

# Teacher

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## Women's conference

# Remembering our rights



MARIAN DODDS PHOTO

*The BC Native Women's Association displayed their crafts at the conference and keynote speaker President Mollie Bono's description of the situation for native women paralleled the descriptions heard from immigrant women and women living in the polygamous community of Bountiful. The solutions Bono held out could have provided a template for all other marginalized groups of women attending the conference.*

by Jane Turner

The following is a compilation of many of the women's voices who attended the *Remembering Our Rights* conference held in Creston, BC on November 10-11, 2006.

This was a wake-up call for me. It is not enough to simply know something is true and then to file it away. With knowledge comes a responsibility to act on that knowledge. Don't just listen to my words, watch the way my feet move.

I was reminded to speak up and out on the issues critical to all women in this country and to undertake a plan of action in areas I am able to influence. It has become convenient to keep my head down, feeling like my own life is all I can manage. This conference has brought my head up, forced me to look clearly around, and having done that, I don't believe I can keep my head down any longer.  
*Deborah Cappos, Princeton*

The women came from all across BC. They came to Creston in spite of rainstorms that cancelled ferry services and caused long flight delays. It was the Remembrance Day weekend and the women were there to participate in the aptly named

conference, Remembering Our Rights. The conference was organized by the Status of Women Action Group of the BCTF Social Justice Committee. Many of the attendees were BCTF members but there were also many women from other trade unions and from community organizations. The conference had many aims. Three key ones were: (1) to gain an understanding of the history of women's rights in Canada; (2) to examine the current status of women's rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and; (3) to develop networks of activists that would serve to defend women's rights now and in the future.

*Maeve Moran, VESTA*

This conference was an inspiring, educational, and moving experience. The feminist lawyers, the activist teachers, our BCTF leadership, the strong First Nations women, and the courageous women from Bountiful and elsewhere, both within and apart from their communities, were incredible! I was so fortunate to hear and meet some of them! Jinny Sims is wonderful! What a strong presence! She radiates the spirit of a dedicated, caring, brilliant, and hard-working teacher!"  
*Kathy Duley, Kootenay Lake*

The keynote speakers galvanized the conference by providing participants with a common base of knowledge that deepened the impact of the workshops and panel discussions. Mollie Bono, the president of the BC Native Women's Association addressed issues that reflect the changing goals of native women—health, self-determination, an end to violence, and matrimonial real property. She spoke of how the isolation of many First Nations' communities compounds these issues. Over and over, the issues raised in the first keynote of the conference were echoed by other speakers over the two days.

In speaking about the general lack of housing, vulnerability with marriage breakdown, powerlessness—both by law and culture—discrimination, custody battles, and the legacy of colonialism, Bono's description of the situation for native women paralleled the descriptions heard for immigrant women and women living in the polygamous community of Bountiful. In the same way, the solutions Bono held out could have provided a template for all other marginalized groups of women attending the conference.

Solutions to women's problems cannot be externally driven. Aboriginal women must determine how the laws need to be changed, communities restructured, and problems resolved. Having said that, Aboriginal women are seeking broad community support to ensure that Canada is a safe place for the next seven generations.

Marylou McPhedran, the co-director of the International Women's Rights Project, reminded participants of the historic struggles for women's rights in Canada. Women fought for the rights that were to make them equal partners with men in Canadian society. While women's rights were enshrined in the constitution in 1982, those rights are rusting, according to McPhedran. Not because of lack of use, but because they have been rained on—they are getting watered down. If women are not vigilant, the rights they have fought for will disappear.

Mary Woo Sims, the third keynote speaker reinforced McPhedran's message.

She detailed the provincial government's attacks on human rights after taking power in 2001. Sims, the last chairperson of the BC Human Rights Commission, described the dismantling of the commission and its replacement, the Human Rights Tribunal. In addition to this cut to all citizens' rights, the provincial government cut funding for child care, women's programs, legal aid, welfare, and education retraining programs. Mary Woo commented that while the government was forging ahead with cuts to most programs that benefit women, it was boasting to the United Nations about the great strides BC was making in improving women's rights. She also noted that while the government stated it had to make these cuts due to a weak economy, it hasn't restored any of these services now that the economy is booming.

Mary Woo called on conference participants to protect, defend, and advance women's rights, not just for women in Canada, but for women the world over. If our rights are sabotaged and eroded, what hope will women in the developing world have of gaining rights for themselves? She called upon women to "Rise up and be indignant" (Nellie McClung) and bring women's issues to the fore.  
*Jane MacEwan, VESTA*

Since 1974, the Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) had published, *Kinesis*, a vehicle for information sharing and a forum for debate within the women's community, locally, nationally, and internationally. In March of 2001, VSW had to stop the production of *Kinesis* due to financial constraints and

## President's message



Jinny Sims

The weekend before we all left for our much-needed winter break, I flew to Mexico City to participate in an international initiative to provide some support to our teaching colleagues in the province of Oaxaca, Mexico. You may have read newspaper articles citing the provocative actions of the province's governor—actions that have led to many deaths, including the loss of some teachers. All this was prompted by a teacher strike that quickly gained popular momentum and public support. Before long, the broadened teacher strike gave rise to widespread dissent with the actions of the governor, whose very election was challenged as fraudulent.

I travelled to Mexico with leaders from Quebec and several Central and South American teacher unions. Our express purpose was to draw public attention to what was going on in Oaxaca and to attempt to convince the Mexican government that it should stop aiding the provincial police in their attacks on teachers and other protesters. When we subsequently travelled to Oaxaca we found the entire province in a state of utter quiet and fear.

Another purpose of our visit was to let the federal government know that Mexico is gaining an international "black eye" through the actions of its Oaxaca governor. If there is no resolution to the repression in Oaxaca, I and other Canadian delegates to the Tri-annual Congress of Education International in Berlin this July, intend to take a resolution forward condemning the Mexican government for its inaction. Education International represents 29 million teachers worldwide.

Interestingly, these same Oaxaca teachers supported us in October of 2005 when we were out on our "illegal" job action for two weeks. They demonstrated at the Canadian consulate trying to pressure our government to address the needs we had identified in our strike. Local, provincial, national, and international solidarity is a key component of teacher unionism.

For more information on Oaxaca, see my article on page 10 of this issue.

Jinny

## Bill 33 a year later

This time last year, teachers were involved in a political protest to gain fair negotiating rights, a fair wage settlement, and reinstatement of fair class-size and class-composition numbers. We marched beside members from other unions because they believed, that in gaining our rights, the rights of all unions would be gained. We marched beside parents and students because they believed what we were doing would improve learning conditions in schools. And because of our unwavering beliefs, we have a wage settlement that keeps up with inflation and we have Bill 33.

Bill 33 was the government's attempt to address class size and composition. It gave us arbitrarily set class-size limits and a limit of three students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) per class. What it didn't give us was any means to remedy classes over these limits.

Bill 33 is merely a data collection system. It counts numbers of students and that's it. What does this mean for students? What does it mean for teachers? Students get no more help. Teachers get no more support. We still have the same number of students. We still have the teachers teaching the same number of students. In the words of one teacher, "We struggle to do our best, but we are only human."

Approximately 45% of our classes are over the limit of students with IEPs. One teacher observed that his class sizes were actually bigger this year and said, "Isn't that what we went on strike for last year? Smaller class size?"

As an informed community concerned about the future and the people who will be our future, we have to remain vigilant in advocating for an environment "appropriate for student learning." We owe it to our children. It's the least we can do for their future.

Please contact your child's teacher and ask questions about class size and composition. Just ask.

Karen Langenmaier  
Courtenay

## Everyone should help with literacy

In the Lesley Edwards article "The Teacher Librarian: A Students' Best Bet to Acquire Information Literacy Skills," (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2006), I was reminded of the debate in teacher circles over 15 years ago over which teacher group was responsible for teaching reading and writing skills. As the debate raged, the general consensus was that all teachers needed to teach these skills, not just English teachers. Science teachers needed to teach students the literacy skills related to science, and so on. Improving students' writing skills was everyone's responsibility.

Information literacy, media awareness, and online safety

are too important to be left to any one teacher group. In a recent Industry Canada national report called "Young Canadians in a Wired World 2005," 94% of the 5,000 students polled had Internet access at home. Students in Grades 10 and 11 prefer to use the Internet over the library by a factor of 10 to 1. All teachers need to address the lack of students' information literacy skills, particularly as they relate to subject-specific domains. I agree we don't hand teenagers the keys to the family car, without teaching them how to drive. But let's get everyone involved in the driving lessons.

Maryjanne Yusyp  
Vancouver

## Fish farm fiction?

I have just been alerted to new curriculum that is being "offered" to Grade 8 teachers from the Aquaculture in the Classroom Program. This is an arm of a partisan fish farming organization that is offering this material. In Prince Rupert, we have had a long and largely successful fight against fish farms and their products. Please ask teachers who might be considering using this material to: (1) Look at the material opposed to fish farms—[www.bucksuzuki.org](http://www.bucksuzuki.org) is one of many places to start. (2) Contact Des Nobels at 250-624-3921 for more information. (3) Consider not using the material from this partisan source at all.

Marty Bowles  
President, PRDTU

## Finding voice an inspiration

I am writing to say a huge thank you for publishing the story "Finding Voice," by Suzanne McCarthy (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2006). It was one of the most heart-warming stories I have ever had the pleasure of reading. It just shows how powerful a force love is—that special kind of love a dedicated teacher has for the children in her care. I hope you can let Suzanne know that her story is a real inspiration for all of us. It is a reminder that we should always look just a little deeper and see what treasure is locked away inside the souls of those we meet along life's journey!

Thanks to you and your newsmagazine for allowing all of us (readers) to share Suzanne's most excellent story.

Marie Reid  
Saanich

## Parents can still opt out

The front-page headline of the October 2006 issue of *Teacher* was commendable: "Building positive parent relationships." It's too bad that such an unfortunate contrast to that tone appeared in the centrefold article by Glen Hansma, "Parents can opt out of provincial curriculum: Clarifying alternative delivery."

Many BC parents are offended that two militant individuals should be handed such wide-ranging influence over their children's curriculum. For some

parents, this feeling is obviously related to the negative assessment of homosexual behaviour found within the Bible, which happens to be the historic basis for the worldview of millions of Canadians.

How is the BCTF working to build "positive relationships" with those parents?

Hansma writes about promoting "inclusive classrooms." Assuming the Correns might be successful in achieving significant changes to curriculum, how will the BCTF then promote the inclusion of Bible-believing Christians—and any others—who are opposed to homosexual behaviour for genuine conscientious reasons?

The headline over Hansma's article states that parents "cannot" opt out of provincial curriculum. That is patently false. The BCTF itself has provided a strong example for parents (and teachers, too) with its recent illegal job action: everyone who finds a government action heinous can boldly, and with all good conscience, "take a stand" against it. (And of course, get ready to face any consequences.)

Richard Peachey  
Abbotsford

## Accountability conference

I would like to take this opportunity to thank BCTF for hosting an accountability conference in October. It was a profound experience to be in attendance, to hear progressive educational leaders speak valiantly on prevalent issues in public education today and to have an opportunity to gather in small groups for discussions facilitated by deeply caring professionals.

The message that was shaped collectively by the attendees—teachers, parents, trustees—is one of eloquence and determination; determination to continue to form a consistent, tireless, and principled voice for the needs of all students in BC. This kind of voice will provide leadership and assist teachers in your daily efforts to build a public education system that gives every child an opportunity to make a difference and fashions young minds to become compassionate members of a larger human family.

Stephan Vdovine  
Trustee, Maple Ridge

## Notice of AGM 2007

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2007 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 91st Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, beginning on Saturday, March 17, 2007 at 19:00 and continues to Tuesday, March 20, 2007.

## Apologies

The list of retired teachers in the November/December 2006 issue of *Teacher* had some errors and omissions.

These teachers have retired and their names were missed:

David Hudson (Burns Lake)  
Pam Harris (Sooke)

These teachers have not retired and their names were printed in error:

Marnie Brown (Richmond)  
Marilyn Payan (Coquitlam)



## Free library cards!

The Ministry of Education recently sent out notices to all students in the province offering them a "free" public library card. Coquitlam teacher, Jennie Boulanger wrote the following letter to her MLA:

Dear Diane Thorne, MLA

I am a resident of your constituency and an elementary teacher in Burquitlam's riding. Please find enclosed a class set of notices given to me today to distribute to my Grade 4 students.

If you could be so kind, please return these to Honorable Minister of Education Shirley Bond. I find it appalling that our precious tax (education) dollars would be spent on such an outrageous piece of (false), self-congratulatory propaganda.

I'm sure that there was at least one BC student not eligible for a free public library card prior to our current government's probable policy change. What I'm not so sure of is why the money for this lovely letterhead and distribution to probably 500,000 students wasn't spent on *buying library books for schools instead*.

Once again, we are subjecting our children to a shameless piece of advertising. "...our government's way of encouraging you to ...enjoy the gift of reading." Indeed.

Unfortunately, my 10-year-olds didn't receive these to take home. Instead we discussed how this "news" seemed strange, considering that we have been to two local public libraries already this school year and already had our "free" library cards for some time. Some students brought up concerns about saving our trees instead of using paper needlessly for notices such as these.

Perhaps (if a Spring Session is held) you could bring up some of our future-voters' concerns in Legislature. Thank you for considering my request.

Jennie Boulanger  
Coquitlam



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## RIGHTS from page 1

insufficient women power to ensure continued quality writing and editing in keeping with the standards women expected from this newspaper ([vsu.ca/Documents/vswherstory.doc](http://vsu.ca/Documents/vswherstory.doc)).

I subscribed to *Kinesis*. It kept me well informed on issues for women. It gave me the feeling of being connected. It gave me options for connecting to the women's movement. These days, I receive e-mails on various issues but I no longer read a publication that pulls interconnected local, national, and international women's issues together.

**Donna Clark, Burnaby**

We need to be writing letters to our MLAs, to our MPs, to the Premier, and in all cases sending a copy to the Opposition and to the newspapers. We need to educate each other!

**Kathy Duley, Kootenay Lake**

Generally, polygamy presents a power imbalance. The male has the power over the families, over the women, over all of the decision making that is significant. The women are "assigned" to the male with no regard to their feelings or thoughts or wishes. Women are not marrying multiple husbands in these communities. Women are not marrying multiple husbands under fundamentalist Islamic law either, to look at another example.



**Creston quilters create healing quilts for members of their community who are struck by serious illnesses.**

Women may choose to be in a polygamous relationship and it is obvious that the women from Bountiful who spoke, feel strongly about their right to choose a polygamous relationship. The women of Bountiful have been raised from birth to believe that polygamy is right in God's eyes. They have known this way of life from birth and they are not as familiar with the way of the wider world, nor do they trust that world. Carolyn Jessop (a former polygamous wife) said, it can be very difficult to find support if women do decide to leave. There is the fear of being caught by their husband. There is the isolation inherent in planning an escape when it must be planned while the woman is still residing in the home. There is real danger. There is the question of the second or third wife's legal status, particularly outside of the community. There is the fear a mother has when she worries that she may end up losing her children if the courts decide to give the father custody. There is the question of how she will support her children. There are far too many cracks to fall through for a woman thinking of escaping with her children.

There is a parallel to women living in abusive relationships. They too, often feel strongly about their right to choose to return to their abusive relationships. I remember what it was

like before transition houses helped women escape from abusive relationships and I am well aware that many women still have no way of escaping. They have no way of analyzing their situation and realizing it is oppressive or abusive and because of this, they often blame themselves for not being able to make it "work." They accept the reality being thrust on them by their husbands as being more "true" than their own perception of reality. During the time that transition houses were coming into being, we came to understand some of what held a woman in an abusive relationship. Internalized oppression, the repeated hammering of a false reality into a woman's mind while keeping her isolated, can have the effect of having her come to believe the false reality. The damage to a woman's self esteem, the demoralizing effect of living with fear on a daily basis, the real struggle to reject the husband's reality and embrace her own are overwhelming obstacles. We came to understand what support was needed and knew it was never simple. Information provided on outside services, support to name the abuse, being believed, physical protection, financial support, counseling, a safe place to hide, money, bridges built to the outside world—all are part of the support system needed to help women in abusive relationships.

I haven't any answers here but I believe that polygamy as we see it practiced in the closed community of Bountiful oppresses women. It is a patriarchal institution that solely benefits a few powerful men in the name of religion.

**Catherine Alpha, Sooke**

### Did you know?

December 10, 2006 was the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Instead of celebrating this historical milestone, women in Canada mobilized to ensure that governments honour and respect their international and domestic human rights commitments.

#### In Canada:

Women still earn 71 cents on the male dollar, making Canada 38th in the world in wage gap ratio.

Racialized and Aboriginal women earn significantly less than white women.

Although 70% of mothers are in the paid work force, we do not have a national childcare program.

There are over 10,000 children on wait lists for subsidized child care in Toronto alone.

#### Our federal government has:

- Cut 40% of Status of Women Canada's budget.
- Eliminated 12 regional Status of Women Canada offices.
- Decided not to adopt an improved federal pay equity law.
- Eliminated all funds for the Court Challenges Program.
- Removed the goal of equality from the mandate of Status of Women Canada,
- Prohibited the use of federal funds to engage in advocacy, lobbying, and research for women's equality at any level of government.

*Compiled and edited by Jane Turner, assistant director, BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division.*

## Teachers' tips

# Self-directed PD

by **Lucinda Tooker and Bob Wilson**

Professional development does not begin and end with activities planned on your PD days. As a group of self-regulating professionals, it is our responsibility to engage in self-directed PD throughout our careers. In order to help teachers conceive and plan self-directed PD, the BCTF has produced a planning log and numerous PD resources for teachers, many available online by following the "for teachers" link on the main web site. The planning log itself includes templates and a "menu" of professional activities ready for use. If you aren't already engaged in self-directed PD, here are several ideas from the menu of activities to get you started right away.

1. Join a BCTF Provincial Specialist Association, [bctf.ca/psas](http://bctf.ca/psas). There are 33 PSAs in the province, offering the opportunity for colleagues to exchange ideas on research, teaching strategies, and curriculum development to name a few. Many PSAs also offer online mailing lists, which electronically connect colleagues across the province. Some locals also have specialist associations, and your local office or staff representative can point you in the right direction.

2. Read an educational book, journal, or article. Many schools, locals, and districts maintain subscriptions to journals for circulation among staff. Call your local office or district resource centre to check for their availability. As well, there are numerous free journals available online. The BCTF has a comprehensive listing of these journals available on the BCTF web site. The principal's office is another source of literature. To keep on top of trends, many principals purchase materials representing current thinking in educational directions.

3. Choose and work with a mentor. Do you like what's going on next door? Has something you've seen in the broader

community sparked an idea for engaging instruction? Excellent professional development can be found anywhere. Your principal may be able to find a place in the school's budget to allow some of this collaboration to happen or, if you are entitled to use local PD funds for the purpose, you may be able to cover the costs yourself.

4. Start regular professional discussions. Have you read an article, watched a TV program, or taken part in a discussion that made you question your practice? Why not extend those experiences with a discussion group? In many schools and locals, teachers set aside a "social" time to discuss current issues in education. From breakfast clubs to afternoon teas, there are many different ways to make these discussions enjoyable and rewarding opportunities.

5. Involve yourself and other like-minded professionals in an Action Research project. The BCTF's Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) provides a framework for ongoing professional inquiry and growth. It also offers training and support throughout the inquiry process. PQT offers the opportunity for teachers to extend their understanding of teacher practice, develop research skills, examine the broader context of social forces, and encourage teacher experimentation to better meet the needs of students. Again, complete information, including how projects are funded, is available on the BCTF web site.

6. While the ideas from the self-directed experience menu are valuable on their own, purposefully combining several together with related "traditional" PD opportunities creates a self-directed professional learning plan. Thoughtful, self-directed PD planning is one of the ways individual teachers can take action to resist efforts by others to take control of professional development, and assert their professional rights.

*Lucinda Tooker (Maple Ridge) and Bob Wilson (Golden) are members of the Professional Issues Advisory Committee.*

# Looking back

## 70 years ago

The words "vitalize" and "devalue" have been much overused in matters and discussion pertaining to the classics, but even so their meaning should be fairly clear in the connection in which they are to be used here. All classicists are aware of the charge that many teachers of the classics, in a desperate effort to make Latin attractive to the student, have completely overlooked the numerous real values and objectives of Latin in their well-meant but misguided "sugarcoating" of the subject. To handle the subject thus certainly tends to devalue it.

— February 1937, *The BC Teacher*

## 50 years ago

A good school is not a good building with teachers inside but good teachers with a building around them. Indeed the quality of a child's education depends primarily on the classroom

teacher. He carries the ball. If the classroom teacher is not a good one, it won't matter how good the Department of Education officials or the inspector or superintendent or the school trustees or the curriculum or the school building are. If the pupils are to be stimulated to grow and develop in their best fashion, school boards must invest in good teachers before anything else. Paying high enough salaries to attract highly competent teachers is a gilt-edged investment that pays great dividends; paying low salaries which command the service of poor teachers is wasteful and extravagant.

— January 1957, *The BC Teacher*

## 30 years ago

There is the discipline debate. In reaction to the excesses of the youth cult and anti-establishment vehemence of the 1960s, many adults want to see kids put back in their place. They want to see obedience and order—compulsion in place of choice.

## An e-mail message bit me

E-mail is increasingly used by teachers to communicate with students and parents. Although e-mail often provides an effective means of communication, it can also be the source of serious problems for teachers. Imagine this situation:

*A teacher carries out extensive e-mail discussions with students as a way of building rapport and knowing more about the lives of her students. She has received a summons to a school district hearing. A parent has complained that their daughter has been part of an inappropriate e-mail conversation with the teacher that dealt with private information about the family. The parent has also filed a complaint with the BC College of Teachers.*

Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries in communication with students is always essential. Stepping across those boundaries can have negative consequences. E-mail can be especially problematic. The conventions of using e-mail encourage less formal communication—at the same time providing an electronic record of what has been said.

"Confidential" is meaningless with e-mail. In its travels between computers, e-mail goes through a number of servers. School e-mail goes through school district servers—and can be intercepted there. Messages can be easily saved, printed, or forwarded.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario has called e-mail and text messaging "dangerous modes of communication" for teachers.

Avoiding these forms of communication is not practical advice these days. Having a personal filter or censor is required, however. Every time you send a message to a student, imagine that the principal and the student's parent will read the message. Given that these readers will not have the context of the message, how might they interpret it?

Whether school can be authoritarian when the home is still permissive is one question. Whether it should be, is another.

— Jan./Feb. 1977, *The BC Teacher*

## 10 years ago

If the boys aren't working as hard as the girls at their class work, if they aren't taking on leadership and social responsibilities, and if they seem less concerned about their futures, what are they doing? If the girls are simply outperforming the boys, that's fine. It's their turn anyway. But too many boys don't seem to be even trying. They aren't on the field. They have retired to a leisured existence of watching televised sport and playing electronic games. They have been anesthetized by a "boy culture" that celebrates bravado, lassitude, and stupidity.

— January/February 1997  
*Teacher newsmagazine*

*Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich*

# From war toys to peace art

by Larry Kuehn

The media star of the show in the buildup to the World Peace Forum in Vancouver was the project called "From War Toys to Peace Art." In the weeks leading up to the end of June 2006, kids turning in their war toys captured symbolically the whole idea of the transformation that is necessary for peace.

The energy behind the project came from two people—Sam Fillipoff, a retired teacher, and

*The kids loved the idea, and so did their parents. Hundreds of war toys were turned in and converted to art works.*

Susan Ruzic, an elementary teacher in the suburban Coquitlam school district. Both were active in the organizing of the International Peace Education Conference that was the education component of the overall World Peace Forum.

The World Peace Forum attracted some 5,000 people from nearly 100 countries to the many different conferences within the forum. Groups included labour, faith, women, indigenous, mayors, and youth as well as sessions with a focus on regions—Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. So much was going on that it was difficult to make choices of what to attend.

About 500 teachers took part in the education conference. The same number of students took part on the day that had a focus on youth activities, including talks by Debra Ellis (see an interview in the Nov./Dec. 2006 issue of *Teacher*) and Silken Laumann speaking for Right to Play, an international NGO of athletes that focuses on play to enhance child development in areas of disadvantage globally.

While all these activities and talk would have an impact on participants, it was the war toys project that leaves a lasting

physical legacy—artwork created from the war toys, a plastic version of "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares."

This wasn't the first example of symbolizing peace by transformation. In Mozambique, for example, several years ago CUSO ran a program of trading arms for other goods, an AK-47 for a sewing machine or a plow. This was part of the process of demilitarizing society after a long and vicious civil war. The weapons were transformed into sculptures which served as an ongoing reminder of the importance of finding non-violent ways of sorting out social and political differences.

In Cambodia, an art student took an AK-47 and created a beautiful bird sculpture. In Oakland, California, an elementary school exchanged toy weapons, violent DVDs, and video games for books and pencils.

The BC version of the project put together a number of these elements, along with some original touches. Susan Ruzic got one of the toy stores in her community to be a collection point—and to give the students a voucher that could be used as a discount toward a non-violent toy. Ruzic and Fillipoff worked with the UBC Museum of Anthropology to display the artwork created by Bill Thomson for six months. The museum even arranged workshops for students who would bring toys and take part in creating their own artwork.

For Fillipoff, the project was an expression of his own cultural background as a Doukhobor. The Doukhobors were a religious group in Russia that in 1895 had renounced compulsory military service. They gathered everything that could be considered a lethal weapon and burned them until they melted into slag.

As a social movement committed to peace and non-violence, the Doukhobors were persecuted. However, they refused to fight back. An international support movement managed to get permission for

them to leave Russia. In 1898 the Canadian government granted permission for them to immigrate and gave them an exemption from participating in military service in Canada. They initially settled in the prairies and then moved to the Kootenay area of British Columbia, where Fillipoff grew up.

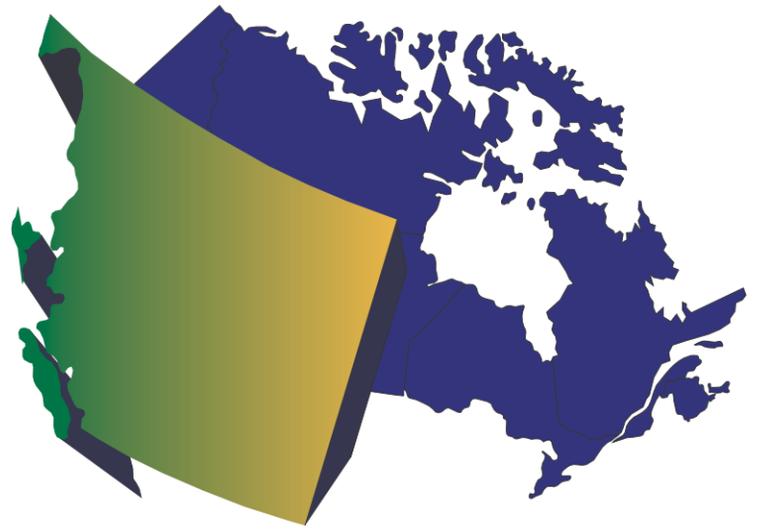
When Fillipoff made the suggestion of the toys into art project, one of the teacher committee members, Susan Ruzik, picked up on it. She found an artist and a toy store as partners. Then she invited students at her school to a peace assembly and told the kids about the project. The kids loved the idea, and so did their parents. Hundreds of war toys were turned in and converted to art works.

Fillipoff and Ruzik did not stop with this success. They are trying to make this an Olympic project, focused on the Winter Olympics to be held in Vancouver and Whistler in 2010. The United Nations has adopted an Olympic Truce Resolution, calling for a truce in violence during the Olympics. This is another opportunity to grab on to a high profile event and use it as a way of focusing on the values and practice of peace.

*They are trying to make this an Olympic project...*

They have also created an 80-page lesson aid package for teachers interested in carrying out their own "Acts of Transformation from War Toys to Peace Art." It contains lesson plans, background resources, and links to other sources of related information. A copy of the full package is being sent to all schools and it is available from the BCTF Lesson Aids Service through the web site [www.bctf.ca](http://www.bctf.ca).

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



## A profound change for the worse

by Ellen Gould

This past spring, with no public consultation, the BC and Alberta governments signed the Trade, Investment, and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). Todd Hirsch of the Canada West Foundation says the agreement effectively makes the two provinces one in every respect except for voting and the colour of the license plate. David Bond, former economist for the Hong Kong Bank in Canada, describes TILMA as the "the single most important economic event to happen in Western Canada in the last almost 100 years. It really is very, very profound."

The most profound impacts of TILMA are likely to be political rather than economic. A report for the BC government done in 1998 surveyed studies of interprovincial trade barriers and found that they were already low, so any economic benefits to be gained from eliminating remaining barriers would also have to be minimal. On the other hand, TILMA's constraints on government are without parallel in international trade and investment agreements. Certain government "measures" (defined broadly to include legislation, programs, regulations, guidelines, or policies) will have to be eliminated under TILMA's requirement that there be "no obstacles" to trade, investment, or labour mobility.

What government program could not be seen as a restriction on investment or labour mobility? By their very nature, the provision of government programs like public education restricts private investment in the education sector. TILMA's definition of investment includes the establishment or expansion of an enterprise. In the event of a TILMA challenge, it will be left to an independent panel to determine if aspects of the public education system violate the agreement by creating obstacles to the establishment or expansion of for-profit schools.

TILMA also prohibits governments from establishing new regulations or standards that "restrict or impair" trade, investment, or labour mobility. Existing regulations and standards in BC and Alberta will have to be harmonized. So Premier Campbell's initiative to ban junk food in schools will be vulnerable to a TILMA challenge, since Alberta's education minister has declared he will not introduce such a ban.

Once the agreement comes into force on April 1, 2007, parties to the agreement and private individuals will be empowered to take complaints to an independent panel and get up to \$5 million in compensation for successful challenges to government measures. TILMA is like NAFTA in allowing private interests to take their complaints about government to

*...TILMA goes far beyond NAFTA in a number of ways.*

dispute panels. But TILMA goes far beyond NAFTA in a number of ways. For example, it does not have the exception in NAFTA that allows Canada to "adopt or maintain any measure with respect to...public education."

The Alberta/BC government guide to TILMA says that the agreement applies to "all government measures across all sectors" and if something is "not clearly identified as an exception, it is subject to the rules of the agreement." Education is not clearly identified as an exception to TILMA. The agreement exempts "social policy," but does not include education as an example of what constitutes a social policy. And after two years, the agreement will be extended to cover all measures of, or related to, school boards, and publicly funded academic institutions.

With the sweeping prohibition in TILMA of government measures that restrict investment or labour mobility, BC and Alberta have essentially committed themselves to a radical reduction in the powers of government. Take, for example, TILMA's requirement that "any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of a Party shall be recognized as qualified to practice that occupation by the other Party." BC and Alberta have listed occupational requirements in TILMA that will have to be made consistent with the agreement after a transition period.

Among the requirements BC and Alberta have listed as "inconsistent" with, or violations of, TILMA are the "Additional training and examination" needed to be certified as a teacher in BC. The BC College of Teachers' requirements are higher than Alberta's, such as requiring a five-year rather than a four-year degree; more units of course work in specific subject areas such as English composition; stricter limits on



Sam Fillipoff, a retired teacher and Susan Ruzic, an elementary teacher in Coquitlam were active in organizing the education component of the World Peace Forum and they are the energy behind the project called "From War Toys to Peace Art."

how long a teacher can be out of the profession and still have their qualifications be considered current. All of these higher standards restrict or impair the ability of Alberta-certified teachers to get hired in BC.

TILMA will prevent governments from maintaining policies, such as a higher English proficiency testing requirement for teachers even if (1) they are needed to address problems particularly serious in one province, (2) there is a reasonable expectation that such policies will improve educational outcomes, or (3) simply because their populations want them to.

TILMA allows for violations of the agreement only if *all* of the following criteria are met:

1. A government has to demonstrate it is pursuing objectives recognized in the agreement as "legitimate." TILMA defines a limited list of government objectives, such as protection of human life, as legitimate, but this list does not include protection of the quality of the public education system. So governments could not defend themselves from a TILMA challenge based on that goal.

2. A government has to demonstrate it is not being "unnecessarily" restrictive. Dispute panels have interpreted such "necessity tests" in other agreements to mean measures

***These are issues that touch on the very essence of democratic governance, and should not be decided without engaging the public and the legislature.***

have to be proven to be "effective," which is a very difficult thing to do conclusively in the education sector given all the variables involved. Under necessity tests, governments also have to demonstrate that less restrictive options could not have accomplished their objective. Furthermore, they have to prove the strictness of what they have done is "proportional" to the importance of their goals. How, for example, would BC prove that requiring applicants whose qualifications are over 20 years old to take their training again is proportional to the goal of maintaining the quality of teaching? A dispute panel could rule there are "less restrictive" alternatives BC should adopt.

3. Finally, governments have to demonstrate they are not engaging in a disguised restriction on trade, investment, or labour mobility. Could BC demonstrate its higher certification requirements for teachers is not just a way to reserve teaching jobs for its residents?

Premier Campbell has said TILMA's harmonizing of requirements will mean BC will be able to attract more skilled workers not only from Alberta but as well from overseas. Is the increased labour mobility TILMA could provide worth sacrificing a government's ability to maintain higher standards than exist in another province? These are issues that touch on the very essence of democratic governance and should not be decided without engaging the public and the legislature.

*Ellen Gould is a Vancouver-based consultant on trade and investment agreements.*

# BCeSIS: What's wrong with this picture?

by Larry Kuehn

The BC enterprise, Student Information System (BCeSIS), is a centralized data system initiated by the Ministry of Education to collect and process data on all students. Currently it is being used in districts with about a third of the students in the province.

Teachers in districts using BCeSIS have reported many problems. Teachers in other districts who may only have heard about the difficulties can be thankful their district was not one that took the lead in implementing the program.

The ministry says that the purpose of BCeSIS is management of student performance information and "data-driven decision making." It has several components, from demographic and attendance data to holding all student assignment marks and issuing report cards and eventually letting parents get access to the information on their child, online.

## BCeSIS has serious performance problems

The program has had serious performance problems at key times. Last June, it slowed down considerably, probably because of heavy demand when secondary schools were doing scheduling for the next year. That was a warning of things to come when the demand is greatest in September.

The system shut down completely over two days in late September, just when school districts had to provide information to the ministry on students' registrations and staffing levels. The company with the contract to provide the service, Fujitsu, had greatly underestimated the demand.

Several factors were at work here. One is that the technical people do not know the practices and demands of the education system. Another is that this is the first time this program has been used for a provincial jurisdiction, so there is no other experience to fall back on to gauge the level of demand.

Still another problem is that the ministry selected a completely centralized system over the view of teachers on the selection committee that they should have chosen another type of software and a distributed system.

Many teachers who have been putting their marks in the program have experienced very high degrees of frustration. One teacher required to use the system has written a two-page list of the problems with the grade-book program. Another reports an experience of marks having been changed. "The word *frustrated* doesn't even get close to the way I'm feeling right now," he said.

The general advice from many who have tried the BCeSIS grade book is, don't use it. It is possible to maintain marks in another program and to upload only the overall marks, work habits, and comments for report cards.

Teachers using the attendance program report it taking much longer to enter attendance than systems used in the past. One teacher timed it at 16 minutes more a day

taken out of instructional time—a loss of over 40 hours in a year.

Despite all the problems, in October the ministry issued a press release announcing "British Columbia's new system for streamlining student records and improving achievement has received national recognition." BCeSIS won a bronze medal for "innovation and excellence."

The technology contractor for BCeSIS is just as out of touch with reality. It did an internal review after the system collapsed at the end of September. Fujitsu's conclusion about its service: "The Ministry and School Districts are being serviced by a world-class operation."

## The real costs of BCeSIS

When school boards signed on to the program, they were told the cost would be \$10 a student per year. In fact, the costs, as one ministry official told BCTF Executive Committee member Jill McCaffery, are closer to \$140 a student per year, which would be about \$80 million a year if all students were included.

The significant costs include local hardware and technical support, training and local staffing to carry out all the functions necessary to implement the system and get it running. In addition, the complexity of the system has forced most districts to hire external consultants. This compares to the \$3.50 per student that the province provided as a one-time textbook grant.

To give an idea of costs with a system like this, Fujitsu projects that \$1.3 million is required just to implement a test database so that new developments can be tested before they are put online and create unanticipated problems.

## BCeSIS as a surveillance and control system

The aim of this centralized database can be seen in the recent appointment of a "Joint Committee on Curriculum, Assessment and Report." This is a joint ministry/district committee to look at processes for managing student achievement information for elementary and middle schools. As is typical with this project, the committee is selected by the BCeSIS Service Management Council, rather than being open to teachers to apply or having the BCTF appoint representatives as is typically done for IRPs.

The ministry claims that the data in BCeSIS belongs to the school districts and can only be taken by the ministry with agreement by the district. However, already with distributed learning schools, districts

are required to upload "achievement data for all active students" on five specified dates during the year. Districts can either agree to let the ministry take the data from BCeSIS directly, or the district can extract the data itself, and then upload it to the ministry. Any claims of the system being "voluntary" on the part of districts is straight obfuscation.

## BCeSIS may not meet the ministry's own FOIPA issues

It was recently discovered that there is a data field in BCeSIS for teacher social insurance numbers. Some districts have 'uploaded' this information to the system. It now turns out that at the end of the year the teacher SIN number becomes part of the student record and travels with the student as they change schools within BC and other places.

## BCeSIS and Sector Data Warehouse

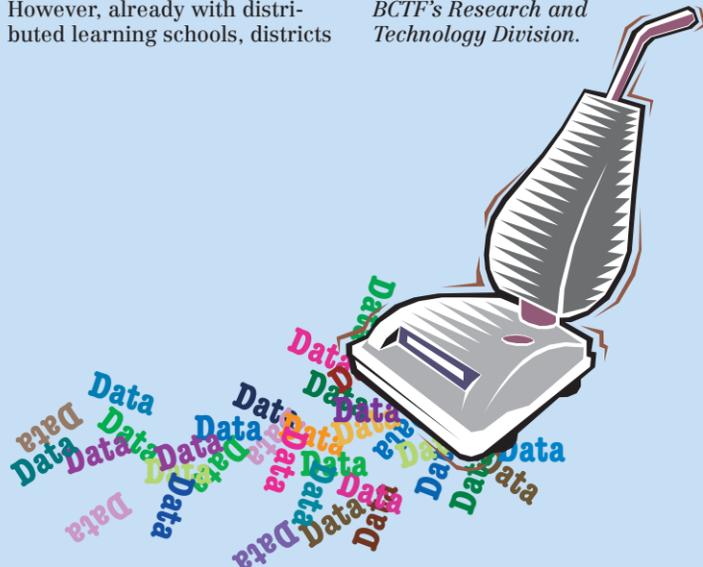
Although the promise of BCeSIS was to provide data that districts could use for decision making, it turns out that BCeSIS is woefully inadequate for this task. BCeSIS does not store historical data such as attendance or school marks over time. For example, if a district wanted to measure progress of a group of students, such as looking at Aboriginal transition rates, BCeSIS is unable to perform this task. This is why the ministry is not commissioning to develop, build, and maintain a Sector Data Warehouse at this time. The cost of this project is not yet known.

BCeSIS was not designed for all the objectives that the ministry was seeking to meet and a lot more money will be thrown at it if it is to meet those objectives. Much of the cost of BCeSIS is downloaded onto school districts as they hire staff and consultants to make up for the problems with BCeSIS.

## Education policies are imbedded in BCeSIS

Langdon Winner says that a social order is programmed into a technology and use of that technology then shapes the social order. This is the most serious problem with BCeSIS. A system of control and a conception of education is imbedded and will shape education in the future. That conception is based on standardization, data-based decision making, and centralization disguised as decentralization.

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



## Historical perspectives

### The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

by Ken Novakowski

Many of you will be aware of the work done by the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). The office is run by a young staff of researchers and others with communications and administrative skills, all under the leadership of its director, Seth Klein. The BC Office is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. The history of its origin and the role of the BCTF in its establishment is a good way to acknowledge its contribution to the progressive side of public policy debates in this province over the past decade.

***The BC office is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.***

The Ottawa office of the CCPA has been in existence for 25 years operating as a national think tank and research centre with support from the Canadian Labour Congress, unions, and other national progressive organizations. The BCTF was a member of the CCPA many years before the BC office was conceived. The BCTF also played a key role in trying to get an alternative research centre established in BC.

In the 1980s, progressive forces, including the BCTF, came together to form the Pacific Institute for Policy Research. This research coalition was intended to be an antidote to the increasingly influential and ultra-conservative Fraser Institute. Larry Kuehn, the current director of the BCTF's Research and Technology Division, was BCTF president during the early 1980s, and worked hard to keep the Pacific Institute going as a viable voice and clearing house for progressive analysis and research on public policy issues. But without a sustainable and reliable financial base, the Pacific Institute floundered.

As BCTF president from 1989 to 1992, I recognized and supported the need for a think tank alternative to the Fraser Institute. The Solidarity Coalition that had emerged from the mobilization of broad opposition to the government's legislative attack on social programs and workers' rights, including significant reductions to funding allocations for public schools, had disintegrated.

The BCTF initiated a series of sessions called "Economic Alternative Seminars" and invited other trade-union leaders and academics to participate in discussions about how the broader progressive forces in this province could begin to articulate a positive, well-grounded alternative to the emerging neo-conservative agenda. Through that process we got to know Marjorie Cohen, a professor at Simon Fraser University. Cohen's extensive academic background included women's studies, political science, and economics. Gideon Rosenbluth, professor emeritus in Economics from UBC, also

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proved to be an invaluable resource.

Several years later, with the full support of the Executive Committee of the day, and particularly the president, Alice McQuade, we launched a series of seminars involving speakers from across the country speaking out on social and economic policy issues, including a number of speakers from the CCPA.

In 1995, again with the support of the Federation leadership, we organized a series of meetings at the BCTF building with other trade unions and progressive community groups to again try to get a BC-based research centre started. The BCTF and CUPE had both committed start-up funds to help but there was no consensus amongst the broad range of groups about the next steps to take to launch this organization.

That's when, in mid-1996, Duncan Cameron, then president of the Ottawa-based CCPA, came up with the plan that would see it happen. Working with Marjorie Cohen, a member of the CCPA national board, Cameron initiated a meeting to secure BCTF and CUPE support for establishing a branch of the CCPA here in Vancouver. We all agreed and the BC office of the CCPA was launched. At the instigation of Cohen and Cameron, Seth Klein was hired as the BC director of the centre. We haven't looked back.

The CCPA soon became a credible and sought after voice for comment on public policy issues in BC. Today, the CCPA continues to hold an annual social event that draws the entire progressive community in this province together every February.

The organizational memberships grew and after a significant initial financial boost from VanCity Savings Credit Union, the remaining key public-sector unions and the BC Federation of Labour joined. Individual memberships soared and after a few years of producing solid, credible research, the CCPA financial base expanded to allow for a current staff of nine. In addition to a full-time economist, the BC office also runs a public-sector desk, a resource- and environmental-policy desk, and supports a team of research associates with strong academic backgrounds in virtually every field of social and economic policy.

The media go to the CCPA for comment on a regular basis and the CCPA release of a new research study always manages to capture public attention. The CCPA office in BC has become a success and since then offices have been established in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia. Seth Klein and the dedicated staff of the BC office, continue to challenge the privatization and anti-progressive moves of the provincial government. At the same time, the centre maintains a non-partisan approach to its public positioning, working with forces in society committed to building a democratic society with strong social programs, equitable treatment of all citizens, and publicly funded public institutions.

Congratulations to the CCPA-BC office on 10 great years.

*Ken Novakowski is the BCTF's executive director.*

If you are interested in joining as an individual member or want further information, go to the web site: [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

## Health and safety

### Boards neglecting responsibilities

by Mark Keelan

What would happen if a teacher decided to completely ignore Section 17(1) of the *School Act* or Section 4 of the *School Regulation*? Section 17(1) of the act states: "A teacher's responsibilities include designing, supervising and assessing educational programs and instructing, assessing, and evaluating individual students and groups of students." The *School Regulation* elaborates on the act. How long would it take for the teacher to find herself in serious trouble if she decided

### Employers have many obligations, including the obligation to train their workers.

not to instruct and evaluate individual students or groups of students or not to supervise educational programs? The *School Act* and the *School Regulation* are the law of the province and for a teacher to ignore the law would be to invite significant repercussions.

Why is it, then, that school district employers choose to ignore the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* (OH&SR)? Section 115(2)(e) of the act requires the employer to "provide to the employer's workers the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of those workers in carrying out their work and to ensure the health and safety of other workers at the workplace." Shouldn't ignoring health and safety laws bring about the same degree of consequence as does ignoring school laws?

Like the *School Act* and its *Regulation*, the OH&SR elaborates on the *Workers Compensation Act*. Employers have many obligations, including the obligation to train their workers. It is time for them to be made to take those obligations seriously.

Part 3 of the OH&SR requires all employers to have a health

### BCTF members need to keep employers "on the hook" when it comes to the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*.

and safety program. The program must include a statement of the employer's aims and the responsibilities of the employer, supervisors, and workers. Most teachers have never seen such a statement. Ask for it! You have a right to know what is expected of you and of others in your workplace. The program must also include "provision by the employer for the instruction and supervision of workers in the safe performance of their work." Few teachers have ever received instruction in the safe performance of their work but all have the right to demand it.

Many BCTF members regularly find themselves working alone which, for a variety of reasons, puts them at risk of a disabling injury. OH&SR Section 4.22 states that workers who work alone must be trained in the written procedure for checking on the worker's well-being. The procedure must be reviewed annually.

One of the most common causes of injuries to BCTF members is as a result of violence. Section 4.30 of the OH&SR provides excellent protections for members, but often the provisions of the section are ignored. According to Section 4.30, workers are entitled to be informed if they may be exposed to the risk of violence, to know the history of a person's violent behaviour, and to receive instruction in how to recognize, respond to, and report on violence. Workers are also entitled to be instructed in the procedures that have been developed to eliminate or minimize the risk of violence. Obviously, such procedures have to have been developed if workers are to be instructed in how to follow them.

### One of the most common causes of injuries to BCTF members is as a result of violence.

OH&SR Section 4.51 states that workers who may be exposed to the risk of a musculoskeletal injury (MSI) are educated in "risk identification related to the work, including the recognition of early signs and symptoms of MSIs and their potential health effects." Employers are also required to train workers in the use of measures that are intended to control the risk of developing MSIs.

Many members are required to use hazardous materials in the course of their work. The OH&SR contains regulations related to the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). One of the WHMIS regulations is that the employer must provide instruction in the procedures for the safe use, handling, storage, and disposal of controlled substances. There must also be instruction in emergency procedures related to the controlled substances. In addition, employers must ensure that workers who are required to use emergency eyewash or shower facilities are instructed in their location and proper use.

There are other areas of the OH&SR that require employers to provide instruction and training to workers. The point is that employers are required to ensure that workers get a considerable amount of health and safety training. For the most part, the training is not happening.

Few principals or superintendents would let teachers off the hook if teachers decided to ignore the *School Act* and the *School Regulation*. BCTF members need to keep employers "on the hook" when it comes to the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*. Employers have many obligations; training workers is one of them. Assert the rights that are designed to ensure that you work in a healthy and safe environment.

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

## On being well

### Wellness is the passion of a Prince Rupert educator

by Julia Johnson

On December 5, 2006, CBC television, on their program *SEVEN* with host Mark Kelley, featured Roosevelt Park Elementary School in Prince Rupert. This documentary was made at the request of principal Steve Riley, in response to the report by the Fraser Institute, whose formula for ranking schools in reading, writing, and numeracy claimed that Roosevelt Park Elementary had the lowest scores in BC.

"The Fraser Institute was founded in 1974 to redirect attention to the role markets can play in providing for the economic and social well-being of Canadians." Specific to the field of education, the Fraser Institute views the "educational market [as one where] parents choose their children's schools and schools compete more freely for students. [thus producing] better educational results for students" ([www.fraserinstitute.ca](http://www.fraserinstitute.ca)). With this perspective, the news release from the Fraser Institute delivers a message that Roosevelt Park Elementary is the worst school in BC, as was the case in the opening remarks made by Peter Mansbridge of *The National* when he introduced Mark Kelley's *SEVEN*.

What this documentary showed was even though Roosevelt Park is ranked last in the province using the FSA data,

### Research in this field suggests that passion is as necessary to our health as earth, air, and water and without passion our life becomes meaningless.

their teachers are not the cause for this low ranking. Many variables affect a student's ability to be successful, including how students are viewed. What this documentary subtly demonstrated was that the teachers of Roosevelt Park had empathy and compassion for their students; they gently encouraged and celebrated each student's success, aware that the slightest negative tone could paralyze a student to inactivity and put in peril their fragile self-esteem. What this documentary brought to light was that this school struggles daily with the worst of society's problems, namely poverty and First Nations issues. With 60 out of 210 students requiring additional support to become successful learners, this

documentary revealed that the teachers in this school were passionate about their teaching, and their passion creates a safe place for children to be. When almost one-third of a school population is at risk, the passion of an educator is the school's saving grace.

An educator with passion has an "abiding belief that every human life is sacred and no task is more important than nourishing and developing the extraordinary potential in all students" (Bolman & Deal, 2002, *Leading with Soul and Spirit*). It was evident in this documentary that Roosevelt Park Elementary has passionate teachers who care deeply about their work and are endeavouring to make a difference in the lives of their students.

From a wellness perspective, passion is the fire in our bellies and the wind in our sails that set us on a course of action. Research in this field suggests that passion is as necessary to our health as earth, air, and water and without passion our life becomes meaningless. We begin to sweat the small stuff and before long, accumulated stress brings us to a grinding halt, commonly known as burn-out.

Wayne Dyer in his book *Wisdom of the Ages* states: "I have found that people who have a passion, or a strong will for what they want to achieve, and who do not allow others to smear or sully their inner pictures of what they want to manifest, always seem to get what they desire in their lives." Elsewhere, Dyer suggests that people who are passionate about something should share their passion because "a shared joy is a doubled joy."

This documentary provided a venue for the educators of Prince Rupert to share their passion for teaching with us and in doing so, the Fraser Institute's rankings become less credible and the teaching profession more valued. Being a Prince Rupert educator is not for the faint of heart, but for those who, like Mike Kelley, will learn to see a hungry child as a survivor and who will have a passion for helping disadvantaged students to not only survive, but to thrive.

On behalf of all who teach, I wish to thank the passionate educators of Prince Rupert for this valuable lesson on teaching and demonstrating what it means to "walk the talk" of finding joy in the workplace. We especially thank you for the fire in your belly that gave you the courage to invite the world into your school to illustrate that teaching and learning is more than achieving high scores on standardized tests.

*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](mailto:livingjewels@shaw.ca) (250-747-3650)*



# A censor? Who, me?

by Murray Corren

I have just finished gushing to a colleague about the Breadwinner trilogy of children's novels written by Canadian writer Deborah Ellis and how they would make a thought-provoking choice for literature circles in her Grade 5 class.

"Oh, but I have a child in my class who is Muslim and his mother is very sensitive about anything touching on that. In fact, I would have to let her read the books first before I could use them in my class," she replies.

In the September issue of *Teacher*, I published an interview I conducted with Ellis during the World Peace Conference in which we discussed the trilogy. The novels tell the story of the experiences of two girls whose lives were profoundly affected when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. When I asked her what message she hopes her books send to young readers, Ellis replied, "If kids who read my books remember them when they get to be decision makers, and their government says it's time to go to war, hopefully they'll remember that there are real people under those bombs... and will think seriously before letting their government get away with killing [those people] in their name." It seems to me that is a pretty important message to give to kids who are about to become the adults of tomorrow.

But should a teacher allow one parent's sensitivities to decide whether or not these, or any other children's novels, be read in her classroom? To what extent do we deprive children of opportunities to view the world from a variety of perspectives because of a fear of parental backlash? Whose worldview should we privilege and whose should we censor? Who should decide what gets taught and what doesn't?

I have seen and heard about numerous other examples of how we self-censor in our classrooms or have our classrooms censored for us. At one elementary school where I

taught, two children were excused from the entire year's music classes because of their parent's religious beliefs. Last year, when C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* hit the big screen, a teacher who intended reading the novel to his Grade 3 class stopped doing so after the first chapter when a child indicated he couldn't sit through the read-aloud because he is a Jehovah's Witness. A student teacher told me of a parent who insisted his child was not to see any images of people or animals where the eyes could be seen and that she had to black them out! I am certain just about every teacher in this province could tell similar stories.

***What rights do parents have to determine what parts of the provincially mandated curriculum their children will learn and how they will learn it?***

So, the question then is: What rights do parents have to determine what parts of the provincially mandated curriculum their children will learn and how they will learn it? Many teachers may be surprised to learn that those boundaries are very restricted and, have, for years, been clearly defined by the Ministry of Education. The policy, currently described as the Alternative Delivery Policy, clearly defines the areas of the curriculum where students and their parents or guardians may arrange for alternative delivery of instruction; namely, the Health curriculum organizer of Health and Career Education K to 7, Health and Career Education 8 and 9, and Planning 10, and the Personal Development curriculum organizer of Personal Planning K to 7. The policy does not apply to any other prescribed learning outcomes in those IRPs. Nor does it apply to any other BC provincial curriculum.

In a letter from the deputy minister sent to all the education partner groups in September 2006, this policy was, once again, reiterated "in order to clarify some common misunderstandings" with regard to its application. "The policy does not permit schools to omit addressing or assessing any of the prescribed learning outcomes within the health and career education curriculum," the letter states, and goes on to say, "Neither does it allow students to be excused from meeting the expectations of any prescribed learning outcomes related to health. It is expected that students who arrange for alternative delivery will address the learning outcomes and will be able to demonstrate that they have done so."

Just so that we are all clear, the Alternative Delivery policy applies only to the health organizers of the above-named IRPs and to no others. What this means is that there are no other areas of the curriculum that students have the option of not being in attendance or accessing alternative means by which to achieve the required learning outcomes. So, when a student says he or she can't participate in lessons, other than those of the health organizers, for whatever reason, our response needs to be that they are required to be in attendance and are not exempted from meeting the prescribed learning outcomes.

This brings us back to the examples described earlier where teachers have allowed parental pressure to determine what and how we teach to meet the requirements of the curriculum. As professionals, we have a duty to address the learning needs of all our students by ensuring that they be exposed to ideas, materials, and knowledge that informs and educates them about the world in which they live. When we relinquish our right to professional autonomy and bend to the dictates of a small segment of the parent population, we do a disservice to our students as a whole.



So, when a parent declares that a teacher's choice of a novel to be used in class must be vetted by the parent first; when, in social studies, children are learning about the different family models, a parent objects to the inclusion of same-sex parented families; or when a child is not permitted to attend music or physical education classes because of the religious beliefs of the family, we need to take a stand. Our response should be, "This is the public education system and I am required to follow the mandated provincial curriculum. If you are not happy about that, there are other educational options available to you and to your child."

***When we relinquish our right to professional autonomy and bend to the dictates of a small segment of the parent population, we do a disservice to our students as a whole.***

I have often heard it said that if we take such an approach, we shall lose students to the private education system. My response to such an assertion is, an overwhelming number of parents want their children educated in a public system that reflects the values of a diverse and inclusive Canadian society, values

espoused in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In other words, why should we allow ourselves to censor and dumb down public education and reduce it to its lowest common denominator simply because the system doesn't meet the needs of a few parents and their children?

Let us now replay the encounter I described at the beginning of this article. This time, the teacher immediately sees the value in using novels such as the Breadwinner trilogy with her students, asserts her professional autonomy, and declares, "I think it's important for my students to learn about the plight of children in Afghanistan, and I'm going to use those books to help them see the world from another perspective."

My question to all of us, as the guardians of public education, is: Are you prepared to protect and uphold the right to do what is best for all your students, to provide them with quality opportunities to learn about the world around them, and to fend off efforts to censor teachers and, ultimately, the children we teach? I hope your answer is a resounding, "Yes!"

*Murray Corren is a Coquitlam teacher at the Winslow Centre, Curriculum and Staff Development Department.*

The Alternative Delivery Policy can be found on the ministry's web site at: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/alt\\_delivery.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/alt_delivery.htm).

## A chronology of French-as-a-first-language education in BC

by Pierre Blouin

French people have been in BC for many years and all along they have demanded that their children receive a French education. Even though some francophone students were able to attend classes conducted in French earlier, it was only in 1982, when the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was adopted, that it became a constitutional right for francophone parents to have their children educated in French anywhere in Canada. (Note: The francophone program is completely different from French immersion. The provincial government has an obligation to provide a francophone program but French immersion remains an option.)

**1793** Alexander McKenzie's expedition: 6 of his 10 crew members were French Canadian (Doucette, Landry, Beaulieux, Bisson, Beauchamp, and Contois).

**1807** A group of French Canadians founded Fort George, today Prince George.

**1840-42** 125 people of European origin lived in Fort Victoria: 25 were English, 100 were French Canadian.

**1848** The Hudson's Bay Company opened a French school for its employees. The company still used French in its communications.

**1848-49** The religious French schools served Aboriginal, Métis, and francophone children.

**1860-90** The French clergy, nuns (Soeurs Sainte-Anne de Québec) and priests, established schools around the province (Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Mission, Williams Lake, Kamloops, and Cranbrook). The only way for French Canadians to have their children educated in French was to finance their own school.

**1910** The first French school opened in Maillardville, Coquitlam.

**1951** The two French Catholic schools of Maillardville went on strike to demand free transportation, school books, and financing.

**1954** The municipality of Coquitlam asked that 44 years of tax arrears be paid. The schools and the churches were seized by the government.

**1967** The Premier of BC, W.A.C. Bennett, declared that there would never be French public schools in the province.

**1977** More than 100 years after the creation of a public school system, the government recognized the right of francophones to be educated in French.

**1979** The francophone program (then known as "programme cadre") was established in BC: 232 students were registered in nine school districts.

**1982** Adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which recognizes the right of Canadians to be educated in

their mother tongue wherever they reside in Canada.

**1983** Opening of école Anne-Hébert school in Vancouver, the first French stand-alone school in BC.

**1986** Creation of a new BCTF provincial specialist association: Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme cadre (APPIPC).

**1986** The Greater Victoria School Board assumes control of école Victor-Brodeur, on the military base in Esquimalt, making it the second French stand-alone school.

**1987** The third French stand-alone school, école André-Piolat, opened in North Vancouver.

**1993** The BCTF created the bureau of French Programs and Services and the Advisory Committee on French Programs and Services.

**1995** The Ministry of Education announced the creation of a French school board, Conseil scolaire francophone (Franco-

phone Education Authority/FEA). The board has responsibility for French-as-a-first-language education throughout BC.

**1998** The FEA assumed responsibility for hiring its own teachers—the BCTF created a new local (93): Association des enseignantes et enseignants francophones (ADEF). The local is now known as the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (SEPF).

**2006** The Conseil scolaire francophone offers programme francophone services in 38 schools around the province of which 19 are stand-alone. Current CSF enrolment is 3,815 students, up from 1,800 in 1996, an increase of 112 %.

*Pierre Blouin is co-ordinator, BCTF French Programs and Services.*

Source: Based in part on a document from the Fédération des parents francophones de la C-B.

# Education Committee report to the BC Fed Convention

## Defending the K-12 education system

In the K-12 education system, 2005-06 was a tumultuous year for workers. Teachers and support workers were embroiled in a struggle against the provincial Liberal government education policies, which threaten the very basis of public education.

A prime example of this was the crisis that ended in the job action of teachers in October 2005. During this job action, a systematic series of attacks designed to undermine public confidence in the system and foster privatization and commercialization was launched by the Liberal government.

The assault began with the stripping of teachers' collective agreements from 2002 (as noted in our 2004 Report to Convention). The crisis came to a head when the Liberal government intervened in a limited teacher job action in 2005. The result was Bill 12, which imposed a one-year contract and ordered the teachers back to work. This piece of legislation, however, had the opposite effect. Despite the Bill and previous essential service legislation, teachers defiantly went out on a full withdrawal of service while affiliates, supported by the BC Federation of Labour, walked the line in solidarity throughout the province. This withdrawal of services lasted two weeks, the longest provincial public education action in the history of Canada. Teachers faced the intimidation of the province, the media, and the courts, and stood their ground. The tremendous and solid support of the affiliates, particularly in school support unions, parents, and the public, led to the appointment of Vince Ready as mediator.

Teachers voted to accept Ready's recommendations that \$100 million be injected into the system, that working and learning conditions (class size and composition) be addressed in public policy and negotiated at the Learning Round Table, and that teacher bargaining processes be reviewed and improved.

The year came to a close with another round of teacher bargaining, an 88% strike vote, and round-the-clock negotiations that ended just before midnight on June 30. The result was the ratification of a new five-year

collective agreement in September, bringing a period of stability to an otherwise stressed system.

The struggle is not over, Bill 33, the Liberals' legislation to control class sizes, remains critical, as do the battles to achieve appropriate class composition and confront the Liberals' so-called "accountability agenda."

Bill 33 limited Kindergarten to 19 students, Grades 1-3 to 21 students, and Grades 4-7 to 30 students. Up to 30 students per class are permitted in secondary school classrooms.

The legislation also introduced a cap on the number of students with special needs that could be placed in any one class to three.

***The deputy minister has suggested districts "use...non-enrolling staffing" to create new classes, thereby paving the way for the further erosion of the services provided by non-enrolling teachers.***

However, this legislation has never been funded, meaning that school boards will have to rob Peter to pay Paul. The deputy minister has suggested districts "use...non-enrolling staffing" to create new classes, thereby paving the way for the further erosion of the services provided by non-enrolling teachers.

Thus, Bill 33 goes only a very small way to addressing the pressing workload issues facing teachers (and must be compared to Ontario, which plans to reduce all elementary classes to fewer than 20 over the next two years). If it remains unfunded, the provision of programs for children with special needs is threatened, as are the services of non-enrolling teachers such as counsellors, school librarians, English as a Second Language (ESL), and special education and learning assistance teachers.

The second issue at hand, the accountability agenda, is the education policy framework of the Liberal government and its hallmarks include:

### 1. Chronic underfunding, resulting in privatization and commercialization

The West Vancouver School District now generates 20% of its budget through privatization initiatives such as recruiting international students.

### 2. Centralized control

Currently, almost every school in BC has the same identical goals, which are driven by ministry accountability contracts.

### 3. System-wide, high-stakes testing

Tests cannot measure everything of quality that is done in school. If test results are published and schools are ranked as a result, more and more effort is focussed on achieving higher scores. Instruction is therefore increasingly focussed on the narrow content of these tests, while electives are sacrificed. Moreover, such uniformity in curriculum and teacher-proof instruction allows tests to be compared school-to-school and district-to-district, leaving children and entire schools who cannot hope to compete in these tests, viewing themselves as failures. Also, Grade 10 and 11 provincial exams (some harder than the Grade 12 equivalents) will discourage many students from continuing on in school.

### 4. Re-purposing of school boards and school-based budgeting.

The government is looking for economies of scale, and so is questioning the role of small, local boards. Larger amalgamated boards will reduce duplication of services, produce economies of scale, and result in less local control of public education. Similarly, school-based budgeting allows the province to offload the cuts necessary when funding doesn't allow the provision of all services to all children.

5. Information control has been accomplished through the BCeSIS information tracking system. Now every student, through their own personal Provincial Education Number (PEN), can be tracked across the province. This includes academic progress, discipline, attendance, letter grades, assignment completion, and marks.

This emphasis on testing and data-gathering over teaching and learning, of individual achievement over collaboration, co-operation, and community-building, and achievement or "product" over the process of lifelong learning, threatens the

***Teachers have called for a dramatic shift away from the accountability policy framework toward an education policy that supports optimal conditions for teaching and learning.***

very nature of public education as we know it. Teachers have called for a dramatic shift away from the accountability policy framework toward an education policy that supports optimal conditions for teaching and learning.

The struggle in defence of workers' rights and quality public education is now part of our proud labour history, and has forged the strong bonds that will enable us to meet the challenges that face all public services in the province.

— Education Committee report  
BC Federation of Labour  
Convention, November 2006

## Resolutions passed at the convention

### Resolution C-2-2006

That the BC Federation of Labour will lobby government to further improve class-size and composition legislation by funding it properly and bringing it closer to the standards set out in the BCTF Working and Learning Conditions Declaration. (Burnaby Teachers' Association, Local 41)

### Resolution C-8-2006

That the BC Federation of Labour call upon all trade union members in BC who are parents to withdraw their children from writing FSA tests. (BCTF)

### Resolution C-11-2006

That the BC Federation of Labour call upon the provincial government to provide additional funding for the implementation of improvements in class size and composition that are a result of Bill 33; and be it further resolved that the provincial government develop a three-year plan to further improve learning conditions and to fully fund those improvements. (BCTF)

### Resolution C-12-2006

That the BC Federation of Labour encourage trade unionists who are parents of students with special needs to work with teachers to advocate for funding necessary to implement the class composition provisions of Bill 33 to help ensure a quality education program for their children. (BCTF)



Ken Georgetti, president of the CLC presents Jinny Sims, president of the BCTF with the CLC Certificate of Affiliation at the BC Fed Convention.

## CLC's newest affiliate gets a major boost

The BC Teachers' Federation has something new in its arsenal as it tries to force the BC Liberal government to adhere to international labour laws. For the first time since the International Labour Congress (ILO) initially found the BC Liberals guilty of contravening international laws, the BCTF is able to count on the considerable clout and strength of the Canadian Labour Congress, thanks to its recent CLC affiliation.

CLC President Ken Georgetti joined BCTF President Jinny Sims at a news conference

outside the BC Federation of Labour annual meeting, to slam the Campbell Liberals for their lack of respect of international law. "As president of the CLC, I call on the Canadian government to take steps to guarantee the enforcement, in Canada, of internationally recognized labour rights," said Georgetti. "I call on the government of BC in particular, to return without delay, to democratically accepted standards of labour relations, to respect the rights of its citizens and the conventions that we have signed onto."

Despite four rulings against them, the BC Liberals continue to thumb their nose at international laws to which Canada is a signatory by ignoring the rulings. In this latest decision, however, the ILO has even taken the unusual step of offering to help the BC government and the

federal government adhere to international regulations. BCTF President Jinny Sims says, "If the Liberals don't have the skill set or the knowledge base or the professional expertise to do this by themselves, they should avail themselves of this international offer, and take away the stigma that BC has a government that ignores workers' rights."

Georgetti says the Liberals' flagrant and repeated violations are "an international embarrassment for all Canadians," a matter of justice for workers and a matter of justice and compliance with our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Sims says it appears "the Liberals are slow learners. You can make a mistake once or twice, but you hope to learn from it. We're hoping that the shame that we, as Canadians, are subjected to over and over,

will force this government to take some action."

The CLC has asked the ILO's director general "to directly contact the Prime Minister of Canada and ask him why the Canadian government is ignoring conventions that they have been signatory to," Georgetti says. "The real test will be in the court of public opinion. If the governments don't value the rights of their own citizens, why are they governing?"

Georgetti has pledged labour's ongoing support. "The beauty of the labour movement is that we don't stop until we win. We'll continue to put pressure on the various levels of government to honor these rights. It's ironic that the rights of citizens—human rights—are less important than commercial agreements."

The CLC president cautions that Canada's tarnished international reputation will have a detrimental affect on the country's current labour shortage. "Canada, unfortunately, has a very bad record internationally in terms of the number of violations of conventions that are basic human rights. This will continue, but as we search for new workers, it's not lost on workers from other countries who want to come to Canada. If they have choices, and see Canada's record at the ILO, maybe they'll opt to work in other countries."

Sims says we can not afford to quit because "so much is riding on it. We can not be silenced in either our advocacy or our actions. A better world is built when we respect the rights of people."

— Yvonne Eamorf

## UN body offers to help BC government

The International Labour Organization, an agency of the United Nations, has issued another rebuke to the BC Liberal government for ignoring international standards to which Canada is a signatory and has offered to help the government bring its laws in line with international standards. In referring to the imposition of a contract through Bill 12, the ILO stated "...the Committee is particularly concerned at this latest unilateral intervention on the part of Government despite previous recommendations of the Committee to avoid doing so." It goes on to quote a previous ruling against the BC Liberal government, "The Committee also points out that repeated recourse to legislative restrictions on collective bargaining can only, in the long term, prejudice and destabilize the labour relations climate if the legislator frequently intervenes to suspend or terminate the exercise of rights recognized for unions and their members." The ILO calls on the provincial government to amend its laws to conform to the international standards that Canada has agreed to uphold. In light of the government ignoring its previous rulings, it offers the government assistance to bring its laws in

line with international standards.

One of the panel members reminded the Government of Canada that it is "accountable [for] upholding the freedom of association throughout the whole territory of Canada..."

The ILO is jointly run by representatives of government, business, and labour and promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the joint ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. The joint committee issued a statement for World Teachers' Day this year restating the importance of the teaching profession and calling on governments and others support a high status for teachers and quality education. "At all levels of education, teachers are the very heart of the efforts made to establish the common foundations for the acquisition of skills, knowledge, lifelong learning, culture, respect for constructive achievements, and regards for codes of conduct that are essential for the economic, social, and cultural progress of society. In so many respects, the future of the world is in the hands of teachers.

"Accordingly, on this special day, the Joint Committee urgently appeals to all members of the educational communities throughout the world to enter into frank and honest social dialogue in support of a high status for teachers and the promotion of quality education at all levels of education."

## Yours for the asking

### Grades 5-8 teaching resource

*The Gathering Place: An Exploration of Canada's Capital* is a free teacher's guide for Grades 5-8 social science/social studies and history designed to help youth explore our national capital in the context of who we are as a country and as a people.

Capital cities play a vital role in the life of nations, and Canada is no exception. Many of us are familiar with the energy, pride, and emotional connection that a visit to the capital evokes. It is a place of national institutions, treasures, and symbols that enable us to explore our history and examine our identity. It is where we make the decisions that shape us as a country, but it is more than just the seat of government—it is the place where we gather to remember, celebrate, and share the stories that define who we are and what has formed us as a nation.

The lessons will be of particular value for teachers trying to engage students in meaningful learning opportunities around Canadian culture, identity, and symbols, government, citizenship, and democracy, Canadian stories, heroes, and celebrations, and Canada's connections and contributions to the world.

*The Gathering Place* has been pilot-tested with teachers across the country. The lessons include all student materials, are completely ready to use, and support a learner-centred, activity-based education model. Additional support materials for

teachers are available online at [www.canadacapital.gc.ca/gatheringplace](http://www.canadacapital.gc.ca/gatheringplace).

To get more information, or to order your copy, go to [www.classroomconnections.ca/resources](http://www.classroomconnections.ca/resources) or e-mail [info@classroomconnections.ca](mailto:info@classroomconnections.ca).

### The Great EcoKids Challenge

All across Canada, schools and youth groups are taking action to positively impact the



environment and their communities. Earth Day Canada's EcoKids program recognizes the efforts and accomplishments of these groups through the Great EcoKids Challenge.

All elementary schools and youth groups in Canada are eligible to enter the challenge and tell us about their environmental projects. Sony of Canada Ltd. provides great prizes for the top three entrants including a Vaio notebook computer, a digital handycam camcorder, and a digital camera. All entrants receive a free EcoKids Club membership.

Suitable challenge activities are those that contribute

# From Amazon to the Antarctic

Recreation land management instructor Dan Catt, is taking a journey of sustainability through South America and Antarctica. Catt will take the next four months to promote sustainability on a global scale, and he will be communicating with interested students through the Internet.

"You can watch a video, you can have a lecture, and you can read a book. But I want to make this as real as possible for as many people as possible," says Catt. Using the latest Internet technology, Catt will provide online experiences that make the trip as real as possible for students who track his adventure. *Catt-Trax2, Antarctic to the Amazon*, as this global enterprise is known, "will give students the chance to see the challenges of different areas of the world, and to share some sustainability issues. We hear the old saying, think globally and act locally, and that's what I want to promote."



There's no curriculum and no homework. What there is, is the opportunity for secondary school and college students to follow Catt and his experiences through two very different continents. Catt's web site, [www.catt-trax2.bcit.ca](http://www.catt-trax2.bcit.ca), offers students the chance to explore endangered habitats, lets them talk shop with conservationists, and shows them the global connections that affect us all.

Catt is using this experience to educate his own students, as well as potential future students. "My own students have helped research topics for the web site, so whoever wants to learn can participate. There will be a series of pages where experts are invited to write their personal thoughts on global connections and how, in BC and in Canada, we're all connected to the outside world and southern continents." Catt says Catt-Trax2 is not just about science or ecology, "I want people to realize that when you

think globally, there are so many different angles to it. We're connected through the whole planet through the biosphere."

One key element of the Internet experiences will be an essay contest for secondary students and prizes will include a \$1,000 BCIT scholarship.

This is not the first time Catt has launched such an ambitious venture. Five years ago there was *Catt-Trax, Journey for Sustainability*, which involved a lengthy trip through Africa. Catt says, "it worked out very well, even though the interactive tools on the Internet were very different than they are today. This time it's going to be better, and we hope to be even more successful and connect with even more kids across the province."

Catt doesn't know how many students and teachers or supporters and friends will log on to come along for the ride, but he's confident Catt-Trax2 will be big.

positively to the health of the environment, produce positive outcomes, encourage student participation and leadership, and positively impact the local community. Previous challenge entries have included activities such as energy efficiency campaigns, schoolyard gardening, and waste reduction projects.

If you are an elementary school teacher or youth group leader, (including leaders of Girl Guides, Scouts, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, or other youth groups) start thinking about your Great EcoKids Challenge project today. The deadline for applications is May 11, 2007.

Please visit [www.ecokids.ca](http://www.ecokids.ca) for information and to fill out the online application.

### Thirsty Planet World Water Lessons

Were your students impacted by the November 2006 boil water advisory? CoDevelopment Canada has a timely resource, entitled *Thirsty Planet*. The focus includes local, national, and international water issues.

The resource consists of a 49-page booklet and a CD-ROM that contains tools and resources to enhance the classroom experience. The booklet provides background information for the teacher and a modified version for students. There are 12 activities, including a pre- and post-water quiz in a self-test format.

Topics covered include:

- Case study: Sto:lo, the people of the river
- Water pollution and solutions board game
- Is bottled better than tap?
- Water around the world, with facts and figures for 15 countries
- Women are the water experts
- Who owns the rain?
- Tips for using less water
- Letter writing and lobbying.

The resource sells for \$15 including the CD-ROM, plus shipping and handling of \$3.95 per item. CoDevelopment Canada partners with the BCTF International Solidarity Committee and communities in the global South. Other resources are available as well.

Contact information: CoDev Canada, 101-2747 E. Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V5K 1Z8, phone 604-708-1495, e-mail: [coddev@coddev.org](mailto:coddev@coddev.org), web site [www.coddev.org](http://www.coddev.org).

### Schools in Kenya looking for same in BC

Over 60 schools surrounding the Ol Pejeta Conservancy (OPC) in Kenya are looking for schools to twin with!

Project Kenya Sister Schools is a BC public-school-based organization closely connected to the OPC's community outreach program in the Laikipia district. Our relationship with the conservancy ensures that 100% of our donations go directly to the students without impediment. Connecting our school to Kenyan schools has not only enriched our school community with increased global and cultural awareness, it has afforded us the opportunity to support the educational goals of impoverished Kenyan students. Last years' Kenyan Christmas Campaign netted \$17,000 in donations through card sales. The cards simply stated that \$15 was being donated in the donor's honour to allow Kenyan students to attend school. Our school community was asked to avoid buying the box of chocolates or coffee mug and give a card that has true and lasting value. It was an overwhelming success. We are currently putting over 100 students through secondary school and have purchased desperately needed school

supplies. We now have three sister schools in Abbotsford, Grand Forks, and in Langley. We would love to find 60 more.

There are currently 14 million AIDS orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa and at the current rate of infection that number will increase to 40 million by 2010. It is a pandemic of unprecedented proportion. This generation of young Africans are raising themselves. Waiting for governments and international organizations to respond with sufficient urgency is at best frustrating. Give yourself, your school, and African kids the priceless gift of education.

For more information, contact Neil Bryson, [nbryson@sd35.bc.ca](mailto:nbryson@sd35.bc.ca).

### UBC looks at high caesarean rate

Researchers at UBC are trying to get to the bottom of BC's high caesarean rate, but they need help from pregnant women. Wendy Hall, as associate professor at the UBC School of Nursing, is currently collecting information from 200 women to see how they feel prior to labour. BC has the third highest C-section rate in Canada at 27%. This is well above the World Health Organization's recommended range of 10 to 15%.

Studies in other countries suggest fatigue, stress, and anxiety may create the need for otherwise healthy mothers to undergo a C-section. Hall hopes that the findings of her study help pinpoint problem areas, and to do that the sample size needs to be bumped up from 200 to 1,000 pregnant women across the province.

The survey takes only 40 minutes. Women who want to participate can call UBC at 604-822-7480 or toll free at 1-877-822-7480.



# The global accountability juggernaut and you

by Ritchie Kendrick

**Juggernaut:** (n) 1 an overwhelming force or object. 2 an institution or notion to which persons blindly sacrifice themselves or others.

Unfortunately, the likely sacrificial victim of this accountability juggernaut is our own public education system.

We need to be concerned about this obsession with accountability and its impact on our schools. This drive toward standardization and account-

*“Sometimes there are other things that are important too,” but the push is, “if it’s not measurable, then... don’t teach it.”*

ability is nothing new in the global arena. Just look toward the UK and the US to see how this obsession has negatively impacted their public schools through competition, funding, and testing. They have successfully corralled teaching into a narrow framework with limited goals and objectives. This narrow focus on testing for a few basic skills is squeezing out other school subjects deemed non-essential and too expensive.

In BC, expansion from Grades 4 and 7 FSAs to standardized assessments at all elementary grades is in progress. Many districts in BC have already implemented these district-wide assessments or are attempting to move in this direction with the introduction of Grades 3 and 6 assessments. These and the creation of provincial Grades 10 and 11 exams barely scratch the surface of where we are headed. This is not just empty rhetoric but a reality. Once standardized testing is commonplace, it’s an easy progression to extend control into the classroom (through curricular content and teaching methodology) that further weakens teacher autonomy.

Our politicians have failed to learn the lessons from our American and British cousins. In the UK, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is a government watchdog established in 1992. The invasive nature of this department has led to a severe decline in the quality of a teacher’s work life. Regular reports on schools and classrooms have seriously undermined teacher autonomy and caused a dramatic increase in teacher loss through stress and workload.

This acknowledgment of the British condition is recognized by a well-known British actor, Richard Griffiths (Uncle Vernon in the Harry Potter films), who plays a teacher in a new film, *The History Boys*. Griffiths’ character laments that instead of pursuing knowledge for its own sake, education is now regarded as an accumulation of facts and strategies to be put to practical use, “the inculcating of enthusiasm for intellectual ideas and the improvement of the human condition, what is it to love, what is it to discover the meaning of loyalty, treachery, cruelty, kindness, sweetness, sourness... these things shape every one of us for the rest of our lives, and they’re not debated any more, they’re not understood any more, they’re not addressed by the school curriculum.” When asked why, he states, “There isn’t an exam for it—so what the hell?”

Recent developments in the US, which allow some states to use a pilot program called a “growth model” to more effectively measure student progress over time, give hope that change is in the air for the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Educational partners in the US have echoed the concerns we have in BC: “...it is evident that test-driven external accountability has not advanced equity on a large scale, as the disparity in achievement among different racial and socioeconomic groups of students persist before and after NCLB.” (J. Lee, Harvard University) Parent groups have also aired concerns—Michelle Kirk, PTO president, says it has caused educators to “overtest” and focus their lessons so students learn only the standards on the tests. “Sometimes there are other things that are important too,” but the push is, “if it’s not measurable, then... don’t teach it.” This sounds all too familiar doesn’t it?

NEA President Reg Weaver, while not exactly painting a picture of Shangri La, does at least show a chink in the armor of the NCLB Act. “We are encouraged that [they’re] moving away from measuring student progress under the current snapshot approach and toward a more reasoned growth model... This is a step in the right direction... Accountability systems should help students learn and succeed in an increasingly interconnected 21st Century economy.”

Both the US and UK models, touted by Bush and Blair as being the savior of the public education system have failed to live up to their hype. So what

have these developments in the UK and the US got to do with us in BC? Well, you would think that our government would reflect on the impact these accountability programs have had on the American and British systems. The growing resistance, to the NCLB in the US and Ofsted in the UK, and the resulting demand for change should ring a bell of caution in our political leaders. Why they don’t see the damage caused by this accountability juggernaut is anyone’s guess. But, whatever the reason, their agenda to push us into a quagmire of data-driven management, must be resisted. Failure, to get real dialogue on authentic assessment and stop this madness, will hurt our students and the public education system for years to come. So, how do you put the brakes on this accountability juggernaut?

*If we want to avoid the establishment in BC of an educational structure that resembles the UK or US models we need to continue our efforts to engage our educational partners in a dialogue that questions the logic of such programs and the long-term negative impacts.*

The experience of our colleagues in the US and UK should be a warning to us, because although there is evidence of some backpedalling by the bureaucrats and political leaders, the evidence is still there to show how difficult it is to move them away completely from such a well-entrenched ideology. If we want to avoid the establishment in BC of an educational structure that resembles the UK or US models we need to continue our efforts to engage our educational partners in a dialogue that questions the logic of such programs and the long-term negative impacts.

Failing that, we need to be prepared to engage in a campaign of passive resistance. Or as Gandhi put it—engage in *Satyagraha*. Standing firm for what we know is right may be our only redress.

*Ritchie Kendrick is president, South Okanagan Similkameen Teachers’ Union.*

## International support needed for Oaxaca teachers and indigenous communities

by Jinny Sims

Our teacher colleagues and the large indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico need our solidarity support. I traveled to Mexico City and Oaxaca in mid-December as part of an international delegation to provide some of that support. I was representing both the BC Teachers’ Federation and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. Other representatives were from Quebec and Central American teacher unions.

*In Oaxaca we were able to meet with teachers, union officials and participants in APPO to hear their fears and express our solidarity.*

The situation in Oaxaca is intolerable, with many violations of human rights. More than 200 people have “disappeared,” including more than 100 teachers. Police have grabbed them when out shopping and even gone into classrooms and arrested teachers in front of primary children. Many have been shipped out of the state to prisons in other parts of Mexico. Several people have died in attacks from police and paramilitaries.

Teachers, their families and other community activists are very fearful of retribution from the governor of Oaxaca in response to them challenging the fraudulent election that brought him to office.

**How did things come to this?**

In May, teachers in Section 22 of SNTE (the national teachers’ union) went on strike for resources for their schools and students and an increase in the very low salaries paid to teachers in Oaxaca. After a month, on June 14 the governor of the state ordered police to remove teachers and their families carrying out a peaceful occupation of the public square in the centre of the city. People were beaten and some were killed.

This action by the governor turned a teacher strike into a popular social movement to bring democracy to the state of Oaxaca. Hundreds of thousands from the community turned out in a protest march just days after the police action against the teachers.

For six months protestors occupied plazas in the centre of the city as a part of their protest. For a few weeks before the end of the last school year, classroom teachers returned to their schools to ensure that students would not lose a year. However, some non-enrolling staff continued the protest at the centre of the city along with activists from APPO (Oaxaca Peoples Popular Assembly), the community organization.

Throughout the six months, Section 22 and APPO had a radio station that broadcast 24

hours a day to provide information to the community and to warn of attacks from violent paramilitaries. A score of people were killed—there are disagreements about the numbers—mostly by shots into the crowds. One American journalist was shot while filming people being harassed by police in plain clothes.

Central to the actions by the governor of Oaxaca is an attempt to silence the voices of dissent from the teachers and the community, a common story in many places, although seldom as violently as in Oaxaca.

The purpose of our delegation being in Mexico was to shine a light on what is happening and to urge the Mexican government to live up to the ideals in law that are being ignored and violated in practice. We also wanted teachers in Oaxaca to know they have support from colleagues beyond the borders of Mexico.

Mexican teachers from the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education had arranged a press conference for us in Mexico City. This got coverage in the Mexican media with stories about why we were there.

Our delegation also met with an official in the Ministry of the Interior. This is the agency that is charged with ensuring that human rights are protected in the country. We asked the government to direct the release of the more than 200 people held in prisons and to provide protection to the people being attacked in Oaxaca. The federal government’s police had moved into Oaxaca in November, but they had been just as bad as the state police in attacking the protests.

The ministry official listened to our concerns. He called the authorities in Oaxaca to ensure we would not be harassed and provided us with documents.

In Oaxaca we were able to meet with teachers, union officials, and participants in APPO to hear their fears and express our solidarity.

We were told that the teachers had negotiated a truce and that schools had reopened several weeks earlier. However, the government was not living

*If there is no resolution and an end to the repression, we told the Mexican officials that we would be taking resolutions to the Education International Congress in July calling for action in support of Oaxaca.*

up to the promises it had made. Teachers were still being arrested. To replace any teachers taken away, the government was appointing non-qualified supporters to take over classrooms.

Teachers told us of the fear throughout the state, with police coming into classrooms with no warning or warrants and

grabbing teachers, leaving frightened students behind. The repression directed by the governor has been allowed to continue, despite motions being adopted by both the national Congress and Senate weeks ago saying that he should resign from office.

International delegations are important because they can put more pressure on the government, particularly at the

### *Teachers in B.C. had Mexican teachers support when we were on a two-week civil disobedience strike in October 2005.*

national level. An implicit message from outside the country is that Mexican tourism may be threatened if human rights abuses and repression are allowed to continue. These delegations also highlight the links in neo-liberal policies on a global level with the common elements of underfunding public education, promoting private education and trying to silence teachers who challenge these policies.

If there is no resolution and an end to the repression, we told the Mexican officials that we would be taking resolutions to the Education International Congress in July calling for action in support of Oaxaca.

More delegations from Europe and elsewhere in the Americas are expected over the next several weeks. The BCTF is hosting a strategy session of the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education the last

### *The situation in Oaxaca continues to be urgent and requires broad international support for teachers and the primarily indigenous communities in the state.*

weekend of January. The intention is to plan activities over the next several months to put pressure on the Mexican government and support our colleagues in Oaxaca.

The BCTF has provided financial support to Section 22 teachers. It gave \$10,000 in June and smaller grants to support a protest march of 340 miles from Oaxaca to Mexico City by teachers and to assist in the legal defense of those arrested.

The Tri-national Coalition organized a demonstration at the Canadian embassy in Mexico City—where staff rushed to lock the doors, surprised by a demonstration directed at Canada, rather than at the US embassy.

The situation in Oaxaca continues to be urgent and requires broad international support for teachers and the primarily indigenous communities in the state.

We know the power of the collective and international solidarity. As we continue to face the neo-liberal agenda with attacks on public education, health care and the social safety net, we must continue to work with teachers and others around the world to advocate for public education and a just society.

*Jinny Sims is president of BCTF and vice-president of Canadian Teachers' Federation.*

## Ten new BCTF lesson aids

**1 LA 9348—Acts of Transformation from War Toys to Peace Art: A Teaching Resource Guide!** This teacher resource guide presents a case study, with lessons for K–12, to start a conversation on “A Culture of Peace and Non-Violence,” and the practice of peace in schools and communities. This guide encourages ordinary people to start peacemaking in their homes, schools and workplaces and to practice peacefulness in a mindful and demonstrative manner. Using the lessons in the guide, teachers can ask children in their school or classroom to surrender their toys of violence so the toys can be converted into works of peace art. The toys of violence would then be rendered into a work of peace art by children, teachers and artists, and exhibits could be organized in schools and in community galleries or museums. Grades K–12. \$6.50

**2 LA 9501—Song of the Salish Sea: A Natural History of Northwest Waters** by Earthwise Media and People for Puget Sound, 45-minute DVD, ©2006. The Salish Sea consists of Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This video examines the fragile habitats that make up this large inland sea and its watershed. Spectacular video of the habitats and the creatures that live there are combined with graphics, photographs, and simple animations to examine these environments and the processes that shape them. Some of the ways humans have impacted each habitat are shown along with ways we can reduce those impacts. The teacher's guide provides a copy of the narrative script, a list of 90 vocabulary words used in the presentation, suggested quiz questions, and suggestions for independent study. Grades 6–12. \$29.95

**3 LA 2079—Teaching About Historical Thinking** by Mike Denos, Dr. Roland Case, Dr. Peter Seixas, Dr. Penney Clark, 110 p. ©2006. This resource focuses on six interrelated concepts central to students' ability to think about history. These core concepts are historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspec-

tive, and moral judgment. The nature and importance of each concept is discussed as are the problems associated with helping students understand them. The resource offers specific suggestions for introducing the concepts to students and for applying them throughout the history curriculum. An extended teaching example illustrates how these concepts work in tandem as students learn to think critically about history. The resource also includes ample activity sheets to create engaging history lessons. Grades 10–12. \$21.95

**4 LA 8093—Paragraph Writing** by Evan Moor Educational Publishers, 80 p. ©1997. The materials in this book are for modeling and practicing the basic skills of paragraph writing. Materials include teaching ideas, reproducible forms, and a paragraph writing centre. Topics covered include parts of a paragraph, types of paragraphs, and planning paragraphs. Teaching ideas, student reproducible, and writing forms cover identifying parts of a paragraph: main idea/topic sentence, supporting details; writing various types of paragraphs: descriptive, narrative, directions, compare and contrast; planning paragraphs using a web and an outline; and 21 different writing forms are provided. The writing centre includes ready-to-use materials such as sentences to sequence to make paragraphs, picture cards to write about, and topic sentence paragraph starters. Grades 2–4. \$12.95

**5 LA 8095—Sequencing** by Evan Moor Educational Publishers, 114 p. ©1998. Sequencing practice, whether picture stories or simple word stories, provides young learners with many important skills. This book provides a wide variety of reproducible cut-and-paste sequencing activities for children from preschool to beginning readers. The book is divided to the progressively difficult sections: real-life sequencing experiences; three-, four-, and six- part picture stories, sequencing words into sentences, and sentences into simple stories. Grades K–2. \$16.95

**6 LA 9179—Writing Fabulous Sentences and Paragraphs** by Evan Moor Educational Publishers, 114 p. ©1997. This book includes lessons to improve and refine students' sentence and paragraph skills. Lessons and activities progress from writing sentences to writing paragraphs. There are complete teacher instructions and over 70 reproducible models and student writing forms. Topics covered include sentences, single paragraphs, multiple paragraphs, 27 organizer forms for writing six types of paragraphs, and teacher resource information on keeping writing folders, holding student writing conferences, writing conference forms, and a paragraph skills checklist. Grades 4–6. \$12.95

**7 LA 2234—Project Resiliency: Drug Resistance Education** by Barry MacDonald, Langley School District, 22-minute DVD, 40-p. guide. This resource package includes a 22-minute film about youth overcoming adversity and substance abuse, and a 40-page documentary guide. The film features youth telling it like it is—that drugs and other substances have damaged their lives. It focuses on how accurate drug information, personal strength, courage, and resiliency are the antidote to drug temptation and hardship—not hype and hysterics. The documentary guide is not designed to answer all questions about drugs or addiction but set the stage for meaningful dialogue. Grades 8. \$49.95

**8 LA 8035—Sparking Literacy and Learning** by Cec Welk, Langley School District, 135 p. This all-inclusive resource for Grade K–7 teachers includes literature and information strategies to spark students' creativity and to enhance their understanding of the books they read. Interactive reading, writing, and thinking strategies provide a framework for using quality children's literature as part of a balanced literacy program. This book includes dozens of strategies to promote understanding and comprehension, as well as student response blackline masters. \$22.95

**9 F3104—La quête de Little Bear**, Diane Silvey, 36 p. ©1995. Ce livre d'histoires en couleurs illustré enseigne le respect à l'égard des autres. Les illustrations du livre sont réalisées par Joe Silvey (Salish). Ce livre porte sur le sujet des insultes, en montrant au début le personnage principal, Little Bear, comme un être égoïste et sans considération pour les sentiments des autres. Little Bear apprend à apprécier les traditions de ses ancêtres et par le rituel quotidien de la purification, il se met en harmonie avec la nature. Little Bear apprend le respect pour les autres et l'autonomie. Ce livre est une légende moderne des Premières nations et emploie la méthode traditionnelle d'utiliser des histoires comme outil d'enseignement. Le livre comprend des sujets de discussions que les parents et les enseignants peuvent avoir avec les enfants. Ce livre peut également être utilisé dans le cadre des ERIs concernant les sciences, les mathématiques, et la planification personnelle. Recommandé par le ministère de l'Éducation de la Colombie-Britannique. \$21.95

**10 LAF8004—Le sondage d'observation en lecture-écriture**, Marie M. Clay, Gisèle Bourque, 151 p. M-3e. Outil d'observation et d'évaluation de la lecture et de l'écriture. Primaire. \$49.95

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

To order any of the above lesson aids, enclose a cheque payable to the BCTF or authorized purchase order to BCTF Lesson Aids Service, 100-550 West 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 or telephone 604-871-2180 or toll free 1-800-663-9163, Local 2180, with a Visa or Mastercard. GST and postage/handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail. Lesson Aids office and display room hours: 9:00–5:00 p.m. Mon. to Fri. from Sept. to June; 9:00–5:00. Tues. to Fri. during July and Aug.; 9:00–12:00 on Sat. during Sept., Oct., Jan., and Feb. [bctf.ca/LessonAids](http://bctf.ca/LessonAids).

## FASD Outreach Program

A new provincial program is aimed at supporting teachers who have students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The Prince George district is hosting the service, which is available to districts around the province.

This provincial outreach program provides service through a web site, in-service in school districts, consulting with teachers through e-mail, and finding and making available research of use to teachers of students with FASD.

The best way to find out about these services is through the web site: [www.fasdoutreach.ca](http://www.fasdoutreach.ca). You can register on the web site to get access to the services.

The web site includes a blog for sharing of ideas and resources. It also has e-learning modules for learning about FASD, planning instruction, developing an IEP, and tips for teaching. The teacher resource section includes print resources, DVDs, web sites and conferences.

The FASD Outreach Program is funded by the ministry of



education. The staff team working out of Prince George includes two teachers, a technical consultant, a clerical

assistant, and supervising administrator. It is supported and directed by a multi-district steering committee.

Service can be requested through the web site or by phone at 250-564-6574 (local 233).

# BC Teachers' Pension Plan

## Contribution rate changes effective July 1, 2007

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees has announced that pension plan contribution rates will rise by 1.61% for both teachers and employers effective July 1, 2007.

Every three years an independent actuary assesses the financial health of the plan and the adequacy of the contribution rates for funding the plan. At the most recent actuarial valuation as at December 31, 2005, the Basic Account showed an unfunded liability for basic pension benefits of \$904 million. An unfunded liability means there is a shortfall between the

benefits promised and the assets available to pay for these benefits.

Although the pension fund's investment returns in recent years have been strong, average returns are still recovering from downturns in the markets in 2001 and 2002. The last valuation assumed that the average investment returns would be 7.25% per year. In fact, the fund only earned an average of 5.4% during the previous five years (see graph below.)

On the recommendation of the actuary, the trustees determined that an increase in contribution rates was necessary for the plan

to maintain its financial viability. Therefore, effective July 1, 2007, plan member and plan employer contribution rates will each increase by 1.61% of salaries to pay down this unfunded liability over the ensuing 15-year period. The trustees and the plan actuary have also acted prudently in reducing their expectations for future investment returns (see table below).

Keep in mind that the pension plan continues to be financially sound and that your basic pension is secure.

The report of the 2005 actuarial valuation may be

found on the BCTF web site—[bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca), go to "Quick Links" in the upper right-hand corner, click on "Pensions" then scroll down to "Teachers' pension plan reports and announcements."

*BCTF members are further reminded that purchase of service costs are based on salary and contribution rates.*

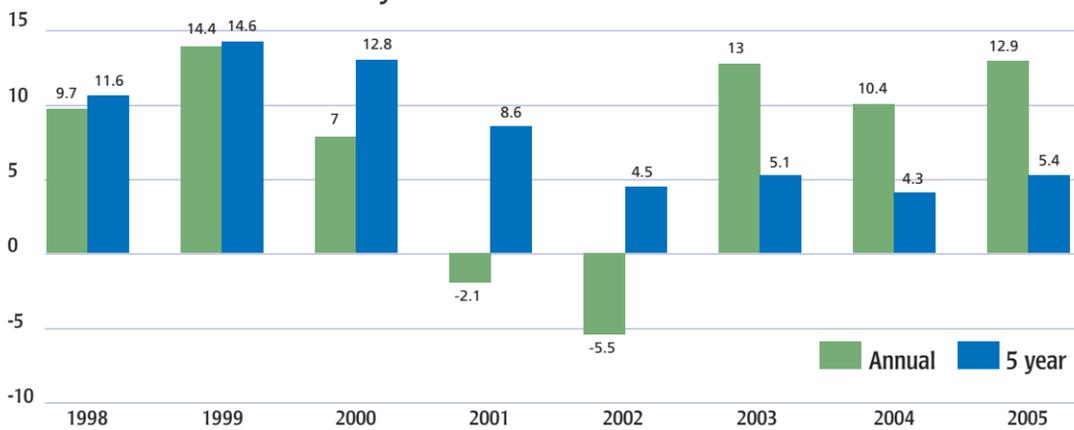
On July 1, 2007, both salary and pension contributions rates will increase, the former based on the 2006–2011 collective agreement and the latter based on the 2005 actuarial valuation. *Purchase of service applications received by employers by June 30, 2007, will be processed*

*using the current salary and current pension contribution rates.*

The deadline to purchase many types of historical service (pre-April 1, 2002) and to reinstate a period of service for which you may have taken a refund is March 31, 2007.

See page 13 of the November/December 2006 *Teacher* or check out "What's New?" on the Teachers' Pension Plan home page [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca) for details.

% Basic Account: Annual & five year market rates of return



## Purchasing service

### Maternity and parental leave of absence

For maternity leaves of absence after March 14, 1981, and parental leaves of absence after March 22, 1991, the cost of purchasing the leave will be calculated as follows: current full time equivalent monthly salary x the current employee pension contribution rate x the number of months of leave of absence being purchased. As the employer will be billed for its pension contribution, this type of purchase is always cost effective.

If you are purchasing maternity or parental leaves completed after December 31, 1991, the maximum that you can purchase is three years of leave. The amount of maternity and parental leave of absence purchased at the employee pension contribution rate is subject to limits established by the *Employment Standards Act*.

For maternity leaves of absence completed prior to March 14, 1981, or parental leaves of absence completed prior to March 22, 1991, the cost will be calculated as a general leave of absence.

The most tax effective time to purchase a maternity or parental leave of absence is during or immediately after the expiration of the leave and before April 30 of the calendar year following the expiration of the leave of absence.

### General leave of absence

Calculating the cost of purchasing a leave of absence has been simplified. As of April 1, 2002, the cost of purchasing a leave of absence will be calculated as follows: your current full time equivalent monthly salary x the combined current employee and employer pension contribution rate x the number of months of leave of absence being purchased.

The most tax effective time to purchase a leave of absence is immediately after the expiration of the leave and before April 30 of the calendar year following the expiration of the leave of absence.

### Further details on BCTF web site [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca)

Click on Pensions on the QuickLinks dropdown menu in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage for the following articles:

- \* Purchase of service: General leave
- \* Purchase of service: Maternity and parental leaves of absence
- \* Reinstatements
- \* Tax deducting your purchase of service.

### Application forms

A Purchase of Service Application Package is also available in the Forms area on the Teachers' Pension Plan web site [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca). Or you may use the TPP web site's Purchase of Service Estimator. This is a combined cost estimator and application form that you can print and attach to your application form. All applications must be signed by the employer who granted the leave of absence and then forwarded to the Teachers' Pension Plan.

### Steps to figure out if a purchase of service is worthwhile

1. Calculate your purchase of service cost using the online Purchase Cost Estimator at the Teachers' Pension Plan web site, [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca). Print off the results. If you have received a Statement of Cost from the plan, you will not need to use the Purchase Cost Estimator.

2. Do a pension estimate using your Personalized Pension Estimator at My Account on the Teachers' Pension web site. Enter the date on which you would like to retire. Click Perform Estimate and print the results.

Note: If you have not previously logged on to My Account, you will need your 2005 Member's Benefit Statement at

hand. Your username and temporary password to access My Account can be found in Section 1 Personal Information on the statement.

3. Do a second pension estimate using *same* date entered in Step 2. Beside the label Additional Pensionable Service, fill in the amount of time you are purchasing as shown on the printed results page from the Purchase Cost Estimator<sup>1</sup> and or the printed Statement of Cost from the Teachers' Pension Plan. Click Perform Estimate and print the results.

4. Compare the two pension estimates.<sup>2</sup> The highlighted amount is the amount you will get *up to* age 65; the top number above the bridge amount is the amount you will get *after* age 65. Make notes of the increase in the pension amount as a result of the purchase of service.

5. Calculate the cost return. Divide the cost of the purchase (as determined by the online Purchase Cost Estimator or the printed Statement of Cost from the Teachers' Pension Plan) by the amount of the pension increase derived if you purchase the service. The answer you get is the cost pay back time in months. If that number is less than 120 months, the purchase may well be to your financial advantage.

<sup>1</sup>Note: if you are purchasing a 100% unpaid leave (general, maternity, parental) then you are purchasing *both* pensionable service *and* contributory service and can thus enter the amount of time on the "Additional Pensionable Service" line. If, however, you are purchasing a partial leave, i.e., you worked half-time and were on leave for half-time in a school year, you are only purchasing pensionable time because you will have already accrued the contributory time. If that is the case, *add* the amount of pensionable service time being purchased to the Pensionable Service amount shown from your last Member's Benefit Statement two lines above the Additional Pensionable Service line.

<sup>2</sup>Note: For ease of comparison, if you are single, compare the Option 1, Single Life Guaranteed 5 results from the two estimates. If you are married, compare the Option 4, 100% Joint Life results.

Table

### Teacher Contributions as a Percentage of Salary\*

	Current Rates	Rates Effective July 1, 2007
Below YMPE**	7.55%	9.16%
Above YMPE	9.05%	10.66%

### Employer Contributions as a Percentage of Salary\*

	Current Rates	Rates Effective July 1, 2007
Below YMPE**	10.68%	12.29%
Above YMPE	12.18%	13.79%

\* Teachers and employers both contribute to the Basic Account to provide for the member's retirement pension, and to the Inflation Adjustment Account to provide for cost of living adjustments that are not guaranteed. It is only the contribution rates to the Basic Account that will increase. The contribution rates to the Inflation Adjustment Account remain unchanged.

Note: The above percentages are inclusive of contributions to both Accounts.

\*\* The YMPE is the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings for the Canada Pension Plan. The YMPE for 2006 is \$42,100.

## Pension seminars

This year (2006–07) the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), BC Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA), and the BC Pension Corporation have joined forces to present pension seminars to members of the Teachers' Pension Plan throughout the province.

The seminars are three hours long and cover a number of topics including:

- How to understand your annual Member's Benefit Statement.
- How your pension is calculated.
- How to use online pension information and tools.
- How to increase your pension by purchasing or transferring service, claiming credit for child-rearing time, or reinstating a refund.
- Retirement planning and the transition from work to retirement.

The presentation is designed to meet the needs of members who are nearing retirement, but the information is useful to all members.

Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Members are encouraged to bring their spouse or partner. There is no charge to attend. To register, complete and return an application, which is available on the TPP website at [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca).

Some venues are still to be confirmed. 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 250-356-2466, or toll-free at 1-877-558-5574. E-mail [TPPseminars@pensionsbc.ca](mailto:TPPseminars@pensionsbc.ca).

City	Date	Time	Location
Nanaimo	Feb. 10	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Coast Bastion Inn
Vancouver	Feb. 15	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Best Western Chateau Granville
Vancouver	Feb. 17	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Best Western Chateau Granville
Prince George	Mar. 1	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	Days Inn
Prince George	Mar. 3	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Days Inn
Williams Lake	Mar. 10	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Overlander
Kelowna	Mar. 31	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	UBC Okanagan Conference Centre
Terrace	Apr. 14	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	Best Western Terrace Inn
Campbell River	Apr. 21	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA
Burnaby	Apr. 26	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Burnaby	Apr. 28	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	BCIT Burnaby
Cranbrook	May 5	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	College of the Rockies
N. Vancouver	May 10	6 p.m.–9 p.m.	TBA
N. Vancouver	May 12	9 a.m.–12 p.m.	TBA

# BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2006

## President's comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2006 have been prepared in accordance with the by-laws of the Federation and the provisions of the Society Act. They reflect the stewardship of the Executive Committee over the resources of the Federation and the committee's accountability to the membership for the effective management of those resources.

On a combined (all funds) basis (Statement 3), expenses exceeded revenues (a deficit) by \$6.1 million for the 2005-06 year compared to a deficit of \$5.3 million for the 2004-05 year. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures in the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) in 2005-06 to support bargaining mobilization.

The General Operating Fund realized a surplus of \$64,000 for the 2005-06 year (Schedule 1) compared to a deficit of \$761,000 for 2004-05. This improvement in operating results was due mainly to increased fee revenue.

The CBDF deficit was \$5.5 million for the 2005-06 year (Schedule 2) which decreased the fund balance from \$14.6 million at June 30, 2005 to \$9.1 million at June 30, 2006.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund deficit was \$244,000 for the 2005-06 year (Schedule 4) which decreased the fund balance of \$130,000 at June 30, 2005 to a negative fund balance of \$114,000 at June 30, 2006.

The Public Education Defence Fund deficit of \$474,000 for the 2005-06 year (Schedule 5) decreased the fund balance from \$548,000 at June 30, 2005 to \$74,000 at June 30, 2006.

At their January 2007 meeting, the Executive Committee will be considering the Finance Committee 2007-08 total fee recommendation of 1.45%, which represents a status quo fee.

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund reflect a surplus of \$7.7 million for the 2005-06 year (Statement 2) compared to a surplus of \$8.8 million for 2004-05. The fund balance has now increased from \$19.2 million at June 30, 2005 to \$26.9 million at June 30, 2006. Based on the market value of investments, the fund balance would be \$58.2 million. The Income Security Committee fee recommendation of 1.70% for 2007-08 (status quo with 2006-07) is being recommended to the 2007 AGM by the Executive Committee.

Jinny Sims

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2006, and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

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

In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2006 and the results of its operations and the changes in its financial position for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe, Chartered Accountants, October 27, 2006

## Management Responsibility for Financial Statements

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

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

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

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

Ken Novakowski, Executive Director

Rob McLaren, C.A., Treasurer

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash	\$ 7,942	\$ 3,942
Marketable securities (Note 3)	7,164	12,296
	15,106	16,238
Membership fees and other receivables	2,935	3,313
Inventories and prepaid expenses	393	317
	18,434	19,868
<b>Due from</b> Salary Indemnity Fund	421	324
<b>Capital Assets</b> (Notes 5 & 6)	15,269	15,461
	<u>\$ 34,124</u>	<u>\$ 35,653</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 3,396	\$ 2,292
Employee future benefit obligation (Note 7)	3,065	1,975
SIP rebate (Note 8)	2,408	—
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1,052	1,036
	9,921	5,303
<b>Members' Funds</b>		
<b>General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets)</b> (Schedule 1)	14,692	14,628
<b>Internally Restricted Funds:</b>		
<b>Collective Bargaining Defence Fund</b> (Schedule 2)	9,163	14,644
<b>Contingency Fund</b> (Schedule 3)	371	343
<b>Provincial Bargaining Fund</b> (Schedule 4)	(114)	130
<b>Public Education Defence Fund</b> (Schedule 5)	74	548
<b>William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund</b> (Schedule 6)	13	51
<b>Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund</b> (Schedule 6)	4	6
	<u>24,203</u>	<u>30,350</u>
	<u>\$ 34,124</u>	<u>\$ 35,653</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee





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

	2006							2005	
	(in thousands)								
	General Operating Fund			Internally Restricted Funds					
	Operating	Invested in Capital Assets	Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	Contingency Fund	Provincial Bargaining Fund	Public Education Defence Fund	Other Funds	Total	
<b>Balance</b> , beginning of year	\$ (833)	\$15,461	\$14,644	\$ 343	\$ 130	\$ 548	\$ 57	\$30,350	\$35,684
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	1,000	(936)	(5,481)	28	(244)	(474)	(40)	(6,147)	(5,334)
Purchase of capital assets	(744)	744							
<b>Balance</b> , end of year	<u>\$ (577)</u>	<u>\$15,269</u>	<u>\$ 9,163</u>	<u>\$ 371</u>	<u>\$ (114)</u>	<u>\$ 74</u>	<u>\$ 17</u>	<u>\$24,203</u>	<u>\$30,350</u>

## STATEMENT 3

## Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 25,910	\$ 26,780
GOF fees during job action (Note 4)	1,200	—
Net investment income	498	616
	<u>27,608</u>	<u>27,396</u>
<b>Operating expenses</b>		
General Operating Fund (Schedule 1)	24,054	24,373
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	6,753	1,535
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	370	363
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	811	553
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	1,236	5,414
Other funds (Schedule 6)	531	492
	<u>33,755</u>	<u>32,730</u>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	<u>\$ (6,147)</u>	<u>\$ (5,334)</u>

## STATEMENT 4

## Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	\$ (6,147)	\$ (5,334)
Items not affecting cash:		
depreciation	936	898
employee future benefits	1,085	1,142
	<u>(4,126)</u>	<u>(3,294)</u>
<b>Changes in non-cash working capital items</b>		
Membership fees and other receivables	383	(422)
Inventories and prepaid expenses	(76)	(21)
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund	(97)	96
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,104	(1,353)
SIP rebate	2,408	—
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	16	(58)
	<u>3,738</u>	<u>(1,758)</u>
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(744)	(607)
<b>Change in cash and marketable securities</b>	(1,132)	(5,659)
<b>Cash and marketable securities,</b>		
beginning of year	16,238	21,897
<b>Cash and marketable securities, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 15,106</u>	<u>\$ 16,238</u>

## Schedule 1

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 22,981	\$ 23,776
Fees during job action (Note 4)	1,200	—
	<u>24,181</u>	<u>23,776</u>
<b>Divisional operating expenses</b>		
Management	2,912	2,932
Communications/Campaigns	4,028	4,048
Finance and Administrative Services	2,534	2,384
Research and Technology	1,956	1,961
Income Security	255	316
Professional and Social Issues	3,971	3,997
Field Service	2,296	2,481
CA Protective Services	2,349	2,293
	<u>20,301</u>	<u>20,412</u>
Grants to Locals	3,753	3,961
	<u>24,054</u>	<u>24,373</u>
Net interest expense	63	164
	<u>24,117</u>	<u>24,537</u>
<b>Excess (Deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	64	(761)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	14,628	15,389
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 14,692</u>	<u>\$ 14,628</u>

## Schedule 2

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 750	\$ 777
Net investment income	522	724
	<u>1,272</u>	<u>1,501</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Bargaining mobilization	3,445	—
Bargaining strategy support	1,305	—
GOF fees during job action (Note 4)	1,200	—
Support to locals	701	692
Legal costs over GOF budget	92	516
Third party support	39	(1)
Bargaining rights/structures	(29)	326
Legislative intervention response	—	2
	<u>6,753</u>	<u>1,535</u>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(5,481)	(34)
<b>Transfer to Public Education Defence Fund</b>	—	(5,000)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	14,644	19,678
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 9,163</u>	<u>\$ 14,644</u>

## Schedule 3

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 375	\$ 388
Net investment income	23	34
	<u>398</u>	<u>422</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Legal costs over GOF budget	340	230
Tsunami relief	10	50
Oaxaca teachers	10	—
Stephen Lewis Foundation	8	—
Cuban Teachers' Union	5	1
Bills 50 and 51	(3)	68
PSAC job action	—	1
Citizens' inquiry/Canada US relations	—	5
ESEUR (Russia) relief fund	—	3
Caribbean hurricane relief fund	—	3
Sooke Happy Valley donation	—	2
	<u>370</u>	<u>363</u>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses</b>	28	59
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	343	284
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 371</u>	<u>\$ 343</u>

## Schedule 4

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 563	\$ 581
Net investment interest	4	2
	<u>567</u>	<u>583</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Provincial negotiations	811	553
	<u>811</u>	<u>553</u>
<b>(Deficiency) Excess of revenue over expenses</b>	(244)	30
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	130	100
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (114)</u>	<u>\$ 130</u>

## Schedule 5

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 750	\$ 777
Net investment income	12	20
	<u>762</u>	<u>797</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Public education advocacy	766	285
BC Federation of Labour	351	304
Support for teaching and learning	332	433
Commitment to public education	(213)	4,332
Charter for public education	—	60
	<u>1,236</u>	<u>5,414</u>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(474)	(4,617)
<b>Transfer from Collective Bargaining Defence Fund</b>	—	5,000
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	548	165
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 74</u>	<u>\$ 548</u>

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

	W.R.Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund	Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund	Total 2006	Total 2005
<b>Revenue</b>				
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 459	\$ 32	\$ 491	\$ 481
<b>Expenses</b>				
Grants	497	34	531	492
<b>Deficiency</b> of revenue over expenses	(38)	(2)	(40)	(11)
<b>Fund balances</b> , beginning of year	51	6	57	68
<b>Fund balances</b> , end of year	\$ 13	\$ 4	\$ 17	\$ 57

## Notes to Financial Statements

### Year Ended June 30, 2006

#### 1. BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF COMBINATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The **Salary Indemnity Fund** is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident. The total fee allocated to the Salary Indemnity Fund was 2.0% of gross salary for the 2005-06 membership year (2004-05 was 2.0%). Any fund deficiency is the responsibility of the Federation. The financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

#### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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

##### a. Fund Accounting

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

##### b. Revenue Recognition

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

##### c. Marketable Securities

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

##### d. Inventories

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

##### e. Capital Assets

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

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

##### f. Employee Future Benefits

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

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

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

##### g. Use of estimates

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

##### 3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES

The market value of marketable securities at June 30, 2006 was \$7,042,739 compared to a carrying value of \$7,163,678 (June 30, 2005 market value—\$12,485,000; carrying value—\$12,296,000).

##### 4. MEMBERSHIP FEE

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2006 was 1.38% of the gross salary of each member. The General Operating Fund fees during the job action in October 2005 were transferred from the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund in accordance with Procedure 10.L.10(h) of the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:

	2005-06	2004-05
General Operating Fund	1.25%	1.25%
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	0.04	0.04
Contingency Fund	0.02	0.02
Provincial Bargaining Fund	0.03	0.03
Public Education Defence Fund	0.04	0.04
	1.38%	1.38%

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

##### 5. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2006 Net Book Value	2005 Net Book Value
			(in thousands)	
Land	\$ 4,430	\$ —	\$ 4,430	\$ 4,430
Building	12,736	(4,251)	8,485	8,961
	17,166	(4,251)	12,915	13,391
Renovations	771	(302)	469	530
Tenant improvements	905	(388)	517	413
Furniture and equipment	734	(156)	578	199
Computer hardware & software	1,633	(843)	790	928
	\$21,209	\$(5,940)	\$15,269	\$15,461

##### 6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

	2005-06	2004-05
	(in thousands)	
General Operating Fund	\$ 8,850	\$ 8,677
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	6,419	6,784
	\$15,269	\$15,461

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

The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principle and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2006. Loan interest for the year 2005-06 was \$231,624.

##### 7. EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS

The following tables pertain to the Federation's employee future benefit plans, and provide fair value of plan assets, benefit obligations, and funded status for the year ended June 30, 2006:

	Pension	Non-pension	Total
	(in thousands)		
Fair value of plan assets	\$ 25,117	\$ —	\$ 25,117
Accrued benefit obligation	(23,060)	(16,305)	(39,365)
Funded status—plan surplus (deficit)	\$ 2,057	\$ (16,305)	\$ (14,248)

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

	Pension	Non-pension	Total
	(in thousands)		
Plan (recovery) expense	\$ (379)	\$ 1,645	\$ 1,266

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

Discount rate	5.5%
Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets	7.0%
Rate of compensation increase	2.0%

The assumed health care cost trend rate at June 30, 2006 was 10%, decreasing to 5% after five years.

##### 8. SIP REBATE

The SIP Rebate amount represents the balance of funds received from the BC provincial government, net of refunds issued to members to date.

##### 9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

###### a. Fair Value

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

###### b. Interest Rate Risk

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

##### 10. SALARY INDEMNITY FUND

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
Total assets	\$198,846	\$186,919
Total liabilities	171,919	167,687
Fund balance, end of year	26,927	19,232
	\$198,846	\$186,919

A summary of the revenue and expenditures is as follows:

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
Total revenue	\$ 56,333	\$ 51,816
Total expenditures	(48,638)	(43,027)
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 7,695	\$ 8,789

# Salary Indemnity Fund

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2006 and the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

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

In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2006, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

SmytheRatcliffe  
Chartered Accountants  
October 27, 2006

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash	\$ 1,236	\$ 581
Accounts receivable	4,513	4,804
Investments (Note 3)	192,503	180,918
Capital assets (Note 4)	594	616
	<u>\$198,846</u>	<u>\$186,919</u>

	2006	2005
<b>Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 577	\$ 477
Due to General Operating Fund	421	324
Provision for claims (Note 5)	170,921	166,886
	<u>171,919</u>	<u>167,687</u>
Invested in capital assets	594	616
<b>Fund balance</b>	<u>26,333</u>	<u>18,616</u>
	<u>26,927</u>	<u>19,232</u>
	<u>\$198,846</u>	<u>\$186,919</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee


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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees (Note 1)	\$36,183	\$37,830
Teachers' share of employment insurance premium reductions	1,845	1,726
Investment income	<u>18,305</u>	<u>12,260</u>
	<u>56,333</u>	<u>51,816</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Short term claims paid	9,254	9,094
Long term claims paid	<u>27,352</u>	<u>26,955</u>
	36,606	36,049
Increase (Decrease) in actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5)	4,035	(464)
Total claim expenditures	<u>40,641</u>	<u>35,585</u>
Excess of revenue over claim expenditures	15,692	16,231
Administrative expenses	7,072	6,612
Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6)	<u>925</u>	<u>830</u>
	<u>7,997</u>	<u>7,442</u>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures</b>	7,695	8,789
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	19,232	10,443
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$26,927</u>	<u>\$ 19,232</u>

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

	2006	2005
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 7,695	\$ 8,789
Items not affecting cash		
Increase (Decrease) in actuarial valuation of provision for claims	4,035	(464)
Depreciation	118	111
	<u>11,848</u>	<u>8,436</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	291	(559)
Accounts payable	100	14
Due to General Operating Fund	<u>97</u>	<u>(96)</u>
	488	(641)
	\$ 12,336	\$ 7,795
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(96)	(29)
Increase in investment portfolio	<u>(11,585)</u>	<u>(7,906)</u>
	(11,681)	(7,935)
<b>Change in cash</b>	655	(140)
<b>Cash, beginning of year</b>	581	721
<b>Cash, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 1,236</u>	<u>\$ 581</u>

## Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2006

### 1. BACKGROUND AND FEES

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

The membership fee for the year ending June 30, 2006 was 2.0% of the gross salary of each member (year ending June 2005—2.0%). At the 2006 Annual General Meeting, the fee for the year ending June 30, 2007 was approved at 1.7% of gross salary.

2005–06 fees were impacted by a two-week job action in October 2005. This resulted in one-half of the monthly fee for October not being collected from school districts. These fees will not be collected in the future.

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

### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3. INVESTMENTS

The market value of long-term investments as at June 30, 2006 was \$224,302,685 compared to a carrying value of \$192,502,902. (June 30, 2005 market value—\$214,608,000; carrying value—\$180,918,000).

### 4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2006 Net Book Value	2005 Net Book Value
	(in thousands)			
Furniture & equipment	\$ 144	\$ (75)	\$ 69	\$ 100
Computer hardware & software	634	(276)	358	326
Renovations	330	(163)	167	190
	<u>\$1,108</u>	<u>\$ (514)</u>	<u>\$ 594</u>	<u>\$ 616</u>

Depreciation expense for the year ended June 30, 2006 was \$118,067 (2005—\$110,748).

### 5. CLAIM EXPENDITURES AND PROVISION FOR CLAIMS

The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims is based upon an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2006 performed in accordance with standards established by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries using data supplied by management of the Plan. This valuation uses standard claims tables modified to reflect Plan experience. In subsequent periods the accrued liabilities and provision for claims are adjusted based upon actual Plan experience. These adjustments can be significant. The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims for the individual segments of the plan are set out below:

	June 30 2006	June 30 2005
	(in thousands)	
Short term claims	\$ 4,260	\$ 4,373
Long term claims	<u>166,661</u>	<u>162,513</u>
Total provision for claims	<u>\$170,921</u>	<u>\$166,886</u>
As a result of the current period's actuarial review, adjustments were required for claim benefits and pension contributions attributable to prior periods. These adjustments are included in the operations of the current period.		
	June 30 2006	June 30 2005
	(in thousands)	
Decrease related to current period	\$ (3,447)	\$ (5,189)
Increase related to prior periods	<u>7,482</u>	<u>4,725</u>
Total change in provision for claims	4,035	(464)
Opening provision for claims	<u>166,886</u>	<u>167,350</u>
Closing provision for claims	<u>\$170,921</u>	<u>\$166,886</u>

### 6. INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRUST COMPANY EXPENSES

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

### 7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

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

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

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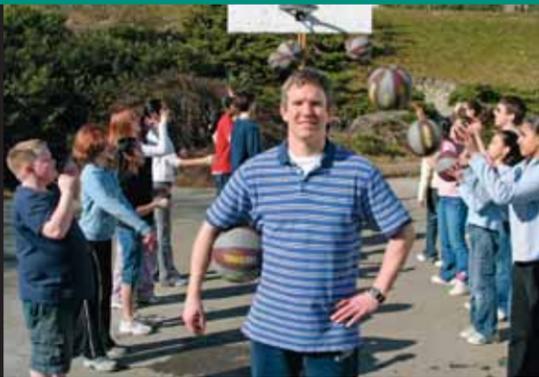
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## FEBRUARY 2007

**2-3** Vancouver. Speech-Language Pathology, Vancouver General Hospital: New Innovations in Treatment of Adult Neurological Disorders, and Three A's in Pediatrics: Autism, Auditory Processing Disorders, and Apraxia. Conference open to S-LPs, OTs, PTs, physicians, nurses, teachers, and any other interested professionals. Contact Heather, 604-875-4111, local 62964 or [heather.longstaffe@vch.ca](mailto:heather.longstaffe@vch.ca) for details.

**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 info TBA. [www.bctf.ca/bcata](http://www.bctf.ca/bcata)

**15-17** Richmond. 11th Annual BC Student Activity Advisors' Conference, Working Together to Empower Youth. Registration Thurs, Feb 15, 6-7 p.m., Marriott Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7571 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC. Contact [gloria@bcasaa.bc.ca](mailto:gloria@bcasaa.bc.ca); phone or fax: 250-477-8592.

**15-17** San Francisco. Learning and the Brain: An International Conference for Educators and Clinicians, San Francisco Marriott Airport Hotel. Using brain research to enhance cognition and emotions for learning. Registration and information: [www.edupr.com](http://www.edupr.com)

**16** Nanaimo. Coast Bastion Hotel. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association Regional Conference. Teaching to Diversity: Universal Design for Learning, with Dr. Beth Sparks, Brigitte Sebulsky, and Wally Asher. Learn how UDL translates into more effective teaching and learning practices in elementary classrooms and learning centres. Contact Alan Peterson, [lataconference@hotmail.com](mailto:lataconference@hotmail.com), or f: 250-554-9358.

**16** Vancouver. Principles of Math 12—Around the Curriculum in One Day. New teachers and veterans examine teaching strategies and problem-solving techniques for Principles of Math 12. SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings. Info: [www.leapeducation.ca/Ma12.pdf](http://www.leapeducation.ca/Ma12.pdf)

## MARCH 2007

**2** Whistler. Inspire Me! Howe Sound Teachers' Association presents Erin Gruwell and the story of the Freedom Writers' Diary, coming on film in January 2007. Workshops in critical thinking, literacy, social justice, media studies, science, etc. Information: [www.bctf.ca/hsta](http://www.bctf.ca/hsta) or contact April Lowe, [pd48@bctf.ca](mailto:pd48@bctf.ca), 604-892-3056.

**2** Prince George. Educational Spring Fling—3rd North Central Zone Conference. Keynote speaker Gordon Neufeld; PITA and BCPTA mini conferences. Workshops for all grades and subject areas. Prince George Senior Secondary school. Info: [www.bctf.ca/locals/local57/](http://www.bctf.ca/locals/local57/) or contact Deb Vandal, [dvandal@sd57.bc.ca](mailto:dvandal@sd57.bc.ca), 250-562-7214.

**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. Info at [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca). Contact Joanne Nam at [ipad@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipad@interchange.ubc.ca).

**15-16** Vancouver. The Special Education Association of BC presents its 32nd annual Cross-currents Conference at the

Westin Bayshore, featuring a top quality presenters and a wide range of sessions relevant to teachers working with students who have special learning needs. Keynote speech by Norm Bossio, "Leadership and Motivation." Information at [www.bctf.ca/sea](http://www.bctf.ca/sea) or contact Priscilla Fortier, [priscillaf@shaw.ca](mailto:priscillaf@shaw.ca)

## APRIL 2007

**19-20** Saskatoon. 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, ph: 651-3118, [eofd@sasktel.net](mailto: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](mailto:jkugler@oise.utoronto.ca), Ph: 416-9233-6641, ext. 7859.

**19-21** Coquitlam. Encompass 2007 Conference (K-12). Celebrating social emotional learning and academic success, with keynote speaker Alfie Kohn. Registration and information (February 2007) [www.cta43.org/pd-encompass-07.htm](http://www.cta43.org/pd-encompass-07.htm) or contact Gerry Lush, [pd43@bctf.ca](mailto:pd43@bctf.ca) or 604-936-9972

**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](http://www.languages.ubc.ca)

**25-26** North Vancouver. Fast Forward Educational Media Showcase at Capilano College, organized by media users in K-12 and post-secondary education, brings together high quality educational media distributors with buyers. Registration and info: [www.langara.bc.ca/ffivd](http://www.langara.bc.ca/ffivd). Contact: Susan Weber, [sweber@langara.bc.ca](mailto:sweber@langara.bc.ca), or 604-323-5533.

## MAY 2007

**2-5** Regina. DreamCatching 2007: Professional Development Workshops in Math & Science for Teachers of Aboriginal Students, at the University of Regina, SK. Cost: TBA. Info: [www.dream-catching.com](http://www.dream-catching.com)

**5** Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2007. Celebrating IOP's 10th Anniversary. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings, and questions. Call for Proposals—Share Your Classroom Inquiries. Submission deadline: March 9. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. Information: [www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/](http://www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/workshops/) or contact Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, or [judy.paley@ubc.ca](mailto:judy.paley@ubc.ca)

## JULY 2007

**2-19** Quebec City. Institut de Francais, UBC a Quebec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. Info: [www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec](http://www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec) or toll-free 1-866-528-7485.

**PSA PD Day: October 19, 2007**  
[bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx](http://bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx)  
Additions/changes: [elambert@bctf.ca](mailto:elambert@bctf.ca)

# Canadian teachers breaking the ice

by Ellen Hardy

I had always dreamed of a trip to the Arctic to experience the true north. It has been a life-altering experience. I know that my students, colleagues, and I will be able to learn much from the children and teachers of the north.

An opportunity to travel with the Canadian Coast Guard came about after a field trip with my students in Grade 2 to the *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker stationed in Victoria. As the tour progressed the captain showed us the science labs that are used on the Arctic trips. He proceeded to tell me about an American teacher who travels with these scientists through a program called The Armada Project, <http://tea.armada.project.org/>.

*Educating children is a sure way to knock down the racial prejudices and cultural misunderstandings that are prevalent in our society.*

When I asked if any Canadian teachers had this opportunity he said that he didn't recall a Canadian teacher going on the Arctic trips. He offered to help me come up with a proposal. Along with another Victoria teacher (Linda Hall) and the support of the technical department of the Greater Victoria School District, the proposal came to reality. We hope this will be an ongoing project to develop Arctic curriculum for teachers to use. Each year we will need to apply to the Canadian Coast Guard to travel aboard an icebreaker on their trip to the Arctic. Our dream is for this project to continue over the years. You will be able to find information about this August 2006 project, along with my daily journal, curriculum links (still being worked on), coast guard links, and a photo gallery at [www.sd61.bc.ca/ctbi](http://www.sd61.bc.ca/ctbi).



From top: Walrus on ice floe; classroom in the Arctic; Inuit children working on dream catchers for The Universal Child project. Left above: Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker *Sir Wilfred Laurier*. Left below: young Arctic tern. Right above: curious polar bear. Right below: Ellen Hardy with Inuit sculpture.

As a teacher I felt that I could enhance my teaching of a unit on communities by actually visiting a community. My students and the other Grade 2 classes at Hillcrest Elementary School will be communicating this fall with three Arctic Schools: Jimmy Hikok Ilihakvik (Kugluktuk, Nunavut), Quqshuun Ilihakvik (Gjoa Haven, Nunavut),

*As our classes communicate over this year and many others to come, we will all grow and learn so that this mutual respect is constantly fostered.*

and Netsilik Ilihavik (Taloyoak, Nunavut). I spent time in each of the schools, meeting the teachers and the students. I was fortunate to spend a morning with two of the schools while the children were in attendance. Hillcrest students made dream catchers to share with the Arctic children. The children were able to start the dream catcher projects that they will send to us upon completion. This project is called *The Universal Child* project, initiated by the University of Victoria and Charlotte Holtan's students at Gordon Head School in 2005.

This experience has been a wonderful way to develop and grow professionally. Not only did I have a strong sense of Canada and bringing us together but a strong sense of unity with children. Educating children is a sure way to knock down the racial prejudices and cultural misunderstandings that are prevalent in our society. In developing this program, I was building my dream as a teacher to help children respect and celebrate the differences and similarities of others. As our classes communicate over this year and many others to come, we will all grow and learn so that this mutual respect is constantly fostered.

Ellen Hardy teaches at Hillcrest Elementary School, Victoria.

