides me with the food and shelter I need to keep me dry, warm, and safe. I am grateful that where I live enables me to grow, learn, and develop creatively and that I am able to explore new life paths without intimidation. I am grateful that I have freedom of choice that allows me to express myself freely and pursue meaningful work. I am grateful I am healthy and this country provides me with a healthcare system I can afford. I am grateful for my friends and family who provide support when I am overcome by life's tragedies. I am grateful for the diverse misfortunes that have been a part of my journey for they have been my greatest lessons on living.

On a professional level, I am grateful my education provides me with diverse teaching opportunities that challenge my thinking, my security, my relationships, and my ability to seek solutions. I am grateful a multitude of resources are

available to augment my instruction and serve the needs of my students. I am grateful for the diverse student populations I meet for they enhance my ability to create inclusive learning environments. I am grateful for the many professionals and colleagues who provide their wisdom and skill when I am faced with unfamiliar challenges. I am grateful for the parents who value and respect my ability to connect with their children and help them be successful learners. I am grateful for teachers who volunteer to be active members of the Federation because I am able to entrust them with protecting my professional rights.

When gratitude is not practiced as a life skill, Emmons suggests that, "we all too automatically fall prey to feelings such as irritation, anxiety, worry, frustration, judgmentalness, self-doubt, and blame... These habitual response patterns [begin to dominate] [one's] internal landscape, diluting and limiting positive emotional experience and eventually becoming so familiar that they become ingrained in one's sense of self-identity." Emmons points out that the human body has as inherent capacity for self-healing and regeneration. However, he reminds us that the energy drain produced by negative emotions places stress on the whole body and plays a major role in many health problems.

Emmons suggests people generally are not able to sustain positive emotions in the midst of an ordinary day-to-day life, but if one attempts to view life as a gift then the grateful person is more able to find benefits even in unpleasant circumstances. Gratitude then becomes an effective coping mechanism for dealing with stressful events. This is best described in Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, as he illuminates us on man's suffering: "He will have to acknowledge the fact that even in suffering he is unique and alone in the universe. No one can relieve him of his suffering or suffer in his place. His unique opportunity lies in the way to which he bears his burdens."

When we live a life of gratitude, we are given the gift of accepting life as it is, and with that comes the freedom to choose how we respond. May all of your emotional choices this year take you down the road to wellness.

Julia Johnson, a retired learning resource teacher in Quesnel, is a BCTF PD wellness associate and a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board. livingjewels@shaw.ca



Antonio Garcia, an executive member of the teachers' union in Oaxaca, Mexico, receives a \$10,000 cheque from the BCTF in support of the Oaxaca teachers whose strike has lasted more than four months. Garcia and other teacher union leaders were in Vancouver in June for the International Peace Education Conference.

L-R: Mariluz Arriaga (Mexico), Rouston Job (Caribbean Union of Teachers), Fatima da Silva (Brazil), Felicidad Torrecillas (Mexico), Steve Stewart (CoDevelopment Canada), Antonio Garcia (Mexico), Larry Kuehn (BCTF), Reina Cabrera (Peru), Amanda Rincon (Colombia), Jane Goyes (Ecuador), Tito Nenna (Argentina), and Gerardo Hernandez (Mexico).

World Teacher's Day

Helping teachers in Lebanon and Oaxaca

With the struggle that BC teachers went through in the last year, it is perhaps easier for us to understand how personal and professional lives can be affected by events and struggles. Two groups of teachers in the last few months have gone through cataclysmic events far greater than those we have faced.

Teachers in Lebanon...had their schools and homes destroyed during the month-long war.

Teachers in Lebanon, particularly in the south of the country, had their schools and homes destroyed during the month-long war. When the bombing stopped, Education International (EI) put out an appeal on behalf of Lebanon's teacher unions for funds to help their members get re-established. The BCTF executive responded to the appeal with a

contribution of \$10,000 to the EI solidarity fund specifically for the teachers in Lebanon. Many individuals also donated to the fund.

Teachers in the state of Oaxaca in Mexico have been in the midst of incredible social upheaval for several months. The 70,000 members of Section 22 of SNTE, the Mexican teachers' union, went on strike on May 15. One of their demands was a raise in salary to keep up with inflation—not a surprise. However, they also had a number of demands for their students and their learning conditions.

The teachers wanted the government to provide a free breakfast for their students, books, writing utensils, and minimally adequate school buildings. Oaxaca is a state that is made up of about 40% indigenous population. Poverty is widespread, particularly in the rural indigenous communities. A large percentage of the young people have been forced to abandon their homes and cross into the United States,

often illegally, to make money they send back to Mexico to support their families.

To increase the pressure on the government to negotiate,

Teachers in the state of Oaxaca have been in the midst of incredible social upheaval for several months.

thousands of teachers and their families occupied the huge plaza in the centre of the city of Oaxaca. On June 14, the government responded by sending in 3,000 armed state police in the middle of the night. Fleeing teachers and their families were beaten and, according to reports, some were killed.

This changed the situation from a teacher strike to a community demand for change. Two days after the attack, 400,000 people marched in support of the teachers. Agricultural, student, and union groups joined the teachers and created the Popular Assembly of

the People of Oaxaca. The teachers reclaimed the plaza and the community took over the city and demanded the resignation of Gov. Ulises Ruíz Ortíz, who went into hiding.

For over three months the protest has continued, with thousands of people living in the plaza and the streets of the city, sharing their food and holding meetings of the Popular Assembly where they discuss how to make changes. Several people have been killed, some on their way to the city from a rural area and the union offices attacked. Despite fears of further violence, the protest has continued for four months.

Fleeing teachers and their families were beaten and, according to reports, some were killed.

Soon after the attack by the police on the teachers, Antonio Garcia, a member of the executive of the teachers' union was in Vancouver to take part in

the education section of the World Peace Forum. The BCTF executive had approved a \$10,000 grant to the union to help to feed and support the families and Antonio was able to take the cheque back to Mexico.

A DVD on the teachers' movement in Mexico, and Oaxaca in particular, is available on loan from the BCTF

A DVD on the teachers' movement in Mexico, and Oaxaca in particular, is available on loan from the BCTF. It is called "Granito de Arena" (grains of sand) and was made before the recent events, but helps to explain the context of education in Mexico and the struggle of the teachers' union in Oaxaca.

To borrow the DVD and to show it to colleagues, mail your request to video@bctf.ca and include your name, the title, school address, and school phone and fax.

— Larry Kuehn

International solidarity in Surrey

by Jacqui Birchall and Julia MacRae

Surrey is a large local with more than 4,000 members, and the capacity to fundraise, make donations, find interested members, and host international visitors is perhaps easier than in other locals. However, Surrey's international solidarity work is done by only a few people so even in a much smaller local, effective work can be done. The work is inspiring, not only for the people involved, but also for the general membership, for a few reasons:

- Getting to know the problems of teachers in other areas of

the world puts some of our grievances and struggles into perspective.

- We can see commonality in our struggles and those of teachers across the world.
- Strategies used by "far away folks" can be used locally.
- Globalization and the threats to public education are more deeply understood.
- Pride in union work is increased. Teachers know their union is doing vital work on a global scale and participating in solidarity.
- Solidarity actions by our partners in the south can help us practically or symbolically in our struggles here, e.g.,

Costa Rican, Honduran, and Mexican teachers picketed Canadian embassies during our recent strike.

History

Surrey has often made donations for disaster relief or for union support in the third world. Various teachers have traveled with Project Overseas through the CTF and brought back a little of the far away to their classrooms.

We went through a process of forming an official International Solidarity Committee. The committee works through Co-Development Canada to support an on-going project in Honduras, on non-sexist pedagogy, and advises the STA

executive on emergent international solidarity issues.

We also keep members informed of the work we are doing, create workshops to be delivered at our convention, and host international union visitors.

Getting started

We formed a standing committee of the association. This includes an eight-member committee, a committee budget (\$1,600, the same budget as all the committees) for the year's activities, and a budget of \$5,000 to be distributed to International Solidarity projects.

We advise the STA executive of the suggested distribution of these funds, based on our committee mandate.

Rules for disbursing of funds

1. Projects are specifically teacher union to teacher union.
2. Money is not used for Canadian committee members travel expenses, should there be any travel associated with the committee.
3. If the money is not used in a year, it goes back to the local.
4. Not all the money should be used on committed project funding, some should be saved for natural disaster relief or emergent issues, such as a third-world union that is attacked or threatened.

The committee meets about seven times a year. We try to pick a focus for our work in

Canada in any given year. In 2004–05 our focus was on Colombia. We organized a speaker (Colombian political refugee) to speak at our AGM, we distributed information pamphlets to all our members, and we hosted a workshop on the teacher union activism at our convention. This past year our focus was preparing for the World Peace Forum. We invited and funded Maria Trejos from the Costa Rica Teachers' Union as a speaker for the World Education Peace Forum. Maria spoke on non-sexist pedagogy. We funded this project with the help of an Ed May grant through the BCTF. Maria visited elementary schools in Surrey on June 19 in the company of Rosario Avila, past president of the Honduran teachers' union, and the president of the Namibian Teachers' Union, Ndepewa Nhipandulwa. Avila was president of the union when the right-wing government attacked the teachers' union members. Members of the BCTF flew to Honduras to successfully protect Rosario and her executive members from the government forces during those difficult times. Members of our committee traveled to Honduras last summer to visit union representatives and Honduran schools. Teacher union representatives praised the BCTF members for their help during the difficult times with the government, and told us that their office building was only possible because of that aid. This is the same executive that visited the Canadian Embassy in Tegucigalpa to protest the BC government's treatment of striking teachers last fall.

Last summer military forces attacked the Guatemalan Teachers' Union offices and their office equipment was destroyed. We immediately forwarded \$500 to help replace lost equipment. We were not the only donors in Canada and the Guatemalan government quickly learned that international support for the teachers is so strong that destroyed offices are quickly replaced.

At our most recent meeting we hosted the head of the Colombian University Teachers' Union, Carlos Gonzalez. As we have said before, life is very difficult for Colombian union leaders, especially teachers. The Colombian government supplies Gonzalez with a bullet-proof vest, a bullet-proof car, and bodyguards. Even within the grounds of the university where he teaches, it is possible that students are working for the paramilitary organizations that target union activists.

We hosted a table at the STA convention and had a raffle to raise money for Red Sepa Women's Network. We have an on-going commitment to the union in Honduras, to help fund for three years (\$3,500/year) their non-sexist pedagogy project. This money is sent through CoDev, which is able to match our funds with CIDA money and combine it with other donors, and monitor the project.

We attend CoDevelopment Canada's annual dinner in June. It is a great opportunity to catch up with other activists in the field of Latin America solidarity. Visit www.codev.org for more info.

Jacqui Birchall and Julia MacRae teach at Fraser Heights Secondary School, Surrey, and are members of Surrey International Solidarity Committee.



Emelina Perez from Cuba was a guest of several of the BC Cuba project team members this summer. Perez spoke at the international workshop at the summer conference. Some of her speech is excerpted here.

by Emelina Perez

To be a teacher is a great challenge blessed by innumerable rewards. No matter bad or good times, it is always the most precious profession. I have been teaching for more than 30 years and I always had enough pride in my job. What really makes me feel happy is when I meet former students who still call me *profe* (professor). Even though some of them occupy important positions in different ministries, they still greet me and acknowledge my contribution to their success in life as a professional.

Cuban teachers want to be with a native speaker and they know that where there is a Canadian, there is fun, there are more activities, and there will be extra resources.

My teaching expertise has been shared in Guyana and Jamaica, and also brought me to BC to work on the development of the Cuban-English-language curriculum for secondary school students. The project with the BCTF started in 1999 when a group of my colleagues from Varona, together with members of the Cuban union and the Ministry of Education, gathered with the members of the BCTF to sign an agreement to help Cuban English teachers. When I consider all the plans you had in mind and our expectations from this agreement, it is my opinion that the expectations have been surpassed, because the results show that this has been a very good project and it needs to continue.

If we want to enumerate the results, the first one is the teaching programs you had for us. The professional development for teachers courses that have been taught include language enhancement, methodology, evaluation, the use of the communicative approach, strategies for EFL and ESL, reading and writing, and cultural exchange. The project started in Varona with the presence of secondary teachers from different municipalities and provinces and teachers of English from specialist positions in medicine and tourism. Some teachers traveled every day from great distances—teachers who were up at 3:00 a.m. and hope to be lucky enough to catch a bus or a train to be at Varona by 8:00 a.m.

That first meeting was the beginning of the most outstanding and interesting work Cuban teachers have ever had to

upgrade their language skills—10 days devoted to develop the four abilities.

One of the most important results changed the education system for the teaching of English through the development of the revised curriculum for secondary-school children. This curriculum paved the way for other interesting projects in the teaching of English in Cuba. For example, the entire Cuban population benefited from the program Universidad para

Interesting future projects could be more information on activities to develop multiple intelligences.

todos (University for All) and English has been the most outstanding of the language courses taught on television. Millions of Cubans follow the English course. It does not mean that Cuban teachers were not able to do the job by themselves but the television teachers had access to the most up-to-date methodology for teaching foreign languages, activities, and strategies in the communicative approach. It was all part of the knowledge that we got from the course taught by the Canadian teachers.

And later, video lessons for secondary schools were developed—these lessons started because of an extreme shortage of English teachers and the new changes introduced into the curriculum. This summer, for the first time, we started lessons on television for primary school students. Books at different levels have been published for primary and junior high and now high school. This is also, in part, the result of this project. Now we have the whole system from Grades 4 to 12.

When the project began, Canadian teams came to present the program. Now we have two Canadian teachers and one Cuban working together in different sites. This

partnership helps the pedagogical institutes provide professional development to Cuban. Working with the Canadian team has the added benefit of the Cuban team member continuing to provide support for their own colleagues.

For me, personally, working as part of the team was very good. We adapted the plan so that instead of having my own class, we taught in teams. Cuban teachers want to be with a native speaker and they know that where there is a Canadian, there is fun, there are more activities, and there will be extra resources. In our team we met each evening and planned to share the activities. When the Canadian teachers were presenting, I was able to show the Cuban teachers how they could apply the ideas and activities in their own classrooms and at the same time the Cuban team member is listening to good English. This experience made a difference with my own teaching at Varona. I have used more strategies, games, and include more items to be discussed with my students.

The Canadian teams have had challenges working in Cuba. They have dealt with the heat, the living conditions, the hurricane, and have learned

This is possible for us now because our classes have been reduced to 20 students in secondary and 15 in primary.

that in Cuba they must be ready to adapt to the “ever changing plan.”

Interesting future projects could be more information on activities to develop multiple intelligences. Not many people in Cuba know about MI and what kind of activities can be

used to develop these. This is possible for us now because our classes have been reduced to 20 students in secondary and 15 in primary.

We would also be interested in learning more about reading and writing strategies and the use of strategies to support the video lessons.

My thanks to all the people who contributed to make it possible for me to be here again and supported me during my stay here. I have had the chance to experience new cultural shocks. For example, when we went to BCTF in 2000, we saw the photocopy machine and the bulk of paper you have here for printing and the number of new updated books

My thanks to all the people who contributed to make it possible for me to be here again and supported me during my stay here.

and resources. That was amazing.

This time I can say that I have enjoyed being exposed to new places like Harrison, Bowen Island, Grouse Mountain. I have seen people living in a floating house, I tried to sleep on a waterbed, and I traveled on Sky Train and back and forth on the ferry.

I have to thank you again and again and I hope the project will continue with more success and ideas and contribute to the ongoing strengthening of our friendship. Abrazos Cubanos y muchos besos para todos.

Emelina Perez, Higher Pedagogical Institute, Enrique Jose Varona, Ciudad Havana, Cuba.

Project Overseas

July-August 2007

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

Each year Project Overseas sends about 50 Canadian teachers to work in partnership with teacher organizations in English- and French-speaking developing countries to provide professional-development-in-service programs to teachers. Projects are based on requests from CTF's partners in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, and take place during the summer. PO is a volunteer experience, but administrative, travel, and living expenses are covered. Visit bctf.ca/social/isp/TeachingOverseas.html for more details.

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

Deadline: applications must be received at the BCTF by November 16, 2006. Information & applications: Amber Vint, BC Teachers' Federation 604-871-2251, toll-free 1-800-663-9163, fax 604-871-2294, avint@bctf.ca

10 new BCTF lesson aids

Please note: No Lesson Aids catalogue will be printed and mailed to schools this fall. For the most current listing of BCTF Lesson Aids, please check the online Lesson Aids catalogue at bctf.ca/LessonAids.

1 LA 8034 I'm Spelling Now! Langley Schools, 65 p. ©2000. This 18 cm x 22 cm workbook for Grades 1 and 2 is a full-colour, spelling book to support early literacy. The book provides pages for students to record their own words as they learn to read and write. Students can learn to spell the most commonly used English words, record their own words as a handy reference for their own writing, practice identifying the differences between the short and long vowel sounds, practice printing and upper and lower case letters, and practice alphabetizing—a lifetime research skill. The book includes pages adjacent the letter pages on which students can write their new words. \$4.95.

2 LA 8009 Basic Phonics Skills, Level C, Grades 1–2, Evan-Moor Educational Publishers, 290 p. ©2004. This book features 238 reproducible skill sheets and 20 reproducible Little Phonics Readers featuring stories that utilize the phonetic elements presented in that book. The book is organized into sections by phonetic or structural element, with each skill presented in the same consistent format. Worksheets for each skill progress in

difficulty so that teachers may choose practice that meets individual student needs. Note that the book is published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards. \$29.95

3 LA 8010 Basic Phonics Skills, Level D. Grades 2–3, Evan-Moor Educational Publishers, 290 p. ©2004. This book features 242 reproducible skill sheets and 20 reproducible Little Phonics Readers. The book is organized into sections by phonetic or structural element, with each skill presented in the same consistent format. Note that the book is published in the USA and may contain some US-based standards. \$29.95

4 LA 9557 Optics: A Teacher's Guide to Light and Optics, Let's Talk Science, 40 p. ©2001. This resource book will engage participants in a hands-on approach to the teaching of optics. Topics covered are the transmittance and absorption of light, how objects are seen, the laws of reflection, how light is refracted and the characteristics of mirrors and concave and convex lenses. Includes teacher suggestions, background information, hands-on student activities and a glossary. Grade 4. \$22.95

5 LA 9558 Good Vibrations: A Teacher's Guide to Exploring Sound, Let's Talk Science, 56 p. ©2002. This coil-bound resource book explores what causes sound, what factors affect the quality of a sound and can sound cause harm. Includes teacher suggestions, background information, hands-on students activities, blackline

masters, and a glossary. Grade 4. \$19.95

6 LA 1005 Direction for Creative Writing Teachers. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Perspective, Dan Lukiv, 274 p. ©2006. This resource is a collection of internationally published articles by the author. It is a comprehensive guide for teachers who are interested in teaching creative writing, and includes extensive direction about what sorts of activities and events may encourage some students to become adult creative writers. Chapters about tact and the nature of encouragement highlight the teacher's responsibility to create a classroom environment that promotes individuality and creative expression. The work, five years in the making, utilizes three of the author's research projects in which he interviewed established Canadian writers about experiences in school that had encouraged them to become adult creative writers. Grades 8–12. \$18.95

7 LA 9908 The Practice of Teaching: A Handbook for TOCs and New Teachers, BCTF, 62 p. Rev. 2006. This handbook book is designed to help teachers on call and new teachers understand the services and resources of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, enhance classroom-management skills, and improve job-search skills. Practical tips and information on beginning your career as a teacher on call and as a classroom teacher, classroom management and teaching strategies, resources available, and job search

strategies are among the many articles included in this resource booklet. \$8

8 LA F9005 Quand lire rime avec plaisir : pistes pour exploiter la littérature jeunesse en classe, ÉlaireTurgeon, 228 p. ©2005. Un recueil d'une cinquantaine de fiches d'exploitation pédagogique conçues pour accompagner les romans jeunesse publiés chez Québec Amérique. Feuilles reproductibles. 1re–7e. \$42.95

9 LA9015 Histoire de lire : la littérature jeunesse dans l'enseignement quotidien, Danièle Courchesne, 200 p. ©1999. Un recueil d'activités accompagnées de propos théoriques visant la lecture : montrer aux jeunes à explorer une page couverture ou table des matières, les inviter à se renseigner au sujet de l'auteur et de l'illustrateur, les mener à découvrir la personnalité des personnages et leur quête, de donner le goût de lire. Ces activités peuvent durer une quinzaine de minutes ou s'étaler sur plusieurs jours et s'intègrent facilement à l'enseignement du français, des mathématiques et des arts plastiques. Recommandations de livres incluses. Élémentaire. \$43.95

10 LA 9772 Moving and Grooving: A User Friendly Dance Program for Schools and Community Groups, Nick and Mary Anne Turner, ©2004, 166 p. and eight music CDs. This resource promotes the culture of square and round dancing, and the social, mental and physical health benefits of these dance forms. The package includes

eight audio CDs of dance music and a resource binder. The resource book includes CD content lists and two dance sections on moving and grooving. Each section can be used as a stand alone program or the sections can be combined. All dances are non-sex-oriented and partners are designated by numbers for left hand/right hand dancers. The dances in both sections can be used in schools from Grade 3–12. The moving section includes collections of traditional dances and solo dances, notes for teachers, partner dances, trio dances, mescolanzas, contra dances, traditional squares and an index for moving. The grooving section is entirely modern square dancing and includes caller biographies, 10 teaching units, index for grooving section and abbreviations explained. Grades 3–12. \$89.95

More curriculum resources and information are available at 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.

Yours for the asking

Hands on: An elementary school teachers' manual

Have you ever felt you didn't have the knowledge or the skills to do the kind of job in the classroom you knew you should be doing? Have you ever wished you had chosen another profession? Have you ever wanted to be a better teacher—maybe a great one? There is a new resource available that is practical, philosophical, and blunt, and it is guaranteed to help you become the best teacher you can be.

Even better, it is not written by someone who left teaching because they were lousy at it. It is written by a teacher who has been praised by parents, professionals, and kids, and who has spent 37 years in schools. As a former student recently commented, "Mrs. Paul's class was where I really learned things." *Hands on* will explain how to be a life-changing force in your classroom. Sample chapters include: Behaviour management, Working with parents, How not to be boring, and Why teachers quit plus there are detailed chapters on teaching language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Although the curriculum references are specific to elementary schools, this manual will stimulate all teachers to improve their classroom practices.

To order a copy, send a cheque for \$23.99 (\$19.99 + \$4 S&H) payable to Margaret Paul, 509 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC V8S 4X4.

Volunteer opportunity Study buddy tutors

Volunteer as a Study Buddy tutor and help a Little Sister reach or surpass her academic goals! Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland (www.bigsisters.bc.ca) is currently seeking volunteers to participate in their Big Sisters Study Buddy Program for one hour a week for a minimum of six months.

The Study Buddy Program offers Little Sisters (ages 7–17) the educational support and guidance they need by matching them in a one-to-one relationship with a volunteer tutor. The Little Sisters in this program have demonstrated a need for extra help with their school-work, and could benefit from the one-to-one tutoring assistance this program offers. With the support of a Big Sister Study Buddy, Little Sisters are encouraged and equipped to improve their educational performance and meet their academic goals, which contributes to their overall sense of self-esteem.

If you are a woman who is 19 years of age or older, has a high school diploma, some post-secondary education (completed or in-progress), and some experience helping others learn, please contact Elsie Hopcraft at 604-873-4525, ext. 301, e-mail studybuddy@bigsisters.bc.ca.

Kids' discovery workshops

Kids' discoveries at Vancouver Museum and Science World workshops parallel, or even exceed, real-world sustainability science.

Picture this: wacky-looking scraps of bright metallic cardboard held together by sticky tape that brought a stone to nearly 200°F in two minutes,

using only the sun. It doesn't look like a conventional solar oven, more like a science-fiction movie prop. It was created, not by a film-studio artist, but by an 11-year-old attending Vancouver Museum's workshops. Solar ovens have commercial potential, and might even reduce forest fires, if we can convince campers to use them.

Another scene is not from a Silicon Valley board room, where the Tesla electric sports car is nearing final engineering work. Six gifted young people discuss the merits of various energy sources for a vehicle of the future. And, just like *Popular Mechanics* editors, they decide that the hydrogen fuel-cell vehicle isn't as practical as a solar-powered battery vehicle. The group's average age is probably 12, and the scene is actually at Pinewood Elementary School in Delta. The Tesla electric car is the first production car created by software and computer engineers, spurred on by the hit feature documentary, *Who Killed The Electric Car?*

Here's another example: Wired magazine featured a light-concentrator based on supercomputer calculations programmed by math wizards. These math geniuses' parabolic dishes will allow a solar panel to exceed its usual performance. At the 30 Days of Sustainability event at Science World, a young boy created a parabolic panel that allowed his model electric car to run without direct sunlight. The car worked in the shade and at a good speed relative to other solar cars running under full sun! Check out *Marek's Curve* with Google.

Why are we adults throwing alkaline batteries away? All landfills will eventually leak and that toxic sludge will bubble up

in our children's drinking water and litigation lawyers will issue class action writs, decades from now. Adults don't know this, but scores of preteens in Vancouver attending Solar Power Road-show's workshops have experimented with everything from gravity to freezing temperatures to revive single-use batteries. Students who succeeded in bringing used batteries back to 1.5 volts have shared their methods with others. Vancouver now has dozens of potential recycling entrepreneurs, since a new brand-name alkaline retails for \$2 each.

Consider allowing elementary school students to investigate sustainable energy technology without showing already existing adult-world models because there are useful discoveries being made by preteens, as we've seen in Solar Power Road-show's free-form workshops.

For more information, contact Rob Matthies at 604-739-7717 or robert04mat@yahoo.com.

Tigers and dragons China and India for kids

Bring your class/group (children aged 2–9) down to

Gastown this fall to experience *Tigers and Dragons—China and India for Kids*. Tigers and Dragons is the first exhibit produced by Kids Around the World Children's Museum Society.

Our goal is to create a permanent children's museum to celebrate countries and cultures around the world and the 'world' in our city.

School group visits are going to be amazing. They will start with a chance for kids to look at the globe and find out where China and India are and where their own ancestors are from. There will be plenty of time for free play in the exhibit (including a make-and-take), plus a chance to do some Animal Yoga and learn to say and write some Chinese and Indian words. The 90-minute program ends with a story time.

We will also offer a range of pre- and post-trip activities that teachers can do with their class.

For more details about this colourful hands-on exhibit and to sign up for our newsletter, visit our web site at www.kidsaroundtheworld.ca.



Surrey elementary teacher, Carlos Fedyk, enjoys the experience with his son and plans to take his class to the exhibit.

Pension seminars 2006–07

Venues are still to be confirmed in specified locations. Members who register for a particular seminar will receive an e-mail confirming specific time and location.

Contact information for registration and more information about the TPP Member Seminars is:
Telephone 250-356-2466, or toll-free at 1-877-558-5574.
Fax 250-953-0436
E-mail TPPseminars@pensionsbc.ca
Web site www.tpp.pensionsbc.ca

Victoria	October 26	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	UVic (Michele Pujol Room)
Victoria	October 28	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	UVic (Michele Pujol Room)
Delta	October 26	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	TBA
Delta	October 28	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA
Kamloops	November 18	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Executive Inn
Abbotsford	November 25	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Abbotsford District Teachers' Association
Coquitlam	January 11	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	TBA
Coquitlam	January 13	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA
Surrey	January 25	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Kwantlen University College
Surrey	January 27	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Kwantlen University College
Nanaimo	February 10	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Coast Bastion Inn
Vancouver	February 15	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Best Western Chateau Granville
Vancouver	February 17	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Best Western Chateau Granville
Prince George	March 1	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Days Inn
Prince George	March 3	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Days Inn
Williams Lake	March 10	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Overlander
Kelowna	March 31	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	UBC Okanagan Conferences & Accommodations
Terrace	April 14	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Best Western Terrace Inn
Campbell River	April 21	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA
Burnaby	April 26	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Burnaby	April 28	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Cranbrook	May 5	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	College of the Rockies
North Vancouver	May 10	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	TBA
North Vancouver	May 12	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA

Journées de perfectionnement professionnel

par Anita Chapman

Les journées pédagogiques abrègent-elles l'année scolaire ? Pourquoi les enseignants ont-ils besoin de journées de perfectionnement professionnel ? Ces questions et d'autres continuent d'être un sujet de débats pour les enseignants, les parents et le public.

Histoire des journées de perfectionnement professionnel

Les journées de perfectionnement professionnel représentent une reconnaissance, emportée de haute lutte, de nos droits et responsabilités en tant qu'enseignants. Pendant de nombreuses années, la FECB a soumis des observations à nos employeurs et au ministre de l'Éducation pour faire reconnaître l'importance pour les enseignants de disposer de temps et de ressources nécessaires pour prendre part au perfectionnement professionnel.

En 1972, après des années de pression de la part de la FECB, des journées pédagogiques ont été ajoutées au calendrier scolaire à la demande de la profession enseignante. Cette addition augmentait le nombre de journées de travail pour les enseignants sans perte de journées d'enseignement pour les élèves. Les journées de perfectionnement professionnel dans le calendrier scolaire reconnaissaient le fait que les enseignants avaient besoin de temps au cours de l'année scolaire pour aiguiser leurs connaissances, améliorer l'exercice de leur travail et se tenir au courant des changements liés à l'enseignement et à l'apprentissage.

Pendant les jours de négociation collective locale, la plupart des syndicats locaux de la FECB

ont réussi à obtenir certaines dispositions au sujet des journées de perfectionnement. En général, les dispositions contractuelles prévoyaient que les établissements scolaires ou les comités de perfectionnement professionnel locaux détermineraient et prévoiraient les activités des journées de perfectionnement professionnel. Une disposition connexe des syndicats locaux confère à la plupart des comités de perfectionnement professionnel locaux le contrôle de l'affectation du financement du perfectionnement professionnel destiné aux enseignants.

Valeur et objectifs des journées pédagogiques

Les enseignants utilisent les journées pédagogiques pour se tenir au courant des derniers progrès qui ont un effet sur leur travail avec leurs élèves, comme les nouvelles technologies, de nouvelles idées sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage et des besoins communautaires qui ont évolué.

Sur une base individuelle ou collective, les enseignants décident des sujets à aborder. Ils assistent aux ateliers et aux conférences, participent aux programmes de mentorat, poursuivent un perfectionnement professionnel autonome et entreprennent d'autres activités destinées à l'amélioration de leur enseignement et de l'apprentissage.

Outre les journées pédagogiques, de nombreux enseignants suivent des cours universitaires, des cours du soir et des ateliers en fin de semaine ; ils lisent des revues professionnelles et suivent également des cours d'été. Ces expériences favorisent une culture d'enseignement et de perfectionnement professionnel où les enseignants travaillent dans un cadre collectif, comme membres d'une

communauté d'apprentissage, plutôt que de manière isolée.

Planification efficace de journées pédagogiques qui se tiennent dans l'école

Une évaluation des besoins constitue le point de départ d'une planification efficace de journées pédagogiques à l'école. Le ou la représentante de l'école chargée des journées pédagogiques devrait s'unir à d'autres membres du personnel pour cerner des besoins et planifier une formation en fonction.

Journées pédagogiques en danger

L'utilisation des journées pédagogiques pour des activités telles que des plans de réussite scolaire, et de formation en cours d'emploi organisées par le Ministère de l'Éducation et les conseils scolaires sapent sérieusement nos représentations sur le besoin de temps pour le perfectionnement professionnel d'enseignants.

En effet, l'utilisation des journées pédagogiques à des fins autres que le perfectionnement professionnel, comme, par exemple, des compétitions sportives, va également à l'encontre de nos représentations concernant le besoin de temps pour le perfectionnement professionnel.

À cause de la formation prescrite par le gouvernement et l'employeur, comme les protocoles à suivre pour les enfants victimes de mauvais traitements et ceux concernant la santé et la sécurité, les enseignants subissent des pressions pour utiliser les journées pédagogiques à des fins de formation en cours d'emploi.

Des sujets tels que la discipline à l'échelle de l'école, la prévention de l'intimidation et



Education for Social Justice: From the Margin to the Mainstream

A CANADIAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION CONFERENCE
MAY 4 - 6, 2007 – OTTAWA MARRIOTT HOTEL

Although definitions of social justice vary widely, equity and fairness are common components. The Canadian Teachers' Federation believes in the concept of social justice in public schools which embodies a focus on equity, democracy, rights, global citizenship, and respect for differences. Our education system and school communities are critical to the creation of a more socially just society.

The conference will provide opportunities to explore the concept of social justice by seeking answers to two important questions:

- What does it mean to be a social justice school or classroom?
- What are the roles and structures of a social justice teacher organization?

This conference will challenge students, educators, parents, communities, researchers, policymakers and unions to remake our schools and organizations in the image of social justice and as sites for social action. Presentations and workshops will focus on:

- Learning about Social Justice
- Living Social Justice
- Advocating for Social Justice
- Working Together for Social Justice

Registration Fee: \$428
Early Bird: \$321 (before December 21, 2006)

Please visit the CTF Web site for registration information and program updates at www.ctf-fce.ca



Canadian Teachers' Federation
2490 Don Reid Dr. Ottawa ON K1H 1E1 613-232-1505 / 1-866-283-1505

Skills. Knowledge. Innovative Learning.

Master of Arts in Learning and Technology

Educators today face a growing demand to take learning outside the classroom and beyond traditional methods.

Our MA in Learning and Technology gives you the skills and knowledge to facilitate learning in a technology-mediated environment. And you get to practice it, too – our innovative blended learning model, combining distance learning with short residencies, allows you to earn your degree while you earn a living.

Want to know more? Contact us today.
1-877-778-6227 | learn.more@royalroads.ca
www.royalroads.ca

The Royal Roads Advantage

The knowledge gained at Royal Roads University is relevant, timely and immediately applicable to the workplace. Experienced leaders in their fields teach our programs. Programs are completed in two years and combine brief residency periods in Victoria, B.C. with online learning.

ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

Advance in the workplace

OTHER RELATED PROGRAMS: GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION
MA IN LEADERSHIP | MA IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION
MA IN CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT WITH CONCENTRATION IN COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL CONFLICT | MA IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

d'autres besoins de perfectionnement professionnel, sont appropriés pour des journées pédagogiques.

La Fédération a demandé au ministère d'offrir des journées supplémentaires sans enseignement pour la formation autorisée et la mise en pratique du programme d'études. Une sixième journée a été fournie, mais les enseignants n'ont pas la possibilité d'assister à toutes les activités prescrites en une journée.

Dans certains conseils scolaires, l'intensification de l'enseignement et d'autres facteurs locaux poussent les enseignants à penser à prendre leurs journées pédagogiques à la fin août. Cette décision donne aux enseignants parfois une semaine supplémentaire de vacances au cours de la semaine de relâche. Cela pourrait aboutir à une plus longue année scolaire. Face à cette possibilité et sur les conseils du comité consultatif de perfectionnement professionnel (Professional


Issues Advisory Committee), le comité exécutif de la FECB a adopté une politique encourageant les syndicats locaux à organiser des journées ayant lieu à l'école ou dans le conseil scolaire au cours de l'année scolaire plutôt que pendant l'été.

Enseignants unis dans l'appui du perfectionnement professionnel

Nous pouvons résoudre les défis soulevés si nous unissons nos efforts. En tant que syndicat de professionnels, nous devons utiliser une stratégie qui comprend la négociation, la défense de nos intérêts, l'influence professionnelle et les communications pour soutenir le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants.


Anita Chapman, Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de la C-B.

Synopsis: This article is about professional development days.



Insurance Institute

RISK RESPONSIBILITY REALITY




Risk Responsibility Reality is a new classroom resource and DVD that appeals to BC teachers of LAW, HOME ECONOMICS, and PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

- Supports high school curricula in British Columbia
- Offers easy to use lesson plans & activities
- Presents real-life situations as a foundation for lively discussion

Order your **FREE** copy on-line at www.career-connections.info

FREE!
Order on-line today!



GRADUATE STUDIES IN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY – FROM WHEREVER YOU LIVE

Two new flexible professional programs delivered online using the latest educational technologies.

Professional Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education

Start January 2007
Application Deadline November 2006

- Graduate qualification for certified teachers who want to work as special educators and/or consultants
- 8 one-semester courses
- Can be completed in 16 months

For more information contact:
Dr. Ken Ryba
karyba@ucalgary.ca
403-220-5099

Master of School and Applied Child Psychology

Start May 2007
Application Deadline February 2007

- For individuals interested in working as school psychologists or in applied psychology in school or community settings
- 3-year program with extensive field experience


For more information contact:
Dr. Michelle Drefs
madrefs@ucalgary.ca
403-220-3675

www.educ.ucalgary.ca/apsy


UOFC
THIS IS NOW

Work as a teacher in the U.S.A.

Teacher: Emily
Home Country: Canada
U.S.A. Placement: Virginia
Professional Goal: Complete my master's degree
Personal Goal: Learn to kayak
How She Got Started: www.vifprogram.com



Hundreds of teachers like Emily are teaching in the U.S.A. and gaining experience that will advance their careers. You can, too. Visit www.vifprogram.com.



Over 170,000 new PALS!

*In the 2005/06 school year, Science World provided more than 170,000 K–7 students throughout British Columbia a fun, **FREE** science experience through BC PALS.*

And we're not stopping there!



We're making science a priority, at no cost to students, with *Science World on the Road* province-wide science shows, field trips to TELUS World of Science, classroom workshops, online games and teacher resources!

For more information call 604-443-7500 or visit www.scienceworld.ca

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education for BC PALS.



CUBA

Education tours for students and teachers. See details in Classified ads under "Resources."

www.hellocuba.ca

BCTF Status of Women conference

Remembering Our Rights

November 10–11
Creston, BC

For more information and to register, go to bctf.ca or www.sporg.com (Event 58211) or contact Jane Turner, jturner@bctf.ca

AutoSkill®

A helping hand for literacy

Canadian Software for Your School or District!
Academy of Reading®/Academy of Math®



- Powerful Reading/Math intervention Grade 1–HS/Adult
- Pre-tests/Trains/Monitors/Reports/Post-tests
- Low Literacy, LD, Special Ed. and ESL students
- 60 to 90 min/week/student within existing programs
- User friendly for Techs/Students/Teachers/Admin
- Windows or Macintosh/LAN or WAN/One database

To attend an online demo or request information, contact:
Eric MacInnis, B.Ed., M.Ed., Western Canadian Regional Sales Manager, 403-844-8490, eric_edu@telusplanet.net

Visit AutoSkill International Inc. @ www.autoskill.com

LOWER MAINLAND HIGH SCHOOL TUTORS REQUIRED

for one-to-one in-home tutoring after school hours
Earn extra money!

Teachers' Tutoring Service

A collective of BC Certified Teachers

Phone: 604-730-3410
E-mail: teacher@tutor.bc.ca
Web: www.tutor.bc.ca



Highest interest % paid on your \$\$\$

CDIC insured
Payroll pac options
dsmith@capri.ca
1-800-670-1877, ext. 114
Doreen C. Smith CFP
Kelowna BC

2006 Provincial Conference on LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Coast Terrace Inn Edmonton South
4440 Gateway Blvd, Edmonton, Alberta

November 16-18, 2006

Extending Our Visions

Receptions	Highlights
President's Luncheon	LD Artists' Gallery
"Chocolate Dream" Reception	Exhibits
T.G.F.I. Reception	Door Prizes
"Thank Goodness For Information"	

Featured Speakers

Edward Hallowell, MD
Doctor, Speaker, Author
Arlington, Mass, USA

Linda Siegel
Professor, University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

Brenda Robinson
Educator and Writer
Sherwood Park, Alberta

..... and MANY more exciting speakers!

For further information and to register:
LDAA Edmonton Chapter at
Tel: (780) 466-1011
E-mail: conference@ldaa.ca
www.ldaa.ca/conference.htm



LEAVE A LEGACY™

Leave a Bequest in your Will to Variety – The Children's Charity and BC's children who have special needs.

You will truly be making the Gift of a Lifetime. Your generosity will provide a future gift for children like Rebecca, pictured above, and may provide you and your estate with substantial tax benefits. Please notify us of your bequest or contact us for more information on how a charitable bequest will benefit you, your estate, and BC's children who have special needs.

Variety – The Children's Charity of BC
Director of Planned Giving
4300 Still Creek Drive
Burnaby, BC V5C 6C6

tel 604-320-0505
fax 604-320-0535
email peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca
web www.variety.bc.ca/legacy
toll free in BC 1-800-381-2040



VARIETY IS A REGISTERED CHARITABLE SOCIETY

CLASSIFIED

TRAVEL/VACATION

EAST COAST COTTAGES *Beach House at the Cape*, sleeps 10, 4 bd., 2 bath, sunroom, 2 sun decks, bbq, private, treed property. *The Ocean Breeze Cottage*, sleeps 5, 2 bd., 1 bath, wraparound deck, bbq. Both properties are next to each other and can be rented together, fresh seafood market nearby, beautiful sandy beaches. Centrally located along the NB coast, 1 hr. to PEI or NS. Wkly or mthly rates. Visit our website: www.seatosearentals.com

CHEMAINUS, Vancouver Island. *Tide's Inn*, sleeps 2, gas F/P, *Tide's Table*, sleeps 5, quiet with beautiful gardens, both properties have panoramic ocean views, covered decks and are beautifully decorated. Enjoy kayaking, golfing, beautiful beaches and Salt Spring Ferry nearby. Wkly and mthly rates. Visit our website: www.seatosearentals.com

PUERTO VALLARTA Beautiful, large, 2 bd. furn. condo, downtown, 3 blks from the Malecon (beach). Reasonable wkly rates, NS, dbemc@hotmail.com, 604-608-4268.

Old PUERTO VALLARTA large 1 bd. condo, 2 blks from Los Muertos Beach, 604-879-7673, www.vrbo.com/56182

QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS/HAIDA GWAII Fabulous "mother-ship" kayaking, wilderness adventure, unforgettable experiences. 1-888-559-8317, www.island.net/~archipel

WHISTLER Condo. Sleeps 4, views, close to village, all amen. 604-943-9423.

GRANADA, NICARAGUA. Discover this beautiful Spanish colonial city and little known country. B&B run by retired BC teacher. For information contact carolannrea@hotmail.com

WHISTLER GETAWAY. Pinecrest Estates, 4-5 bd., 1.5 bath, 1400 sq.ft. cabin, sauna, deck with BBQ, fully-equip. kitchen, DW, WD, wood stove (wood provided). Seasonal rates. glush@shaw.ca or 604-936-3346.

BLACKCOMB Luxury 2 bd/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in, ski-out, 604-940-0156.

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

WHISTLER 1 bd. condo (Whistler Creekside) sleeps 4, F/P, hot tub, swimming pool, sauna, kitchen fully equipped, u/ground parking, close to lift and stores. Call Jan or John at 604-530-0958.

SUN PEAKS RESORT Stone's Throw, Unit 49, luxurious brand new condo, 2 bd/2 bath, sleeps 5, ski-in/ski-out, mountain views, private hot tub, F/P, bbq, 6 appliances, plasma TVs. All amenities. NS/NP. 1-800-585-8834, reservation code: Teacher

WHISTLER Village North, 2 bd. deluxe townhome. 604-531-6847. View at www.whistlervacationhome.ca.

FRANCE. Ultimate vacations, privately owned, beautiful furn. 1 bd. central Paris. Provence lovely furn. house close to Avignon. Wkly/mthly. 604-738-1876, 604-298-3904, i_roland@hotmail.com, www.ultimateparis.com

KIHEI, MAUI. Large selection of fully equipped condos. Great beaches. Near shopping centre. Call Alf, 604-291-1751, F: 604-291-9773, kihei@telus.net.

WHISTLER Deluxe 1 bd., village, 2.5/bed. Creekside, rates \$69+, salij@shaw.ca

KIHEI, MAUI. Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. 2 bd., 2 bath condo across from Kamaole beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955, F: 250-598-6965.

WHISTLER BLACKCOMB Ski-in/ski-out, luxury condo, sleeps 5, pool, hot tubs, 3 night min. www.at_blackcomb.com, Sheila 604-929-6589.

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

FRANCE HOLIDAY RENTALS Medieval house/ studio, 16C village, Montagnac, S France. 1/2 hr. Montpellier, 15 min. Med. sjevent@shaw.ca

SNOWBIRD IN VICTORIA Feb.-Mar. Character bungalow in Victoria's best residential area. 2 bd., den, 2 bath. \$1600/mo. includes all utilities. 250-595-7606. www.jsexton.blogspot.com

CULTUS LAKE Enjoy a wonderful autumn or winter holiday at beautiful Cultus Lake. Very reasonable rates for deluxe waterfront accommodation suitable for 2 adults. Phone 604-316-1235.

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

WHISTLER condo, 2 bd. Sleep 6, Quiet family area, 10 min. to Village. All amenities, fireplace, jetted tub, etc. Rates from \$100 to \$225 per night. Depending on duration and season. Ron 604-988-8231, rhsargent@shaw.ca

SUN PEAKS new chalet, mountain views, 3 bd. +den, additional 2 bd. suite avail., fully equipped, hot tub, BBQ, ski-in, 400m to lifts. Call 604-864-0139.

MEXICO. Oceanfront condo in Bucerias. 20 min, north of Puerto Vallarta airport. 2 bd., 2 bath, sleeps 5 or 6, 3rd fl. with elevator, handicap friendly. Has Star Choice and high speed internet. Call 250-697-6273 or gwwood-linda@hotmail.com.

FOR RENT

VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bd. \$95/ single. Daily/weekly/monthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com

RESOURCES

KOZMIC VISUAL CONNECTIONS visual boards, charts, guides, kits, picture cues, and routines for children and adults who require visual supports to enhance their daily life. These products may be of particular interest for special education teachers or teaching assistants. Web site at <http://members.shaw.ca/kvcweb/default.htm>, e-mail kozmicvc@shaw.ca, or call 306-978-3362.

BC-WIDE CUBA STUDENT TOUR A 10-day tour program led by BCTF educators. The tour is open to all BC high school students over spring break 2007. Program focus is music, dance, culture and volunteerism. We encourage teachers to invite your students to join this program. Travel dates: Thr 15 Mar - Sat 24 Mar 2006. See www.hellocuba.ca/bc for itinerary and costs.

ORGANIZE A STUDENT CUBA TOUR Cuba is the preferred choice for educators seeking culturally rewarding study abroad experiences for their students. It is safe and economical. Your students return having enjoyed an experience-of-a-lifetime. As a result they become more engaged academically and civically. Our notfor-profit organization assists teachers with every step of planning and organization. Teacher leaders travel free. See our website at www.hellocuba.ca

TERRY FOX RUN IN CUBA Students go to Cuba from Fri 16 Mar-Fri 23 Mar, 2007 (spring break). Join cuban youth in the world's largest Terry Fox run after Canada. Participate in sporting events, visit Cuba's cultural venues and historic sites for one week. Educators: please announce to your students, and teachers are welcome too! For more info, see www.hellocuba.ca/fox.

VENEZUELA FOR STUDENTS Cuba Education Tours offers short-term study abroad programs for BC high school students to Venezuela. See programs at www.hellovenezuela.ca

SOUND PARTNERS, Cambium Learning program for 1:1 word attack, word identification and spelling Grades 1-2 and Intervention 2-3. Scripted for teacher assistant implementation. Complete published new set with guides, sound cards, and decodable readers. \$359 value for half price \$179 including delivery. Call 604-825-2111.

MISCELLANEOUS

MASTER OF EDUCATION (Special Education) by course-work offered by Flinders University in S. Australia is recognized by the B.C. TQS. Degree available entirely in distance mode. Apply now for commencement of study semester one (late February) or semester two (late July). More information at: ehlt.flinders.edu.au/northamerica or from the program co-ordinator, Bernice.Burnip@flinders.edu.au

SEARCH ASSOCIATES International Job Fair, Toronto, Feb. 2-4, where over 50 schools from around the world will be recruiting teachers for the upcoming school year. Workshop for interested teachers will be held in Vancouver November 12. For more information, contact Ray Sparks, raysparks@eastlink.ca or visit our web site www.searchassociates.com

VARIETY-THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY Working with children is your special passion. Leaving a legacy in your will for BC's special kids will be your gift of a lifetime. There are estate planning benefits too. Contact Peter Chipman to confirm. Toll free 1-800-381-2040, direct 604-268-3887 or email peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca

CERTIFIED TEACHERS needed for in-home tutoring (all subjects and grades) 604-439-1790, www.schooliseasy.com

FOR SALE Lovely country estate with 2 homes on 20 acres. 10 min. to Parksville and Qualicum Beach. Main residence 3200 sq.ft. with in-law 1 bd. suite. Economical heat pump. Panoramic mountain views. Established garden area for your vegetables, flowers and fruit. Second home provides steady rental income. Pasture for horses or hobby farm and forested areas. \$895,000. Contact Neil Callander 1-250-248-6587, e-mail randall@mala.bc.ca

NEED A NEW OR NEWER VEHICLE? I would like to assist you. I make vehicle shopping easy, while saving you time and money on a Sale, Lease or Purchase. With a background in education I can listen and understand what is important to you. Save yourself time and money; check our web site and give me a call. Bill Sloan, Vehicle agent, Prime Source Lease Group, 250-412-7970, Email: bsloan@shaw.ca, Web site www.pslease.com

MOSCROP SECONDARY SCHOOL in Burnaby invites all 1956-2006 students and staff, to a 50-year Reunion-Open House, Saturday, October 21, 2006 from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

WANTED: Volunteer educators with friendly pets needed for BC SPCA school presentations. If you are interested please contact your local shelter or in the Lower Mainland call Paula Neuman 604-647-5505 or pneuman@spca.bc.ca

ESL TEACHER WANTED for winter ESL camp, (a.m. or p.m.) part-time teaching positions open for retired or TOCs, Mon-Fri, Dec06-Jan07 in Burnaby or vicinity. \$17-\$25/hour. Send resume to nick@jinnyenglish.com immediately.

PD CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2006

1-2 Huntsville. 2nd Annual National Character Education Conference, Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, Ontario. Pre-Conference: Barbara Coloroso. Information: www.ncec.ca

8-10 Calgary. 10th Annual Online Learning Symposium is a national conference directed at K-12 and post-secondary instructors from across North America who have an interest in online learning. The conference is an opportunity for teachers, faculty members, and administrators to discuss innovative practices, existing programs, the development of new programs/courses and current research into online teaching and learning. Visit www.ataoc.ca or call 403-241-6045 for info.

11-12 Kelowna, Manteo Resort. UBC offers a French and Spanish Immersion Weekend. \$250 includes tuition and three meals. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the fee. Call 604-822-0802 or see www.languages.ubc.ca

DECEMBER 2006

7-9 Vancouver. 12th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, Literature & Literacy will be happening at the Westin Bayshore Vancouver. The conference is an opportunity for educators and administrators to discuss innovative practices. Visit www.fnesc.ca/conferences/index.php#conf (registration kits available by September 1) or call 604-925-6087 for details.

JANUARY 2007

26-27 Vancouver. The BC Alternate Education Association's 20th annual Challenge & Change Conference at the Vancouver Sheraton Wall Centre. Keynote speaker: Gary Phillips, along with many other informative, fun, and inspirational sessions, and the not-to-be-missed Schmooze. Conference details: www.bctf.ca/bcaea, follow conference link. Co-ordinator: DJ Pauls: dj_pauls@sd34.bc.ca

FEBRUARY 2007

15-17 Kamloops. BC Art Teachers' Association Annual Conference, About Face 2007. Art can make one look at an image, a person, an object, the world in a different way. It can change one's perspective and it can bring one's attention to what has previously been overlooked. Delegates will do an "about face" in Kamloops, an exciting, vibrant city where the arts thrive. Further information TBA. www.bctf.ca/bcata

MARCH 2007

8-10 Victoria. 2nd International Conference for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Research, Policy, and Practice Around the World. Fairmont Empress Hotel. The conference goal is to provide participants with the means to use research and practice to inform and shape policy regarding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Information at www.interprofessional.ubc.ca. Contact Joanne Nam at ipad@interchange.ubc.ca.

15-16 Vancouver. The Special Education Association of BC presents its 32nd annual Crosscurrents Conference at the Westin Bayshore, featuring a line-up of top quality presenters and a wide range of sessions relevant to teachers working with students who have special learning needs. Information TBA fall 2006 at www.bctf.ca/sea or contact Priscilla Fortier, priscillaf@shaw.ca

APRIL 2007

19-20 Saskatoon, SK. Where It's AT-Assistive Technology for Children & Youth Conference. Speakers: Susie Blackstien-Adler, M.Ed., B.Sc. O.T. (Bloorview Kids Rehab, Toronto) on Supporting participation of students with high needs in the activities of the classroom and Stacey Harpell, B.S., M.S., CCC-SLP (Saskatoon Health Region), on Social communication. Contact Events of Distinction, t: 651-3118; f: 651-3119; eofd@sasktel.net.

19-21 Toronto. Inner City: Strength in Diversity—Advocating for the Future. This national inner-city conference is calling for contributions and participation. Session categories can include: Student leadership, Teaching practice in the inner city, Teacher development for the inner city, Student well-being, Curriculum and programs, Family and community partnerships, funding and policy. Contact Jeffrey Kugler, jkugler@oise.utoronto.ca, Ph: 416-9233-6641, ext. 7859.

21-22 Kelowna. Manteo Resort. UBC offers a French and Spanish Immersion Weekend. \$250 includes tuition and three meals. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the fee. Call 604-822-0802 or see www.languages.ubc.ca

PSA PD Day October 19, 2007

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

Additions/changes?
Contact Elizabeth Lambert,
elambert@bctf.ca

November 19-24, 2006 National Media Education Week

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) has partnered with Media Awareness Network (MNet) to create Canada's first National Media Education Week (NMEW), November 19-24, 2006. The primary goal of the week is to highlight the importance of media and Web literacy as key learning areas in the information age.

The CTF is currently working with teacher organizations and education and community groups to develop media education programs and activities and PD opportunities

in recognition of National Media Education Week.

This portal will be developed progressively through the contributions of media educators and organizations. It will be a working tool to provide resources to teachers as they strive to help their students become media literate.

Make media education part of your classroom by bookmarking this page and visiting often throughout the year—www.ctf-fce.ca/nationalmediaeducationweek/default.htm.

Project overseas

SIERRA LEONE

by Sandra Holmes

In July, I led a team of Canadian teachers on an overseas teaching project organized by the Canadian Teachers' Federation with the support of BCTF, other Canadian provincial associations, and the Canadian International Development Agency. Our team of four Canadians joined eleven other teams travelling to various countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean to assist with the training of teachers. On July 7, our team flew out of Montreal on our way to Freetown, Sierra Leone via Brussels.

At Lungi airport, we were met by Hawa Koroma and Leonard Komeh, officials with the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU). Sheka Koroma, our driver, welcomed us and hurried us along to catch the ferry to Freetown. Immediately we felt welcomed and cared for.

As it turned out, it was fortunate for us that we missed the ferry. What a welcome to Sierra Leone we had as our team waited on the dock in the late afternoon for the next ferry to arrive to take us to Freetown. We marvelled at the sights of the nearby community and the fishing boats returning to shore as the sun set red amid the thunderheads on the horizon. For many days during our stay we heard the mountains roar with the thunder that preceded the tropical rainstorms and agreed the country was aptly named Sierra Leone—Lion Mountains.

We enjoyed the company of children showing off their math

skills and sharing information about their country with us as we shared information about our country. Hawa and Sheka were with us to answer our many questions. A few hours earlier they were just names on paper, and already their warm welcome and gentle concern for us set the scene for the deep and meaningful relationships to come. When the ferry arrived, we were privileged to watch the folks pour off, returning home after a work day in Freetown. The entire market walked gracefully past us, carried on the heads of the people.

These folks desperately want education for their children, for they, like others in Sierra Leone, see education as the way to a more secure, peaceful, and certain future.

This was the beginning of four weeks of learning and teaching in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Along the way we were gently guided in our learning about this jewel of a country and its very friendly people by the 80 participants who attended the in-service courses that SLTU had organized and invited us to assist with.

The first group of participants came from the Eastern and the Western regions of Sierra

Leone. After two weeks of work, we said a reluctant good-bye to this group of eager learners and welcomed the second group from the Northern and the Southern regions of the country. All of the participants were practicing teachers. None of them had any teacher training and for many, this was their first experience of learning about the curriculum syllabus, the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union, and how to effectively teach children reading and other skills.

We worked, played, laughed, cried, and sweated our way through the next four weeks. Always it came back to the children. They were the reason we were in this challenging country. Their smiles, their handshakes, and their wonder and curiosity sustained us as we felt so much love and expectation from them. We hoped our efforts to train their teachers would indeed fulfill their expectations of us.

This small humid, country, with its amazingly beautiful and diverse landscape, its 16 different ethnic tribes, and complete religious acceptance between the Muslim and Christian faiths has much to teach the world about perseverance and love. We visited Grafton Resettlement camp. In an attempt to assist many people who were injured during the recent wars, the government has set up seven resettlement camps for those who for one reason or another cannot return to their homes. At

Grafton, we heard the stories of homes destroyed, loved ones killed, disease and starvation facing those left behind. The community secretary, a former teacher displaced from his home in the north when he was transported to Freetown to

Re-establishing Sierra Leone's once prestigious education system is at the top of its list and we felt proud to represent Canadian teachers and to be part of this extensive and vital effort.

recover from his leg amputation, spoke about the difficulty with just getting enough to eat. Now that the resettlement communities have been set up there is no further government assistance. A man with both arms amputated just below the elbow brought me a chair so I could be comfortable while I sat and listened to the stories. All around me the new generation, the four-year-olds and younger, who have not experienced war, laughed and played and touched my white arms in surprise to see such strange looking women sitting with their parents and aunts and uncle. These folks desperately want education for their children, for they like

others in Sierra Leone, see education as the way to a more secure, peaceful, and certain future.

As we travelled about we felt that the whole world has surrounded Sierra Leone in a loving embrace, just as a mother will surround her hurting child in order to speed her recovery.

NGOs, church groups, United Nations' organizations such as UNICEF, and other agencies with education and health as their interests are supporting the determined folk of Sierra Leone in rebuilding a viable and sustainable country after the atrocities of war. Re-establishing Sierra Leone's once prestigious education system is at the top of its list and we felt proud to represent Canadian teachers and to be part of this extensive and vital effort. The eager, beautiful children of Sierra Leone deserve every opportunity to grow to be the best people they can. With continued awareness of the power of peace and assistance with education and health issues from the world, I feel Sierra Leone will one day be able to teach the rest of us the importance of religious acceptance, perseverance, and love.

A huge vote of thanks goes to the CTF for its long-term commitment to improving education at home and around the world. And special thanks to the BCTF for supporting me in this life-changing project.

Sandra Holmes teaches at Blue River School, Kamloops.



(Above left) Agnes Kamara presenting her language arts lesson; (Left) Sandra Holmes, BCTF, poses with graduates of CTF/SLTU In-service Program; (Above) Robyn Murphy, Yukon Teachers' Association teaching math.