

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

We say no to the FSA

Contrary to the minister's claim and the mainstream media, not all parents are clamouring for the FSA. Dan Small suggests the FSA may have more in common with Egyptian mummy powder. Dawn Steele provides her reasons in an interview with Teacher Editor David Denyer.

Foundation skills assessment and expectancies: Pygmalion returns?

By Dr. Dan Small

"If I accept you as you are, I will make you worse; however if I treat you as though you are what you are capable of becoming, I help you become that."

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A parent never forgets the first day their child comes home from school and says: "I'm stupid." The introduction of standardized assessment in Grade 4 marked an end to innocent learning for my son. Despite my unwavering celebration of his islands of brilliance, he began to tell me every morning that he didn't want to go to school. Children who do not conform neatly into the middle of statistical distributions directly experience the psychosocial weight of assessment scores. The public call by BC teachers for a more reflective approach to Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)



is courageous and it goes to the very heart of the culture of education.

The connection between assessments and the effect they have on expectations, or "expectancies," has been a subject of research in a number of fields for 40 years. From the beginning of medical history first recorded in the Ebers papyrus with origins 5,500 years ago to the relatively recent arrival of evidenced-based medicine in the last century, nearly all of medicine rested on the power of expectancy or the placebo effect as the most central element in healing. In fact, it could only have been so, given the outlandish nature of therapeutic concoctions administered in medicine's not too distant past such

as: crushed unicorn horn (narwhal or elephant tusk), bezoar (a hardened teardrop from an animal bitten by a snake), usnea (a part of the brain of an executed criminal), powdered Egyptian mummy or mistletoe. Medicine's therapeutic power derived not from diagnostic tests or science but from the physician's relationship with the patient. Even today, subtleties of communication, such as tone of voice, have dramatic impact on healthcare. A study of interactions between surgeons and their patients revealed that surgeons are more likely to be sued if they were perceived as domineering and less caring. Expectations and perceptions are important in healthcare. How something is said may be as

significant as what is actually said. Patients pay careful attention to subtle cues from clinicians to obtain a reading of the intensity of their concern, anxiety, caring or indifference.

In the educational realm, the notion of "self-fulfilling prophecies" or "expectancy effects" was made famous by the Pygmalion study, where teachers were given *non-factual* results from standardized tests about their students. Teachers were told the apparent outcome of psychological assessments that purportedly indicated which students would bloom academically ("bloomers") and which would be late bloomers. In time, the predictions of the researchers were realized and the students performed according to the prediction of the supposed aptitude tests. In fact, standardized tests were *never* administered—the students had been randomly assigned to the late-

or early-bloomer categories. Mock foundational skills assessments had become self-fulfilling prophecies impacting the success or failure of early grade students. In subsequent experiments, elementary school children are able to report their perceptions of expectations teachers have toward a student after only 10 seconds of seeing interactions between teachers and students.

Like all studies, the Pygmalion study was not without flaws but it is, nevertheless, useful for discussions about critical practice. There have been more than 400 experiments examining self-fulfilling

The public call by BC teachers for a more reflective approach to Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) is courageous and it goes to the very heart of the culture of education.

prophecies and their impact on expectations in various settings. Standardized assessment can affect expectations of student performance, future assessments, self-regard, and peer relationships.

The FSAs have the potential to amplify achievement disparities by creating expectancies, using a crude assessment, regarding individual students, classrooms, and schools. Universally applied tests, without adaptation to each unique learning environment, hinder the ability of teachers to more sensitively modulate the impacts of successes and failures in education. It appears that expectancies take a firm hold by the time children reach Grade 5. By this time children have internalized

See **FSA** page 3

Interview with a parent

The minister of education has said that parents want the information that FSAs supposedly provide, do you think that is so?

We want the best for our children. So obviously, assessment and evaluation is an important part of that. I think parenting has become really complicated, education has become really complicated and if we could get a simple answer or a simple score that tells us whether or not our children are getting the best possible education, it's something every parent would love to have. So in that sense, absolutely parents want what the FSA supposedly provides but the question becomes is that what the FSAs are actually providing? And is it actually possible to provide that kind of information through a simplistic test?

Why do you think the FSAs are simplistic and don't actually give that complete information that you suggest parents are needing?

I think there's a lot of confusion of what it is that we think the FSAs are telling us. I hear people saying that they think the FSAs are telling us how well our children are doing

individually in schools, a good way to measure whether they're on track in terms of basic skills. It's not clear to me whether we mean on track in terms of achieving their potential or in terms of mastering the objectives of the curriculum, or in terms of the basic skills themselves—reading, writing, and arithmetic—in general, the development of literacy and math skills in a broader sense. And are we talking about our children's individual achievement? Are we talking about the achievement of our children's school in a broader sense? Or are we talking about achievement system-wide, in terms of what students in general are achieving? Are we talking about accountability? Are we talking about holding schools and individual teachers accountable for doing a good job? You know, there's at least six questions in there. These are very, very different questions. Now each question on its own is a very complex question, and I don't see how we can think that one single test that records a moment in time for students in Grade 4 and

On the inside

In this gathering economic storm many of us are beginning to fear for the fate of sorely needed and in some cases, already announced, projects and funding in education and the services for the disadvantaged.

A range of articles covering poverty, inequality, and early learning highlight how now, more than ever, we need substantial commitments from government to not only maintain but increase support in

these areas if the needs are not to become desperate. Bail-outs and loan guarantees for big business will do nothing but salvage the forces that create the misery.

Other writers turn their attention to the BC Fed convention, the teacher congress, and the saga surrounding seismic upgrading. To round things out, there is a crossword to keep you occupied on a cold winter evening, which the "author" claims is quite challenging.

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President's message



Irene Lanzinger

The teachers of this province continue to amaze me. Over and over, we prove to be courageous, dedicated and unwavering advocates for our students, our profession, and public education.

On Thursday, December 10, 2008, Denise Moffat, the chief returning officer for the BCTF, informed me that 85% of our members had voted in favour of the AGM recommendation regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment test. That recommendation was that we exercise our professional autonomy and refuse to prepare for, administer, or mark the FSA test. Furthermore, more than 22,000 teachers took the time to vote and express their view on this important issue.

During the fall, I visited schools and attended many meetings to discuss the AGM recommendation and the vote. In those meetings teachers spoke passionately regarding their professional concerns about the education policy direction in this province and the impact of

the increase of standardized testing on public education.

Teachers have deep concerns about the neo-liberal policies that narrow the curriculum, attack professional autonomy, and rank and blame students, teachers, and schools. Those policies are designed to undermine confidence in public education and pave the way for privatization. We are far from alone in our convictions. More and more, parents, academics, trustees, and others are speaking out in opposition to the American-style reforms being imposed on BC's public schools.

Many teachers in this province are facing untenable workloads. All over the province I hear stories about large classes and lack of support for students with special needs. We need more librarians,

counsellors, learning assistance and special education teachers and other critical specialist support services for our work in the classroom. Teachers are drowning in an avalanche of demands to be attended to: marking, BCEsis, preparation for classes, communication with parents, administrative tasks, and extra-curricular activities.

In spite of the overriding challenges with lack of resources, teachers have decided to take on the issue of standardized testing. In our determination to defend and improve public education we have never had the luxury of only one campaign.

As teachers we are proud of the work we do. We try to do a lot of things. It is certainly important that students become skilled in reading and mathematics. We also try to

instil a love of the arts, to teach kids about the democratic society they live in and their rights and responsibilities in that society. We try to teach them how to treat each other and to honour and celebrate their differences. We want them to grow up respecting each other sensibilities and human rights.

Most of all we want students to build their self-confidence and self-esteem, to believe in themselves and have hope for the world. And the Fraser Institute believes that we can judge all that based on a single test of reading and mathematics given to nine-year-olds.

Teachers, parents and the public know better. Thank you to the teachers of the province for having the courage to stand up for what you believe in.

Readers write

Thankful for the BCTF and the KTTA

I am a teacher with the support of my union. On August 12, 2006, while driving my son to his place of summer employment at 8:30 a.m., we were hit head-on by a drunk driver. Not only did we suffer numerous bodily injuries, our lives as we knew them were sent into a tailspin. Post-traumatic stress affected us both and still plays a part in our daily lives.

As a teacher, I had the immediate support of my union. I was able to opt into the Rehabilitation Program offered to us. A trained social worker took on my case and visited our home. She attended doctor's appointments with me to document my needs and to suggest other ways to help our healing. Counselling sessions were paid for through our Employee Assistance program. A "work-hardening" plan began six months after the accident with two and then three visits to the classroom per week for two hours. An ergonomic assessment was done at her initiative at the beginning of the second year when I could return half-time. That report initiated the purchase of a few items by the school district to help me further adjust to being back in the classroom.

Constant documentation and follow-ups with the doctor, as well as reporting back to the union and the school board on my behalf, helped me to personally get through the turmoil of healing physically and emotionally while trying to get back to teaching. At the same time having to deal with lawyers and ICBC added more stress. Having the documentation provided through the program assisted in our settlement.

I'm thankful I'm a teacher with sick days, our short-term indemnity

plan, and our long-term disability plan so I could afford the time off work and still have some income to help pay for all of the physiotherapy, chiropractic, and massage therapy recommended. I hope no one else should have to go through what we've been through, but rest assured that if you are a teacher, you have the support of the BCTF and your local union to help you heal and get back to work in the classroom.

Brenda Melnychuk
Chase

Wake up call

I was preparing a lesson on social bullying wherein I have the students define satire, which according to the Oxford dictionary, is: "The use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to reveal and criticize people's bad points."

I then ask the students to list as many forms of media, entertainment, or marketing that capitalizes on this form of expression; use specific titles of TV shows, DVDs, video games, blogs, etc.

Then I was struck by the irony that in order for human beings to grasp satire they must be at least nine years of age developmentally. Satire is an abstract "poetic medley" that predates Aristophanes. Current forms include The Simpsons, and the innumerable so-called reality shows. In the context of Canada's abysmal voter turnout and the 2008 US presidential election, I realize that I am teaching multigenerations of children who have been raised by media that glorifies stupidity, normalizes cruelty, and deprives our children of their childhood.

Why, you ask? Because they are too young to understand it. Only a few children are ever told that the characters they are mimicking are spoofs on depravity and materialism. Or perhaps this is precisely

what is needed in order for [a candidate such as] McCain to win; a "dumbed-down" America, complete with built-in consumers who embrace debt, succumb to addictions, believe anything, and "believe in" nothing.

Wake up everyone. We all have a voice—it's called a VOTE. Our kids need our guidance, now.

Susanna Kaljur
Courtenay

Still waiting

I recently read Joanna Larson's letter about the "worst school in the province," Roosevelt Park Community School in Prince Rupert. I am the ESL/ELD teacher in that school and part of my role is to assess the Kindergarten students. This year, 5 out 35 scored over the 4th percentile in our assessment, with 5 being an average score. Fully 1/3 of them were also identified as needing speech support. I spend many hours teaching these youngsters the name of every day items and helping them to learn to talk about them. While I do think that our school needs more support from the Ministry of Education, in many cases that support comes way too late. These children need help when they are 2, 3, and 4 years old. Many of their parents are young, not well educated themselves and dealing with many issues. They need support from the time their children are born.

An aspect of residential schools that is rarely identified as a problem is that many of the parents and grandparents today were not raised by their families and therefore did not learn much about good parenting. In turn, good parenting skills have not been passed onto succeeding generations. Giving parenting skills to these young parents would help us to see improvement in five years—a

relatively short time.

I have worked on and off at Roosevelt Park School for a number of years and have continually been impressed with the high level of commitment on the part of the teachers and support staff. We are working with a challenging population and it is unfair and demoralizing to be publicly regarded as the "worst school in BC." If we are able to help a child have one years growth in one year, we consider ourselves successful. We recognize that even the very best teaching won't make a child who comes in operating at a 2.5-year-old level finish up in June working at a 5.6-year-old level especially when they are often living in circumstances that are far from ideal.

Everyone in our community was encouraged when the Clyde Hertzman data identified our students as some of the most needy children in BC as we thought that this would mean a big increase in supports for our children. To date we are still waiting.

Shelley Stafford
Prince Rupert

About time!

Finally, the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher* has begun to educate members about the harmful neo-liberal/Milton Friedman economic policies of BC's provincial government.

Walter Trkla's "Economic failure and lack of accountability" and Margaret White's "Where did all the funding go?" are examples of what this reader would like to see more of.

Teachers need more of this kind of information so they can make an informed decision while at the polls in May of this year, as well as counter the neo-liberal spin of a centralized private media.

Having recently read Naomi Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine*, I have a better understanding of why the Campbell government's mantra is to economically starve public institutions as well as why the provincial Liberals stripped the collective agreements of health care workers, teachers, and other public servants following the 2001 provincial election. Similarly, Stephen Harper's actions in November 2008 to not use taxpayer dollars to fund democracy, strip federal public servants of the right to strike, and deny women the right to appeal for equal wages for work of equal value, are patent examples of how the "shock doctrine" works. I urge everyone to read Klein's book.

Robert Minty
Mission

Let's hope

I retired in 1992, but have been involved in education as a consultant across Canada and all over BC since I "retired."

I feel compelled to write to you to express (as an avowed moderate politically) that I support the BCTF

in a number of their initiatives:

- On homelessness. Good to see you visibly standing up for those who have little voice in advocating for their needs.

- In your response and taking a stand on how testing is used in BC. The immorality of how the media has reported these testing results makes me ill. Literally.

At a time when we need creativity, on the part of teachers and schools, we are being "gate keepered" by this stultifying process of testing and reporting.

We know it is not about improving education—it can't be. This hyper-control mechanism is conversely narrowing and stifling teachers, education, and learning for children.

I know the uphill political battle you are fighting. I also am aware that the polls do not support the BCTF.

But someone has to speak out! I applaud loudly for what you are doing in taking a stand. Maybe the general population will finally wake up when they hear the whole story. We have to live in the hope.

Thank you.
Dennis Tupman
Vancouver

Ranking is abuse

I greatly appreciate receiving and reading our *Teacher* newsmagazine! I find the articles on forced testing of our young students very disturbing and the unfair comparison of the test results achieved by the varied schools (public, private, religious, etc.) totally unfair and biased. The Fraser Institute's attempt to drive the privatization of our free public education system is creating a widening wedge between parents, students, and teachers alike. One *cannot* compare anything unless you start all competitors on an *equal* footing. Hungry, ill-housed, and ill-clothed children (thanks to BC ranking worst in child poverty) don't stand a chance against children from moneyed and elite households. The Fraser Institutes' displaying of the test results for public ridicule is totally unfair to all concerned. Perhaps the Human Rights Commission should check into the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that apply to our innocent children. What does the United Nations have to say regarding humiliation of our youth and child abuse? Do we no longer have a freedom of choice in our democratic country? Abuse of any kind should not be tolerated.

There is an enlightening article, "Lessons from Finland," published in the October 2008 issue of *The CCPA Monitor*, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Good wishes to all in 2009. In Obama's words—"Yes, we can!"

Peter Harshenin
Central Okanagan

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Tone it down

I retired in 1984 and still read the *Teacher* with interest.

The Nov./Dec 2008 issue contained several articles that raise some valid issues such as a call for a living wage.

However, I am distressed to read in our newsmagazine that the teachers have chosen to rebel against the government regarding the testing programs.

For too long I have wondered why they do not go to the government with an attitude that perhaps we can work out some of these issues rather than balk at what our elected representatives in Victoria set out. There is so much what I call cry baby and antagonism that will not do you much good. It just antagonizes the opposite party.

I do not agree with the way the Fraser Institute uses the test results but that is another issue.

I cannot see why it is so objectionable to have some standardized tests to show that the teaching is properly being done to the best of the teachers' ability, and always hiding behind the term "we are professionals and know best what should be taught and how."

Even professionals can have a wide disagreement on these matters.

Also, teachers tend to take a high ground when it comes to listening to what parents want their children to be taught.

Have you ever wondered why more and more people choose to do home teaching or send their children to a private school at extra expense over and above the regular public school services?

There must be a good reason. Thanks for listening to my griping."

Helmut Neufeld
Surrey

Oops

Thank you for publishing my piece, "Drop Everything and Read" in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher*. However, my school, Ecole Reynolds Secondary, is in Victoria, not Richmond as you reported. My colleagues are wondering how I managed to move both myself and the school to the Mainland.

Karen Lindsay
Victoria

Correction

In the Nov./Dec. edition of *Teacher* we incorrectly acknowledged Susan Lambert for her article in a letter from David Weir when he had in fact intended to acknowledge the article submitted by Susan Ruzic. We apologize for any confusion and embarrassment this may have caused.

– David Denyer, *Teacher* editor

FSA from page 1

expectations and, as a result, their own inner expectations begin to dovetail to the expectations created by assessments.

The impact of standing relative to others comes soon enough for children without also making it the foundation of education. Of course, tests, and the expectancies they create in medicine and education, can be used for the good of patients, students and the community. But their unreflective and blanket use can also put healing and learning in peril. If people are influenced by what we think about them based on test results, then we can by logical extension harness our own expectancies for social good—to help them to better reach their potential. But perhaps, rather than the test, it is largely the doctor that is therapeutic and, similarly, it is the teacher and not the FSA that is the true agent of learning.

The Foundational Skills Assessments are an unnecessary short cut on the educational journey. The reflective approach to universal assessment by teachers is not a renouncement of testing altogether. Structures are important but not without institutional reflection about their purpose and the ramifications of their use. Peer-to-peer governance is the soul of professionalism. Teachers are advocating, as part of their professional responsibility, for a learner-centred focus that allows them to emphasize experiential learning and create a more positive socio-emotional ambiance. In so doing, they make children less likely to experience rejection by their peers. We should trust the professional judgment of the teaching community. They are the people who spend the most time in the every day educational lives of our children. Hopefully, the wider public will support teachers so that the self-esteem of students can be the centre of gravity for BC's educational landscape rather than the data from a misconceived notion of assessment.

"If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming."

– Haim G. Ginott

Dan Small is an adjunct professor, Department of Undergraduate Medicine and Department of Anthropology, UBC.

References available on request.

INTERVIEW from page 1

Grade 7 can perform these multiple and very different tasks.

The minister has labeled teachers as irresponsible for making the decision to not prepare for, administer, or mark the FSA. What do you think?

I think if the teachers had taken this position at the outset of this debate, I would have agreed fully with the minister and said, "Yes, it's irresponsible." But the teachers and others, including many parents, trustees, other educators, academics, have all been bringing up these concerns about the FSAs as they're done and the misuse of the data (school ranking) for years now. And those concerns have been growing more and more intense and the minister hasn't responded. And I think there is an obligation, when the education partners bring up serious concerns with an education issue, to sit down and work through them. I think in the current context where the minister has simply refused to deal with the issue, that this boycott should not be taken lightly. We're throwing the baby out with the bathwater, because there is valuable information we can get out of this if we address the concerns, and that means people sitting down and taking the politics out of it and looking at this purely from an educational perspective.

What kind of assessment do you think is needed?

First of all, I'm not the expert in this field so take my comments with a grain of salt. I can say what I'd like to see as a parent. I think what's most important to me as a parent is to know whether my child is achieving his potential. How is he coping with his challenges? Are we giving him ways of overcoming those? I would like to see him, in spite of his challenges, grow up and be able to be independent and work and support himself and lead a successful life. But I certainly don't think that the FSA that he took in Grade 4 and Grade 7 is going to tell me anything about that. So I would like to see assessment that is far more proactive.

I think it's too late to wait until the end to measure if you've been successful or not. Successful assessment comes right at the beginning and it's what guides what you do to make the child a success. It's about the needs of that individual child.

What would you recommend parents do on behalf of their children when FSA time comes around next February?

When it came time for my son to do the FSA, despite everything I've said, I got the letter coming home from our school offering to excuse our son from sitting the test because of his learning challenges, that just got my back up. I said look, if you're going to be measuring outcomes, you're not going to sweep the kids that you perceive as failures under the rug. So I said if you're going to be doing this test, then my son is going to be included. So the answer is, parents have to make that decision on their own based on whether they feel the test is any use to them or their child, and I think that's a very individual decision. I don't think anyone can force a parent one way or the other, or a child to do a test.

Why do you think the provincial government clings so tenaciously to such a simplistic notion of assessment?

Primarily, it lets them off the hook from doing meaningful assessment and meaningful accountability. If they can convince everyone that this simplistic test is giving them all the answers they need, to see whether the system is performing as it should, then yes, I think they're pulling the wool over people's eyes basically by misleading people into thinking this one simplistic test is giving us all the answers we need to be confident the system is doing what needs to be done. I think it does an enormous disservice to individual students, subgroups of vulnerable students, school districts, regions where there are clearly major problems in the school system that are just covered over by this test because it's so simplistic. In the debate you hear concerns from parents that they're not satisfied all is well in our education system. And so this simplistic solution plays to those concerns but I think it does a disservice because it doesn't correctly identify the problems that do exist, it doesn't correctly identify the reasons for those problems, and it doesn't point us toward solutions. All of that, I think, is seen as a way for the minister to avoid her responsibilities to actually confront and tackle real problems by giving the impression that we've got it all under control because we've got this FSA thing that tells us all we need to know.

Do you have any further thoughts as to how these simplistic ideas affect the broader government agenda for public education?


Absolutely, I think if your broader political agenda is to reduce the size and influence of government and put more into the hands of the private sector, cut taxes, that sort of thing, which is generally the agenda of the right—then yes, I think the FSAs and particularly their misuse by the Fraser Institute's school rankings supports that agenda.

It erodes public confidence in public schools; it encourages more people to go to private schools or schools that are perceived as better, which are basically just schools that are in the wealthier neighbourhoods. The shift to the private schools reduces the education budget because you're paying for half the cost per student as opposed to the full cost. We have seen a clear shift to private schools; to schools that supposedly have higher ratings and that has meant a loss of resources to schools that serve challenging populations. Basically, we've punished our most challenging students through this and rewarded those who can pay for education themselves or supplement the public funding with private fundraising and that sort of thing.

I think that's been incredibly damaging for the public system but I think it's going to be interesting to see if that trend holds or if it turns around with the economic downturn. If we can address some of these misperceptions of what FSAs and school rankings mean in the current economic context you could see a lot of families coming back to public schools when they realize that a lot of what they've been led to believe is not based in any reality.

One of the things I feel I have to say is that if I had paid any attention to the Fraser Institute rankings I would never have chosen the schools that I chose for my son. In both cases, they were very low on school rankings list but in both cases they've turned out to be extraordinarily successful, whereas I mentioned earlier, my son is now in Grade 9 and doing better in things like Grade 9 math and English than even typical kids. When at the very beginning we were told that he would never be able to do these things.

Dawn Steele is the co-ordinator, Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion.



The Foundation Skills Assessment.

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- does not help teachers teach
- wastes valuable time and resources

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British Columbia Teachers' Federation

New teachers' and student teachers' conference 2009

The BCTF will be hosting its 12th annual New Teachers' Conference on February 27 and 28, 2009. The conference is a professional development opportunity designed specifically for new teachers—those in their first five years of teaching, and for student teachers. The conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond.

Registration is be available online at bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2009.aspx.

When Will They Learn? TV spots

In mid January, the BCTF re-launched the *When Will They Learn?* public relations campaign with a new TV ad in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Punjabi. The television spots highlight the provincial government's record on class size, school closures, and the

lack of support for children with special needs. The ads ask parents and voters to remember their kids when they vote in the May provincial election. Don't forget to check it out on *YouTube*. Just search for BCTFvids. On *Facebook*, look up and become a fan of the When Will They Learn? campaign. 177 schools closed. 10,000 overcrowded classes. Special needs neglected. When will they learn?

Notice of AGM 2009

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2009 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 93rd Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, beginning on Saturday, March 14, 2009 at 19:00 and continuing to Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

Looking back

70 years ago

Sabbatical leave is granted in Hawaii after eight years' service, and is looked upon quite as a matter of course, a little more than one per cent of the entire staff being on leave in every year. The teacher is paid the difference between the minimum salary and the salary that would have been received had he remained that year on active service in his school-room. The city of Saskatoon allows unused sick-leave to accumulate for a term of years and pays the teacher-on-leave the difference between his or her regular salary and the salary of the teacher replacing him or her. 62 Saskatoon teachers have taken advantage of these provisions and the Board was reported to be well satisfied with the results.

– January 1939,
The BC Teacher

50 years ago

Report cards are fraught with the weakness of all forms of written communication, that of interpretation. One ill-chosen written comment can create more resentment toward the school and its staff than can be eradicated through years of pleasant experiences. A parent will prefer to read on her son's report card, "Jim took a book from class without his teacher's permission," rather than "Jim stole a book from class."

– January 1959, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

The "industrial strategy" is winning out over the "professional strategy." This strategy requires educators to churn out raw material to be manufactured into a finished product. This has alienated a great number of students who somehow know they are being shortchanged. It has also alienated many teachers who want to teach students to think critically,

but are forced to concentrate on mainly irrelevant facts to ensure that their charges will be prepared to take their place in the industrial, work-a-day world.

– Jan./Feb. 1979, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

This year's education-funding brief to government again emphasizes the dramatic changes that have affected schools over the past decade, and it emphasizes the failure of funding to keep pace with those changes. Enrolment of students with special needs is up 65% since 1990! The number of ESL students has increased by 130% over the same period. Yet funding per student in constant dollars declined by \$300 per student. If per pupil funding in 1998-99 matched that of 1990-91, 3,200 more teachers would be in the system.

– Nov./Dec. 1999,
Teacher newsmagazine

Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



By Margaret White

On November 21, 2008, the First Call: Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition released its 2008 Child Poverty Report Card. In 2006, there were an estimated 181,000 low-income children in the province, with BC (21.9%) reporting the highest before-tax child poverty rate in Canada (15.8%) for the fifth year in a row. Many of these families lived on incomes that were at least \$11,000 below the before-tax low-income threshold. These figures tell us that thousands of BC families are struggling economically and the children are dealing with the effects of poverty and may feel marginalized as a result of their economic situation.

Challenging beliefs about structural causes of poverty can help us to better support low-income students

Challenging assumptions and beliefs about structural causes of poverty is essential to creating a sense of safety for low-income children who are dealing with the effects of poverty. In 2007, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto released a research report on homelessness and

Students reported feeling shame and humiliation at school due to differences in appearance, living in sub-standard housing conditions, and having minimal food or food that was different from other students..

education. The study found that students living in shelters had a lesser sense of belonging to their school and tended not to participate in before- and after-school activities. They were reluctant to disclose their living situation for fear of being stigmatized, taunted, or bullied, and that, in turn, was a barrier to receiving subsidy to assist with the cost of extra-curricular programs.

Donna Beegle's thesis research with university graduates who grew up in severe poverty reveals the extent to which students can internalize the blame for their economic

situation. Students reported feeling shame and humiliation at school due to differences in appearance, living in substandard housing conditions, and having minimal food or food that was different from other students. Some tried to remain invisible to avoid negative reactions from others. They also reported feeling that their personal worth was judged by the type of work their parents did and believed that others perceived poverty to be their fault. They believed that their teachers could have done more to protect them from the ridicule of others.

Freiler and Cerny in their report, "Benefiting Canada's Children: Perspectives on Gender and Social Responsibility," cite evidence that reveals the extent to which one's economic situation can shape perceptions of child poverty. They report a 1997 poll, by Ekos Research Associates, that found economically secure Canadians tended to view child poverty as being due to internal factors under the parents' control, such as lack of self-discipline, selfishness or lack of parenting skills. In contrast, economically insecure Canadians tended to view child poverty as being due to external factors such as technological change, globalization and bad luck.

These findings suggest that educators need to evaluate how their sense of economic security influences their perceptions and beliefs about why families are living in poverty. Not doing so may result in educators consciously or unconsciously blaming parents for their low-income situation, and risk students internalizing this negative message.

The language of poverty makes a difference

In communicating about poverty, it is also important to be aware of the subtle meanings contained within labour market terminology. How we define poverty can reinforce or challenge existing stereotypes. When we talk about poverty we really mean economic poverty. Yet this is only one of many dimensions to the human experience including intellectual, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual well-being. Obviously, these are inter-related and living in economic distress may compromise one's sense of well-being in other areas.

But it is also the case that while one suffers from economic poverty she or he may have strengths in other domains while those with more material wealth may not.

A slight change in wording can also affect our perceptions and convey subtle messages. For example, children living with the effects of poverty do not objectify a child in the way that terms such as "poor children" might. Instead, it creates an opening, implying that there is more to a person than their economic circumstances—that economic conditions may be a defining characteristic of a person's experience but it is not all of her or his experience.

How we define poverty can reinforce or challenge existing stereotypes.

Joseph Flessa's comprehensive literature review, on poverty and education for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, documents the dominance of a deficit framework approach to poverty and education policy. Underlying this approach is an assumption that low-income families and their communities are to blame for their poverty and its impact on educational achievement. A deficit approach views students as "essentially inadequate" who need to be "fixed" and can create an adversarial relationship between school and community.

A 2002 report "The Framing of Child Poverty," by Status of Women Canada, cautions that separating the issue of child poverty from poverty in general may have unintended negative consequences. Focusing exclusively on child poverty may reinforce perceptions and beliefs that parents are to blame, that adults who are poor are less deserving of support, and may obscure the effects of regressive social policies on adult poverty. The report advocates an approach that locates child poverty within the broader context of family poverty and gender inequality.

The language used to define poverty has shifted in recent social and economic policy reports. Terms such as *low-income children* used by Statistics Canada describe an individual or family's economic

situation relative to others. Terms such as *income security* and *economic well-being*, used by the Canadian Council on Social Development remind us that the ultimate goal of eliminating poverty is to provide a sense of security and well-being to all individuals and families.

So, too, the Living Wage Campaign recently launched in Vancouver and Victoria by First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, implies *the right of all individuals and families to a living wage*. This is a more empowering use of language shifting the poverty debate from a stance of neutrality or of powerlessness to a proactive concept that engages all parties in a hopeful way in a movement to improve the economic conditions of low-income individuals and families.

Educators may not be able to solve poverty, but they can influence how they and others in the school community respond to children affected by poverty. By challenging attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate harmful stereotypes about people living in poverty, educators have an opportunity to remove a significant emotional barrier limiting the educational success of low-income students.

The next issue of *Teacher* will include a follow-up article examining structural causes of poverty and comparing the government of British Columbia's response to child and family poverty to other Canadian provinces.

Margaret White is a researcher in the BCTF's Research and Technology Division.

Links to further reading:

- First Call Poverty Report Card: <http://tinyurl.com/4mppc7>
- D. Beegle's thesis work: <http://tinyurl.com/3gqggz>
- J. Flessa's literature review: <http://tinyurl.com/4krzk6>, Other publications
- Framing of child poverty: <http://tinyurl.com/4wbq4z>
- Living wage campaign: <http://tinyurl.com/3etqqt>
- Homelessness and education: <http://tinyurl.com/2mtuhr>

The high price of poverty

By David Denyer

The reports just keep on coming in. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been especially critical of Canada's lack of effort in overcoming poverty (see the Nov./Dec. 2008 *Teacher*)—likewise, the Canadian Council on Social Development and Social Watch Canada. It comes as no surprise that a report by UNICEF on the state of childcare and early childhood education finds Canada tied for the bottom spot with Ireland out of the 25 OECD countries in which data have been collected. Investment in early childhood, the report notes, is a key component in building not only for future prosperity and success in school, but in society and citizenship.

"The trend towards early childhood education and care has enormous potential for good—for giving children the best possible start in life, for limiting the early establishment of disadvantage, for advancing progress towards equality for women, for boosting educational achievement, and for investing in citizenship. Poor quality care, on the other hand, has the potential for both immediate and long-term harm."

James Heckman, a Nobel prize winning professor of economics at the University of Chicago (home to the late Milton Friedman), an institution known for promoting free market ideology, nevertheless identifies persistent and concentrated poverty as the biggest source of the difficulties facing education.

Seth Klein, BC director of the CCPA, said in a recent article that "a dramatic reduction in poverty and homelessness within a few short years is an achievable goal."

His recommendations are broad and far-reaching, encompassing interventions that start long before children enter school—nurses to advise on post-natal health, education for parents on time management and effective ways to promote cognitive development, early childhood programs with long days, qualified teachers, and generous teacher-pupil ratios.

Canadians are more than ready to meet the challenge. According to an Environics research poll conducted recently for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Ready for Leadership: Canadians' perceptions of poverty), 77% of Canadians say that in a recession it's more important than ever to make helping the poor a priority. Other findings include:

- 89% support raising the minimum wage to a level that will lift people out of poverty.
- 85% want to see government create more low-cost childcare spaces.
- 92% want to create more affordable housing.
- 96% want more investment in skills training and retraining.
- 92% say if countries like Great Britain and Sweden can do it, so can Canada.

In a subsequent paper released in December entitled "The Time is Now: A poverty reduction plan for BC," the CCPA says the provision of universal publicly funded childcare

is a high priority.

"Within one year, develop a comprehensive plan and timeframe for the implementation of a high-quality, universal, publicly funded early learning and childcare program. Initial phase-in should start immediately."

Seth Klein, BC director of the CCPA, said in a recent article that "a dramatic reduction in poverty and homelessness within a few short years is an achievable goal."

So what are the prospects? At this point, federal and provincial governments flounder in the face of an ever-gathering and intensifying economic storm. Bailouts in the financial world and of automakers and the possibility of horrendous Olympic cost overruns, and talk of limited funds and revenue threaten to sweep aside the very crucial actions that need to be undertaken now in order to avert an ever-deepening crisis in poverty and inequality.

We have been witness to boom times during which governments at the national and provincial level have been awash in surpluses and yet nothing has been done. Standing by and allowing poverty and the plight of its children to increase will only result in more resources going into emergency aid, medical and hospital care, higher justice system costs, and more demands on social and community services to say nothing of the lost potential and earnings. The costs of doing nothing will far outweigh the costs of dealing with the issue now and no amount of bailout money will help in the future.

David Denyer is an assistant director, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division and editor of the Teacher Newsmagazine.

For more, go to:

- www.oecd.org
- www.unicef.ca
- <http://jenni.uchicago.edu/human-inequality>
- www.policyalternatives.ca
- www.socialwatch.org/en/informesNacionales/583.html
- www.ccsd.ca

What's happening with early learning?

By Carol Johns

Things seem a little different today than they did when the BCTF hosted a two-day Early Learning Issues Session, October 1-2, 2008. Hot topics were "All-Day Kindergarten and All-Day Four-Year-Olds."

A representative group of teachers and staff participated in a variety of discussions and presentations. A history of the "Primary Program" with its roots coming from the earlier Kindergarten program and the emphasis on playful learning all dovetail nicely into the recently published "Early Learning Framework" for the years before children enter the school system in Kindergarten. Supported by research, the "Primary Program" has stood the test of time and is still used by many teachers as a resource to support how we teach and how children learn in the primary years. The emphasis on teaching the "whole child" focusing on all areas of development is important. The "Kindergarten Learning Project" provides developmental continuums and resources to support teachers in documenting growth starting with language development and social responsibility, and just recently also adding reading, writing, and numeracy.

A panel presentation gave the group a variety of perspectives on early learning.

Joanne Schroeder from HELP at UBC described the EDI project done by all Kindergarten teachers for all their students in February of each year.

Susan Kennedy from the ministry described the survey process undertaken to find out what the public thought about the all-day Kindergarten, the all-day four-year-olds, and the all-day three-year-olds proposals. She indicated that there seemed to be widespread support for all-day Kindergartens, a little less for all-day four-year-olds and a lot of questions about all-day three-

year-olds, especially, if all these programs were to be housed in the school setting. She talked about the choice for parents and reassured us the programs would be developmental and play-based.

Susan Lambert, BCTF first vice-president, described our concerns and thoughts about the issue and reminded us that while it may appear to be an opportunity for children we need to be cautious and make sure the implementation is well thought out with appropriate resources to support that implementation.

In the debrief from the panel discussion, many issues were raised. What would the criteria be for accepting three- and four-year-olds? How can families be part of this experience? Would daycare after school hours be addressed?

Rita Chudnovsky, from Child Care Advocates of BC, reiterated that all children have a right to quality experiences that are similar to the public school system, and that at this time there is no system for

childcare to fit into and they are interested in joining the public education system. They are suspicious about government plans because of the poor track record and past history. Transportation issues are a real concern and the care given needs to be seamless.

Sheila Davidson from Early Childhood Educators echoed Chudnovsky's concerns and talked about the possibility of EC Bachelor degrees.

Later in the day, Dr. Clyde Hertzman and Dr. Lori Irwin, also from HELP, answered questions about EDI (Early Development Indicator). EDI helps to document the state of development when children reach Kindergarten. They are moving to a yearly EDI to see key trends earlier. Over 500 initiatives have developed from the EDI data that have helped children in the province. The group cautioned Hertzman and Irwin about tying their research with FSA scores and we were assured that they would use their data to contrast the Fraser Institute rankings.

In the debrief from the panel discussion, many issues were raised. What would the criteria be for accepting three- and four-year-olds? How can families be part of this experience? Would daycare after school hours be addressed? There is a need to have specific

facilities for Kindergarten and any younger group based on physical as well as their other developmental needs. What can we learn from other jurisdictions who have all-day Kindergarten programs?

The group reviewed BCTF policy and made recommendations to delete, amend, or keep relevant policies. Some new recommendations were suggested. These will go to the BCTF Executive Committee and to other relevant groups or committees.

Since our session, the ministry has become cautious about the proposed implementation of all-day Kindergarten and the initiative seems to be on hold. We will be moving forward with our recommendations and hope to have sound policy in place to support any appropriate early learning initiative.

With any implementation, the key issue will be making sure adequate resources and workshops are available and that any program for young children be play-based, universally available, and developmentally appropriate.

We all recognize the importance and the critical nature of the early years. We will need to continue to build strong partnerships with our early childhood communities.

Carol Johns teaches at Highland Elementary School, Cranbrook.



From an inner-city school to a remote rural school

By Susan Gilbert

This is part 2 of an interview with Susanne Hryboko—the sole staff at Surge Narrows Elementary School on the remote shores of Read Island. Part 1 appeared in the Nov./Dec. 2008 issue of *Teacher*.

How do you like living in a teacherage, on site?

I like it. We have a four-day work-week; I come over Monday mornings by boat and I go back Thursday evenings. I can really focus on doing all my school things during that time and the weekend is a separate time.

Because I am on site here, if someone wants access to the school in the evenings I can open it up. It is part of the process of what you have to do here and at first I wasn't sure. The teacherage is old; I don't think there are any new teacherages in the province. I have to deal with the mice, but again that is part of what we do living up here. I have a fridge, but the generator is off at night so keeping ice is difficult. There is no TV or radio so my life is the school and I read a lot.

What is the biggest threat to your job in both schools?

In the inner city, especially teaching behaviour classes, there was always

the threat of violence. We were prepared for it by going through training but the underlying threat was always there.

Here, the biggest threat I feel is if families move away and the school population diminishes enough for the school to close. That is about it; it feels like a really safe place here.

Compare parent involvement in both schools.

There are some parents who are here a lot more than other parents and it was the same in the inner-city school. In the city school, there was a separate parent room and we had a full-time staff worker who was the parent counselor. Something I really found interesting coming here is that the parents fight for the same basic issue; the right for their children to be educated in their own catchment area. In the inner-city school, I was in a class that was set up the year before I came and it was set up as a result of parents camping for 44 days on the school board property to demand the right for the kids to attend their home school. These kids were sent to district classes in various schools and yes, the school board bussed them so it wasn't transportation issues but some parents had kids in two or three school across the city and for them to try and make their way to the schools was impossible. The kids were being shipped out of the neighbourhood. This meant they had teachers who didn't understand the living situation and what was going on at home.

Coming here, to a school that had become really small before I started,

to the point where parents were protesting saying, "Do not shut the school down, we need it." It is the same issue of kids having the right to be schooled in their own school whether it is inner-city Vancouver or small-town rural Surge Narrows.

How do you justify a school being open for 10 students when schools of 200 plus are being closed down from lack of funds?

It is hard to justify when it comes down to the paper level. For the people who make the decisions, I ask them to come and travel the road and the distance once, not by water taxi, not by float plane, but to actually travel that road by vehicle to see if this experience would differ if it was decided to close Surge School. The only other option the school board could offer is to board the Surge students out and for parents to give up raising their own children in lieu of an education and this is not an option anyone would agree to. It is one of those things of reality verses business world.

How do you teach different grade levels in one classroom?

It is a constant series of mini lessons. There are no big lessons in a subject like math. The kids work out of their textbooks and I go around and make sure each one is on track. With a subject like science, I teach the group together. Right now we are doing "simple machines" which is technically Grade 5. I teach the basics but the observations on what they do during experiments and the expectations of their written work are in accordance with the child's grade

level.

Are you teaching life skill more here at Surge Elementary than you were in Vancouver?

Actually, it is the opposite. I do teach life skills here, specifically emergency preparedness—calling the coast guard and being able to give locations etc.—but what I found in the inner city was that many of the students did not go beyond Grade 8 and therefore, I could be the last teacher they might have. These kids needed to know money; they needed to know how to look up phone numbers, how to cross streets, take buses, etc. Here, life skills are primarily taught by the parents and are reflected in the lifestyle in which they live.

Do you think the lure of working with colleagues in the traditional public school system will ever draw you back?

In a word—no. The only way I would ever return to a traditional school is if this school closes for lack of students. I love it here. I love the life style, I love having the same students year after year and being able to cater to their individuality. I love the lack of stress in my life and, ultimately, I feel that the way these children are experiencing school will be of a much greater benefit to them as adults. This system unequivocally nourishes a sense of self. I consider myself extremely fortunate to be here in such a uniquely wonderful situation.

Susan Gilbert is a parent and freelance writer, Read Island.



This year at Surge Narrows School, there are two Kindergarten students, one in Grade 2, four in Grade 4, two in Grade 5, one in Grade 6, two in Grade 7, and two correspondence students in Grade 11. The school is slowly increasing in population and, as long as it does, Susanne Hryboko will continue to be its matron.

3rd Annual Teachers' Congress



Will this teachers' congress also be the last?

By Paul Steer

A naïve, yet not-so-innocent visitor to the 3rd Annual Teachers' Congress held at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue might wonder if the happy educational republic presided over by Education Minister Shirley Bond on November 28, 2008, was really British Columbia, or some other destination.

Since 2006, for reasons best known to him, Premier Campbell has eschewed subsequent Teachers' Congresses, leaving the chore to the minister of education and her minions. They, in turn, have worked dutifully to cut off authentic dialogue and to muffle dissenting views.

Billed this year as, "...an [invitation to] teachers from across BC to directly communicate with the Minister of Education..." and as [encouragement for] "...discussion of important education ideas and how they can be used in schools across the province," it was clear that the Teachers' Congress has been carefully shaped over its short three-year run into an annual set-piece, consisting of a pre-determined ministry program, highly-scripted, overly-long, with very little room left for authentic dialogue. In a way, the Teachers' Congress has much in common with the perennial Christmas concert, where long periods of endurance are punctuated by episodes of guileless charm.

At the launch of the very first Teachers' Congress, in 2006, teachers seized the opportunity to decry the misuse by government of quantitative data and standardized tests; large classes with untenable compositions; school closures; diminished funding and resources for students with special needs; crushing work and caseloads, the absence of upper limits for classroom and non-enrolling specialist teachers, ministry add-ons unsupported by additional resources or funding, and more.

It was at the first Teachers' Congress in 2006 where teachers found their voice in a place where they could speak directly to the premier, and did so, freely and forcefully. Premier Campbell put considerable effort into making sure that the professionals at the first Teachers' Congress included many teachers who were not members of the BCTF. And even though many in attendance had come from private, independent, band, proprietary, and other unaffiliated schools, they still expressed concerns very similar to those of BCTF members.

As a result, many attending this event learned a very important lesson—the professionalism of teachers is real and cannot be stripped away as a matter of employ-

ment, legislation, or political expediency. Teachers, being teachers, will always advocate on behalf of their students. In the face of bad laws, unreliable funding, and questionable policy changes, teachers will not be erased, marginalized, or shut-off from advocacy on behalf of our students. Teachers know that their work in schools is in direct service to the greater good of society, and this knowledge sets a common purpose which is central to their professional identity.

Since 2006, for reasons best known to him, Premier Campbell has eschewed subsequent Teachers' Congresses, leaving the chore to the minister of education and her minions. They, in turn, have worked dutifully to cut off authentic dialogue and to muffle dissenting views. Teachers were not consulted in the setting of the agenda. This really is a pity, because what Campbell's government needs the most at this time is advice from the real world of teachers. And who other than teachers are most qualified to offer the professional advice that the government needs in order to set sound workable policies, and to enact fair legislation. Never has the government needed our counsel more, nor wanted it less.

Most teachers found some value in the five presentations rolled out by the ministry in an attempt to bulk-up the shape of the day. As keynote speaker, former UBC President Dr. Martha Piper, spoke to the development of global citizens, a student-led initiative encouraged educators to make use of educational resources having to do with the 2010 Olympics. Members of the Youth Climate Leadership Alliance made a presentation on the integration of sustainability into the classroom, and teachers from Frances Kelsey Secondary and Alpha Secondary Schools spoke on the Healthy Schools Network and the Draft Healthy Living Performance Standards. Marc Kielburger, chief executive director of Free the Children made an energetic presentation on "Fostering Student Engagement."

Teachers waited patiently for their turn to communicate with the minister. And as they did so, they became more resentful at the cynical manipulation of the agenda by those in control ensuring that that opportunity would be minimal. Given this, what purpose or reason would there be to have Teachers' Congress IV?

Those few among the many who actually claimed their five minutes of direct "communication" time with the minister, all spoke very clearly and well. But in the fanciful Teachers' Congress in the Happy Educational Republic of British Columbia, the clock ran down all too quickly—and the premier wasn't there.

Paul Steer is vice-president of the Delta Teachers' Association and a member of the Teacher Newsmagazine Advisory Board.

BC Teachers' Congress 2008

By Susanna Quail

In early November, I received an exciting invitation in my e-mail inbox. Better than a free cruise, or a chance to make a fortune by helping out an unfortunate Nigerian inheritor, I was offered a place among 100 teachers from across the province, who would assemble in the Wosk Centre and talk about education. Extended to me and my colleagues was the opportunity, according to the event's agenda, "to directly communicate with the Minister of Education." My colleagues and I would "help shape the future of education in the province." We would "offer input and suggestions for positive change."

My enthusiasm was somewhat dampened by what I knew to be the history of the Teachers' Congress. This was the congress' third year, and the ministry touted it as a way to hear directly from teachers without our union getting in the way.

Heading into the Wosk Centre, I harboured some scepticism about the true purpose of the day. A quick review of the agenda confirmed my suspicions. Most of the day was packed with presentations of varying degrees of relevance and utility by presenters with varying degrees of connection to our education system. Only 30 minutes were set aside for general discussion with the minister.

Heading into the Wosk Centre, I harboured some scepticism about the true purpose of the day. A quick review of the agenda confirmed my suspicions.

The day began with former UBC president Dr. Martha Piper talking about global citizenship.

As at the end of each presentation, the assembled teachers thanked Martha Piper for her inspiring words, but directed our more urgent questions to the minister: How, we asked, can we expand second-language instruction when our students are still struggling to learn English in over-crowded and under-funded ESL programs? How can we inspire kids to tackle climate change, or end world poverty, when we are all burdened with overly-rigid curricula and high-stakes standardized tests that don't address those outcomes? How much energy and enthusiasm can we expect students to put into 2010-themed webcasts if they haven't eaten breakfast?

As a teacher in an inner-city secondary school, these are not rhetorical points for me. I would really, truly, like to know the answers to these questions. I think

about them every day.

At lunch, I had another stroke of luck when an MLA, the chair of the Select Standing Committee on Education, happened to sit next to me. We chatted about this congress and its purpose. His view was that our union is unnecessarily belligerent; therefore the ministry needs an assembly like this one to find out what teachers really think. I pointed out to him that our union representatives are democratically elected, just like he is. I offered him an analogy: suppose representatives from a foreign country came to Burnaby-Willingdon, and wanted to know what the people there really thought about political issues. They couldn't accept what he, their elected political representative, said on their behalf—he was biased, in their view. They needed to go straight to the people. Wouldn't that undermine the democratic process by which he had been elected? He had no answer, but soon hurried off to a more comfortable conversation elsewhere.

His view was that our union is unnecessarily belligerent; therefore the ministry needs an assembly like this one to find out what teachers really think.

What struck me most about the day was that despite the efforts of the ministry to limit opportunities for dialogue, the voice from teachers was nearly unanimous. Again and again, teachers brought up the same issues—class size, under-funding, too many kids with too many unmet needs, and the terrible ramifications we see in our classrooms of this government's assault on social programs like income assistance, housing, and addiction treatment. If the Liberal government was hoping to circumvent the BCTF via the Teachers' Congress, what they hadn't counted on was that, as our democratically elected representatives, the union does in fact speak on our behalf.

I started the day with muted excitement, but I left with the distasteful sensation that I'd taken part in a propaganda show. At least, I consoled myself that it was an unsuccessful one.

Susanna Quail is a teacher teaching on call, Vancouver.

Teachers raised many issues

By Irene Lanzinger

On November 29 the minister of education held the 3rd annual Teachers' Congress in Vancouver.

BCTF members from around the province were randomly selected to attend and were joined by teachers from private schools and band schools. All education-partner groups, including the BCTF, were invited to send their presidents.

The overview description of the congress describes its purpose as fulfilling the "government's commitment to invite teachers from across BC to directly communicate with the minister of education."

The day began at 8:45 a.m. with opening remarks from Minister Bond and ended at about 3:00 p.m. In spite of the stated purpose, the agenda for the day was packed with presentations to those attending and very little time for teachers to raise concerns with the minister.

In total, teachers had about 50 minutes to raise concerns and ask questions of the minister. Teachers at the congress did a good job of demonstrating that no amount of planning on the part of the ministry can silence teacher voices.

In spite of the restrictive agenda teachers raised many issues of importance to teachers. As expected, much of their input focused on resources. Problems with class size and composition were raised a number of times. Teachers also raised the shortage of librarians and counsellors and the increased workload that results from initiative after initiative from the ministry being downloaded on teachers. The impracticality and lack of consultation around the daily physical activity requirement was also discussed.

The minister also heard from members regarding our concerns about testing, particularly, the ranking of schools by the Fraser Institute, and our concerns about the provincial exams at Grades 10, 11, and 12.

Many thanks to the members who attended. They did an admirable job of using the small amount of time available to them to raise the major issues of importance to teachers. It was very heartening to hear members talk sincerely about their struggles in the classroom and use their everyday experiences to confirm the message the minister hears repeatedly from BCTF leaders.

Irene Lanzinger, BCTF president.



An open letter to Shirley Bond

The Greater Victoria Teachers' Association sent the following letter to Education Minister Shirley Bond in October 2008.

We are writing in response to your allegation, printed in the *Times Colonist* (October 15, 2008) that the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA) is "misleading the public." At no time has the GVTA said that the Victoria School Board is "violating legislation." We do say that the Victoria School Board is violating the spirit and intent of the legislation, when it ignores the voices of hundreds of educators protesting that their classrooms are not appropriate for student learning and will not meet students' needs.

When the GVTA refers to the "School Act limits," we are referring to the limits described in section 76.1 of the *School Act*. These limits pertain to both the size of classes and the number of students in a class with an IEP (what we call "composition"). We fully acknowledge that if these limits are exceeded, and the requisite consultation has occurred, no legal violation has taken place. However, if "consultation" merely means ignoring the advice of hundreds of professional educators, year after year, then this consultation is a sham. When this occurs, schools are not, in your words "organized in the best way possible to meet the needs of students."

As minister of education, you are responsible for conditions in our schools. You are accountable. Your government has consistently underfunded public education and the result is that students in our classrooms are suffering. Our superintendent and our school principals have put their signatures to reports claiming that teaching conditions are appropriate when hundreds of teachers have said they are not. You have accepted these reports and done nothing to address the adverse teaching and learning conditions.

Every single day, Ms. Bond, thousands of children (in SD 61 alone!) walk into a classroom that is not suitable for student learning. In the best of cases, these students just don't learn as much as they could. In the worst, these students fall far behind their peers because their needs are not met (and we point you here to the excellent report by the Representative for Children and Youth on education and children in care as just one example of students whose needs are not being met).

We invite you to meet with our Working and Learning Conditions Committee, to see the hundreds of "consultation" forms teachers have filled out with classroom concerns. We invite you to meet with teachers who are in these classrooms every day and to find out the truth about learning conditions in our schools. We invite you to read our report and the pages of quotes from classroom teachers about the inadequate conditions in their classrooms.

Finally, Ms. Bond, you are in a position to fix this problem and you have the responsibility to do so. Your government must properly fund our public schools so that all children in public schools receive the education to which they are entitled. If your government had maintained the funding levels from 1999–2000 of 3.7% of GDP, we would have \$1 billion more to meet the needs of students today.

Tara Ehrcke, chairperson, GVTA Working and Learning Conditions Committee and Thierry Ponchet, president, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association.



L-R: Marjorie Dumont (BCTF Aboriginal education co-ordinator); Jessica MacLeod (youth advocate of the Urban Native Youth Association); Fialka Jack-Flesh, Eric Wilson, Rennie Wilson, and Crystal Smith (Britannia secondary students) attended the Aboriginal Education provincial conference in November 2008 and shared their public and band school experiences.

Aboriginal student conference

On November 27, 2008, Ms. B. Seed (principal) and Mr. M. Finch (vice-principal) of Britannia Secondary School, Vancouver, sent four empowering students to the 14th annual provincial conference on Aboriginal education called "Strengthening Connections: Investing in Aboriginal Students" at the Westin Bayshore (hosted by the First Nations Education Steering Committee).

The BCTF workshop "Working with Aboriginal Youth" included the educational journeys of Eric Wilson, Rennie Wilson, and Crystal Smith

who are all in Grade 12, Fialka Jack-Flesh in Grade 9, and Jessica MacLeod, youth advocate of the Urban Native Youth Association. Thanks to Counsellor Chris Stewart for organizing the field trip; all four students and MacLeod did a fantastic job sharing their stories of what worked and continues to work for them at the public schools and band schools.

I raise my hands in honour and respect to Ms. B. Seed and Mr. M. Finch for allowing this opportunity for the youth.

— Marjorie Dumont

The magic of a circle: ProD extraordinaire

By Jennie Boulanger

If you're looking for some exceptional professional development—something out of the ordinary, sign up for the next Aboriginal Educators' Association conference. I just attended one and was simply blown away.

Tired and stressed, I dragged myself to the opening night, Thursday evening. Informal

"I've never felt so welcome, connected, energized, and embraced by a circle of new acquaintances in my life. If this is what Aboriginal circles are all about, then this is the hope for our future."

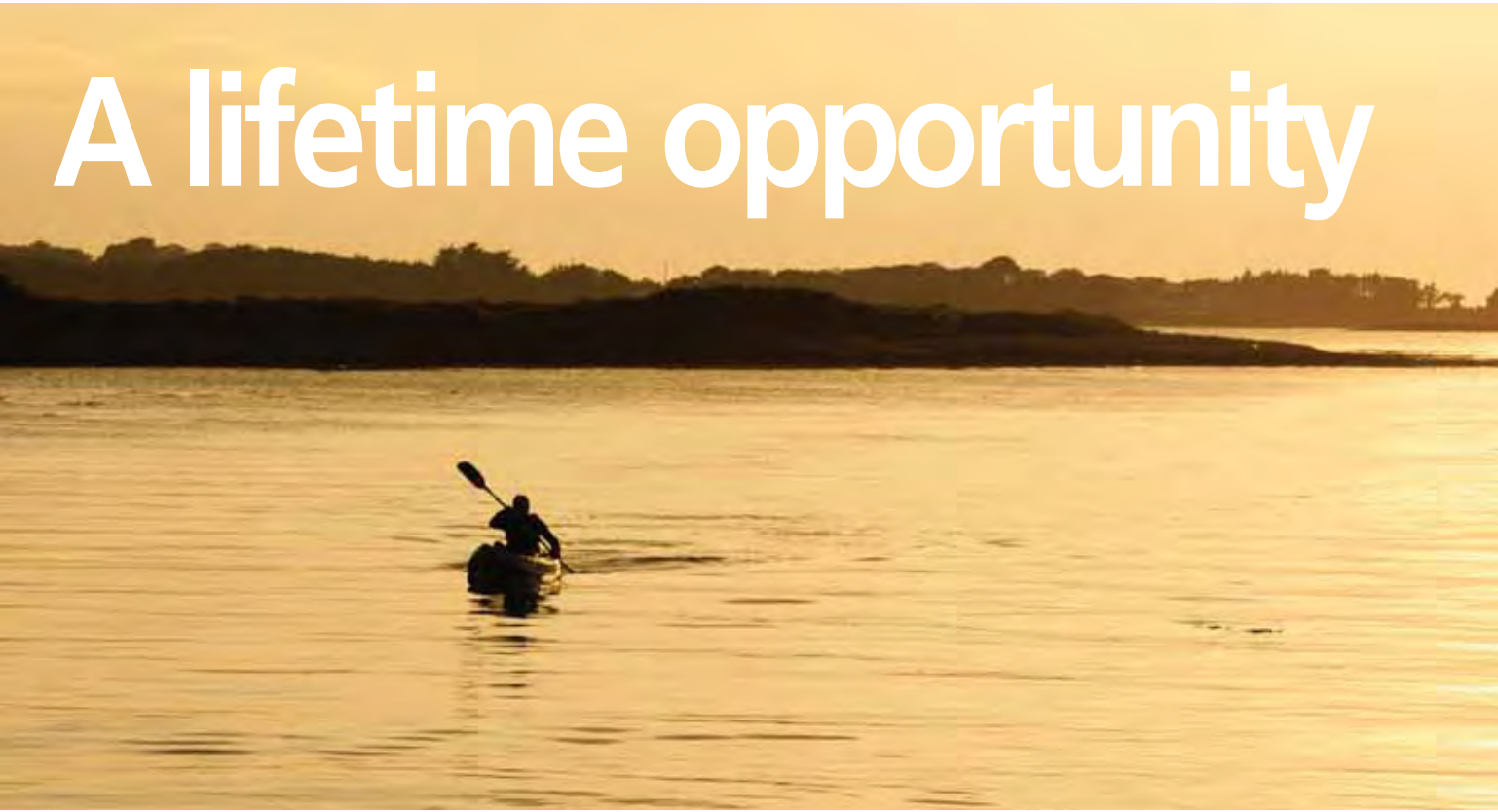
chatting, a delicious feast of stew, and homemade bannock preceded a most magical event: an Honouring Ceremony in an Aboriginal circle formation. Led by Leonard George, son of Chief Dan George, the

ceremony honoured three (very surprised) leaders from our own district: Marjean Brown, Lyn Daniels, and Emily Sutherland. I've never felt so welcome, connected, energized, and embraced by a circle of new acquaintances in my life. If this is what Aboriginal circles are all about, then this is the hope for our future.

As an educator, I've always been a little reluctant to teach First Nations units. Teaching past traditions as written down by non-Aboriginal writers seemed almost disrespectful of First Nation cultures. Now, after a quick introduction to several aspects of literature, music, art, and governance, I'm excited to begin a new approach: integrating prescribed textual information with oral traditions, circles of support, and celebrations of some lost-but-now-found fundamental life lessons.

I can't wait until my next magic circle.

Jennie Boulanger teaches at Seaforth Elementary School, Burnaby. joeboulanger@telus.net



By Marjorie Dumont

It is without doubt one of the most exciting moments of my life when I was given the opportunity to work for the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as the assistant director for Aboriginal education in the Professional & Social Issues division. I am honoured and feel very privileged. My traditional name is C'tan and my English name is Marjorie Dumont. My father's name is Wah tah ghet and my mother's name is Wild'at (Henry and Sue Alfred). My house chief is Chief Namox (late Bill Holland). I belong to the Tsayu (beaver) clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation and my roots are also in the Gitksan nation.

Since July of 2008, I have been wandering the BCTF building, picking up and learning as much as I can about the protocols and the way things are accomplished. The work that I am blessed with is so much like travelling in a canoe headed for the open sea. There are many with me, travelling in the same direction with the same destination in mind, that of making improvements to the public education system.

Although each one of us has a different idea or plan for our

journey, still we continue to pull together. I haven't experienced the possibility of extreme weather conditions yet so my optimism is very high with so much energy and enthusiasm. In the last few months of 2008, there have been moments that made me so proud to be the "voice" for the Aboriginal teachers in the BCTF building.

The work that I am blessed with is so much like travelling in a canoe headed for the open sea. There are many with me, travelling in the same direction with the same destination in mind, that of making improvements to the public education system.

One of those moments would be when it felt like this canoe went ashore and the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) met for the first time under my guidance. Personally, this meeting was similar to my world of "potlatching." It definitely felt like coming ashore to a potlatch. The meeting was a continuation of many discussions over the last few

years regarding topics like employment equity for Aboriginal teachers and enhancement agreements. Of course, it was also very important that we continue building a positive relationship with each other, as well as with the staff and the Executive Committee. Our meeting was not typical of the ceremony held at a potlatch but nonetheless it was our way of governance.

Our wealth is in the knowledge we carry and the friendships we have with each other. The gift giving is in the stories and classroom experiences we share. The second meeting was similar but with even more issues and concerns for the obstacles and challenges the Aboriginal students face every day. One pressing issue at the forefront was the over-use and misuse of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). The negative impact of the standardized testing felt like a tsunami hit and our canoe began to rock furiously. Listening to the stories shared by Carol Arnold, Moira Currey, Floyd Dick, Robert Genaille, Lillian Lincoln, Meredith Rusk, Susan Spalding and Gail Stromquist sent a message to the Executive Committee and to all the members that we must not continue using a colonial tool that further perpetuates negative feelings and

undermines the learning of, not just Aboriginal students but, all students.

The committee also encourages all locals to have Aboriginal education at the forefront. We can start by acknowledging the territories that the schools are located on. As much as we would love calm and warm weather to travel in, this will not be the case. The canoe will eventually have to go through many "storms of misunderstandings" or "competing ideas" as to where and how our canoe travels. Despite our differences, misunderstandings, and competing ideas, we as a team can get through the worst weather conditions of racism, stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression. Ultimately, we are all ensuring the public education system is a better place, not just for Aboriginal students but for all students. The direction of our journey is totally dependent on the stories and advice of the AEAC and Local Aboriginal Education (LAEC) members. I would like to thank all the AEAC and LAEC members for their hard work and determination. Pulling together makes a difference. Thank you, Mesih.

Marjorie Dumont is Aboriginal education co-ordinator, BCTF Professional and Social Issues

The teacher conversation: Teachers learning together about the role of co-operating teacher

By **Mitch Ward and Tina Grigoriadis**

Have you ever wondered how co-operating teachers learn about the role of mentoring pre-service teachers? Where does one learn to be a “teacher educator”? A common response is, “on the job.” The lack of any authentic opportunity to explore the very crucial role of co-operating teacher led to the “Teacher Education Conversation,” which is a professional learning community, meeting monthly in the Richmond School District. Both teachers and administrators are part of this community that is supported by the Centre for the Study of Teacher Education at UBC. A group of about 15 participating teachers from 12 different schools, at different stages of their careers, share a common interest in examining the role of a co-operating teacher. Our monthly meetings began with exploration of such topics as, where do co-operating teachers

turn for information? How do we know that we are doing the right thing in our advisory capacity? And, how does the school-based experience fit with the larger context of pre-service teacher education? These are extensive questions that we fear have been taken for granted in terms of how teachers understand the role and responsibilities of co-operating teacher, and how the profession replenishes itself through the mentoring of pre-service teachers. By unpacking the issues, concerns and problems inherent in the aspects of the role, we are aiming to develop an instrument that characterizes the motivational factors that make teachers want to be co-operating teachers. This will be one of several ways that we share what we have learned through our work in this professional learning community with the wider community of teachers who serve the profession as co-operating teachers. Initially, we saw the practicum as a fragmentary part of the teacher

education program, a disconnected, even disembodied, experience that crosses over from the university to the “real world” of the classroom and its practical concerns. Over the course of our first year working together, our emphasis has evolved from seeing the practicum as a series of problems to be solved to an important interface in its own right, a place between university and the profession, between student teacher and teacher educator, consisting of its own pedagogy. We are developing new perspectives of our own personal and professional knowledge—knowledge that is developing collaboratively out of our inquiry and conversations. We now consider the experience of becoming a teacher to be situated in relationships, and our involvement in the Teacher Education Conversation is one of those relationships that we now see as critical to our work with student teachers. *Mitch Ward and Tina Grigoriadis teach at William Bridge Elementary School, Richmond.*

Teachers without borders—Canada

By **Greg Phillips**

Ten Canadian teachers arrived in the dusty town of Maai Mahiu, Kenya, in August of 2008, hoping to make a lasting difference. The volunteers saw a need and an opportunity to use their skills and experience to help mentor their comparatively undersupported Kenyan colleagues. Being a teacher in Kenya is a challenge at the best of times. However, after the government initiated free and compulsory primary schooling, the number of children attending increased dramatically, without a sufficient increase in funding, classrooms, or teachers.

“There is so much potential here that will not be realized...these are future leaders, scientists, doctors, musicians, mechanics, even teachers, who don’t get to (become) what they want to be.”

“There is so much potential here that will not be realized...these are future leaders, scientists, doctors, musicians, mechanics, even teachers, who don’t get to (become) what they want to be,” says Teachers Without Borders—Canada (TWBC) President, Noble Kelly. One Maai Mahiu school with 17 classrooms is bursting at the seams with 1,600 students; the teachers entrusted with their education are over-worked. Noble Kelly of Vancouver created the Canadian chapter in 2006 after a trip to Durban, South Africa, to help a friend care for some local orphans. The experience “captivated” him and he returned months later with computers for their school that were donated by his West Vancouver school. The necessity of setting up the computers led the computer science instructor to work with some of the South African teachers, most of whom, he realized, had little formal training or access to the professional development resources so readily available in Canada. From this came the recognition of the need for an organization that could provide mentors to those educators. TWBC is a membership-driven, grassroots initiative. Promotion and recruitment is generally through word of mouth and their website—

www.twbcanada.org. The hope is that those who participate and witness the need first-hand will then return to their communities and share their experiences and ideas, building a network with others who may then be motivated to participate. “Teachers will come back and want to do more global initiatives, want to connect their classrooms,” Kelly says. “Any NGO’s biggest challenge (is fundraising),” laments Kelly. Until a more sustainable model of supporting this kind of work is achieved, TWBC is dependent on individual and corporate/ foundation funding and grants. TWBC wants to recognize and thank the BCTF for one such grant that supported the BCTF members who were participants of the projects in Kenya and South Africa this past summer. Funding is not the only challenge, however. When TWBC researches an area to present their unique workshops, they must identify and partner with a reputable NGO that is familiar with the community and its needs. In the transient trucker town of Maai Mahiu, along the infamous AIDS highway, where 60% of the 30,000 residents are HIV positive, Comfort The Children (CTC) was that NGO. Part of CTC’s mandate is to promote education; consequently it was efficient to augment this CTC initiative. It is extremely valuable to have a reliable, long-term partner in the area to facilitate the follow-up needed. The workshops implemented

included strategies for primary and secondary school instruction through various teaching techniques and subject area resources. Reinforcing effective teaching/assessment strategies and building teacher confidence will ultimately benefit the children in those communities long after the Canadian volunteers have left. One major goal for TWBC is to build the capacity for Kenyan educators to be able to facilitate their own workshops by increasing the number of local facilitators in subsequent projects, while TWBC branches out to other communities. In addition to creating a localized professional development model, another goal is to facilitate lasting relationships between educators from around the globe and continue to mentor them by linking classrooms and communities via the Internet. Through these same means, Canadian students are also connected to their counterparts and informed of global realities. “If you are not integrating global issues into your curriculum,” asks Kelly, “then I question how small is your classroom?” “Even though we go with the intent of giving of ourselves, our resources, and our experience,” says Kelly, “we actually come back with so much more.” Accepting applications for this year’s projects soon. For more information, visit www.twbcanada.org or e-mail noble@twbcanada.org. *Greg Phillips, gp@sturdeephoto.com, edited by Larry Kuehn.*



A question

Taking social justice to the street

By **James Chamberlain**

Rarely, if ever, does anyone protest about anything in BC’s “Bible Belt.” I know because I grew up and was schooled there in the 1970s. Now, I’m a teacher who often wonders—what has changed? I was surprised, in October, when about 150 students from W.J. Mouat Secondary School marched down the street with picket signs in hand! They were protesting the Abbotsford School Board’s decision not to offer the elective course—Social Justice 12. Prior to September, 90 students from W.J. Mouat Secondary School had signed up for the course. The school board abruptly cancelled the course citing a variety of excuses and red herrings for their last-minute decision.

Where did the course originate and why all the fuss? The course was developed as a result of the Corren Agreement. It required that by 2008 an elective course, which covers topics like sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and gender be offered to Grade 12 students in British Columbia. The agreement was reached in 2006, after a long and protracted legal battle. In 1999, a human rights complaint was filed against the Ministry of Education by Murray and Peter Corren. It occurred in response to the ministry’s refusal to include sexual orientation among the factors educators should consider when implementing curriculum. The Ministry of Education tried many times to avoid the conflict, hoping the Correns and other anti-homophobia educators would simply disappear. They didn’t and after a comprehensive two-year consultation and curriculum development process, Social Justice 12 was born in 2007. Abbotsford quickly branded the elective as a “gay course.” Initially, concerns were raised over course content on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues. The school board was concerned about the community fit of the course and the objections of some parents with religious views who were opposed to homo-sexuality.

People have begun to point to some people’s thought processes as proof of the need for a course like Social Justice 12 to teach about acceptance of individual differences.

What they neglected to mention was that this is an elective course and no one was being forced to take it. Not one student would be “indoctrinated into the gay lifestyle” as some citizens openly feared and mused in the media. Currently, a healthy debate and discourse is occurring in the Abbotsford media about the origins of such attitudes. People have begun to point to some people’s thought processes as proof of the need for a course like Social Justice 12 to teach about acceptance of individual differences. **Censorship and shades of Surrey** Remember the Surrey School Board’s unsuccessful attempts to

ban books about same-gender families from classrooms? That court case went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and the school board lost. Perhaps Abbotsford trustees want the same degree of notoriety? Maybe they want to waste taxpayer’s dollars on censoring course content of provincial curriculum too? **Social Justice 12 is a ministry-approved course that covers a wide variety of social justice issues, not just LGBT ones. Therefore, school boards are not allowed to censor or remove course content at the whim of any group of parents or trustees.**

Social Justice 12 is a ministry-approved course that covers a wide variety of social justice issues, not just LGBT ones. Therefore, school boards are not allowed to censor or remove course content at the whim of any group of parents or trustees. If that were the case, some boards in BC might still be teaching that the world was flat or that creationism was the only theory about how the world came into being. In Surrey, trustees and board officials unsuccessfully argued in the courts that students were not old enough to grasp the concept of same-gender families as one form of family. The Supreme Court of Canada justices ruled seven to two that “Teaching of tolerance is always age appropriate.” Abbotsford officials are now proclaiming that the content of Social Justice 12 is too sophisticated for Grade 12 students. They say that the course is better suited for university students. SJ 12 was piloted in seven schools in different districts last year. If it was so darn difficult—how did the students who took it pass last year? Surrey and Abbotsford’s arguments are sounding oddly familiar.

Too little, too late Finally, Abbotsford officials raised concerns over the fact that the course had not been approved in time by the Ministry of Education for them to make a decision on offering it. Minister Shirley Bond didn’t buy their arguments, citing well-established and published timelines for the move to full implementation of the course in 2008–09. SJ 12 had been developed over a two-year period with input from all stakeholders. Neighbouring districts are currently teaching SJ 12 or offering it in January in semester-based schools.

Next steps in the dance While many of the province’s school districts are offering the new elective course in their secondary schools, Abbotsford School Board members are still waiting to make a decision on the issue. The board has said they pulled the social justice course due to concerns brought up by some parents, regarding not only the course, but the Corren Agreement itself. The W.J. Mouat students are not sitting idly by waiting for the board to act. They’ve been advised by the Abbotsford District Teachers’ Association to get a formal presentation ready for the board. I wonder what will happen next in this saga of social injustice. **Taking social justice to your local** Even if you don’t live in Abbots-

on of social justice

ford, take heart! You can make a positive impact by:

- lobbying your local union to pass a motion supporting the teaching of SJ 12 in your school district.
- making sure your school district offers SJ 12 in the upcoming semester in your high school.
- offering to teach SJ 12 if you are an English, social studies, or humanities teacher.
- informing your local union if you encounter any opposition to the course from your principal.
- telling students about this exciting new elective course and publicizing it in your school newsletter.
- checking out the MOE website and informing yourself about the real content of the course.
- asking local trustee candidates in upcoming elections if they would support SJ 12 being offered in your school district.
- voting for trustees who support inclusive education and oppose censorship of this course.

James Chamberlain is an assistant director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division.

The Abbotsford School District's decision to drop the Social Justice 12 course caused students to organize a social justice march and rally on December 6, 2008.

Is social justice really a pillar of our union?

By Dalal Kawas

The majority of the social justice resolutions that are brought to the BCTF AGM by locals fall into the category of public affairs. For the second year in a row, these resolutions fell off the 2008 AGM agenda and were sent to the Representative Assembly. The 2007 AGM was shortened and was a unique situation, so one could try to understand why these motions did not make it to the floor. However, because public affairs motions again fell off the agenda in 2008, one begins to wonder why. Is this a trend that will continue over to the 2009 AGM?

The 2007 public affairs resolutions were numbered 161 to 173, and in 2008 were numbered 189 to 202. In 2006 and 2007, they were placed last in the session in which they are to be discussed. The 2008 public affairs motions were placed after two other major motions that were going to require much debate. The first of these motions was on whether or not the BCTF should withdraw from the CTF. As you can imagine, and as those of you who were there certainly experienced, this motion took up a major portion of the session. When combined with the guest speaker, who was fabulous but took over an hour, this left little time for any other business to be dealt with.

For two years the Burnaby Teachers' Association's Social Justice Committee has put forward resolutions on stopping military recruitment in our schools, and on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. These motions were placed last among the public affairs resolu-



GLEN HANSMAN PHOTOS

Students organize and inspire in Abbotsford

By Glen Hansman

Thanks to the efforts of students and allies, a large crowd marched on December 6 against the Abbotsford School District's decision to drop Social Justice 12, the provincially-approved course that touches upon a wide range of issues—including the history of marginalization on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The BCTF, the BC Federation of Labour, and even the Abbotsford News (which had published a

number of letters to the editor decrying, for example, "the teaching that homosexuality [as] a healthy, worthwhile, viable alternative lifestyle which high school youth should feel free to pursue") have been urging the board of education to show leadership by reinstating Social Justice 12 in W.J. Mouat Secondary School—where over 90 students had originally been registered in the course, only to have it cancelled and replaced with a version of the course that omitted references to homophobia and queer identities. The school district's decision is questionable in light of the *BC Human Rights Code* and the requirement under 76(1) of the *School Act* that requires public schooling to be "conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles."

Originally planning for a Pride parade after the Abbotsford Board of Education withdrew the course pending a board review, the students instead decided to organize a Social Justice rally in conjunction with the Fraser Valley's Pride Society.

The event organizers called for the right to access uncensored education, and the right to be able to learn and develop in a non-judgmental and safe environment.

Hundreds ended up gathering at the University of the Fraser Valley's main campus to hear a variety of speakers—including Gregg, Meyer, and Kuipers, as well as Abbotsford District Teachers' Association President Rick Guenther and BCTF 1st Vice-President Susan Lambert.

All the adults who spoke expressed admiration for the youth of Abbotsford for standing up and bringing nation-wide attention to the actions of the Abbotsford Board of Education. The Social Justice 12 Integrated Resource Package can be found at

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/social_justice12/sj12irp2008.pdf.

The Teacher Guide, as well as *Making Space: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* can be found at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/program_delivery/ss.htm.

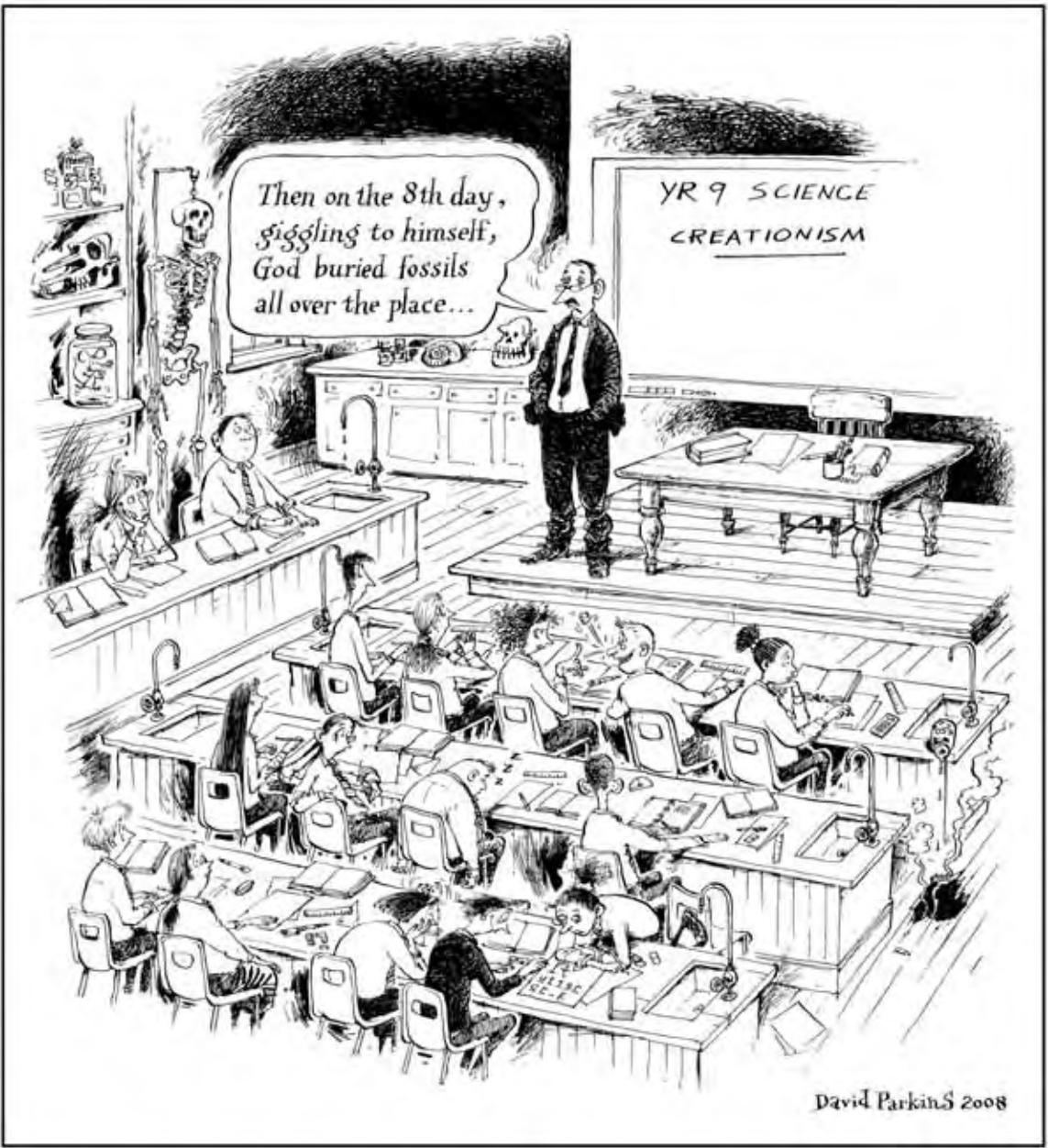
Glen Hansman is the President of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association.

tions, which were then placed last in an AGM session. Is it because that these resolutions were viewed as contentious by some of our members that they were positioned to fall off the agenda? If these motions do not come to the floor, then the issues can never be discussed by the AGM. The AGM is the highest, most representative decision-making body of our union, and is therefore the most appropriate body to deal with controversial issues.

Since these resolutions might be seen as controversial, the best place to discuss them is this most representative body of teachers in the province. And furthermore, it discourages and embitters union members who have spent many hours preparing resolutions, getting them passed at the local level, and interacting with reps from other locals to improve them, only to have all this work be brushed aside. Participatory activism at the grass roots level is the best guarantee that our union will remain strong and democratic, and we should always work to preserve that.

Let BC teachers have a say on where they stand on these social justice issues. Let's make sure that these social justice issues do not conveniently fall off the agenda, and let's insist that we are given the time to discuss them. Otherwise, how can we say that social justice is a pillar of our union?

Dalal Kawas teaches at Burnaby Mountain Secondary School and is co-chair of the Burnaby Teachers' Association Social Justice Committee.



Solidarity at the BC Fed

By Jane-Ann Kay

Attending the BC Federation of Labour Convention is an experience that I think every teacher should have at least once. For five days in late November, I attended meetings with union members from all walks of life at the Trade and Convention Centre in downtown Vancouver. There were steelworkers and healthcare workers, forestry-sector workers and social workers, teachers and nurses all ready to listen to each others' concerns and stories. We met to decide the priorities of the BC Federation of Labour for the next year.

With Jim Sinclair (president of BCFed) and Angela Shira (secretary-treasurer) at the helm, some key priorities for the BC union movement were hammered out for the upcoming year. Those that stand out are:

- working toward a livable minimum wage
- ensuring that migrant workers have safe working conditions and fair pay
- organizing a green jobs/green economy conference
- promoting a fair electoral system in the form of BC-STV (single transferable vote)
- opposing Bill 42, which places extreme limits on public interest advertising and communication in BC, leading up to the May 2009 provincial election
- supporting teachers in their efforts to get rid of the Foundation Skills Assessment tests
- encouraging the proposed national coalition government in response to the Conservative Party's financial plan for Canada that included taking away the right to strike for public servants until 2011. Needless to say, there was a lot of discussion, cries of

'shame, shame' whenever Gordon Campbell's name was mentioned, roaring cheers at the thought of a centre-left coalition government, and a rousing rendition of the union song *Solidarity Forever*.

I found the BCFed experience valuable because I had the opportunity to listen to the stories of other working British Columbians and learn a little more about the concerns in their industries and sectors. It increased my awareness of issues such as the export of raw logs in the forestry industry, the impact of public/private partnerships in our healthcare system, people trying to raise families on a wage of \$8 per hour, and the often deplorable conditions that migrant workers undergo to build our infrastructure.

Other highlights included an impassioned speech from Stephen Lewis about the HIV/AIDS epidemic and violence against women, a presentation on human trafficking by activist and artist Patsy Sorenson, meeting Vancouver's new progressive mayor, Gregor Robertson, hearing Carole James' first crack at her provincial election campaign speech, and listening to the grief-stricken words of family members of the migrant workers who were killed on the mushroom farm and in the van accident. I encourage every BCTF member to try his or her hand at being a delegate to the BCFed convention. Some may have found the sessions too long-winded, the speeches too biased, or the points of view too left-wing, but I learned much from the BC Federation of Labour Convention and left feeling motivated, disgruntled, annoyed, energized, and wanting to spread the words... Solidarity Forever!

Jane-Ann Kay teaches at Southlands Elementary School, Vancouver.



GEOFF PETERS PHOTO

Organizing to win: From the bargaining table to the ballot box

By Kip Wood

Canadian author and activist Naomi Klein recently said, "We are seeing the failures of laissez-faire before our eyes. It's time to say, your model failed. This is a progressive moment: it's ours to lose."

Indeed the feeling that our society is at a turning point was what the BCFed convention was all about.

The urgency felt by over 1,150 delegates at the 52nd annual BC Federation of Labour Convention (November 24-28, 2008) was what Klein was talking about. The economic crisis should be "an indictment of an ideology," said Klein. Indeed the feeling that our society is at a turning point was what the BCFed convention was all about.

Whether the discussion was about the safety of farm workers, the crisis in forestry, or the lack of childcare, the theme was the same. Our communities are the engines of our economy and we all have a role in being caretakers. The struggle to take back the vast "public commons" is what the labour movement is all about. As a member of the BCTF delegation for the fourth time in the past five years, I was proud to be part of the convention.

The defining moment was when Stephen Harper's "Economic Update" was announced to the convention. The proposed sale of public assets, cuts to public services, and rollback of collective bargaining rights were met with a chorus of dissent. Moments later, the possibility of a coalition government forming in Ottawa was received with a brief and passionate celebration. First anger, then applause! The lasting emotion, however, was "what now?"

Naomi Klein summed it up: "This is a progressive moment."

At the convention, like our AGM and rep assemblies, there are too many resolutions. Unlike our meetings, the convention has a resolutions committee that sorts and prioritizes. Resolutions that are dealing with the same issue are often "composited" into a single resolution. No resolutions are amended on the floor.

The format allows stories to be told at the microphones that reveal commonalities in experience. A profound sadness is shared by the delegates when stories of exploitation are heard over and over again. However, when you feel someone else's pain, the result is unifying. Standing ovations are frequent and the motivation required to engage in political action and continue the struggle is renewed.

When the 13 education resolutions went to the committee, a

collective decision was made to put the FSA at the top of the list. The value for teachers in attending the convention and one of the benefits of being affiliated with organized labour is that we gain a deeper appreciation for the issues that resonate with workers from other sectors. The school rankings published by the Fraser Institute undermine public confidence in public education. More than any other education issue, the FSA is important to labour activists because of the direct link to privatization. Whether it's the selling of water licenses (independent power projects), the contracting out of hospital services, or the export of raw logs, the issue of privatization and the loss of "community" is the overarching theme of the conven-

The value for teachers in attending the convention and one of the benefits of being affiliated with organized labour is that we gain a deeper appreciation for the issues that resonate with workers from other sectors.

tion. Not surprisingly, the BCTF received unanimous support for taking on the FSA when the following resolution was passed:

The Federation will call upon the

government of British Columbia to ensure that the Fraser Institute does not have access to Foundation Skills Assessment data, and

The Federation will support the BCTF in any actions they take to oppose the Foundation Skills Assessment Tests.

What about the opportunities in this time of financial crisis? What about a coherent economic plan for our province and our country? Ottawa devolved into a political and constitutional crisis the week after the convention and still there has been no substantive public discussion about the ailing economy. Will the privateering continue or will our collective thinking change the political ideology?

Concerns raised at the convention included the need for financial regulations and government oversight, the need for a new energy economy, and the need to rebuild the social infrastructure and safety net. Delegates talked about the importance of research and development, job creation, and secure pension plans. Resolutions came forward addressing the need for a national childcare program, a higher minimum wage, and a revision of the unjust Employment Insurance system.

The economic crisis has started conversations about a massive investment in the commons including public transit, affordable housing, and public school upgrades.

Keynesian philosophy is now permeating the discourse. Is this simply a "market correction" that society will endure before returning to the status quo? Or, is this a paradigm shift where there is no turning back?

The economic crisis has started conversations about a massive investment in the commons including public transit, affordable housing, and public school upgrades. Keynesian philosophy is now permeating the discourse. Is this simply a "market correction" that society will endure before returning to the status quo? Or, is this a paradigm shift where there is no turning back?

Being at the BC Federation of Labour Convention at this turning point in our history was breathtaking. Workers are organizing and preparing to seize the moment. This moment presents us with an opportunity—an opportunity that is ours, as a society, to lose.

Kip Wood is president of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association.

BCTF *Advantage*
Contest winner

The BCTF Advantage program ran a contest looking for stories about summer travel. This is the winning story.

Karibu! Welcome

By Kim Jonat

This past summer I took the opportunity to travel to Kenya with Teachers Without Borders Canada with 10 other Canadian teachers. For part of the trip, we facilitated workshops on teaching methodologies such as co-operative group learning, learning styles, assessment, and developing professional learning communities. Although I am a fairly new teacher to the profession having only taught for five years, the secondary and primary workshops were definitely a highlight of my career thus far. Professional development in Kenya is virtually non-existent so our arrival was like a breath of fresh air. The Kenyan teachers possessed a contagious energetic spirit.

Throughout the entire trip, I was amazed by the day-to-day challenges faced by the Kenyan teachers and even more so by their ability to look beyond these obstacles or improvise to get by. Most schools did not have electricity, all had water tanks and outhouses, and some had windows—although they were usually broken. There were no whiteboards, AV equipment, or overheads. No, there was a chalkboard and many eager students, sometimes four to five on a bench meant for two, peering up at the teacher. I was stunned at how hard the students studied for their upcoming examinations. I will never forget when the Kenyan Institute of Education's director of secondary education stated, "Exams are a matter of life or death in this country." Education gives people hope.

One of the most memorable parts of my trip came when we visited a Masai school on the Rift Valley floor. Three years ago the school consisted of a shady patch under a tree in the schoolyard where students would gather for the day's lessons. A lot has changed since then. The school now has three classroom blocks and a donated computer lab. The traditional songs and dances performed by the Masai students and the entire school were a testament to the pride they have for their school and their tribe. Kenyans' hunger to learn was never clearer than when I met a 28-year-old man who had returned to standard 5 (Grade 5) at this primary school to further his education. We continued our journey that day with the headmaster and one of his past pupils who is now in secondary school. She took us to her family's compound where we met her family, learned about the Masai peoples, and ate a traditional lunch cooked by her family.

Of course, any trip to Kenya is not complete without a safari! The wildlife and scenery was breathtaking. Elephants, lions, giraffes, and an array of other animals roamed the Masai Mara savannah. We were fortunate to play witness to the largest mammal migration in the world—the annual wildebeest migration.

I have taken away a myriad of memories that upon reflection seem a bit surreal. It's such a world of difference from here that it's hard to put into words.

Kim Jonat teaches at West Vancouver Secondary School, West Vancouver.

School seismic upgrades in BC a shambles

By Noel Herron

"As a result, the approved (BC) budget of \$1.5 billion will fall far short of the amount required to retrofit the at-risk schools identified in the original assessment."
— BC auditor general's report, December 4, 2008

It was ironic that on the same day the province's auditor general released a damning review of BC's foot-dragging on earthquake-proofing the hundreds of schools across BC that required attention, the news media revisited with graphic reports from Xiang'e's schools, in China's Sichuan province, the horrors of the devastation caused by last May's 7.9 earthquake in which 327 children and 16 teachers died when their schools collapsed.

Despite years of denial, empty promises, and shameless foot-dragging, the province's independent watchdog confirmed what most parents, teachers, and school trustees knew all along—that BC's seismic upgrading plan was a shambles.

It was doubly ironic that the same reports noted that heart-broken parents pleading for an explanation and an inquiry spooked the protest-averse Chinese government so badly that Beijing has never issued an update on the collapse of over 7,000 classrooms.

Despite years of denial, empty promises, and shameless foot-dragging, the province's independent watchdog confirmed what most parents, teachers, and school trustees knew all along—that BC's seismic upgrading plan was a shambles.

In 2005, the province's Ministry of Education promised to have 80 schools finished by 2008. To date, 32 have been completed, 31 are underway, and 17 are slated for construction.

In March 2005, then-Education Minister Tom Christensen held a news conference at Carleton Elementary School in Vancouver where he outlined the province's promise to upgrade schools, including 16 Vancouver schools that would be fast-tracked. "Planning for projects will begin immediately, with construction to start by 2006," the minister's news release promised.

These Vancouver schools are Strathcona, Laura Secord, Jules Quesnel, Carleton, General Gordon, Kitsilano, Kitchener, Moberly, Fleming, Nelson, Trafalgar, Douglas, Cook, Queen Mary, L'Ecole Bilingue, and Begbie.

Not one of these high-risk schools has, as of the writing of this piece, been completed and most haven't had any preliminary work done at all. Firm start dates have yet to be established—just empty promises.

But wait. Enter Premier Gordon Campbell, whose Point Grey riding in the west side of the city has been in a state of near parental revolt for six months due to an ill-advised threatened school closure by the Vancouver Board of Education coupled with provincial roadblocks to seismic upgrading in two schools in the premier's riding, and the pace clearly picks up with the opening of

a new school year. Bypassing the Vancouver board, the premier, it has now transpired, under the guise of a so-called new provincial project entitled "Neighbourhoods of Learning" (in reality this was the resurrection of the former and long-established Lower Mainland Community Schools project cancelled by the Liberals in 2002 but now repackaged) announced that seven Vancouver schools would be fast-tracked for seismic upgrading.

Never mind the fact that parent activists denounced the initial preferential Point Grey selection of schools as an "abuse of process and authority." With a provincial election in the offing, something had to be done in city schools where nine out of ten schools were officially designated as high or medium/high risk.

But what about the official reaction to the auditor general's report?

Education Minister Shirley Bond's ad nauseam comments about student safety being a "top priority" now have a hollow ring to them. When she blames spiraling costs and program complexity for Victoria's current off-the-rails plan, pleading that "we did not and could not anticipate what would happen in 2006 and 2007," she should think twice.

She should heed the advice from the auditor general about openness and transparency in dealing with stakeholder groups. She should also set up a "comprehensive risk management framework" within her ministry; something the auditor general noted is missing in Victoria.

Victoria should also develop and present a realistic plan for assistance to BC from the upcoming infrastructure infusion of funds—\$33 billion over seven years—from the wobbly Conservative govern-

ment in Ottawa in its January 2009 budget.

Promising once again that her ministry is committed to seismically upgrading all of the province's 747 at-risk elementary and secondary schools by 2020—when most analysts now estimate that it could take to 2045 and beyond, and will require a substantially revised BC budget—our grandstanding education minister should learn from the rubble and pain of Xiang'e's schools and stop gambling with our children's future.

Noel Herron is a former Vancouver school trustee.

Education Minister Shirley Bond's ad nauseam comments about student safety being a "top priority" now have a hollow ring to them.

Key comments from the auditor general's report

- "There is nothing more important than the safety of British Columbia's children." (Opening statement in response from Ministry of Education to Auditor General's report).
- "Southwestern BC is an earthquake environment similar to that of the coasts of Japan, Alaska, and Central and South America."
- "We visited a selection of boards of education (Vancouver, Greater Victoria, Comox Valley and Haida Gwaii) to learn about their seismic mitigation activities and to examine the boards' relationship with the ministry and other agencies."



At a recent all-candidates' meeting, Michael Watkins, co-chair of the Parent Advisory Council for Douglas Elementary School in Vancouver shows parents his concerns with these signs.

- "We plan to conduct a second review to assess how well the ministry and boards of education are implementing the Seismic Mitigation Program."
- "The ministry knows that the budget of \$1.5 billion for structural mitigation will not be enough to remediate all the schools included in its original plan."
- The ministry is not providing the public and stakeholders with information that would help them understand how program choices are made and form reasonable expectations for the program's implementation."
- "The ministry has not assembled its internal and external risk management activities for the program into a comprehensive risk management framework."
- "Effective public participation plays a key role in helping governments develop policies and programs that best reflect the public interest. It builds public confidence in the soundness of government decision-making and in the transparency and openness on how those decisions are implemented."
- "As a result, the approved budget of \$1.5 billion will likely fall far short of the amount required to retrofit the at-risk schools identified in the original assessment."

For the full report go to: www.bcauditor.com.

Province-wide overview of seismic risk in schools

	High risk	Moderate/high risk	Total schools
33 Chilliwack	4	12	23
34 Abbotsford	15	10	36
35 Langley	3	13	32
36 Surrey	26	14	66
37 Delta	3	15	29
38 Richmond	7	19	37
39 Vancouver	74	22	108
40 New West.	3	3	9
41 Burnaby	9	12	24
42 Maple Ridge/ Pitt Meadows	2	7	20
43 Coquitlam	29	10	54
44 North Van.	16	13	37
45 West Van.	1	6	17
46 Sunshine Coast	1	6	12
47 Powell River	2	6	8
48 Howe Sound	1	6	9
49 Central Coast	0	0	4
50 Haida-Gwaii/ Queen Charlotte	1	0	4
52 Prince Rupert	1	4	8
61 Greater Victoria	29	1	44
62 Sooke	3	5	15
63 Saanich	1	10	18
64 Gulf Islands	1	7	8
68 Nanaimo			
Ladysmith	11	14	39
69 Qualicum	1	4	8
70 Alberni	5	5	12
71 Comox Valley	7	4	21
72 Campbell River	1	3	16
75 Mission	0	4	15
78 Fraser Cascade	6	3	10
79 Cowichan Valley	9	13	24
82 Coast Mountain	3	6	20
84 Van. Island West	2	3	5
85 Van. Island North	6	4	13
87 Stikine	0	0	3
92 Nisqa'a	0	0	3
93 CSF/FEA	1	3	6

Provincial grievance update

By George Popp

All collective agreements between unionized employees and their employers contain a “grievance” procedure to handle disputes with respect to those employees’ working conditions, which are covered by our collective agreements, and legislation such as the *School Act* and regulation, the *Employment Standards Act*, or the *Labour Code*. In the case of teachers in BC, the BCTF as their bargaining agent is responsible for “carrying” grievance with the BC Public School Employers’ Association.

Most grievances arise in local school districts and may originate in local collective agreement language or in the local application of province-wide (provincial) contract language. Most such grievances are solved between the local teachers’ union and the school board. If not, then a dispute may be referred to the BCTF to take before an arbitrator or mediator.

Sometimes however, the BCTF may initiate or carry a grievance on behalf of all local teacher unions if the issue is one of general principle in the provincial articles of the collective agreement (such as access to information). In other cases, issues with respect to provincial contract language, which encompass a large number of school districts (e.g., class sizes and compositions), are also initiated by the larger Federation. Many of these also go before an arbitrator to adjudicate. The arbitrator’s ruling then becomes part of the contractual record. In the larger picture, such rulings also become part of the legal framework in labour relations around the province and the rest of Canada.

...BCPSEA has objected to our grievances on a number of grounds. e.g., that the thousands of violations should have been launched as separate grievances and that the BCTF cannot collect them into a provincial grievance.

Class size and class composition

The *School Act* Section 76.1 created a class-size limit for elementary and secondary schools and limits on the number of students with special needs who require an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Class size limits in grades K–3 are fixed and cannot be exceeded at



all (Kindergarten maximum is 22 and Grades 1–3 are 24). Class sizes for grades 4 through 7 are “firm”, meaning that teachers must give consent to have them exceeded. However, the limits in secondary classes require only consultation and an “opinion” that the learning situation is appropriate on the part of the principal and superintendent to be exceeded. While the class-size limits in K through 7 are “firm”, meaning that teachers must give consent to have them exceeded, the limits in secondary classes require only consultation and an “opinion”

that the learning situation is appropriate, on the part of the principal and superintendent, to be exceeded. Similarly only “consultation” and “opinion” are required to exceed limits on the number of students requiring IEPs.

The BCTF has initiated provincial grievances on class size and composition for 2006–07 and 2007–08, which have now been combined and moved forward to arbitration after failure to reach resolution at earlier stages of the grievance process.

The BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSE) has objected to our grievances on a number of grounds. e.g., that the thousands of violations should have been launched as separate grievances and that the BCTF cannot collect them into a provincial grievance.

Teachers there have bravely recounted the stress and frustration of working with large classes with inordinate numbers of IEP students (15 students with IEPs in one class) and have held up well under aggressive cross-examination from the employer’s lawyers.

Arbitrator James Dorsey heard arguments on the BCPSEA’s objections on September 2, 2008, and ruled on October 1 rejecting all of the employer’s objections and advancing the grievance to hearing its merits.



Subsequently, the BCTF and the BCPSEA met before Dorsey to determine how the very complex process would move forward. As there are thousands of classrooms that exceed the limits (both class size and the numbers of students with special needs), teachers proposed to deal with the grievance by selecting representative classes that showed typical problems with violations of the *School Act*. The employer (BCPSEA) wanted to take forward representative districts, as their argument was that we had to consider a whole district to show why class limits could and should be exceeded. The arbitrator ruled that we would take forward representative schools where classes were exceeded with a variety of situations. Also one school district was clearly in violation of district class-size averages and would also be dealt with. The Federation selected two secondary schools (Claremont in Saanich and Guildford in Surrey), two middle schools (Qualicum Beach in Parksville and Spencer in Sooke), and two elementary schools (Thornhill in Terrace and FJ Mitchell in Sparwood). A number of our colleagues in those schools have volunteered to act as witnesses representing the rest of those public school teachers whose classes are violating the *School Act*.

As of the Christmas break, hearings have taken place for Qualicum Beach Middle and Claremont Secondary schools. Teachers there have bravely recounted the stress

and frustration of working with large classes with inordinate numbers of IEP students (15 students with IEPs in one class) and have held up well under aggressive cross-examination from the employer’s lawyers.

BCPSEA’s position so far appears to be:

1. Only the numbers of IEPs need to be considered when determining whether the learning situation is appropriate. Grey-area students and other issues that impact the learning environment are not relevant, as they are not mentioned in the *School Act*.



2. Large numbers of IEPs must have been OK if the failure rate is low.
3. Courses such as electives Communications 11, 12, Essentials of Math, and PE can have lots of IEP students because that is the nature of the course. Class sizes need not be smaller in these situations either.
4. The workload on teachers is not relevant. The legislation does not deal with this.
5. Criteria, if any, as to what is appropriate is solely up to administration.
6. If teachers don’t ask for reduced class sizes or fewer IEPs then they are tacitly accepting the organization of the class.
7. It is not up to the administration to suggest alternatives or inform teachers as to what resources are available.
8. Teachers are responsible for finding out about their classes before the consultation.
9. Any discussion about a class (or potential class) even the year before is considered consultation.
10. If teachers have input (however minor) into timetabling then they diminish their right to complain about or grieve the resulting class organization.
11. If special education services exist in the school, that makes the learning environment appropriate, because teachers can send their IEP students there if they have problems.

Teachers are contending that the BCPSEA is encouraging the boards to violate the legislation or is at least not ensuring that they obey it.

The BCTF also launched a provincial grievance for this year (2008–09), realizing that violations of the *School Act* with respect to class sizes and compositions were planned and will occur (although we certainly hope that all classrooms will be within the limits as poor as those are). Although the government has shifted the onus on consultation to teachers, to date, thousands of teachers have enrolled in the grievance because their classes exceed the limits in legislation. No doubt thousands more will occur in the next semester in early 2009. Teachers are contending that the BCPSEA is encouraging the boards to violate the legislation or is at least not ensuring that they obey

it. Predictably, BCPSEA has also objected to this grievance on several grounds (some similar to the previous objections, another being that we were just anticipating violations and have no evidence that any have occurred). The BCTF has already met with the BCPSEA to attempt to resolve this issue.

In one departure from last year, we are nearly finished identifying the classrooms in violation and will forward an accounting of these classes to the employer to give them a chance to remedy the situations. In the event that they are unable or unwilling to do so, we will then be forced once again to the arbitration process. For the second semester we hope to further streamline the process to make it more timely and useful to teachers.

The Federation recognizes and appreciates the time and dedication to their profession and their students that this asks of our colleagues. We hope that all of our efforts to make our classrooms more suitable to learning and teaching will bear fruit. What is truly sad is that we have to “force” our employers to create appropriate learning environments.

What is truly sad is that we have to “force” our employers to create appropriate learning environments.

Elimination of Salary Category 3

Vince Ready, acting as the arbitrator in the period following our political action of 2005 determined that Salary Categories 2 and 3 would be struck from our contract and that the minimum salary category would then be Category 4. Some boards on the advice of BCPSEA used the levels of compensation from Category 3 to incorrectly calculate TTOC pay (as well as some other issues where Category 3 used to be relied on, such as early-retirement incentives).



Water travel to and from work

Some teachers are required to use ferries or water taxis to get to and from work on some small and/or remote islands. The collective agreement reached in 2006 contained provisions for reimbursing costs for a number of these and making arrangements for reimbursements for similar (analogous) situations not actually named in the original clause language.

After a number of mediation sessions with BCPSEA, mediated by arbitrator Judi Korbin, on the two above issues we have reached a resolution settlement that now sees TTOCs paid as was intended in the collective agreement and has teachers compensated for ferry travel if they are involuntarily transferred or laid off and must use ferry travel to retain employment.

George Popp is an assistant director, BCTF Collective Agreement and Protective Services Division.

Book review

The Secret of the Dance

Reviewed by John Boan-Mitchell

During the week Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered Canada’s apology to its First Nations survivors of the Indian residential school system, I shared with elementary students, the book—*The Secret of the Dance* by Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow.

The collaboration by the authors, Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow, has produced a very powerful book that sensitively portrays one aspect of Canada’s treatment of its Native People without relying on shock value.

The students were introduced to Watl’Kina, an eight-year-old boy, who in 1935, along with his family “...defied the government.”

Students, as young as 6 and as old as 12, were able to quickly identify with Watl’Kina and his family as they leave their winter homes and go off to a remote summer village to perform a Potlatch ceremony—a ceremony that had been illegal in Canada since 1885.

The collaboration by the authors, Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow, has produced a very powerful book that sensitively portrays one aspect of Canada’s treatment of its Native People without relying on shock value. The book is described as a fictional account of the childhood events of retired Judge Alfred Scow, a member of the Kwakwa’ka’wakw First Nation. Perhaps, it’s due to the learnedness of Judge Scow that the book does not resort to excessiveness to convey the plight of Watl’Kina and his people. In addition, as one would expect from a book from Andrea Spalding, careful attention to dialogue and description contributes to the effectiveness of delivery of the message.

The book worked well on so many levels with different age groups. In the beginning of the book, the Indian agent declares, “Dancing is against the law.”

For the primary students, the book provided an opportunity to discuss persecution and a people’s determination in their defiance to unjust laws. For the older elementary students, the book served as an introduction to a group discussion about the apology by Canada to its Aboriginal people. With the older students, I did have a couple of students report that they had grandparents who had gone to a residential school. Which is not surprising, as I later learned that British Columbia has the highest concentration of residential school survivors in all of Canada.

Darlene Tait, a Coast Salish artist, uses black and white contrasted dynamically with colour in the beginning of the story to portray the repression, but resilience of the First Nations people. The book ends as Watl’Kina as an old man, in current times, portrayed in vibrant colours, stands in the foreground of Native dancers welcoming guests and dignitaries to Canada. Watl’Kina reflects, “Life makes strange circles.”

John Boan-Mitchell is vice-president of the Cowichan District Teachers’ Association.

BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2008

President’s comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2008 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, expenditures exceeded revenues (a deficit) by \$0.6 million for the 2007–08 year compared to a surplus of \$1.6 million for the 2006–07 year. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures in the General Operating Fund (GOF) in 2007–08 versus 2006–07 which resulted in a GOF deficit of \$915,000 for the 2007–08 year (Schedule 1) compared to a surplus of \$617,000 for 2006–07. This change in GOF operating results was due mainly to increased expenditures for AGM, grants to locals, EC release and travel, and support staff contractual settlement provisions.

The Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) surplus was \$1.3 million for the 2007–08 year (Schedule 2) which increased the fund balance from \$9.9 million at June 30, 2007 to \$11.2 million at June 30, 2008. The improvement in operating results was due mainly to increased fee revenue as a result of the 2008 AGM decision to increase the CBDF fee allocation from .07% in 2006–07 to .09% in 2007–08.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund deficit was \$311,000 for the 2007–08 year (Schedule 4) which increased the negative fund balance of \$63,000 at June 30, 2007 resulting in a negative fund balance of \$374,000 at June 30, 2008. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures for zone meetings and grievance/negotiation training. Lower expenditures were budgeted for 2008–09 which should reduce the negative fund balance.

The Public Education Defence Fund (PEDF) deficit of \$627,000 for the 2007–08 year (Schedule 5) increased the negative fund balance from \$147,000 at June 30, 2007 to a negative fund balance of \$774,000 at June 30, 2008. For 2008–09, the 2008 AGM increased the fee allocation to .05% from .02% in 2007–08 to reduce the negative fund balance. In addition, the 2008 AGM approved a transfer of \$3 million in 2008–09 from the CBDF to the PEDF to cover the costs of the commitment to public education campaign.

At their January 2009 meeting, the Executive Committee will be considering the Finance Committee 2009–10 total fee recommendation of 1.445%, which represents a reduced fee of 0.005% (from 1.45% in 2008–09) but with a number of changes in the allocations to specific funds.

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund (SIF) reflect a deficit of \$5.9 million for the 2007–08 year (Statement 3) compared to a surplus of \$8.1 million for 2006–07. The adjusted fund balance has now decreased from \$77.4 million at June 30, 2007 to \$71.5 million at June 30, 2008. The \$5.9 million deficit occurred due to a \$14.3 million unrealized loss on investments as at June 30, 2008. With a significant fund balance at June 30, 2007, the SIF fee was reduced from 1.7% for 2007–08 to 1.5% for 2008–09 which represented a reduction of .31% from the “real” fee of 1.81% (needed to cover claim and administrative expenses), but a fee “holiday” was provided due to the significant fund balance. Due to the significant downturn in the economy and deterioration of investment values subsequent to June 30, 2008 year end, a significant deficit is projected in the SIF for 2008–09 which will substantially reduce the fund balance. The Income Security Committee recommended fee of 1.89% for 2009–10 (increase of .39% from 2008–09 fee of 1.50%) has been recommended to the 2009 AGM by the Executive Committee.

Irene Lanzinger

Auditors’ Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation as at June 30, 2008, and the statements of changes in net assets, operations 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, 2008 and the results of its operations, changes in its financial position 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.

Smythe Ratcliffe, Chartered Accountants, October 29, 2008

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

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Assets		
Current		
Cash (Note 10)	\$ 10,514	\$ 10,380
Marketable securities (Note 3)	6,137	6,063
	16,651	16,443
Membership fees and other receivables	3,975	3,841
Inventories and prepaid expenses	525	665
	21,151	20,949
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund	1,097	1,106
Capital Assets (Notes 5 & 6)	14,702	14,575
	<u>\$ 36,950</u>	<u>\$ 36,630</u>
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 2,846	\$ 2,920
Employee future benefit obligation (Notes 2 & 7)	5,502	4,527
SIP rebate (Note 10)	2,164	2,164
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1,292	1,221
	<u>11,804</u>	<u>10,832</u>
Members' Funds		
General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets) (Schedule 1)	14,393	15,309
Internally Restricted Funds:		
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	11,218	9,920
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	525	666
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	(374)	(63)
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	(774)	(147)
William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund (Schedule 6)	148	102
Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund (Schedule 6)	10	11
	<u>25,146</u>	<u>25,798</u>
	<u>\$ 36,950</u>	<u>\$ 36,630</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee

See Notes to Financial Statements

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

	General Operating Fund			Internally Restricted Funds				2008	2007
								(in thousands)	
	Operating	Invested in Capital Assets	Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	Contingency Fund	Provincial Bargaining Fund	Public Education Defence Fund	Other Funds	Total	Total
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 734	\$14,575	\$ 9,920	\$ 666	\$ (63)	\$ (147)	\$ 113	\$25,798	\$24,203
Adjustment to beginning balance (Note 2)	(1)	—	(46)	—	—	—	—	(47)	—
	733	14,575	9,874	666	(63)	(147)	113	25,751	24,203
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	(915)	—	1,344	(141)	(311)	(627)	45	(605)	1,595
Net change in capital assets	(127)	127	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Balance, end of year	<u>\$ (309)</u>	<u>\$14,702</u>	<u>\$ 11,218</u>	<u>\$ 525</u>	<u>\$ (374)</u>	<u>\$ (774)</u>	<u>\$ 158</u>	<u>\$25,146</u>	<u>\$25,798</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

STATEMENT 3		
Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 30,934	\$ 30,448
Transfer from Democratic College Fund	—	40
Net investment income	513	375
	<u>31,447</u>	<u>30,863</u>
Operating expenses		
General Operating Fund (Schedule 1)	28,422	26,378
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	1,087	1,062
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	384	169
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	733	364
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	1,041	849
Other funds (Schedule 6)	506	446
	<u>32,173</u>	<u>29,268</u>
Subtotal	(726)	1,595
Unrealized gain on investments (Note 2)	121	—
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ (605)</u>	<u>\$ 1,595</u>
See Notes to Financial Statements		

STATEMENT 4		
Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Cash flows from operating activities		
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	\$ (605)	\$ 1,595
Items not affecting cash:		
Depreciation	1,040	1,013
Employee future benefits	974	1,462
Unrealized gain on investments (Note 2)	(121)	—
	<u>1,288</u>	<u>4,070</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Membership fees and other receivables	(134)	(906)
Inventories and prepaid expenses	141	(272)
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund	9	(685)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(74)	(476)
SIP rebate	—	(244)
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	71	169
	<u>13</u>	<u>(2,414)</u>
Cash flow from investing activities		
Purchase of capital assets	(1,167)	(319)
Sale of marketable securities	—	1,101
	<u>(1,167)</u>	<u>782</u>
Change in cash	134	2,438
Cash, beginning of year	10,380	7,942
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 10,514</u>	<u>\$ 10,380</u>
See Notes to Financial Statements		

Schedule 1		
General Operating Fund		
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 27,399	\$ 26,966
Net interest income	87	29
	<u>27,486</u>	<u>26,995</u>
Divisional operating expenses		
Management	4,471	4,283
Communications/Campaigns	4,546	4,325
Finance and Administrative Services	2,717	2,553
Research and Technology	2,265	2,058
Income Security	241	235
Professional and Social Issues	4,782	4,309
Field Service	2,542	2,272
CA Protective Services	2,570	2,285
	<u>24,134</u>	<u>22,320</u>
Grants to Locals	4,288	4,058
	<u>28,422</u>	<u>26,378</u>
Subtotal	(936)	617
Unrealized gain on investments (Note 2)	21	—
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	<u>(915)</u>	<u>617</u>
Fund balance, beginning of year	15,309	14,692
Adjustment to beginning fund balance (Note 2)	(1)	—
	<u>15,308</u>	<u>14,692</u>
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ 14,393</u>	<u>\$ 15,309</u>

Schedule 2		
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund		
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 1,919	\$ 1,470
Net investment income	412	349
	<u>2,331</u>	<u>1,819</u>
Expenses		
Legal costs over GOF budget	915	800
CUPE strike support	88	—
Bills 27 and 28	37	—
Bargaining mobilization	29	100
Third party support	17	4
Bargaining strategy support	1	158
	<u>1,087</u>	<u>1,062</u>
Subtotal	1,244	757
Unrealized gain on investments (Note 2)	100	—
Excess of revenue over expenses	<u>1,344</u>	<u>757</u>
Fund balance, beginning of year	9,920	9,163
Adjustment to beginning fund balance (Note 2)	(46)	—
	<u>9,874</u>	<u>9,163</u>
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ 11,218</u>	<u>\$ 9,920</u>

Schedule 3		
Contingency Fund		
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 213	\$ 420
Net investment income	30	4
Transfer from Democratic College Fund	—	40
	<u>243</u>	<u>464</u>
Expenses		
GVTA prep time	145	—
Legal costs over GOF budget	116	84
Langley Commission	44	—
Sooke support action	37	—
Bills 20, 21 and 22	24	35
Bill 42	15	—
School closures	4	30
Bills 50 and 51	(1)	—
Lebanese teachers	—	10
Citizens for Public Power Society	—	10
	<u>384</u>	<u>169</u>
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	(141)	295
Fund balance, beginning of year	666	371
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ 525</u>	<u>\$ 666</u>

Schedule 4		
Provincial Bargaining Fund		
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 426	\$ 420
Net investment expense	(4)	(5)
	<u>422</u>	<u>415</u>
Expenses		
Provincial negotiations	733	364
	<u>733</u>	<u>364</u>
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	(311)	51
Fund balance, beginning of year	(63)	(114)
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ (374)</u>	<u>\$ (63)</u>

Schedule 5		
Public Education Defence Fund		
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30		
	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 426	\$ 630
Net investment expense	(12)	(2)
	<u>414</u>	<u>628</u>
Expenses		
Public education advocacy	1,041	841
Support for teaching and learning	—	8
	<u>1,041</u>	<u>849</u>
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	(627)	(221)
Fund balance, beginning of year	(147)	74
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$ (774)</u>	<u>\$ (147)</u>

Schedule 6				
Other Internally Restricted Funds				
Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the year ended June 30				
	WR Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund	Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund	Total 2008	Total 2007
	(in thousands)			
Revenue				
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 519	\$ 32	\$ 551	\$ 542
Expenses				
Grants	473	33	506	446
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	46	(1)	45	96
Fund balances, beginning of year	102	11	113	17
Fund balances, end of year	<u>\$ 148</u>	<u>\$ 10</u>	<u>\$ 158</u>	<u>\$ 113</u>

Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended June 30, 2008

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 1.7% of gross salary for the 2007–08 membership year (2006–07 was 1.7%). 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. Change in Accounting Policy

Effective July 1, 2007, the Federation adopted the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants’ (CICA) “Financial Instruments—Recognition and Measurement” standard, which establishes standards for recognizing and measuring financial assets, financial liabilities and non-financial derivatives. The new standard requires certain financial instruments to be recorded at their fair value.

Receivables are classified as loans and receivables, marketable securities are classified as held-for-trading and liabilities are clasdsified as other liabilities. As a result, marketable securities are presented at their fair value and the unrealized gain (loss) is presented in the statement of changes in net assets. This treatment has been adopted on a prospective basis with no restatement of prior periods.

c. 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.

d. Marketable Securities

Marketable securities are presented at their market values as of the closing of business June 30, 2008. At June 30, 2007, marketable securities were recorded at cost.

e. Inventories

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

f. Capital Assets

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

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

g. 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 date of the most recent pension valuation was January 1, 2008. 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. The date of the most recent non-pension benefit valuation was June 30, 2006.

h. 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. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectability of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, and the liability and expense related to employee future benefits. 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, 2008 was \$6,137,338 compared to a carrying value of \$6,063,128 (June 30, 2007 market value—\$6,029,860; carrying value—\$6,063,128).

4. MEMBERSHIP FEE

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2008 was 1.45% of the gross salary of each member.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:	2007–08	2006–07
General Operating Fund	1.31%	1.31%
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	0.09	0.07
Contingency Fund	0.01	0.02
Provincial Bargaining Fund	0.02	0.02
Public Education Defence Fund	0.02	0.03
	1.45%	1.45%

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

5. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2008 Net Book Value	2007 Net Book Value
			(in thousands)	
Land	\$ 4,430	\$ —	\$ 4,430	\$ 4,430
Building	12,736	(5,201)	7,535	8,010
	17,166	(5,201)	11,965	12,440
Renovations	851	(458)	393	392
Tenant improvements	973	(555)	418	503
Furniture and equipment	945	(392)	553	571
Computer hardware & software	2,490	(1,117)	1,373	669
	<u>\$22,425</u>	<u>\$(7,723)</u>	<u>\$14,702</u>	<u>\$14,575</u>

6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

	2007–08	2006–07
	(in thousands)	
General Operating Fund	\$ 9,054	\$ 8,534
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	5,648	6,041
	<u>\$14,702</u>	<u>\$14,575</u>

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

The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principle and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2010. Loan interest for the year 2007–08 was \$205,151.

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, 2008:

	Pension	Non-pension
	(in thousands)	
Fair value of plan assets	\$ 27,465	\$ —
Accrued benefit obligation	(26,854)	(18,793)
Funded status—plan surplus (deficit)	<u>\$ 611</u>	<u>\$(18,793)</u>

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

	Pension	Non-pension
	(in thousands)	
Benefit (recovery) expense	<u>\$ (401)</u>	<u>\$ 2,086</u>

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 healthcare cost trend rate at June 30, 2008 was 10%, decreasing to 5% after four years.

8. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

a. Fair Value

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

b. Interest Rate Risk

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

9.SALARY INDEMNITY FUND

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

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Total assets	<u>\$242,681</u>	<u>\$208,482</u>
Total liabilities	171,157	173,430
Fund balance, end of year	<u>71,524</u>	<u>35,052</u>
	<u>\$242,681</u>	<u>\$208,482</u>

A summary of the revenue and expenditures is as follows:

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Total revenue	\$ 55,331	\$ 55,748
Total expenditures	(46,936)	(47,623)
	8,395	8,125
Unrealized loss on investments	(14,254)	—
Excess of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ (5,859)</u>	<u>\$ 8,125</u>

10.SUBSEQUENT EVENT

The SIP rebate amount represents the balance of funds received from the BC provincial government, net of refunds issued to members to date. On October 23, 2008, the Executive Committee of the Federation passed a motion to transfer these funds into the Salary Indemnity Fund.

11.FUTURE ACCOUNTING CHANGES

Capital disclosure

The CICA issued a new accounting standard, “Capital Disclosures,” which requires the disclosure of both qualitative and quantitative information that provides users of financial statements with information to evaluate the entity’s objectives, policies and procedures for managing capital. The new standard will be in effect for the Federation’s 2009 year end. The Federation is in the process of assessing the impact of this new standard on its financial statements.

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, 2008 and the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance, 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 Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation as at June 30, 2008, 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 29, 2008

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

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Assets		
Cash	\$ —	\$ 438
Accounts receivable	4,523	4,994
Investments (Note 3)	237,726	202,515
Capital assets (Note 4)	432	535
	<u>\$242,681</u>	<u>\$208,482</u>
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Cheques issued in excess of funds on deposit	\$ 318	\$ —
Accounts payable	876	1,737
Due to General Operating Fund	1,096	1,105
Provision for claims (Note 5)	168,867	170,588
	<u>171,157</u>	<u>173,430</u>
Invested in capital assets	432	535
Fund balance	<u>71,092</u>	<u>34,517</u>
	<u>71,524</u>	<u>35,052</u>
	<u>\$242,681</u>	<u>\$208,482</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee





STATEMENT 2 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Changes in Net Assets as at June 30

	Fund Balance	Investment in Capital Assets	2008	2007
			(in thousands)	
Balance, beginning of the year	\$34,517	\$535	\$35,052	\$26,927
Adjustment to beginning balance (Note 2)	42,331	—	42,331	—
Excess revenue before unrealized loss on investments	8,395	—	8,395	8,125
Depreciation (net of deposits)	141	(141)	—	—
Purchase of capital assets	(38)	38	—	—
Unrealized loss on investments (Note 2)	(14,254)	—	(14,254)	—
Balance, end of year	<u>\$71,092</u>	<u>\$432</u>	<u>\$71,524</u>	<u>\$35,052</u>

STATEMENT 3 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Revenue, Expenditures and Fund Balance for the Year Ended June 30

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Revenue		
Membership fees (Note1)	\$34,636	\$33,895
Teachers’ share of employment insurance premium reductions	2,190	2,239
Investment income	18,505	19,614
	<u>55,331</u>	<u>55,748</u>
Expenditures		
Short term claims paid	10,287	11,004
Long term claims paid	28,827	28,135
	<u>39,114</u>	<u>39,139</u>
Decrease actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5)	(1,721)	(333)
Total claim expenditures	<u>37,393</u>	<u>38,806</u>
Excess of revenue over claim expenditures	<u>17,938</u>	<u>16,942</u>
Administrative expenses	8,456	7,868
Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6)	1,087	949
	<u>9,543</u>	<u>8,817</u>
Excess revenue before unrealized loss on investments	8,395	8,125
Unrealized loss on investments	(14,254)	—
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenditures	(5,859)	8,125
Fund balance, beginning of year	35,052	26,927
Adjustment to beginning fund balance (Note 2)	42,331	—
	<u>77,383</u>	<u>26,927</u>
Fund balance, end of year	<u>\$71,524</u>	<u>\$35,052</u>

STATEMENT 4 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended June 30

	2008	2007
	(in thousands)	
Cash flows from operating activities		
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ (5,859)	\$ 8,125
Items not affecting cash		
Unrealized loss on investments (Note 2)	14,254	—
Decrease in actuarial valuation of provision for claims	(1,721)	(333)
Depreciation	141	134
	<u>6,815</u>	<u>7,926</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	471	(481)
Accounts payable	(861)	1,160
Due to General Operating Fund	(9)	684
	<u>(399)</u>	<u>1,363</u>
	<u>\$ 6,416</u>	<u>\$ 9,289</u>
Cash flow from investing activities		
Purchase of capital assets	(38)	(75)
Increase in investment portfolio	(7,134)	(10,012)
	<u>(7,172)</u>	<u>(10,087)</u>
Change in cash	<u>(756)</u>	<u>(798)</u>
Cash, beginning of year	<u>438</u>	<u>1,236</u>
(Cheques issued in excess of funds on deposit) cash, end of year	<u>\$ (318)</u>	<u>\$ 438</u>

Notes to Financial Statements Year Ended June 30, 2008

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, 2008 was 1.7% (2007—1.7%) of the gross salary of each member as set at the 2007 Annual General Meeting.

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.

- Change in Account Policy:** Effective July 1, 2007, the Fund adopted the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants’ (“CICA”) “Financial Instruments—Recognition and Measurement” standard, which establishes standards for recognizing and measuring financial assets, financial liabilities, and non-financial derivatives. The new standard requires certain financial instruments to be recorded at their fair value.
Receivables are classified as loans and receivables, investments are classified as held-for-trading and liabilities are classified as other liabilities. As a result, investments are presented at their fair value and the unrealized gain (loss) is presented in the statement of changes in net assets. This treatment has been adopted on a prospective basis with no restatement of prior periods.
- Fund Accounting:** The Salary Indemnity Fund follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees.
- Revenue Recognition:** Restricted membership fees related to the Fund are recognized as revenue of the Fund in the year earned. Investment income on the Fund’s net resources is recognized as revenue in the year it is earned.
- Investments:** Investments are presented at their market values as of the closing of business June 30, 2008. At June 30, 2007 investments were recorded at carrying value.
- 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 10 years Computer hardware and software: 3 to 10 years Renovations: 10 years
- 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. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectability of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, claim expenditures, and the provision for claims. 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, 2008 was \$237,725,536 compared to a carrying value of \$209,648,969. (June 30, 2007 market value—\$244,846,294; carrying value—\$202,515,227.)

4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2008 Net Book Value	2007 Net Book Value
		(in thousands)		
Furniture & equipment	\$ 174	\$ (98)	\$ 76	\$ 68
Computer hardware				
& software	636	(424)	212	285
Renovations	381	(237)	144	182
	<u>\$1,191</u>	<u>\$ (759)</u>	<u>\$ 432</u>	<u>\$ 535</u>

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, 2008 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, 2008	June 30, 2007
	(in thousands)	
Short term claims	\$ 4,911	\$ 4,807
Long term claims	163,956	165,781
Total provision for claims	<u>\$168,867</u>	<u>\$170,588</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, 2008	June 30, 2007
	(in thousands)	
Increase related to current period	\$ 476	\$ 2,162
Decrease related to prior periods	(2,197)	(2,495)
Total change in provision for claims	(1,721)	(333)
Opening provision for claims	170,588	170,921
Closing provision for claims	<u>\$168,867</u>	<u>\$170,588</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

- 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.
- 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.
- Currency Risk:** The Fund owns certain securities that are denominated in foreign currencies and as such is subject to risk due to fluctuations in exchange rates. Currently the Fund is exposed to currency risk with respect to approximately US\$30,000,000 in marketable securities. The Fund mitigates this risk by using professional fund managers to manage foreign currency risk.

8. SUBSEQUENT EVENT

On October 23, 2008, the Executive Committee of the BC Teachers’ Federation passed a motion to transfer the balance of funds received from the BC provincial government for the Salary Indemnity Fund rebate program from the BC Teachers’ Federation to the Fund.

9. FUTURE ACCOUNTING CHANGES

Capital disclosure: The CICA issued a new accounting standard, “Capital Disclosures,” which requires the disclosure of both qualitative and quantitative information that provides users of financial statements with information to evaluate the entity’s objectives, policies and procedures for managing capital. The new standard will be in effect for the Fund’s 2009 year end. The Fund is in the process of assessing the impact of this new standard on its financial statements.

New BCTF lesson aids

1 LA EE306—Environmental Concepts for BC Classrooms by L.J. Environmental Consulting, 90 p. ©2002, Rev. 2008. This resource guide provides a range of environmental study topics in the form of individual fact sheets for each theme. The topics are divided by theme into six separate interactions. Each topic includes sets of facts, key points, common questions and answers and suggestions for “what we can do” to be part of the environmental solution, in addition to activities for students and reference and resource information. Recommended by the B.C. Ministry of Education. Grades 10–12. \$31.95

2 LA 2020—Education for All: Twinning Tools for Schools by Victoria International Development Education Association, 53 p. ©2008. This is a classroom ready guide for educators to help teach about access to education in the world. Includes information and instructions for twinning schools with schools in rural Zambia. The guide provides an overview of the challenges and rewards related to the achievement of universal access to education, and examines each major challenge in greater detail. A twinning activity for students is suggested at the end of each chapter which refers to the twinning reference pages at the back of the resource for more information. A downloadable version of the guide is available at <http://tinyurl.com/3nzqvc>, Grades 8–12. \$5

3 LA 3229—N'mahtahow: Mammal Tracks and Signs by Lisa Pugh, 77 p. ©2008. Designed for use inside and outside the classroom, the unit is focused on mammals. Aboriginal students will have the opportunity to feel a part of the curriculum and find science “come alive” by reflecting Aboriginal concepts and non-linear methodologies. The unit covers specific Aboriginal content in life science and earth sciences and most of the 27 lessons are integrated and cover many of the IRPs for language arts and math. Blackline masters are also included. Grades K–7. \$6.95

4 LA 8074—An Alphabet Adventure by Susan McCallum and Heidi Clark, 28p. ©2008. A combination of childhood imagination, whimsy, and a professional touch, this colour-illustrated small alphabet book was a collaborative effort amongst the Kindergarten students of Florence Nightingale Elementary, professional artist Susan McCallum, and literacy specialist teacher Heidi Clark. McCallum provided the class with numerous hours of art instruction and using her graphic artist skills, Susan formatted the students' illustrations and hand coloured them. Drawing inspiration from the illustrations, Heidi authored the text. The resulting effect is a vivid and mesmerizing story. This powerful collaboration resulted in inner-city children creating a viable learning tool for all students. Grades K–2. \$10

5 LA 8244—Teaching About Canada: Hands-On Activities for Grades 2 and 3 by Dianne Varty, 55 p. ©2007. This illustrated resource book includes hands-on activities and templates for a CPR train ride, a three-dimensional map of Canada, a provincial brochure, a newspaper, and a study of Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Grades 2–3. \$6.95

6 LA 9565—My World, My Choice: Food and Nutrition in My Community by Jim Wiese, 70 p., playing cards and DVD, ©2007. This resource package is produced by the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and includes a 70 page teacher's guide related to learning outcomes for science, social studies, and personal planning, a set of *Take a Bite* playing cards to match where food, plant, and animals come from, where they are grown in BC and where they belong in the Canada Food Guide, and a DVD with three BC Agriculture in the Classroom programs: the Sustainability Road Show, Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is, and Feeding Frenzy, plus video clips from the Metro Vancouver TV series. Grades 4–7. \$4

7 LA 9566—Food for Thought: Agriculture and Sustainability in the Lower Mainland by Jim Wiese, 63 p. and DVD, ©2007. This package is

produced by the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and includes a teacher's guide and DVD for learning outcomes for science and social studies. The guide was created to help students explore agriculture and sustainability in the Lower Mainland, as well as the relationship between agriculture, the environment and society. The DVD compilation has been developed to accompany the teacher's guide to support classroom teaching and learning about agriculture and sustainability. Grades 5–7. \$4

8 LA 9568—Salmon, the Environment and Society: An Education Module on Salmon Aquaculture in BC by Jim Wiese, 52 p. ©2006. This guide, produced as a joint project between the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, is designed to help students explore the many roles of aquaculture in BC including salmon farming and the relationship between salmon, the environment, and society. Grades 5–8. \$4

9 LA 2003—The Meaning of Life by Hugh Brody, 82 min., ©2008. This feature documentary and educational DVD looks at a very unusual prison, and at a fascinating model for rehabilitating prisoners—a collaboration between the Chehalis Nation of British Columbia and Correctional Service of Canada. Filmed over the course of two years at Kwikwèxwelhp (formerly known as the Elbow Lake Correction Facility), the film examines a different way to look at the concepts underlying punishment and rehabilitation and the idea that the current prison system can be significantly changed by including community in the process. Grades 8–12. \$6.95

10 LA F2018—Le concours Begbie d'histoire du Canada: de 11 ans à 15 ans, Subventionné par la Société de concours Begbie, 188 p. ©2008. Cette publication et LA 2017 -. « Le concours Begbie d'histoire du Canada: les dix premières années » s'efforcent de rendre l'histoire vivante, engagent les élèves dans l'analyse historique et leur permettent d'exercer des méthodes de réflexion critiques. La Société de concours de Begbie contient un grand nombre de sources de première main choisies avec soin qui permettent aux élèves d'exercer les qualités dont ont besoin les historiens (et les citoyens) quand ils doivent traiter l'information. Un index détaillé pour ces deux volumes permet aux enseignants de trouver rapidement un matériel divers concernant des événements tant majeurs que mineurs de l'histoire canadienne. Les stratégies associées à l'utilisation de ces documents sont groupées en fonction des différentes étapes de la méthodes historique: l'historien choisit un sujet de recherche, l'historien applique la méthode historique, le passé – la quête de preuves; le présent – l'historien, et l'historien rédige un document d'histoire. De la 10e à la 12e année. \$35

More curriculum resources and information are available at www.bcalmer.ca.

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

Lesson Aid contest

Enter to win a \$50 Lesson Aids gift certificate by joining the new public e-mail list—Lesson Aids Service Alert at bctf.ca/cgi-bin/maillinglistsub.pl on the BCTF website. This list will get you connected to all the latest buzz about new lesson aids, services offered, contests, and lesson aid specials.

Teachers' Pension Plan

Pension seminars

Thinking about retirement

If you are within five years of retirement, this free seminar, jointly presented by BCTF staff and BC Pension Corporation staff, is for you.

Your Pension/Your Future

Your pension benefits will be explained to you in plain language to help you understand how choices/decisions you make today can impact your pension income in the future.

Upcoming dates

Nanaimo—February 12 & 14
Victoria—February 21
Langley—February 24
Kamloops—February 28
Williams Lake—March 5
Prince George—March 7
Squamish—March 26
North Vancouver—March 28
Nelson—April 2
Cranbrook—April 4
Kelowna—April 18
Terrace—April 25
Surrey—May 2
Abbotsford—May 9

Pre-registration is required: on-line at tpp.pensionsbc.ca; e-mail tpp@pensionsbc.ca; telephone: Victoria 250-356-2466; toll-free 1-877-558-5574.

There's more to it than the money

The BC Retired Teachers' Association has developed a workshop for those of you about to retire.

The workshop is designed to compliment the Teachers' Pension Plan/BCTF Pension Seminar, but with limited class size to facilitate sharing and learning. It's a workshop—not a seminar.

Attend a pension seminar and you will realize that “there's more to it than money” and who better to share experiences with you than retired teachers?

Retirement living brings with it life-altering situations and a wide variety of choices, some financial, some legal, and all connected with life-style.

If a pension seminar is coming to your area, ask the BCTF local

president to contact the BCRTA to book this highly acclaimed follow-up workshop.

BCRTA contact information: Website: www.bcrta.ca. Telephone 604-871-2265; toll-free 1-877-683-2243.

Retired teacher list changes

The retired teachers listing in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher* has the following changes:

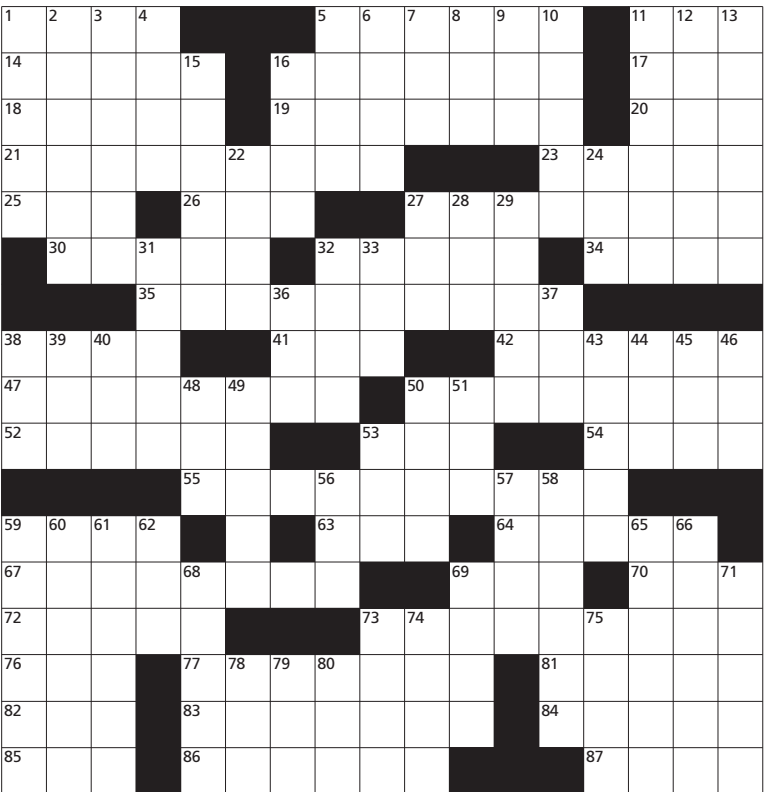
Alana Beefink (Shuswap) retired and was missed on the list.

Joy Brown and Michael Brown of (Richmond) reported as retiring have not retired.

The current Richmond retirees are:

Michelle Adams
Jeanne Brown
Marnie Brown
John Hudson
Angela Kelso
Lisa Macdonald
Sharon MacGougan
Carolyn Pfortmueller
Rod Smith

Crossword by Brian Porter (solution in March 2009 issue)



ACROSS

- 1 Cornrows in the movie “10”
- 5 Social encounters of a kind
- 11 Arboreal fluid
- 14 Clumsy
- 16 Girl of song's origin
- 17 Connecticut business institute once
- 18 It breaks in song
- 19 Backwards step
- 20 Between * and # typically
- 21 Priestly valediction
- 23 Cash for Nehru
- 25 Tunnel has two
- 26 Trap suffix
- 27 Teaching outpost on site
- 30 Lamprey foe
- 32 _____ Gay
- 34 Ascend in spirits?
- 35 Applicable information
- 38 BCTF presidents' conclave once
- 41 Vessel for tradesmen in rhyme
- 42 BCTF 'fringe' local
- 47 Extracurricular joy?
- 50 Salmon attribute
- 52 Wendy Macdonald in “Dark Side of the Moon”

- 53 Mercutio's speech
- 54 Box or knife-pleated garb
- 55 A place where very little is served
- 59 Current group
- 63 Opp of NNW
- 64 Lofty abode
- 67 Not the winners (2 words)
- 69 A test to be put to rest
- 70 BC once had 75
- 72 Greek peak
- 73 This procedure has steps you might skip all together
- 76 “The provos”
- 77 “_____ in good faith” (Labour Code)
- 81 Bar legally
- 82 Neo Nazi org.
- 83 UFC ring shape often
- 84 Peter or Paul but not Mary
- 85 A really big shew?
- 86 Oarlocks
- 87 End of summer fairs

DOWN

- 1 Ship's pump
- 2 Low tie
- 3 Fashion

- 4 The “British” is one
- 5 Oil cartel
- 6 Abnormal lung sound
- 7 Early genetic material
- 8 A student with special needs might require one
- 9 Dorothy's aunt and others
- 10 French actress Myriam
- 11 Darken the door
- 12 Past participle “to call” (Fr.)
- 13 Applesauce and mashed potatoes, e.g.
- 15 Plains dwellings
- 16 Dies _____
- 22 16 oz. poet's first name
- 24 Former Mid-East union
- 27 Home for lookalikes?
- 28 It teaches online
- 29 Hoffman role
- 31 British underground singer with the “Murderbirds”
- 32 Vesti ending backwards
- 33 Beak
- 36 Unit of energy
- 37 Common Guillemot more commonly
- 38 March madness?
- 39 Georgetti is its president
- 40 Tropical airport greeting
- 43 Gardener at times
- 44 Slugger's stat
- 45 Extension
- 46 Having said that
- 48 Sir Henry Thornton was its first president
- 49 Third largest city in France (var.)
- 50 Glut
- 51 Advanced degree
- 53 Hospital staffers
- 56 Many unhappy returns because of this condition
- 57 Second is one
- 58 They may fall or be taken
- 59 Kind of meadow
- 60 ‘Rough’ affirmative with of?
- 61 Super Mario Bros., e.g.
- 62 Average grade
- 65 Not at home
- 66 Blogging columnist from North Carolina
- 68 Automaton
- 69 Huck's handle
- 71 Fall months
- 73 Complex towering over a BC campus
- 74 Spanish waterways
- 75 Quickly, quickly
- 78 First word in a U2 title
- 79 Central Canada pensioners' grp.
- 80 Word before “Sal” in 1942

Honouring and bringing together the two worlds

The BCTF is recruiting Aboriginal teachers who are willing to present packaged workshops to Aboriginal parents. The topics include: Pulling Together, Finding Your Voice, and Breaking Barriers. These workshops are vital to the BCTF outreach to parents. There are many requests for the workshops but often we are unable to fill parent requests. We definitely require more Aboriginal teachers in the North Coast, North

Central, East Kootenays, Okanagan, and Vancouver Island (North & South) zones.

Workshop facilitators are given the opportunity to deliver these workshops in their districts and neighboring districts. The Aboriginal teachers currently delivering the workshops have been given positive feedback from parents. It is a great opportunity to help guide in the building of relationships between

the parents and schools. Teachers volunteering for this important role have any travel expenses incurred covered by the BCTF.

Training sessions will be made available. If you are interested, contact Marjorie Dumont, BCTF, 604-871-1854, toll free 1-800-663-9163, local 1854, or mdumont@bctf.ca for more information.

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PD Calendar

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MARCH 2009

6 Prince George. Educational Spring Fling: 5th North Central Zone Conference. Featuring: Ian Jukes (keynote & presenter,) Adrienne Gear, and Gary Anaka. Excellent variety of workshops for all grades and subject areas. Venue: Prince George Senior Secondary School. Brochure and presenter information will be available December 2008 at, www.bctf.ca/NorthCentralZone. Contact Deb Vandal at dvandal@sd57.bc.ca or 250-562-7214

7-8 Delta. Therapy and Choice Theory training. For registration forms and prerequisites call Educere Consulting at 604-946-1967 or djclifton@dccnet.com

12-13 Vancouver. Special Education Association's 34th annual Crosscurrents Conference will be held at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Keynote: Martin Brokenleg, Circle of Courage. Online information/registration: www.bctf.ca/sea Contact person: sfewster@telus.net

28 Surrey. The Adult Educators' (AEPSA) "Meeting Adult Students Needs" conference will be held at the Surrey Conference Centre. Contact Victor Guenther, AE president: victoriojameseducation@hotmail.com

APRIL 2009

3-5 Delta. Basic Intensive Week Training in Glasser's Choice Theory and Lead Management. Learn how knowing internal motivation theory can take the stress out of any classroom, administrative, or personal problem and help you to be creatively part of the solution. Call Daphni at Educere 604-946-1967 or djclifton@dccnet.com

4-5 UBC Campus. French and Spanish Immersion Weekend. \$350 includes tuition, three meals, and cultural evening. Accommodation is extra and is available on campus in the West Coast Suites. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the tuition fee. Toll-free 1-866-528-7485 or see www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/UBCweekend.pdf

15 Vancouver. BC Teachers for Peace forum "Education and Politics for a better world." MC: Mark Kelley, CBC news journalist, Speakers: Dr. (E)Manuel Rozental, human/indigenous rights activist, Adriane Carr, federal Green Party deputy leader, Clarence Thomas, longshoreman, closed US ports to protest war, Dr. Patricia Vickers, First Nations ethno-consultant (ancestral law, conflict resolution, mediation practices for positive change), Simon Child, youth recipient of Ghandi award. Langara College Newbury Theatre, Vancouver. 7:00-9:00 p.m. BCTF members \$25 includes a PAGE PSA membership; students, entiors and TTOCs \$10; current PAGE PSA members free. Contact Susan Ruzic sruzic@bctf.ca or Roz Johns, rjohns@bctf.ca

16-18 Coquitlam. Coquitlam Encompass Conference, 2009 Celebrating Social Justice to Creating Safe and Caring Schools and Communities. Keynote Speakers Dr. Donna Beegle, Kathy Lynn. Featured Speakers: Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Shelly Hymel, Dr. Lee Brown, David Bouchard, Ivan Coyote, Katy Hutchinson, Eekwol and a host of others. Registration info available Feb. 2009. Contact Chris King at pd43@bctf.ca or 604-936-9971.

18-19 Delta. Basic Intensive Week Training in Glasser's Choice Theory and Lead Management. Learn how knowing internal motivation theory can take the stress out of any classroom, administrative, or personal problem and help you to be creatively part of the solution. Call Daphni at Educere 604-946-1967 or djclifton@dccnet.com

24 Whistler. PITA's Supporting Struggling Students in Literacy and Math. Third annual. Learn practical strategies to support all students. Sessions focused for intermediate classroom teachers, and learning assistance. To sign up to receive more details go to www.pita.ca or contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca

29-30 North Vancouver. Capilano University, At Fast Forward Media Showcase you can preview the latest educational videos from 15 or more prominent Canadian distributors and several independent Canadian filmmakers. Attend sessions on the hottest topics in media today such as video streaming. To register or get more info visit www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd

30 Abbotsford. PITA's Year of Professional Support program for early career teachers. Workshop, Evaluation, & Celebration. Why prepare alone? Workshops to help you be more prepared and confident as you begin teaching. We provide practical strategies, 'ready to go' materials and web-based help. These workshops illustrate good teaching and strategies that are useful to all teachers. To sign up to receive more details go to www.pita.ca or contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca.

MAY 2009

2 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2009 12th annual conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Deadline for proposals March 6, 2009. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 for students.) Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building 2125 Main Mall UBC. Judy Paley, 604-822-2733, judy.paley@ubc.ca or visit epl.educ.ubc.ca/workshops.

2-3 Kelowna. The Cove Lakeside Resort. UBCO offers a French and Spanish Immersion Weekend. \$350 includes tuition and three meals. Accommodation at the resort is extra. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the tuition fee. Call 250-807-8177 or see www.ubc.ca/okanagan/continuingstudies

3-6 Winnipeg. DreamCatching 2009: Hands-on Workshops in Math and Science for Teachers of Aboriginal Students Theme: Connecting the Dots: Building a Pathway to Career Awareness through Excellence in Math and Science held at the University of Manitoba for more info visit www.dream-catching.com. Student rates are available.

Future October PSA days
BCTF procedure statement 30.A.14: That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Friday in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Friday would be the designated day.
2009-10: October 23, 2009
2010-11: October 22, 2010
2011-12: October 21, 2011
2012-13: October 19, 2012
2013-14: October 25, 2013
2014-15: October 24, 2014
2015-16: October 23, 2015

**PSA PD Day
October 23, 2009**

PD Calendar website:
bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx
Additions/changes:
msteele@bctf.ca

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For more information about the Social Justice program at the BCTF, go to bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx

