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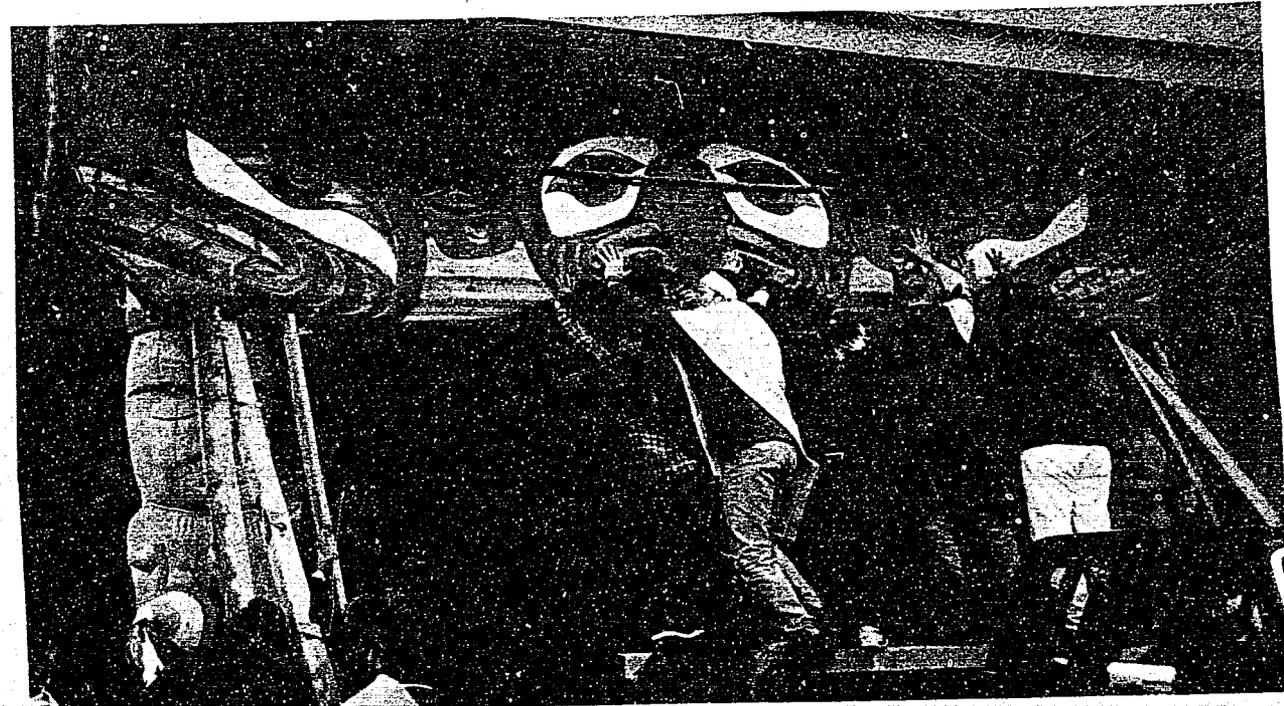
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PERMIT NO. 0038940499
Vancouver

Teacher

The cedar and the circle



Raising of the Welcome Figure, Howe Sound Secondary School, November 1996.

by Constance Rulka

It is the birthright of all children to have the assurance of belonging, to be given the mastery of certain skills, to achieve independence, and to experience the pleasure of giving by passing on to others those gifts that they have acquired. This keeps the circle moving. We all have broken lives at some time; but, so long as we can be absorbed back into the circle, we can be carried along by it toward healing.

That is the philosophy of Steve Van Bockern, a professor of education at Augustana College. He spoke to the school trustees in Victoria at their AGM, and he referred to this concept as "The Circle of Courage." He said that no one must be pushed out of the circle by society or education. All must be drawn in, whatever their age, culture, job, background. Everybody has a contribution to make and attitude and behaviour often depend on how far that contribution is allowed and accepted.

The First Nations who have acknowledged this long ago see connecting circles rather than barriers between youth and age, between differing beliefs, between people and

the environment, between the present and the distant past.

The cedar tree, on which the ancestors depended for so many things links them to their descendants...

The cedar tree, on which the ancestors depended for so many things, links them to their descendants, who still work it into canoes and paddles, totem poles, and houses. As part of creation, it also links people to all the living things that share the earth with us.

This has been made evident during the past few years in SD 48, as Sko'mish artists and artisans have been sharing their skills with students. The process has added a certain depth of spirituality, which is bigger than religion.

On February 5, 1996, a blessing ceremony was held in front of the Howe Sound Secondary School, as members of school and community came together to honour a giant tree that was destined for the new entrance to the building.

"We must receive it formally

into its new home and thank it for giving up its life to come and be with us. It will be not just a work of art but a living member of our community," expressed the beliefs of the Sko'mish Nation. Artists from that nation were to lead students in shaping the tree into its final form. One of them, when asked what that form would be, answered that the tree itself had some say in that, and would make its wishes clear as the work proceeded.

The shape it chose to take was of two welcoming figures—a male and a female—whose significance is two-fold. Not only do they welcome the general community into the new parts of the school, but they also welcome back those

The elders, the traditional storehouses of wisdom, now have a role to play in today's schools.

elders who were once alienated by lingering memories of the residential schools.

The elders, the traditional storehouses of wisdom, now have a role to play in today's

schools. They can come to watch their grandchildren carve the customary symbols of raven, bear, eagle, and salmon. They can make sure that the age-old ceremonies are carried out properly and that the legends are passed on. They can hear the language they were forbidden to use in their own school days being taught once more.

The young adults who have been teaching the language, passing on their skills and the heritage, are graduates from Howe Sound Secondary—to which they have returned to complete another circle. They are products of our public school system. They understand how it works, so they make an effective link between the elders and the grandchildren. Gwen Harry, one of the elders who remembers her experiences in a residential school, can watch her children working as part of the education team to ensure that aboriginal children do well there. Rick Harry, who has made a name for himself as an artist, is the master carver behind most of the projects.

On April 22, 1996, CBC and Japanese National Television interviewed students and

President's message



Kit Krieger

Our Federation's primary focus is on B.C. students, teachers, and schools. However, we recognize a broader educational community in our involvement in national and international teacher organizations and in the work of our W.R. Long International Solidarity Program.

In July, I attended the 2nd Congress of Education International (EI), in Washington, D.C. EI, comprising teacher unions from 150 nations, is dedicated to promoting the rights and welfare of the 22 million teachers in the member organizations.

The meeting provided a chance to talk with and hear from teachers from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Latin America. Common concerns include privatization, career education, limited opportunities for girls, access to and impact of technology, and the neo-liberal agenda that is curtailing all things public, including public education.

Millions of our colleagues around the world face problems that B.C. teachers can't imagine. Russian teachers seldom get paid as the government struggles to meet demands of the World Bank and IMF in its transition to a market economy. In many countries, teachers are jailed, tortured, and killed for involvement in their union. Tens of millions of children are denied even the most basic education and are child labourers. Millions more lack the most basic learning resources.

We must continue our focus on B.C. schools, but our privileged place in this world incurs responsibilities. A highlight of my time in Washington was to hear teachers from South Africa, Namibia, and Latin America speak of the value they place on the support they receive from the BCTF and its members.

The next issue of *Teacher*, celebrating World Teachers Day, will include an article on the BCTF's international programs.

MAI Concern

Many thanks to Murray Dobbin for his fine article on MAI. I have been concerned about this matter for some time, and was glad to hear that there is a temporary stoppage to this disastrous plan.

Our senior citizens' group here in Kaslo has been writing to our government representatives to urge their opposition to the attempt of this international group.

Please keep the teachers and retired teachers informed on this matter! I would hope that our Federation take a united stand against the plan, if it becomes necessary.
Kathleen Elder Kaslo

BCTF failed me

For years I planned to retire at age 56 (June 30, 1998)—"retire with dignity" while you still enjoy teaching. Retire with dignity because of improved pension benefits. These were personal aims I set for myself. The latter I sought and fought for through personal letters to three different education/finance ministers and letters to the BCTF. My letters to Anita Hagen (education minister, May 1992) and to Ken Smith (BCTF, January 8, 1993) even detailed early retirement based on the difference between retiree salaries and new-teacher salaries. Now, in the year of ERIP, the BCTF has failed me as an early retiree.

Pension improvements must be applied equitably. The pension gain made in 1994, i.e., 5% to 3% penalty for early retirees is applied equitably. The ERIP package of our last contract, in essence, should have meant all BCTF teachers age 55 and up would benefit if they chose early retirement. But as ERIP was applied by the BCTF, only a few benefited. Option 1 (the top-up option) was a ramrod job. A "top-up precedent" may have been established, but the result was the rich got richer and most of us got zilch! This is not an after-the-fact letter. You received my letter dated September 15, 1997, in which I expressed serious concerns regarding ERIP Option 1, and the inordinately short time frame given for local discussion.

The predominate consideration among those in the 55+ range who consider "before 90" early retirement, is the penalty clause. We knew that \$10 million wouldn't offer much relief from the existing penalty formula. However, it should have been applied equally to all those who took early retirement between April 1 and June 30 of this school year (1998). It wasn't. Even if

this meant only 1% in penalty relief for all who retired early, at least, it would have been applied in an equitable and fair manner. It wasn't. Under this suggested formula, the penalty suffered still hits harder at those with lesser seniority (at 85-86) than those with more seniority (88-89). Had you put forward the suggestion in my letter of September 15, all teachers who applied for ERIP would have, as equal members within the BCTF, been treated as equals. They weren't.

Retire with dignity—this I planned for. How interesting that, in the end, it is the BCTF that failed me, a proactive BCTF member who actively supported your request for pension reform.
Lyman Jardin Port Alberni

Plagiarism

I'd like to propose a simple but powerful idea to all teachers who assign research essays. Don't.

Assign an annotated collection instead. Ask your students to download, print out, and photocopy as much information as they can find on their chosen topic. Ask them to find common themes in the information and to physically cut up their information and reorganize it so that all information on any specific idea is brought together and juxtaposed. Ask them to highlight the key ideas and any contradictions or extensions they find to those ideas. Then ask them to summarize and comment on what they have found. Moreover, ask them to use the authors' names when they refer to their ideas and to use old sources as well as new.

What will result from this process? Your students will come to understand the value of scholarship and the limitations of their material. Even more important, they will begin to understand their role as that of fellow scholar, comparing and evaluating the work done by others, assessing what seems to be proven and discovering the unsolved scholarly questions. They will realize that research is evolving, especially if they include older materials, and that this evolution is integral to learning.

There will be no question of plagiarism. The source material will be right there in front of you. Moreover, the students' role is to summarize, to compare, and to evaluate, not merely to restate "in their own words."

Your students will develop their research skills and their ability to organize information. They will learn to limit their

topic. They will engage their subject.

The talented will even see, when they have finished, that they are just one small step from producing an essay of university quality. All they have to do is expand the summaries (being careful to cite the authors by name) and eliminate the actual source material.

A thorough investigation takes 12 hours or more, but every minute is productive. If your students keep a log of how they are spending their time, they will become more and more efficient.

The rewards are substantial, so instead of another research essay, assign an annotated collection.
Wayne Thom Sooke

Two-party system

The BCTF has a two-party system. All BCTF Executive members since the latter part of the '80s have been members of either Teachers for a United Federation (TUF) or Teacher Viewpoint (TV). For a decade, the ruling dynamic at the rep assemblies and annual general meetings is the maneuvering and tension between the two parties.

To an outsider, and over 40,000 BCTF members are outsiders, the parties seem to have only one purpose: to elect BCTF Executive members. With party "handlers" leading the way and party members organized to drag for votes, independent candidates have no chance.

When was the last time you saw a notice from TUF or TV to the teachers of B.C. telling us what they stood for and why?

It is my belief that even if the parties wanted to tell us what they stand for, neither TUF nor TV actually has stated goals or positions. It is apparently enough for them to be opposed to the other party. Therefore, they only react to events, because they have no stated philosophical base from which to be proactive. Because of the control of the BCTF Executive that TUF and TV have, the BCTF provincially also reacts rather than acts.

As a result, teachers in B.C. have the worst features of a party political system, and none of the benefits. Candidates must be supported by one of the parties, or they will not be elected. However, neither slate of candidates has to worry about defending their party's platform, because the parties do not have or disseminate platforms. TUF and TV candidates can concentrate on winning over the minuscule percent of the membership that goes to the AGM. Rank-and-file members can safely be ignored.

The party system will not go away. It is far too successful at electing candidates for that to happen. Until TUF and TV recognize their responsibility to develop and disseminate guiding principles and policies, the BCTF will continue to react rather than act. And that hurts all BCTF members, even the relatively few TUF and TV members.

Garth Holmes Williams Lake

Write to us

Letters to "Readers Write" may be edited for reasons of legality, taste, brevity, and clarity. To be considered for publication, they must be not more than 150 to 200 words, signed, and include a home phone number for verification.

4th Annual BCTF Beginning Teachers' Conference

February 12 & 13, 1999

Delta Pacific Resort Conference Centre Richmond

The conference provides opportunities to learn more about teaching strategies, about BCTF resources, and to experience practical "hands-on" workshops facilitated by other practicing teachers. Detailed information will be distributed to all schools in October and will also be available on the BCTF home page (www.bctf.bc.ca). Mark your calendars now, talk to your school professional development rep about funding.

If you have any questions, call Charan Gill or Barbara Preus 871-1839 or 1-800-663-9163, local 1839.

Let us know

Are you receiving more than one copy of *Teacher*? Some people have been receiving a copy of the newsmagazine at their home and one at their school.

Or, are you a retired teacher or a teacher on leave who no longer wishes to receive copies of the newsmagazine?

Please let us know, so that we can correct our mailing lists.

Ph: (604) 871-1876, Toll free 1-800-663-9163 (local 1876), F: (604) 871-2289, or e-mail newsmag@bctf.bc.ca

Teacher

Newsmagazine of the B.C. Teachers' Federation
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E-mail: newsmag@bctf.bc.ca
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Volume 11 Deadlines:
September '98 August 14
October '98 September 11
Nov./Dec. '98 October 16
Jan./Feb. '99 December 11
March '99 January 22
April '99 March 26
May/June '99 April 23

PRINTED IN CANADA BY MITCHELL PRESS LIMITED

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EdPress
A Division of International House of Japan

ISSN 0841-9574

Yours for the asking

Kids' Shop Smart

This program is designed for Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers looking for a resource and field trip that encourages healthy eating by putting fun into food. A team of dietitians, educators, parents, and primary students has developed the Kids' Shop Smart Program to promote the benefits of making healthy food choices. The program consists of teaching guides, classroom activities, and grade-specific materials. The main portion of the program is an interactive supermarket tour facilitated by a registered dietitian at local Overwaitea and Save-on-Foods stores. In the supermarket, the students are led on a food hunt and enjoy a sampling of a variety of foods in the produce department. Each student receives a booklet with more fun food activities, recipes, and nutrition ideas to share with their parents.

Kids' Shop Smart is free to teachers and is designed to meet the learning outcomes of the Healthy Living and Career Exploration segment of the Personal Planning Curricula of the B.C. Ministry of Education. For information, or to book a Kids' Shop Smart Tour, call 1-800-448-2118 or e-mail shopsmart@bc.sympatico.ca



B.C. treaty process

The negotiation of treaties with B.C. First Nations is prominent in the news. A 36-page booklet on the treaty process is available in class sets for any teacher who requests them.

The booklet is called "Understanding the B.C. Treaty Process: An Opportunity for Dialogue." It was produced by the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the BCTF, and the Tripartite Public Education Committee (federal and provincial governments and the First Nations Summit).

Free copies of the booklet are available from Anne Field, Research Department, at the BCTF: (604) 871-2251, afield@bctf.bc.ca, F: (604) 871-2294.

Computers for schools

Computers for Schools (CFS) is a nation-wide initiative dedicated to providing schools and libraries with usable, recycled computers at no cost.

The majority of hardware is equipped with DOS operating systems, 386 and higher. The 386 is still a valuable learning tool. Donations are accepted from the private and public sectors, refurbished by B.C. Tel Pioneer volunteers and given to B.C. schools. Since 1994, 7,500 computers have been donated across B.C. In May 1998, CFS-BC was awarded the Ethics in Action award for its work on behalf of B.C.'s schools.

For more information, or to request an application form, call Mary-Em Waddington, Science Council of B.C., (504) 438-2752 or 1-800-665-7222.

A vehicle for learning

The Sustainable Living Bus is a mobile education centre filled with interactive displays that demonstrate and promote environmental awareness and appropriate technology. The bus visits schools and communities throughout the province, offering a unique opportunity for experiential learning to students at every level.

Learn how to shrink your ecological footprint. See how people in El Salvador are using appropriate technology to cope with the effects of an ecologically devastating civil war. Visit the Virtual Ecocentre Web site, and link to other organizations that provide sustainable living alternatives.

Outside, solar panels and a wind generator provide renewable electricity for lights, a computer, and a water pump. Inside are elaborate displays on sustainable shelter, transportation, recreation, energy and water use, food security, and consumer choices. The walls are richly adorned with murals and photographs, and information panels accompany each station. Three knowledgeable guides are available to introduce and discuss sustainability, walk students through the bus, and propose courses of action so that change can be generated at home and in the community.

Contact the GAIA Project for details and booking. Ask about the upcoming newsletter. E-mail: gaia@islandnet.com, Phone: (250) 384-1534 or Fax: (250) 384-4212.

Winter holiday break teacher tour to Cuba!

Teachers from B.C. are invited to join an educational tour to Cuba for the December 1998 holiday break. The tour, hosted by the Cuban Teachers Organization, the SNECD, is being organized by Co-Development Canada in conjunction with the BCTF.

The first week will consist of lots of recreational time at some of Cuba's most spectacular beaches. The second week will include school visits, meeting with teachers and

teacher-training professionals at the Faculty of Education, and visiting historic and cultural sites in and around Havana. A highlight of the trip will be participating in the celebrations for the 40th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution on New Year's Eve!

Numbers will be limited. For details of costs and to make bookings, contact Co-Development Canada: (604) 708-1495, F: (604) 708-1497, codev@web.net

Partnership in Enhancing Teaching Practice

You have a unique opportunity to explore questions about teaching, have sustained conversation to deepen understandings of practice, and revitalize your work with inspiration and support from many sources. Your leadership in encouraging projects that focus on teachers as learners will benefit students, teachers, and the profession.

The BCTF, SFU, and UBC invite you to join our Partnership in Enhancing Teaching Practice (PETP), committed to supporting teachers engaged in collaborative, self-directed, and sustainable inquiry into teaching.

Partners will jointly develop and participate in a series of projects that focus on enhancing teaching practice. Cost-sharing will depend on program design. PETP is not a grant program.

Your PETP project might

- establish a facilitated study group within or across schools
- offer a field study course providing structure and credit for action research work
- work and implement a school-wide action plan
- create a mentoring program involving student teachers, beginning teachers, and/or experienced teachers

What could BCTF, UBC, and SFU contribute?

- mentor/facilitator training
- resource persons
- co-ordination
- consultation on program design
- university credit (option)

What could school districts and locals contribute?

- leadership
- project design and promotion
- release time for participants
- on-site organization
- allocation of resources from existing district and/or local PD funds to support participation

What could individual participants contribute?

- commitment to collaboration
- commitment to inquiry
- commitment to enhancing their own teaching
- time

How do you get involved?

1. Identify a focus for your PETP project.
2. Design a joint proposal in consultation with local/union, school district, and PETP partners.
3. Submit application by October 26, 1998, to:

PETP Pilot Project
c/o Nancy Hinds, BCTF
#100-550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
F: (604) 871-2291

Top 10 BCTF lesson aids

1 Science K-7 & Multigraded Classrooms: A supplement to the Science K-7 curriculum, Year A. Susan Martin, K-7 Science Co-ordinator, BCTF, 90p. ©1997. The writing team developed a two-year alternating program with topics unique to the combined classrooms as designed. These topics were developed from commonalities within the prescribed learning outcomes and context statements in the regular K-7 science curriculum. Developed for K/1, 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6 and 6/7 classrooms. LA 8551—\$8.75

2 Modified and Adapted Materials Database. A BCTF research project, 82p. ©1998. A collection of materials that can be used with elementary and secondary students who have learning difficulties. Some useful published materials are also included. The database is designed primarily for use on computer and can be accessed electronically at <http://www.bctf.bc.ca/MAM>, suitable for K-12. LA 9912—\$6

3 Creative classroom projects for integrating information technology K-7. Produced by the VSB, ©1997. Includes ideas for using the computer in the classroom or computer lab. It is a collection of classroom projects that successfully integrates the new information technology curriculum in Grades K-7. A variety of themes such as family, owls, explorers, riddles, Egypt and flight can be used. The package gives the teacher many ideas on how to plan computer activities around classroom themes. LA 2101—\$14

4 Multi-age classrooms. Produced by the National Education Association of the U.S., 96p. 1995. Six stories in this resource will assist the teacher team to inspire older students to be mentors; teach integrated thematic lessons; and eliminate retention in grade problems. Teachers will find out how to tailor the curriculum to a mixed-age group, foster co-operative learning, and capitalize on unique group dynamics to enhance student learning. LA PD163—\$16.95

5 Teaching to wonder. Carl Leggo, 144p. ©1997. Intended for secondary English literature teachers and teachers of creative writing and composition. This book is organized around a selection of important contemporary literary theories explained in accessible fashion and linked to teaching strategies in a practical way. It emphasizes contemporary poetry forms that are sure to engage young readers. Each poem is accompanied by a discussion of teaching techniques and suggestions for student activities: Grades 11 and 12. LA 1064—\$19.95

6 An adaptive spelling program for the inclusive classroom. Anne Marie Steele, 17p. 1997. This unit provides teachers with masters and ideas to design a teaching package. It was developed to assist students in learning to spell the core words they most need, and acquire basic spelling rules, yet provide for varied methods and amounts of practise depending on individual use. Included is a sample unit and worksheet template. Grades 1-7. LA 9911—\$3.75

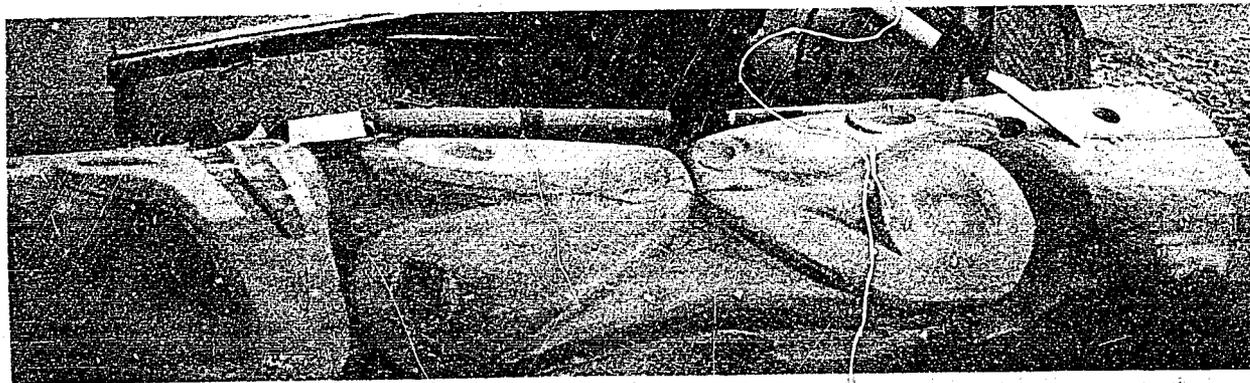
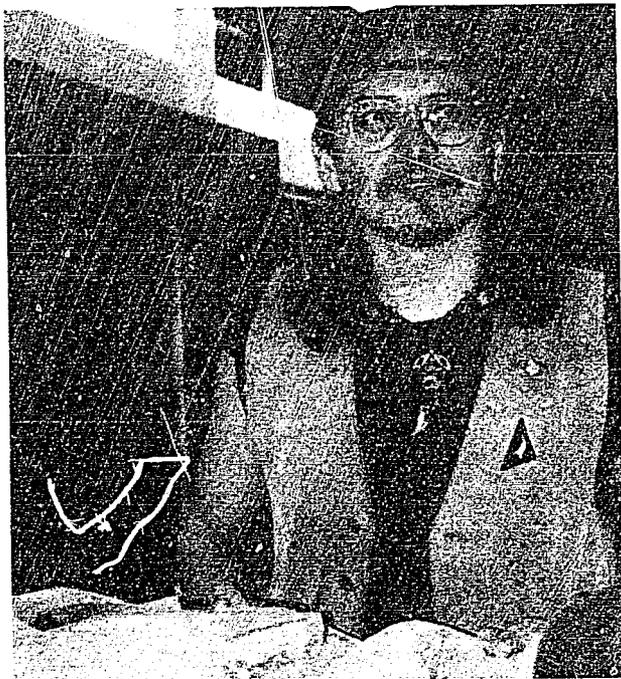
7 Novel study questions for intermediate students. Tina Drewes, 66p. ©1997. Includes chapter questions on looking for detail, general comprehension and critical thinking for these novels. *Banner in the Sky*, *Blubber*, *Christina's Ghost*, *Welcome to Dead House*, *The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight*, *I Want To Go Home*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Maxie*, *Rosie and Earl*, *Me and the Terrible Two*, *My Teacher is an Alien*, *Murder on the Canadian*, *On My Honor*, *Our Man Weston*, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*, *The Summer of the Swans*, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, *Tucker*, *The Westing Game*, *The Whipping Boy*, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, *Who Is Bugs Potter?*, *Why Would Anyone Have a Crush on Horace Beemis?* Grades 4-7. LA 9007—\$7.75

8 The joke's over—an interactive exploration of student-to-student sexual harassment in our schools. Produced by West Coast Education Enterprises Inc. For use with Apple Macintosh and Windows PC systems. ©1997. This interactive C D-Rom written by students for students, helps youth learn about and confront sexual harassment in their schools and communities. Grades 8-12. LA 2214—\$54.95

9 Robert Munsch books: An integrated unit for later primary. Sandra Holden, Rosemary Anderson, 26p. 1990. Includes story lesson plans that relate to primary goals. The lessons also contain whole language activities, *Math Their Way* activities, co-operative learning activities, higher thinking skills, a variety of experiences to include all children, and a bibliography with topic reference. LA 8053—\$4.75

10 The First Nations land question: A resource package. First Nations PSA, 1992. This book encourages greater knowledge and understanding of Canada's aboriginal people. It is a starting point for those educators who are concerned about social justice by providing teachers and administrators with resources that address some of the realities of First Nations people. Includes student activities and resources. LA 2618—\$11

For a complete listing of over 900 BCTF Lesson Aids, consult the catalogue in your school library or the Lesson Aids online catalogue. www.bctf.bc.ca/LessonAids
To order any of the above lesson aids, enclose a cheque payable to the BCTF or authorized purchase order to BCTF Lesson Aids Service, 100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2. GST and postage/handling are included in the prices. Orders are sent by return mail.



Top left: Rick Harry, Sko-mish Nation carving instructor, 1997.
Top right and above: Carving of the poles for totem hall.

charge for registration.

For further information, contact the First Nations Education Steering Committee. Phone (604) 990-9939; Fax (604) 990-9949; email: fnesc_cw@istar.com

B.C. Task Force on First Nations Education

Improving the way the public-school system serves students of aboriginal ancestry is the mandate of the new BCTF Task Force on First Nations Education. The task force will study the issues and listen to the views of BCTF members and aboriginal teachers, students, and communities. The annual meeting that called for the creation of the task force specified that the task force should report to the 1999 AGM.

The task force has identified three different groups of students as the focus of the report:

1. First Nations students who have status under the Indian Act and who live on reserves.
2. First Nations students with or without status under the Indian Act who live in urban areas, not on reserves.
3. Metis students.

The task force will study the relationship of aboriginal students to the schools, school climate, teaching practice, school programs, curriculum and learning resources, language, and culture. It will also consider actions that could be taken in relation to parents, First Nations communities, ministry policies and funding, governance, and teacher education. The focus will be on things that the BCTF can do itself or can influence directly or indirectly.

Anyone interested in making a submission is invited to do so. Submissions may be made through meetings organized at the local or in regions. They can be delivered at the First Nations PSA conference in Duncan on October 23-24. Individual task force members may be contacted. Submissions can also be sent to Larry Kuehn at the BCTF office.

The members of the task force are Geraldine Bob (Vancouver), Lexi Charlie (Cowichan), Alice Gro (Central Okanagan), Debbie Jeffrey (Prince Rupert), Carol McCauley (Prince George), Ian Stuart (Delta), and Merle Williams (Delta).

-Larry Kuehn

CEDAR from page 1

photographed them at work as they carved the welcome figures. The students who were interviewed said that the whole experience of working with the cedar had been a highlight of their school career. They had learned to handle tools and had come to understand wood. Best of all,

The First Nations students, especially, said that they felt this task had won them new respect...

they would be able, for years to come, to look with pride at the results of their handiwork and point them out to their own grandchildren. The First Nations students, especially, said that they felt this task had won them new respect and had helped them to find their place among their peers. More students became involved in

producing welcome figures for local organizations.

The same spirit had been driving work in the classroom for some time by then. On October 14, 1994, a party of teachers, trustees, and administrators had climbed into the 40-foot-long sea-going canoe to test the waters of Howe Sound. The canoe is a magnificent vessel and had been built specially to take a group from the Sko'mish Nation to the Commonwealth Games on Vancouver Island. It was a memorable voyage—but so was the little trip along the sound. This latter was intended to mark the launching of a new venture by Sko'mish Nation and SD 48 personnel working in collaboration.

The October trip was to celebrate the fact that the original ideas had been extended. The "Ch'kai Social Studies Curriculum Plan" had been drawn up for use in Grade 9 Social Studies classes. The course had 10 components, all of which

provided actual experiences rather than theory. For example, students pounded cedar bark to make baskets and clothing and they had to learn how canoes and paddles are made before going out in a vessel.

When Dale Harry was talking to a group of Grade 7 students during their cultural week some time ago, he passed on advice he had received from his father. It used both symbols—the cedar tree and the circle of heritage. His father told him, always to be like a tall, strong tree. No wind, however strong, can topple it; so long as its roots are firmly fixed in the earth. That earth is the culture, the traditions, and the family values that we have received from the past and hand on to the future.

Constance Rulka is a school trustee in the Howe Sound School District.

4th Provincial Aboriginal Education Conference—Transitions or Nexw7ay

"Transitions" will be the focus of a provincial Aboriginal Education Conference to be held at Whistler on November 8 and 9, 1998. The conference is sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Some examples of transitions that will be discussed include: home to school, community to school, childhood to adulthood, First Nation school to public school, out of school to return to school, secondary to post-secondary. Sessions topic will cover curriculum change, Aboriginal cultural awareness programs, the treaty process and much more. There will be a

Collective agreement puts teachers in schools

by Janet Amsden

It was good news for teachers-on-call in the last week of August as school boards scrambled to find classroom teachers, ESL teachers, teacher librarians, learning assistance teachers, counsellors, and special education resource teachers in time for September opening. Districts posted a large number of positions to meet the staffing mandates of the new collective agreement

the B.C. Legislature approved on July 30, 1998. During the summer, corrections to the staffing numbers districts had originally reported to the Ministry of Education on Form 1530 were finalized and by August 21, 1998, boards knew what funding they would receive.

Province-wide, the funding provided for the hiring of 174 Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers (116 more than originally calculated) and 362 non-enrolling and ESL

teachers this fall. In some districts, such as Richmond, this means 44.6 additional ESL teachers. In others, such as Vancouver Island West, it means an additional 0.122 of a Grade 1 teacher.

Staffing ratios and class-size guidelines in the new collective agreement mean that, for the first time, boards give locals staffing plans for each school and district that set out how the funds will be used. In this process, staff reps are essential to the implemen-

tation of the new positions. Without staff reps' verification of each teacher's assignment, locals cannot ensure that school boards meet the staffing requirements specified in the new collective agreement.

The positions created as a result of the 1998 collective agreement are in addition to the estimated 400 vacancies created by teachers taking advantage of the early retirement provisions (ERIP 98) in the 1996 Transitional

Collective Agreement. The net effect of the two agreements has been the creation of approximately 900 new openings for teachers. In each of the last four years, about 1,800 new teachers have secured teaching positions in B.C. If that trend continues this year, about 2,700 TOCs will have that job they've been waiting for.

Janet Amsden is an assistant director in the BCTF's Organization Support Division.

TOCs denied summer EI

"I can't believe I've been turned down for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits."

"I'm a single parent and I work as a teacher on call so that my children can have some basic mothering. But I have to support them during the summer!"

"I voted for this contract because of the EI clause for TOCs!"

Such were the complaints of the hundreds of teachers on call who were stunned to learn that they did not qualify to receive Employment Insurance benefits this summer. The B.C. Public School Employers' Association had advised boards not to comply with the language in the Agreement in Committee about reporting hours worked.

"BCPSEA's refusal to honour the EI reporting requirement is troublesome," said BCTF President Kit Krieger. "The action has hurt the most vulnerable and needy of their employees. It is a punitive measure that provides absolutely no gain for the employer."

He said that BCPSEA justifies its actions on the basis of a letter from a mid-level bureaucrat. "The requirement to report 9.1 hours is unambiguous, and there is no justification for reporting any other number," Krieger said. He indicated at press time that a grievance will be initiated, and TOCs will be advised on avenues to appeal adverse decisions on their EI applications.

The Agreement in Committee between the BCTF and the provincial government guaranteed that, for the purposes of EI, the employer would report 9.1 hours per day for TOCs—the same number of hours as would be reported for a day worked by a full-time teacher on a continuing contract. However, school boards reported only 7 hours per day for TOCs, and hundreds were denied benefits, some missing the qualification by as little as one insurable hour.

Since the January 1997 revision of unemployment insurance regulations, Employment Insurance has used insurable hours rather than insurable weeks to determine eligibility for benefits. "The purpose of the changes to EI was to ensure that fewer people would qualify," said Karen Harper, assistant director of BCTF's Income Security Division.

Under the Employment Insurance Act, teachers on call received an insurable week for each week in which they worked between 1.5 and 5 days. When the reporting was converted to seven hours per day, TOCs in B.C. were required to work five days per week to receive an insurable week. Boards in two other western provinces currently report more than 9.1 hours for TOCs.

The BCTF took the issue to the bargaining table, and the Agreement in Committee reached on April 17, 1998, raised the reporting of daily

hours from 7 to 9.1. Therefore many more of the province's TOCs believed they would have a summer income.

In June, when boards refused to honour the contract language and issue the contract Records of Employment that used the 9.1-hour figure, the BCTF advised TOCs to file their claims without the incorrect records. Employment Insurance denied the claims on the basis of insufficient hours, and shocked teachers experienced real financial distress.

Wayne Turner, Kamloops Teachers' Association president was closely involved with the plight of Kamloops TOCs this summer. Turner who also serves as member-at-large on the BCTF Executive Committee said, "This has been a real hardship for these beginning teachers who are underemployed through no fault of their own. Some of them are new graduates who are carrying heavy student loans. Others are working. We will support our most vulnerable members."

—Janet Amsden

BCTF Health & Safety Manual

by Lynne Sinclair

The new BCTF Occupational Health and Safety Manual should be ready this fall. It will be sent to all local and sub-local offices. There will also be an abridged version of the manual sent to all schools

... two major topics that are covered extensively in the manual: violence prevention and protection and indoor air quality...

and worksites of BCTF members.

The manual includes the following sections: Legislation, Basic OH&S Program, OH&S Committees, Workplace Inspections, Accident/Incident Investigations, Indoor Air Quality, Violence Prevention and Protection, WCB Claims, and Resources. Included are a number of helpful checklists and sample documents that will enable teachers and committees to focus on health and safety in an effective and efficient manner. In particular, BCTF members are asked to focus on two major topics that are covered extensively in the manual: violence prevention and protection and indoor air quality as they have been identified as the top two health-and-safety issues of teachers. This does not mean that other emergent issues are neglected or ignored, but is meant to help focus our efforts and help members learn about health-and-safety rules and regulations by dealing with discrete topics of concern.

The manual is a "work in progress" to be updated and amended through member and local input and because of

legislative changes. New sections will be added as needs arise.

The Workers Compensation (Occupational Health and Safety) Amendment Act was given royal assent this summer. Sections of the act will necessarily change certain sections of the current OH&S Regulation, mostly for the better. The legislation, arising out of the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation in B.C., is designed to improve the health and safety of workers. A review will be conducted by WCB to amend the current OH&S Regulation as necessary, and the BCTF

... the new legislation requires employers to provide eight hours of paid release time to members of the OH&S committees...

will be participating in that process to protect the health-and-safety rights of our members. The Amendment Act gives both the WCB and the lieutenant-governor-in-council regulation-making powers. Most significantly, the new legislation requires employers to provide eight hours of paid release time to members of the OH&S committees and clarifies that committee members must be given paid release time to prepare for the committee meetings and to attend them. Each workplace with 20 or more workers (counting all workers, not just teachers), regardless of hazard rating must have an OH&S Committee, and each workplace with 9 to 19 workers must have a health-and-safety representative. School boards vociferously fought these amendments, mostly through Liberal Education Critic April Saunders, but the government stood firm and adopted the legislation as proposed. The BCTF made a submission on the proposed "Refusal of Unsafe Work," as did many other unions and the B.C. Federation of Labour because the draft legislation seriously threatened one of workers' most important rights: the right to refuse unsafe work. The government

Workers who exercise their right to refuse unsafe work are protected from discrimination.

amended the proposed legislation to keep basically the current wording on refusal of unsafe work. Workers who exercise their right to refuse unsafe work are protected from discrimination. This is a big victory for workers and the union movement and for health and safety.

WCB is expected to reprint at least the *Core Requirements Book*, parts 1 to 4, as most changes are to this section of the OH&S Regulation. The reprinting will occur only after parts of the legislation are proclaimed (enacted) and the review has taken place. In the meantime, the current printed

OH&S Regulation stands.

This year, make the beginning of the school year a safe and healthy one by using the OH&S Regulation and the *BCTF Occupational Health and Safety Manual* to ensure the health and safety of all workers in the workplace. If we are healthy and safe, our students are, too. If the workers lead, the employers will eventually follow and fulfill the requirements of the law. School boards must have an Occupational Health and Safety Program that provides education and training to workers and eliminates or minimizes the risk of injury or illness. Advocacy of these rights and protections will be an important component of forcing school boards to fulfill their legal health and safety obligations. Some school boards have been implementing health-and-safety programs and attempting to reach compliance with the OH&S Regulation, and teachers and locals have been able to work co-operatively with them—that is the goal.

Lynne Sinclair is the BCTF staffperson assigned to Health and Safety.

Good luck and good health this fall. I will be a student again, breathing the quality of air that is at UBC, sitting in those ergonomically designed desks, and walking quickly to my car at night! I look forward to working with you again in April, upon my return from education leave, with my newfound knowledge and expertise in health-and-safety matters.

Mentorship in District 56 (Nechako)

by Pam Hachey

The mentorship program in School District 56 has been sponsored jointly by the Nechako Teachers' Union and the Board of School Trustees. Initiated to support novice teachers in two remote schools, it has served the teachers in the district since 1989. The program delivers support through orientation session, workshops on strategies and instructional methods, assessment, and even winter driving. The intent is to support teachers new to the profession, improve instruction to students, and improve the retention of teachers in an isolated area.

The program was negotiated through the collective agreement in 1990 to apply to all new teachers in the district. The board grants \$10,000 annually to the mentorship program. The funding and the structure of a joint committee of teachers and administrators attests to the board's commitment to support the program. The committee consists of the president of the teachers' union, the PD chairperson, two administrators as selected by senior administrators, and a mentorship committee chairperson, a teacher from the district.

Guidelines

- The program supports teachers new to teaching, and those new to the

district, in their first two years. It also supports those teaching a new course or in a new assignment.

- Funded are classroom visits to observe and be observed by a trusted colleague/mentor and time to meet with a colleague/mentor to organize curriculum and review local available resources, plan units/lessons, discuss strategies, and confer around evaluation and reporting.

The program is voluntary, and teachers may choose not to take advantage of it. Those wishing to have the opportunity may already have in mind a colleague with whom to work, or they may request that one be suggested. Often a teacher works with one colleague in one subject and another in a different one.

Support can be accessed up to three or four days a year per teacher. Travel expenses are 30¢/km within the district to visit other classrooms. A \$50/half-day honorarium is provided for meetings using personal time. TOC costs are paid for meetings during school hours.

The program has slowly gained recognition among teachers and administrators. It supports teachers mostly in remote areas and in specialty areas in secondary schools.

One of the challenges for the program is how to mentor a new teacher at a distance. Technology offers an answer via e-mail, faxes, and telephone.

An orientation session offers a ready support group for surviving the first two years of teaching. The orientation consists of an introduction to the district administrators and teacher union executive, a tour of the resource centre, initial contacts with special ed support staff, and an overview of district programs. Additional sessions have been offered in classroom management, reporting, motivation, and how to manage the multitude of tasks a new teacher faces. Experienced colleagues offer support, and local specialist associations offer support through workshops, meetings, and conferences.

Why mentor?

Mentors insist they gain much through offering their assistance, and research tells us that for a mentoring program to succeed, those involved should be volunteering willingly. Interpersonal skills and good communication are essential. Mentors should be active learners, encouraging best practice, facing challenges in education with a positive attitude, and encouraging the new teachers to continue to learn and grow by modelling in their own professional practice.

The benefits accruing from the mentorship program are apparent. Even as our district is amalgamating with another, struggling to meld two contracts, and facing a provincially negotiated contract, we want to continue this valuable program.

Pam Hachey teaches in District 91 (Nechako Lakes) formerly districts 55 and 56.



It's no more classes and no more teachers' dirty looks as Matthew Broderick (right) and Alan Ruck skip school to cheer on the Cubs at a home game at Wrigley Field in Paramount Pictures' "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." — Media release

Jeffrey Jones portrays the hapless high school principal driven to the edge of hysteria by the grandmaster of adult manipulation. — Media release

Tinsel town teachers: How to wag the dog in class

by Gavin Hainsworth

Dear Gavin,

Thank you for the opportunity to review your screenplay "Secondary School Daze." Your effort, although obviously informed by your direct classroom background, does not meet our production needs. However, despite your lack of screen-writing experience, your turn of phrase shows some promise. I have decided to give you some of the benefits of my over 25 years in the business, and offer you the following tried-and-true themes and scenes from the teacher-film genre. Staying within this template will make your script more likely not only to be picked up, but also to gather both critical and financial success. I suggest you rent the following films, readily available at your local video store; you'll quickly see the patterns I will describe:

Goodbye, Mr. Chips (1939), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *To Sir, with Love* (1967), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), *Teachers* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), *The Principal* (1987), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Lean on Me* (1989), *Dead Poets Society* (1989), *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995), *The Substitute* (1996), *In & Out* (1997), *187* (1997).

Collectively, these 17 films have garnered 22 Academy Award nominations (6 wins), 10 were among the top 20 money makers during their release year (with the 17 making collectively over \$800 million U.S. gross).

Screen teachers begin as youthful and idealistic

Most teacher films are variations on the same story—

beginning teachers launched feet first into the harsh reality of the new school. They are naive, idealistic and completely unprepared for what faces them. As Rick Dadier (Glenn Ford, *Blackboard Jungle*) states: "I want to teach. Most of us want to do something creative—a painter, writer, or engineer. But I thought if I could help to shape young minds, sort of sculpt young lives, that would be something." After being hired on the spot to teach a class of academy kids that had already dispatched five substitutes, *Dangerous Minds'* Michelle Pfeiffer's character states, "I guess Ms. Shephard's lesson plans will be in her desk." Their dreams may even include innocent ambitions like Mr Chips'. "It means everything to be here, headmaster at Brookwood. That's something to work for." They believe that "students will raise to our expectations and desire," Jaime Escalante (Edward Olmos, *Stand and Deliver*).

Screen teachers get cynical advice instead of professional mentorship from their colleagues

This fact is revealed in the staffroom or first staff meeting scene. Mr Chips is told that "the boys are excited by fresh blood...mustn't let them rag you...look out for drawing pins and tacks on your desk," and he is asked if he is athletically inclined, "not that they ever become violent with weapons or anything." A good model for the staffroom cynic is Jim Murdock (*Blackboard Jungle*). He is introduced working out on a punching bag, "getting into shape to defend myself for the fall term," because his school is "the garbage can of the education system. You take the worst kids of most of the other schools, put them together here, and you get one

big overflowing garbage can." "You can't teach logarithms to illiterates," says one teacher in *Stand and Deliver*.

Screen teachers always get the worst class

This truism is timeless, from the balls of paper flying (*Goodbye, Mr Chips*, 1939), through leather-jacket boppers (*Blackboard Jungle*, 1955), twistlers and swingers (*To Sir, with Love*, 1967), to gangster rappers (*Dangerous Minds*, *Stand and Deliver*, *The Substitute*, *The Principal*)—all long after the bell has rung. The desks are broken and vandalized, and the students are completely out of control. They are going through the file cabinets and the teacher's desk (*The Substitute*). There aren't enough seats (*Stand and Deliver*), which only partially explains why couples are sharing desks (*Blackboard Jungle*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Teachers*, *The Principal*). Any attempt to teach the first class is shouted down by the students who throw baseballs (*Blackboard Jungle*), beer cans (*The Substitute*), or books (*To Sir, with Love*, *Stand and Deliver*, 187). The bell to end classes always rings a few minutes after the one to begin, leaving classroom and lesson in tatters.

Screen teachers can count on little or no support from the principal

If anyone is of less help to the screen teacher than his/her class or colleagues, it is the screen principal. Principals are insulated within their office from the reality of the classroom and are incompetent, indifferent, or intimidating. Principal Eugene Horne (*Teachers*) runs back into his office when he sees two teachers fighting over the mimeograph machine, and he

knows neither who does the school's filing nor where the files are kept. Principal Warneke (*Blackboard Jungle*) is more concerned with the softness of teacher Dadier's voice than with the false allegations of teacher racism in his class or the repeated weapons infractions or the attempted rape of a staff member. "There is no discipline problem here, Mr. Dadier, not as long as I am principal here," he says. A death threat against a teacher is swept under the carpet by Principal Claude Rolle (*The Substitute*) because without proof of a direct threat he'd "have a lawsuit on his hands." Where screen principals use discipline, they go to sociopathic extremes. Principals Joe Clark (*Lean on Me*), and Rick Latimer (James Belushi, *The Principal*) patrol their hallways with baseball bats (that they are often called upon to use) as well as other management tools like verbal intimidation and threats used on students and staff alike. It is no accident that Rick Latimer is promoted to principal of his inner-city school after taking a baseball bat to his ex-wife's sports car—he has what it takes to turn a school around.

Screen teachers face an increasingly violent school environment in which they themselves must become violent to succeed

Mr. Dadier (*Blackboard Jungle*, 1955) fights attacks by his students in the alley and in his classroom, and he prevents a teacher rape in the library. Principal Rick Latimer (*The Principal*, 1987) not only has to fight an attack by five students in his library (whom he throws out the window), but breaks up a teacher rape by riding his Harley (labelled *El Principal*) to the rescue

down the hallway. With bike and bat, he takes down the crack dealers around his school and engages in a battle to the death. *The Substitute* (1996) takes on KOD (*The Kings of Destruction*), Miami's top gang, to avenge the intimidation of his teacher girlfriend, but to do so requires all of his mercenary training and the members of his paramilitary squad. The KOD are led by the school's principal, Mr. Rolle, who is using the school for a drug transit point. Principal Rolle shoots down students and teachers alike, saying to one young teacher, "I'm just doing you a favour" as he shoots him in the back. A final showdown with automatic weapons, grenades and bazookas is needed at the school to clean it up. The two remaining mercenaries resolve never to work at a school again.

Realism in teacher movies can get in the way of a good story (and, more important, market success). *Why Shoot the Teacher* (1976) is all together too realistic (it has only one fist fight and an unconsumed love affair), and too Canadian. You might want to abandon the teacher films genre all together and observe your students' more interesting lives for the tried-and-true coming-of-age film (like *The Breakfast Club* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*) where teachers can be safely characterized as buffoons and the butt of teenage pranks and inside jokes. Remember that Robert Donat's Mr. Chips beat Clark Gable's Rhett Butler (*Gone with the Wind*) for the 1939 best actor Oscar. Regards, and good luck! Stanley Motss (Producer), Wag-the-Dog Ltd., Hollywood, CA, USA

Gavin Hainsworth teaches at North Surrey Secondary School, Surrey

Why is Canada's dollar on the decline?

by David Robinson

As the beleaguered Canadian dollar continues its weak showing, politicians and economists are lining up to offer their remedies to revive the lacklustre loonie.

On one side of the debate stands Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who says the economy is strong and the dollar's drop is just a temporary aberration brought on by the Asian currency crisis. On the other side are the Reform and Conservative Parties, saying the loonie's dive can be halted only by sweeping tax cuts.

Both sides are wrong. The falling dollar, while clearly tied to the troubles in Asia, is symptomatic of a chronic weakness in the Canadian economy, namely, an over-reliance on the export of resources. The Asian crisis has sliced deeply into the global demand for resource commodities such as forest products and minerals; about 40% of Canada's total exports are resource-based goods.

Declining demands have hurt Canada's overall exports and our balance of payments with the rest of the world. In 1997, Canada's merchandise exports rose 8.6%; imports soared 18.7%. The result was a large decline in Canada's trade surplus and an overall increase in the balance-of-payments deficit to \$17 billion. That kind of net outflow of payments drives down the value of the dollar and makes investors nervous about the longer-term health of the economy.

As for the argument that the falling dollar can be rescued by a tax cut, there is no solid evidence that differences in taxation have any impact on exchange rates. The Canadian dollar has fallen in value not just against the American greenback, but also against most European currencies, where tax rates are equivalent or even higher.

Major tax cuts would likely worsen the situation by increasing the debt—which we are told makes investors nervous—unless accompanied

by yet more needless spending cuts. More cuts to health care, education, or social services will further slow economic growth and put a greater squeeze on provincial government finances.

Some who favour tax cuts also support the idea of simultaneously raising interest rates to prop up the sagging dollar. This would be folly, since higher interest rates would only slow what is already fragile growth in the economy. Nationally, unemployment remains stuck well above 8%, and statistics show that the economy has stalled in the last two months. Higher interest rates would have a particularly negative impact on British Columbia, which is already bearing the brunt of the Asian crisis.

One thing about which both sides in the debate have been silent is how the volatility of the dollar has been driven by international currency speculation. Daily, about \$40 billion in Canadian dollars changes hands on the currency markets. Canada's major banks, key players in this casino market, have been contributing to the loonie's decline by aggressively selling dollars abroad. The Royal Bank's foreign exchange revenues have risen to nearly \$240 million in the first six months of this year, an increase of 28% over the same period in 1997. Controlling this currency speculation would go a lot further toward stabilizing the value of the dollar than would cutting taxes.

There is no quick fix for the slumping dollar. In the short term, we should resist calls for increased interest rates or major tax cuts and take steps to curb currency speculation. But in the long term, we need to develop policies that encourage more economic diversity and lessen our dependence on volatile, resource-based export markets.

David Robinson is senior researcher with the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; <http://www.policyalternatives.ca>

by Guillermo Bustos

The BCTF is promoting a forum on French immersion on Saturday, October 24, 1998. The goal is to help define a provincial policy for the program and to ensure that it continues to be one of the finest examples of successful public education.

Among the partners invited are the Ministry of Education Modern Languages Branch, Canadian Parents for French, the Modern Languages Coordinators Association, principals and districts' senior management, Heritage Canada, language consortia, former students, and teachers' professional associations (ACPI, APPIPC).

Immersion has been present in B.C. for over 25 years. Some will remember the frenzy of the initial years: parents camped outside schools in order to ensure that their children were registered. During those good old days, generous federal grants enticed school boards into implementing immersion programs.

Discussions on national unity may have influenced registration in immersion programs. Some parents do not see the value in their children's learning French if Québec separates. Another

past motivator, the prospect of a career in the federal public service has less relevance through years of budget cuts. Tough economic times have tempted some school districts to close entry points or to try bizarre split levels that, at the secondary level, are a sure way to encourage students to drop out. Yet the stubborn resistance by groups like Canadian Parents for French and teachers associations has moved school districts to reconsider such measures.

In spite of all this, parents continue to register their children in immersion. Several metropolitan districts have reported that immersion is a program of choice among immigrants families. More and more parents value the learning of a second language. Learning French only makes sense to them if they live in Canada.

What makes French immersion such a success? First, it implies a high degree of parent involvement in selecting the program: ferrying children to the designated school, supporting their children's efforts to learn the curriculum through a second language, joining other parents in fund raisings and extra-curricular activities. Second, students have a high degree of ownership in

learning a second language; they determine how far they want to go. They also stay together as a class during most of their school years. Third, because resources are often scarce or dated, teachers of immersion have learned to improvise, adapt, and create. They have also associated in great numbers to foster professional development; at last year's national conference for immersion teachers in Victoria, 600 of 2000 B.C. immersion teachers attended, a high ratio, indeed.

The BCTF is conscious of the value of immersion education and of the challenges it faces. The forum promoted by the Federation will enable all educational partners to voice their hopes and concerns in order to provide the Ministry of Education with the necessary feedback. This, we hope, will help lift an immersion policy enabling enough to permit every community to pursue local goals but prescriptive enough to ensure parents, teachers and students that the program will not be subject to the whims of number crunchers.

Guillermo Bustos is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division.

Social justice: A new approach to social issues for the BCTF

by Rick Turner

One of the most controversial recommendations considered at the 1998 Annual General Meeting concerned the creation of an integrated social justice program at the BCTF. The vote was extremely close, it was carried by a margin of only ten votes, and revealed, apart from the contentiousness of the issue, the high level of interest and concern BCTF members have for social issues.

The Federation has a significant challenge now to preserve the accomplishments of the Status of Women Program and the Program Against Racism as well as the work of the Committee on the Rights of Children, all of which will end in June 1999. The goals of those programs remain an important part of the integrated social justice model. Concerns about gender equity, racism, and children's rights issues have not gone away, and for that reason the workshops, resources, and local initiatives relating to those issues will be part of the Social Justice Program.

The second challenge of the integrated program will be to find ways to effectively address the issues to which we have been unable to devote significant resources: poverty, violence, homophobia, and heterosexism.

The Representative Assembly has approved a budget for the Social Justice Program that will include a fall conference and training and zonal meetings for social justice contacts from locals. The primary goal of the conference and zonal meetings will be to develop ideas and actions to address social issues that locals can focus on and the Federation can support through provincial initiatives. The conference will establish a network of social justice activist teachers who will have a range of interests and concerns and committed to progressive social change that will build more equitable, socially secure and be safe, co-operative and sustainable communities.

An important feature of the new Social Justice Program will be a substantial local grant fund, almost \$200,000 for 1998-99. The fund will encourage locals to develop local social justice projects on issues identified by teachers in the communities in which they work. The projects could be related to race and social diversity, gender equity and poverty, or they could be part of local community development initiatives that address these and other issues as aspects of poverty and economic dislocation.

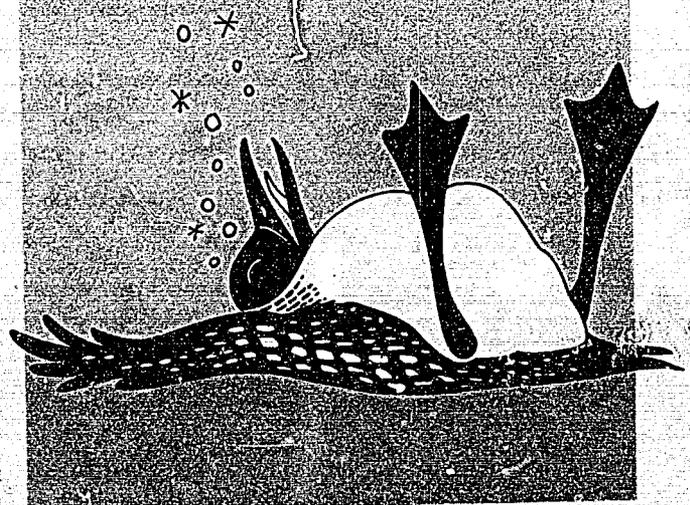
The new Social Justice Advisory Committee, which

will replace the Status of Women Committee, the Committee Against Racism, and the Committee on the Rights of Children had its first meeting in June. At that meeting, the committee established priorities and terms of reference and set criteria for local grants. The co-chairpersons are Susan Croll previously on the Status of Women Committee and Sandy Dore from the Committee Against Racism.

The committee established as a key priority working with locals to help develop local social justice initiatives. A workshop on working for social change and social justice in local communities will be available to locals as part of the Federation's training program.

Our primary goal is to develop a social justice program that connects provincial programs and local social justice projects to make the BCTF and its locals dynamic and effective participants in building equitable, non-discriminatory, sustainable, and safe communities—places where our children's lives will be defined by social justice.

Rick Turner is the BCTF Executive Committee representative to the Social Justice Advisory Committee.



Racist symbols

Racist symbols, like any other symbols, represent and produce emotions. Symbols have the power to make statements without using language. Symbols also serve as tokens of belonging to a group or affirmation of a certain idea or ideology. Teachers may encounter racist symbols in students' dress or in doodling or graffiti. What do you do when students wear, display, or draw racist symbols?

Confronting a racist symbol is not too different from confronting a racist remark. Once in a while a teacher may hear a student making a racist or bigoted comment about minorities or immigrants. A teacher may also come across a student's or parent's aversion to considering certain ethnic groups as fully Canadian or fully human. Depending upon the seriousness or the source of a racist comment, a teacher may choose to utilize it as a "teachable moment," or to take a more formal action such as reporting to appropriate authorities or seeking professional or administrative intervention.

A person's racial prejudice may be rooted in ignorance or misinformation. However, it could also be a product of red-neck anger or indoctrination. That a student shows a preference for military clothing or paraphernalia or that a student wears, displays, or repeatedly draws a Nazi symbol or some other hate-group symbol may indicate that he or she has been influenced by racist or other hate propaganda. On the other hand, a student may not even be aware that the symbol he or she is wearing, displaying or drawing is a racist symbol. It is also possible that a student is attracted to a racist symbol mainly for its design or artistic appeal. Therefore, before deciding upon an appropriate action, a teacher should investigate the nature of that involvement.

In any case, the first step to dealing with racist symbols is to be able to recognize those and be familiar with acronyms like JOG (Jewish Occupation Government), ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government), and RaHoWa (Racial Holy War). Some racist symbols such as the swastika or the iron cross are widely known. Others are relatively new or less known. As a recommendation from the Committee Against Racism and the BCTF Executive Committee, some of the current racist symbols are published here, courtesy of Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society.

Viren Joshi



Nazi Death Head/Totenkopf
Symbol of the Nazi SS Totenkopf-Division used today to project an image of racist violence, much like the SS Thunder Bolts.

Heritage Front
Symbol of the Toronto-based hate group. Once Canada's largest coalition of racist and fascist groups, the HF is still active despite many setbacks. The founders of the HF include convicted KKK felon Wolfgang Droege and CSIS agent provocateur Grant Bristow.



Hammerskins
The various Hammerskin chapters throughout the world use various designs with the crossed white hammers being the common symbol. Many use crossed hammers in conjunction with the flag of their country of residence.

White Aryan Resistance (WAR)
Symbol of the California-based white supremacist organization that has over the years targeted youth with a blitzkrieg of crude racist comics, pamphlets and TV shows. Founder Tom Metzger was found guilty of indoctrinating youth to commit a hate motivated murder.



SS Thunder Bolts
Symbol of the Waffen-SS, the most ruthless of Hitler's henchmen. Used today as a symbol to promote genocidal and fascist violence.

Celtic Cross
Symbol originally used for fascist purposes in the U.K. by the National Front (NF) and still displayed by racists today as advocating white supremacy.



Aryan Nations
Symbol of the Idaho-based Christian Identity organization dedicated to preaching hate under the guise of religion. The Aryan Nations armed compound is the site of numerous white power gatherings.

The Third Reich
This symbol of the Third Reich in Germany is also used by Hitler-lovers throughout the world.



Klan Blood Drop and Cross
Another classic symbol of the KKK worn on their white hooded Klan robes and on the lapels of suits. The Klan is the first and most enduring of the North American white supremacist movement.



Old Norse Rune
Symbol used by Nazis throughout North America and Western Europe. Runes are used to evoke magic and as a form of communication.



NSDAP-AO
Symbol used by NSDAP-AO, led by Garry Lauck of Lincoln, Nebraska, is one of the top producers of hate propaganda.



Rolling Sevens (777)
Symbol of the South African white supremacist Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB). Racists use this symbol to glorify systems of apartheid.



Our youth, racial violence, and building bridges

by Viren Joshi

Racism is a painful reality in Canada, in B.C., and in our towns. Yet many of us are unaware of, or unwilling to acknowledge, it. We hope that in time, it will quietly fade away. In spite of the fact that a number of proactive teachers and students are endeavouring to learn and teach the fundamentals of anti-racist education, within the last year, there have been many troublesome warnings to indicate that many of our youth could be racially motivated and be brutally violent.

... a senseless act of brutality... (the target) may have been any visible minority...

One warning was the racially motivated murder of a Surrey man on January 4, 1998. "If this man were white, he might still be alive" read the headline of *The Province*. Five young men between 17 and 25 are charged with beating the 65-year-old Indo-Canadian to death in a Sikh-temple parking lot in the early hours of the morning.

Citing the incident as "a senseless act of brutality," Surrey RCMP Constable Grant Learned said, "It (the target) may have been any visible minority or anyone from an alternate race or religion or ethnic background."

According to the RCMP, the young men charged with the murder are members of a local white supremacist group called White Power, which is aligned with other supremacist groups, including Northern Hammerskins and the Heritage Front.

About three months before that murder, in October 1997, the racial disturbance among the students of Cole Harbour District High School in the outskirts of Halifax captured the national media headlines when teachers, students, and parents were physically and verbally abused to such an extent that the school had to be closed for more than a week. On the school's reopening, hours were restricted to 08:20 to 12:30. The RCMP patrolled the halls, security cameras were installed, and security guards were instated. Six students were expelled, and criminal charges were laid against 17 people.

Throughout the school year, all concerned with the Cole Harbour High have gone through a soul-searching and problem-solving process. Anti-racism workshops have been introduced, and student mediators trained and put in place to start a racial-conflict-management program.

Another incident took place at the Cat Lake campsite near Squamish, B.C., on May 29, 1998, when 20 to 30 Squamish youth attacked the campsite of 16 Filipino, black, and Chinese youth visiting from Vancouver.

According to an RCMP spokesperson, it does not

appear that the visitors provoked the attack. A *Vancouver Sun* story (June 6, 1998) states that one of the visitors had a fractured arm, another had a broken jaw and a concussion after being struck with a shovel, one lost several teeth when hit by a log, one received a deep gash on his cheek, and one had a bottle smashed on his head.

Such racial incidents sicken the Canadian social conscience desiring to create an ethnically harmonious society. What negative forces are at work to misguide our youth into making superficial human differences the objects of prejudice, hatred, and violence? Is it shocking to learn from a Canada Press Newswire story (April 8, 1998) that an Internet service provider in Oliver, B.C. is "host to some of the World Wide Web's most virulent (racist) hate sites." The Simon Wiesenthal Centre consequently dubbed Oliver the "hate capital of Canada." In contact electronically with racist and hate propaganda, and susceptible to some adult racist attitudes, our youth desperately require some anti-racist education.

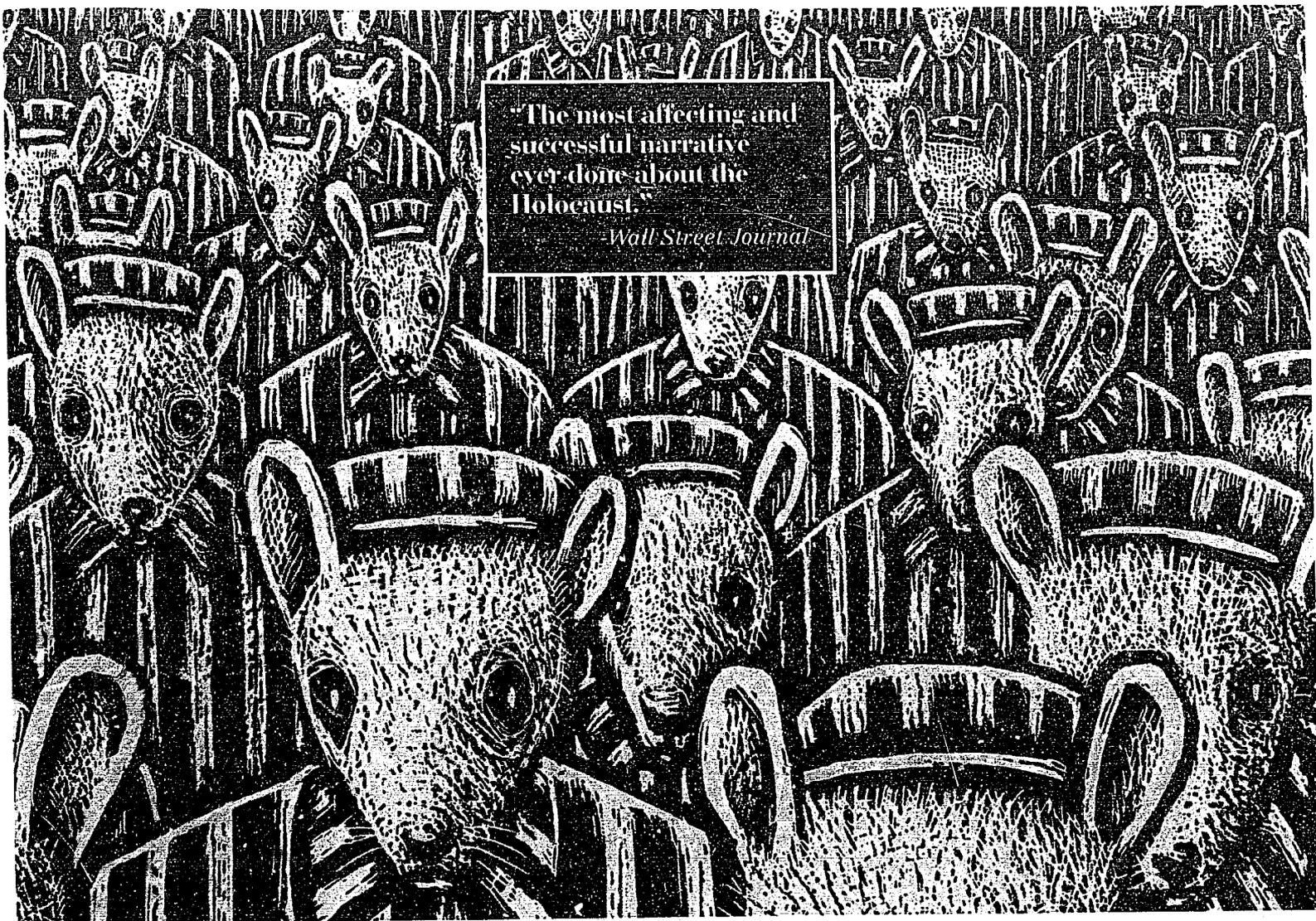
The BCTF has a fine record of commitment and endeavour to eliminate racism. Our program against racism has been envied by other teacher unions in North America and has won awards of distinction. Many individual BCTF members have addressed the issue of race relations on their staffs and in their classrooms. To empower youth for proactive antiracist work and to create safe-school environments, teachers have assisted in STAAR (Students Taking Action Against Racism) Camps and Racism-Free Schools initiatives.

On October 23-24, 1998, in Vancouver, 60 youths and about 300 adults including educators, parents, administrators, will participate in an anti-racist education conference called "Building Bridges, Not Walls," organized by CODE (Consortium on Diversity in Education).

... our ultimate hope for creating a racially harmonious society is through education of youth...

Information about the conference has been mailed to all schools. All teacher colleagues interested in multicultural and anti-racist education are urged to attend, meet like-minded people, and sharpen their knowledge and skills. Let's remember that our ultimate hope for creating a racially harmonious society is through education of youth, and we, the teachers, have a significant role to play.

Viren Joshi is an assistant director in the BCTF's Professional Development Division.



Teach critical thinking through historical problem solving

by Linda Clode

The seeds of the most horrific crimes of the 20th century are sown in the unresolved disputes initiated by the playground bully. These conflicts create initial combatants, opposing camps of supporters, residual resentment, scapegoats, the desire to justify an indefensible position, and escalating hostilities—in short, the very conditions despots use to solidify their hold on a population.

Students must understand—that playground disputes are but a microcosm of the problems of the world in general and can escalate. The difficult topic is a challenge for students. Few materials are both suitable and compelling. Fewer, still, are worthy of the investment in time such a topic deserves. Happily, *Maus* ably fills the void.

Maus, A Survivor's Tale, by Pulitzer-Prize-winning author and illustrator Art Spiegelman, is the story of the struggles that survivors of the Holocaust and their children face as they try to come to terms with their experiences in Hitler's Europe. The topic has been visited before, but what makes this two-volume set unique is that the characters are drawn in comic-book format. A comic book? About the Holocaust? Yes. And it works. Brilliantly.

The heroes are mice; the Nazis, cats. Other ethnic groups are represented by other animals. While the characters are depicted as animals, their behaviour is human. This very human behaviour allows the books to be studied on many different levels. The richly layered and mult textured book proves an invaluable tool in studying this important topic.

The comic-book format pulls the reader into the story, a complex tale that opens with the son in discussion with the

Historical problem solving moves the students to a situation in the past where they are asked to reconsider decisions that have already been made.

father about his life in Poland and during the war. The son wishes to hear about the captivity of the father. Chapter One introduces the reader to Artie and his father, Vladek, and Vladek's second wife, Mala. We learn that Artie's mother has committed suicide, that Vladek has a heart condition. Artie tells us that he is not close to his father and his father and stepmother do not get along. They argue



about seemingly insignificant things such as the use of a wire hanger or a wooden one. We learn that most of Vladek and Mala's friends are also survivors. All of this is revealed in the first six panels of the chapter.

Maus can be used in conjunction with many facets of the curriculum including English (memoir, narrative) and the visual arts. However, if students are to see the connections between behaviour today and events of the past, then creative problem solving in an historical context, or historical problem solving, is a particularly strong option.

The Osborne/Parnes creative problem-solving process of data gathering, problem finding, selecting the underlying or key problem, generating multiple solutions, evaluating the solutions, and creating a plan of action for implementing the best solution is an effective way to explore

current challenges for students in the real world. A variation of this method, future problem solving, is set in the world of the future and relies on students' making their best predictions in a world that is yet to be. Historical problem solving moves the students to a situation in the past where they are asked to reconsider decisions that have already been made.

This key difference between historical problem solving and the other two processes involves the analysis of the actual results of decision taken rather than the speculation as to what those results might be. Using their critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, students can propose alternative solutions to the decisions made in the past. Applying problem solving to history encourages students to see the importance of careful consideration of the problems facing the nations and to come to the realization that consequences of any decision are inevitable.

Students can then make the link from what was (Germany in the 1930s) to what is (rising incidents of hate crimes in British Columbia) to what could be (legislation to control freedom of assembly? censorship? citizen involvement? community intervention? programs to identify and

address bullies in schools?), and appropriate plans of action can be devised. An analysis of what makes a good society is integral to the study. Information gleaned from a thorough understanding of the

Students hone their thinking skills anchored in the reality of the past with the hope of positively affecting the future.

past allows students to propose alternative scenarios of what could have been done in the past as well as what might be done in the future. Students hone their thinking skills anchored in the reality of the past with the hope of positively affecting the future. *Maus* provides an excellent vehicle by which to do that thinking.

Linda Clode teaches social studies at University Hill Secondary School, Vancouver.

The exhibit, *Maus*, runs from October 15 to December 15 at the Holocaust Education Centre. To book school tours or borrow a classroom set, call 264-0499.

Troubled by assessment tests

by Donna Schiller

As the resource teacher for our school, I helped the students with special needs and had an opportunity to see the Grade 4 and 7 exams. When I realized that some of the reading passages were the same for both of those grade levels, I went looking for the Grade 10 PLAP. I find it incredible that Grade 4 and 7 students are expected to read the exact same pizza menu and answer the exact same questions as Grade 10 students! Two other reading selections are shared between the Grade 4 and 7 exams, and four selections between the Grade 7 and 10 exams. In all those cases, the questions posed are exactly the same. You may argue that there are different expectations for each grade, but the fact is that students feel that they should

...children become frustrated, and in some cases they shut down altogether...

be able to complete whatever you place in front of them. Thus, children become frustrated, and in some cases they shut down altogether for the remainder of the test. Anyone who does not realize this has a poor understanding of young learners.

The pamphlet to teachers says that the testing materials are written and reviewed by educators, but nowhere can I find a list of the names and districts of those teachers. Is that list available to the public? Did that list include any Grade 4 teachers?

Did they not think it strange that students across the grade levels should be asked to do the same work? Were they allowed to see the PLAP tests for all three levels? Were teachers really involved in the development of these tests?

- The first reading selection in the Grade 7 PLAP, entitled "The Quarter," is reprinted from *The Toronto Star Syndicate*. I am amazed at both the unrealistic reading level and the choice of passages. At least two stories referred to imperial measurements rather than metric ones.

- The readability levels for the Grade 7 passages are somewhat closer to being appropriate than the Grade 4 passages, but the levels for the Grade 4 tests are far too advanced. According to the Flesch-Kincaid, Coleman-Liau, and Bormuth readability scales, the reading selection in the Grade 4 practice booklet "Bats" has grade-level ratings of 10.1, 10.2, and 9.7.

- The reading selection on page 16 is reprinted from *Safety Guide to Cougars*, published by the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks, 1995. According to the three readability scales, that passage has grade-level ratings of 7.1, 10.2, and 9.5.

Surely someone made a mistake in including these passages in the booklet. People across B.C. pay heed to these scores when they are published. School trustees, parents, teachers, administrators, and others read the results of this testing, but seldom do they see the actual tests our children are given. Are ministry officials aware that these tests are inappropriate?

The writing assignment on the importance of home is inappropriate. For many children, "home" does not conjure up images of the best place to be.

I am disappointed in the whole process, and I am ashamed that I had any part in it at all.

As I stood before these students and tried to explain the relevance of these exams, I found it difficult to look them in the eye. More than once I was tempted to throw the PLAPs in the garbage and not do them at all. Perhaps the people who devise the exams should also administer them and watch as normally competent students break down in tears of frustration. As an educator, I have a responsibility to nurture and empower these children to be the best they can be. It is not my place to give students work so obviously beyond their capabilities that they go home wondering what hit them.

I am disappointed in the whole process, and I am ashamed that I had any part in it at all. Surely I cannot be the only educator who had profound concerns with these tests. Many of the educators I talk to do the PLAP tests under duress, not because they approve of them.

Donna Schiller is a learning assistance/resource teacher at Cache Creek Elementary School, Cache Creek.

Inordinately great expectations?

by David Denyer

Within the K-7 area are seven Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs), either implemented or about to be implemented, with two more to follow within a year. The documents, often running over 200 pages, contain around 300 learning outcomes for the Grade 2/3 span and define the mandated provincial curriculum. Given this overwhelming amount of material and the obligatory half day of in-service education per IRP (the norm in our district), teachers feel overburdened, unsupported, powerless, and unable to meet the public expectation that somehow all of this is manageable and attainable.

Those teachers with the fortitude to continue grappling with these problems are bringing important issues into focus. A colleague of mine, working on the current rewrite of the primary program document, relates how Kindergarten teachers in her district are saying that if they were to cover all the learning outcomes in the IRPs and continue to work on fine and gross-motor skills, and emotional and social development, that the Kindergarten day would have to be doubled in length (which they don't advocate).

Teachers have a keen sense of what is necessary for young children's development...

Sensing that "death by outcome" is imminent the ministry has been asking teachers why they almost intuitively ignore particular outcomes and continue to do things that are not covered by IRPs and tied to outcomes. Teachers have a keen sense of what is necessary for young children's development and learning, and key areas that the Kindergarten teachers identified, such as emotional and social development, are not addressed by IRPs, but some relatively unimportant and irrelevant skills are. Being able to hold a pencil and achieve some measure of composure and calm when listening are prerequisites that exist at a considerable distance pedagogically from being able to describe the properties of matter.

The dual pressures of an overloaded curriculum and a tyranny of outcomes also run counter to much contemporary thinking about education and learning. Howard Gardner, proponent of a theory of multiple intelligences, argues for a radical foreshortening of the curriculum, if we really wish to educate for understanding. Ellen J. Langer points out that the capacity to achieve an outcome is different from the ability to explore the world and understand experience. Instruction takes on a paint-by-numbers quality, "rather than allowing an individual to generate a new hypothesis that may be mind-

fully tested in the individual's own experience."

No wonder then that not only are there 300 outcomes but a similar number of suggested instructional activities and assessment strategies. Assessing continuously, as recommended, requires prodigious skills in record keeping, note taking, filing, and finding space for storage of evidence, to say nothing of time. Yet we are entitled to ask: What is it all really for?

The official rationale is that this information is used to make decisions about an individual child's learning, but many teachers feel the ultimate objective of reporting is directed toward not so much helping the child but toward scrutiny of the teacher—that all of this is about accountability, that fierce, unrelenting

We are obliged to treat children respectfully and help them grow as social beings in an emotionally positive atmosphere.

corporate demand for submission to a greater authority and will. The ministry is obsessed with this "imperative." Provincial learning assessments have been with us for some time, and new performance standards are being developed in a number of areas. Yet here again are more totally "out of context" expectations that do not allow for students and teachers alike to choose their own objectives or explore processes that are outside the experts' repertoire of valued skills.

We teachers are obliged to teach and help children learn in varied and interesting ways in order to stimulate the unique abilities that lie within each child. We are obliged to treat children respectfully and help them grow as social beings in an emotionally positive atmosphere. Hobbiling teachers with 300 learning outcomes, endless assessment, reporting, and planning and turning them into technicians skilled only in the manipulation of materials and strategies does nothing to further those obligations.

Ten years ago, with the development of the primary, intermediate, and graduation programs, we were at least starting down the right track. Those were philosophical foundation documents: the right place to begin. Much could have been built on them, but only one survives, just. We appear to live in a time when more is better, whether it be money or arrests. So I think we're in for more outcomes, more assessment, more standards, more reporting, and more accountability, but less education.

David Denyer teaches at Cobble Hill Elementary School, Cowichan.

Presented at the BCTF Quality Teaching Conference, April 4, 1998.

Five teachers express concerns

As teachers and a teacher counsellor in an elementary school, we wish to express our concern about the writing section of the provincial learning assessment program for Grade 4 students.

The instructions for the section read: "When people think about home, they sometimes think of their family, or their own personal space. Think about why people have strong feelings about their home."

As the object of the assessment is to evaluate the child's ability to think of ideas, express those ideas with well-chosen descriptive language and "evidence, reasons," I imagine the writers of the assessment were expecting the children to be able to think clearly and proofread their writing objectively.

Among our Grade 4 students who were writing this test was a boy whose father had died the previous week, two boys whose parents are in the process of separating, one girl who had moved house at the

beginning of the month with her father and sister only, and a number of other children whose homes are less than happy and reasonably safe. Were those children in a position to fulfill the expectation of clear thinking and objective assessment of their writing on such an emotionally explosive subject?

One of the children was so overwhelmed by the subject that he approached his teacher, tears streaming down his cheeks, to ask "Do I have to do this?"

"Write about your computer," was her suggestion after realizing that was probably the only safe thing for him to write about his two "homes."

In the elementary classroom, the teacher knows his/her students very well, and the parents generally inform the school about any problems that arise so that the teacher is aware and sensitive to the child's feelings. This awareness is carried over into the curriculum, and the teacher attempts to circumvent any

areas that may cause undue upset for the child. For children of such a young age this is entirely appropriate.

We think that kind of sensitivity should be part of an educator's approach to children and we deplore the lack of thought that resulted in the subject under discussion.

Our school is in an area of higher socio-economic status. Our children are generally well loved and cared for. We dread to think what other, less fortunate children felt about the topic that was given to them. The lack of sensitivity that the choice shows is extremely distressing to us, and we would like to be sure that an occurrence such as this will not arise again.

We would like to receive a response to this letter. It is important that we not feel mistrustful of the PLAP and that our students have every opportunity to show their abilities to their full extent.

Liz Lebel, Patsy McCarter, Marilyn Pinder, Lori Richards, Pam Smith, Saanich.

1998-99 Retirement-planning seminars

All teachers age 40+ should plan to attend one of the retirement-planning seminars listed. There is no pre-registration, nor fee. Seminars are on Saturdays from 09:00 to 17:00, except where noted. The agenda includes what retirement is, the Teachers' Pension Plan, legal issues, retirement experiences, pension calculations, and personal advice. Make sure to bring a calculator and your most recent pension statement. Younger teachers are welcome.

Date	Location
October 31, 1998	Campbell River, Coast Discovery Inn
November 7, 1998	Granbrook, Inn of the South
November 14, 1998	Kamloops, Ok. College of the Cariboo
November 21, 1998	Nanaimo, Coast Bastion Inn
November 28, 1998	Richmond, Richmond Inn
January 16, 1999	Surrey, Sheraton Guildford Hotel
January 23, 1999	Coquitlam, Westwood Plateau G&C Club
January 30, 1999	Burnaby, Clarion Hotel Villa
February 6, 1999	Langley, Newlands Golf & Country Club
February 13, 1999	North Vancouver, N. Shore Winter Club
February 27, 1999	Vancouver, Plaza 500 Hotel
March 27, 1999	Kelowna, Ramada Lodge Hotel
April 10, 1999	Castlegar, Sandman Inn
April 17, 1999	Abbotsford, Inn at King's Crossing
April 24, 1999	Prince George, Inn of the North
April 29, 1999	Smithers, Hudson's Bay Lodge
April 30, 1999	Prince Rupert, Crest Motor Hotel
May 1, 1999	Terrace, The Terrace Inn
May 8, 1999	Victoria, Victoria Conference Centre

*Thurs. & Fri. 16:00 to 20:00

Why kids don't go to school

As alternate teachers, we've seen a lot of kids who don't like to attend school. There are usually good reasons behind the anxiety. For most kids, going to school usually is exciting. For some, it brings fear or panic.

Parents have cause for concern when their child regularly feels sick from tension, plays sick or with minor physical complaints wishes to stay home from school.

Often the child five to ten years of age who behaves this way is suffering from a paralyzing fear of leaving the safety of parents and home. The child's panic is very difficult for parents to cope with, but these fears can be treated successfully, with professional help.

The first appearance of unreasonable fear of school is typically in nursery school, Kindergarten or first grade, and it peaks in second grade. The child may complain of a headache, sore throat, or stomach ache shortly before it is time to leave for school. The illness subsides after the child is allowed to stay home, only to reappear the next morning before school. In some cases the child may simply refuse to leave the house.

Refusal to go to school often begins following a period at home that the child has become closer to the parent, such as summer vacation, a holiday break or a brief illness. It also may follow a stressful occurrence, such as the death of a pet or relative, a change in schools or a move to a new neighbourhood.

Kids with an unreasonable fear of school may feel unsafe staying in a room by them-

selves and may display clinging behaviour, shadowing the mother or father around the house. Such fears are common among children with Separation Anxiety Disorder. They often have difficulty going to sleep, and they may show exaggerated, unrealistic fears of animals, monsters, burglars, or being alone in the dark.

The potential long-term effects are serious for a child who has persistent fears and does not receive professional assistance. The child may develop serious educational or social problems if away from school and friends for an extended period. The parents and child can benefit from seeing a child and adolescent psychiatrist, who will work with them in an effort to immediately return the child to school and other important daily activities. Since the panic comes from leaving home rather than being in school, frequently the child is calm once in school.

For some children, the more fundamental causes of fears will need to be treated at greater length. Refusal to go to school in the older child or adolescent is generally a more serious illness, and often requires more intensive treatment. In any case, unreasonable fears about leaving the home and parents can be successfully treated, and parents should not hesitate to seek professional help.

Source: B.C. Alternate Education Association newsletter, June 1998.

Signs and symptoms of inner peace

- Tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experience.

Factor 88? Age 64?

Reminder: SIP-Long Term

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- Anonymous

Reprinted from B.C. School Counsellors' Newsletter, Summer 1998.

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BURNS BOG OCTOBER 23 ProD Day (call us to request other dates for your group!) Environmental Education Resources Workshops: **BOG AUTHORS and ECOLOGY TOUR** in the Delta Nature Reserve (edge of Burns Bog), Delta, BC 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Guided Ecology Tour: Bog formation, unique bog flora and wildlife, bog ecology, regional and international importance of bogs. Bog writers' workshop: Annette LeBox: *Miracle at Willow Creek*, Jill Tasman: *Teacher's Guide to Burns Bog*, Bill Burns: *Discover Burns Bog*. Authors talk about their inspiration, writing process, and how to use these resources in the classroom. \$85 (+ GST). Lunch provided at Great Pacific Forum. Preregister at Burns Bog Conservation Society. Fax (604) 572-0374, Phone (604) 572-0373. Burns Bog is the largest urban wilderness in North America.

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AIDS WALK '98 takes place Sunday, September 27, 1998 in Stanley Park. Come join Western Canada's Largest Single-Day AIDS fundraising event to help our friends and neighbours living with HIV & AIDS. To volunteer or register to "Walk" call 684-0993 or F: 684-0111 or you can e-mail us: walk@parc.org

OCTOBER

16-17 Delta. Salt-water Wetlands Workshop, pilot of EcoScope for Sustaining Wetlands: hands-on workshops at a salt marsh in Delta, class field trips, and evaluative meetings. No cost to teachers. Contact Toby Towe, Friends of Boundary Bay (604) 940-9810, bcwetnet@direct.ca, <http://www.bcwetlands.com>

22-23 Vancouver. The Association for Educators of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children in B.C. Conference, Gifted Ed 98: Follow Your Passion, Parkhill Hotel. Contact Charlene Watts, Box 2822, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0, H: (250) 846-9284, S: (250) 847-2231, F: (250) 847-2165.

22-24 Squamish. Global Rights = Global Responsibilities (Teaching Citizenship: 50 Years of Human Rights), a conference/retreat sponsored by the Teachers for Peace and Global Education PSA, Camp Squamish. Two nights accommodation, use of the pool, six meals, PAGE membership/subscription: BCTF members \$110 and students \$80. Non-BCTF members \$130. Contact Judy Brayden (250) 390-2189, jbrayden@nanaimo.ark.com

23 Langley. Orchestrating Positive and Practical Behaviour Plans, with Dawn Reithaug, sponsored by Council for Exceptional Children and Special Education Association, Newlands Golf and Country Club, 21025 48th Avenue. \$85 includes lunch. Contact Mike Scales, (604) 888-5827, F: (604) 888-5832. Register with Clerical Resources, SD 35, 4875 222nd Street, Langley, BC V3A 3Z7.

23 Richmond. B.C. Teachers of English Language Arts Fall Conference, Open to the World: Multiple Perspectives in the English Classroom, Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel and Marina. Contact Doreen Kennedy, c/o Vancouver Technical, 2600 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5M 1Y5, (604) 255-2644, F: (604) 255-8717. Fax enquiries appreciated.

23 TBA. B.C. Dance Educators' Association Conference. Contact Judy Herridge (604) 581-2709.

23 Richmond. Learning Assistance Teachers' Association Conference, Literacy: Developing a Balanced Reading Program, with Gail Saunders-Smith, Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel and Marina. Registration limited to 250. Contact Lynda Mawer, F: (250) 558-1065, lmawer@sd22.bc.ca

23 Vancouver. Celebrating Diversity, Ninth Annual ESL PSA Conference, Eric Hamber Secondary School. Workshops K-12, keynote speaker Deborah Short, >from California, the project co-ordinator for the publication on ESL standards TESOL Standards K-12. Contact Colleen Tsoukalas, VSB, (604) 713-5218, F: (604) 713-5244, or e-mail Vicki McCarthy: vmccarthy@nv-admin.vsb.bc.ca

23 Richmond. Congrès de l'APPIC: Montre et Recontre 98. Jaqueline Caron, auteur de Quand revient septembre...volumes 1 et 2, guides sur la gestion de classe participative, Hotel Radisson. Contacter Sophie Bergeron (604) 463-1929, sbergero@cln.etc.bc.ca

23 New Westminster. Quality Physical Education, Douglas College. Contact Debbie Keel, (604) 463-0866, dkeel@uniserve.com

23 Vancouver. B.C. Co-operative Learning Association, Literal Connections: Together is Better, a conference on co-operative learning and literacy, featuring Pat Holburn, Vicki Rothstein; Rhoda Termansen and others. SFU Harbour Centre. \$40. Contact K.Latval, BCCLA Conference, 116-6336 197th Street, Langley, BC, V2Y 2T7, (604) 534-0744, klatval@star.sd35.bc.ca

23 Surrey. B.C. Technology Education Association Conference. Contact Julie Crawford (604) 463-4613.

23 Richmond. B.C. Association of Teachers of Modern Languages Conference 98, with keynote speaker Dr. Martin Collis, Delta Pacific Resort and Conference Centre. Contact Chair Dennis Hazelton F: (604) 584-5294, Co-chair Gillian Bloom F: (250) 598-2945, Registrar Dave Henry F: (250) 361-1403.

23 Richmond. Ready or Not! We Teach Mathematics! B.C. Association of Mathematics Teachers annual conference and general meeting, Cambie Secondary School. One hundred session offerings running from 08:00 to 16:00. Keynote: Kanwal Neel. Contact Pat Phillips, P/F: (604) 261-7748.

23 Duncan. BCTF First Nations Education Association: Pulling Together. Cowichan Secondary School. Contact Frank Conibear, (250) 382-9226, H: (250) 474-6148, F: (250) 361-1263, fconibear@sd61.bc.ca

23-24 Richmond. The Text and Beyond, Executive Inn & McMath Secondary. Jamie McKenzie keynote. Visit www.sd38.bc.ca/BCTLA/ and www.bctf.ca/PSAs/BCTLA/

23-24 Vancouver. Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association Conference, Home Economics in Transition, John Oliver Secondary School. Contact Carole Macfarlane (604) 327-8341.

23-24 Kelowna. Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association Fall Conference 98, Okanagan Mission Secondary School. Keynote: Humourist Susan Carter. Contact Leah Gray, lgray@netidea.com, or Paul Wood, Box 255, Grand Forks, BC V0H 1H0, (250) 442-0280, F: (250) 442-0159, pwood@sunshinecable.com, www.bctf.bc.ca/psas/PITA/conference.html

23-24 Vancouver. Pathways for Success, 35th Annual Fall Conference of the B.C. Primary Teachers' Association, featuring Dr. Thomas Armstrong, Dr. Barrie Bennett, Dr. David Booth, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Caren Cameron, Marcy Cook, and Tony Stead, Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre. \$140 BCPTA members. Contact Grace Sinnema, (604) 850-5526, F: (604) 850-1817, innovent@uniserve.com. For conference registration booklets, call or fax (604) 855-3511.

23-24 Richmond. Conférence provinciale de l'APPIC à l'hôtel Radisson à Richmond. Jacqueline Caron est la conférencière principale. Elle est l'auteure des livres Quand revient septembre tome 1 et 2. Information: Sophie Bergeron (604) 936-1451, télécopie (604) 936-3387, sbergero@cln.etc.bc.ca

23-25 Kamloops. McQueen Outdoor School. Environmental Education PSA fall conference/retreat. For more information, contact Donna Hill (604) 857-9467, dhill@uniserve.com

29-31 Victoria. A joint international conference, Tel Ed 98, sponsored by International Society of Technology and Education (ISTE), Open School, and Computer-Using Educators of B.C. (CUEBC). Contact Al Maxwell, amaxwell@direct.ca

29-31 Vancouver. The Quality School International Conference, featuring Dr. William Glasser, author of The Quality School and Choice Theory. Contact Don Kretlow, (250) 428-2013 or (250) 428-7664, F: (250) 428-9077.

NOVEMBER

3-7 Ottawa. Teachers' Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, an insider's view, for teachers of social studies or political science in grades 4 to 12, Parliament Hill. \$250 (Program covers travel,

meals, accommodation, and materials). Contact Claudette Fleury, registrar, (613) 992-4793, F: (613) 992-1273. floure@parl.gc.ca, www.parl.gc.ca

5 Ottawa. Symposium on Technology for Second Language Teachers and Other Educators, hosted by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT/ACPLS). Contact Brigitte Roy, 310-176 Gloucester Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 0A6, (613) 234-6567, F: (613) 230-5940, caslt@istar.ca

5-7 Ottawa. Congrès annuel de l'Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion en collaboration avec l'ACPLS et CPF. Centre des congrès d'Ottawa. Pour de plus amples informations: Suzanne Fournier, 176 rue Gloucester, bureau 319, Ottawa, ON K2P 0A6, (613) 567-2223, telec: (613) 230-59-30, acpi@magi.com

6-7 Victoria. Comrades and Colleagues: New Departures in Professional Practice, a two-day training workshop with David Epstein presented by Rockland Family Therapy, University of Victoria. \$225; students \$150. Contact Kazimiera Stypka or Gerald Guest, Rockland Family Therapy, 843 Yates Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1M1, (250) 380-1737, F: (250) 658-1847, stypka@islandnet.com or gguest@pinc.com

8-9 Whistler. Fourth Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, Transitions in Aboriginal Education, presented by the Ministry of Education and the First Nations Education Steering Committee, Whistler Conference Centre. Contact (604) 990-9939.

12-13 Nanaimo. Rural 98, B.C. Rural Teachers' Association Conference, Malaspina University-College. Contact Gail Moseley, F: (250) 456-2342, moseley@bcinter.net

12-13 Vancouver. B.C. School Counsellors' Association Conference 98, Continuing Together: Advocating Together for Children and Youth, Coast Stanley Park Hotel. Contact Dianne Noort, c/o Poplar Glade Elementary School, 845 North 11th Avenue, Williams Lake, BC V2G 2M5, S: (250) 392-7198, F: (250) 392-4989, dnoort@rodco.sd27.bc.ca

13-14 Vancouver. Down Syndrome Research Foundation and Resource Centre Conference for Parents and Educators, SFU Harbour Centre. \$140. Contact DSRF, 3580 Slocan St., Vancouver, BC V5M 3E8, (604) 431-9694, F: (604) 431-9248, 1-888-464-DSRF (3373).

19-21 Vancouver. Conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, Finding Common Ground: Working Together for the Future, strategies, advocacy and support, Coast Plaza Suite Hotel at Stanley Park. Contact Elaine Liao, Interprofessional Continuing Education in the Health Sciences, UBC, 105-2194 Health Sciences Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z3, (604) 822-4965, F: (604) 822-4835, elaine@cehs.ubc.ca

20 Chilliwack. Robert Sylvester, author of Celebrating Neurons, provides excellent metaphors and cutting-edge research for how the brain works and how new research will affect teaching and learning. Best Western Motor Inn. \$100 fee includes a light lunch. Contact Joyce Clough, Chilliwack Senior Secondary, (604) 795-7295, or download a form from www.chill.org/prod/csss/cn.html

JANUARY

21-22 Vancouver. B.C. Alternate Education Association Conference, Challenge and Change, Westin Bayshore. Contact Joyce Pauls (604) 859-3015, joyce.pauls@sd34.abbotsford.bc.ca

<http://www.bctf.bc.ca/events/PD-Calendar.html>

Any additions or changes? E-mail Debby Stagg, PSA services co-ordinator, Professional Development Division, BCTF, dstagg@bctf.bc.ca

An experience in environmental education

by Steve Lott

Ibrahim, ever the imp, is the first to get his feet wet. "It's cold!" he exclaims, as 290 other toes begin testing the brackish October brine. Soon, five dozen feet are sloshing through mucky tidal pools carrying five dozen down-cast, ogling eyeballs in search of...

"A fish!" yells Karmjit. "Wow! Look, it's chasing another one."

"Weird!" sneers Lisa, dodging a seaweed-covered sand dollar Alphonso has skewered on the end of a stick.

"Yuck!" laughs Jagvinder, as her toes make toilet humour sounds in the thick, silty mud.

These are Grade 7 city kids and for most of them it is the first time they have been to a beach like this, even though it's only 20 minutes by bus from our school. I have brought them here in the hope that such an out-of-school experience will broaden their appreciation of where they live and what it means to be a member of a complex ecological community.

"Yeek!" shrieks Baljit, water up to her knees. "Something bit me!"

"Mr. Lahhhh-hht! Something bit my foot...!!"

Even the best-planned field studies can have their chaotic moments. With 30 inquisitive youngsters scurrying off to distant sand bars, I dare not dawdle with Baljit's rescue—lest her classmates should vanish into the surf, or be swallowed by an unseen mud hole. But fortunately, I am not here supervising alone.

Our field study is being led by Toby Rowe and Adele Stapleton, from the Friends of Boundary Bay/Fraser For Life Society, a non-profit organization with a mandate to raise public awareness about estuary habitats. Rowe and Stapleton work with thousands of students across B.C. every year; they are as proficient at corralling errant kids as they are in identifying aquatic plants and invertebrates.

Today they are teaching us about the many types of changes taking place in the Fraser estuary. Stapleton points out the many long thin turret shells that dot the sand. "Those snails," she tells us, "hitched a ride in the water that ships carry as ballast from Japan. When they arrived here, they had no natural predators. Now they are thriving. Unfortunately, she adds, they eat the same food as the Dog Whelk snails that were native to this beach. Now you'll be lucky to find a Dog Whelk anywhere."

These are meaningful lessons for children growing up at a time when the estuary's prime agricultural soil is being paved over at an

alarming rate, when the historic runs of Fraser River salmon, like the Dog Whelk, are also disappearing, and when dozens of other species of fish, birds, and plants are likewise losing the habitats they need to survive. These are also meaningful lessons for these urbanized children of the TV, video, and computer age, for whom experiences of growing up playing in creeks and vacant lots have been supplanted by commercially contrived fantasy worlds of super heroes and cuddly cartoon fads.

Specialist educators like Rowe and Stapleton bring a wealth of resources and knowledge to enhance the outdoor experiences of students and the curriculum of the classroom teacher. However, there is a price. Before climbing on the bus home, I asked Rowe about the challenges of working with school groups.

"Many schools are in very short supply of funds," she says. "Programs like ours must charge for our services. Add on the bus fare to get kids to a site, and it can get very expensive. It is hard to build long-range field-study programs in schools when the issue of money is always nearby."

Sadly, building long-range programs is what is most needed if long-term solutions to pressing environmental and social issues are to be developed in schools. At present, dozens of skilled and enthusiastic program facilitators provide thousands of

hours of educational services to school children. Most of these educators operate on shoe-string budgets, spending a disproportionate amount of their time and energy seeking new sources of funds just to keep going.

For teachers like me, these entrepreneurial educators provide a vitally important service; for without their expertise and organizational skills, my students would not receive half the outdoor experiences they do. I need their help, and they need mine, too.

On the bus heading home, I am exhausted. My throat is

dry from answering questions above the strong breezes blowing off the sea. My ears, too, are ringing from the shrieks of excited children playing, discovering, and learning. I've grown a little punchy from hearing my name called out over and over again. Yet, overall, it's been a day I won't forget, and neither, my students assure me, will they. They only wish there could be more just like it. So do I.

Steve Lott is president of B.C. Environmental Educators' Association and teaches at Walter Moberly Elementary School, Vancouver.

B.C. Environmental Educators' PSA Fall Conference Retreat

McQueen Lake Outdoor School
Kamloops

October 23-25, 1998

For more information on EEPSEA activities and conferences, contact Donna Hill (604) 857-9467
E-mail: dhill@uniserve.com

Below: Environmental education teachers attend conferences and workshops throughout the year.

