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Teacher

AGM '99: The last of the century



Erin Smeed, Westview Secondary School, Maple Ridge, attends the 1999 AGM, in Vancouver.

While thousands of their colleagues headed off to relax and enjoy spring break with family and friends, teachers from every corner of the province descended upon downtown Vancouver for the BCTF's 83rd Annual General Meeting, the last of the century. The meeting took place March 14-17, 1999, at the Hyatt Regency, one of the few unionized hotels with a ballroom large enough to accommodate more than 650 delegates.

For many teachers, the AGM is like an enormous gathering of the clans: some are friendly, others are feuding, but all are there because of a shared sense of commitment to children and their right to quality public education. As the huge meeting hall filled, members of the extended family of educators greeted one another with hugs and laughter and launched into intense discussion about the many issues before them: bargaining, labour affairs, education finance, health and welfare, constitution and bylaws, professional development, strikes and job actions, organization of the BCTF, school self-evaluation plans, professional ethics, rights, and standards, and more.

The candidates for full-time-officer positions made their campaign speeches on the first evening; members-at-large on the second. Voting took place on the third morning, after an intense campaign that many characterized as a good, clean fight.

David Chudnovsky upset incumbent Kit Krieger in the race for president. A former second vice-president of the Federation and former president of the Surrey Teachers' Association, Chudnovsky has long been involved in international solidarity work, particularly in South Africa. He currently teaches English at North Surrey Secondary School.

"This is the most democratic union in B.C.," Krieger said after the votes were tallied. "The members have made a choice and it is the right choice because they have spoken after hearing all sides of the debate." He bid farewell with heartfelt thanks for the opportunity of a lifetime and "with no bitterness, no second thoughts, just my deep affection for the 44,000 teachers of B.C. and the work you do every day."

Grace Wilson, of Nelson, defeated Barry Prong and Bill Fite in the running for first vice-president, while Linda

Watson from North Vancouver won over Kathryn Askew for second vice-president.

Members-at-large elected are Barb Parrott, Jinny Sims, Linda Shuto, and Alice Rees. They will join continuing members Patricia Clough, Margaret Little, and Neil Worboys. As past president, Krieger will also remain on the BCTF Executive Committee for one year.

One of the most contentious issues at this year's AGM related to the role of teachers as advocates for social change. Some locals proposed continuing a distinct Status of Women Program, rather than have its work woven into the Social Justice Program. They lobbied hard and held every leadership candidate accountable for articulating a clear position on the issue. However, when it came to the vote, delegates opted for the integrated program.

Speaking for the Social Justice Advisory Committee, Susan Croll began with an anecdote about a Kamloops drama teacher who encouraged her students to write and produce a play about a teenage girl coming to terms with the fact she is a lesbian. Through the technique of "intervention theatre," students as actors and audience

members could confront discrimination and homophobia.

This is only one example of the way an integrated social justice model offers teachers, students, locals, and the community a way to transform society, Croll said. "Social justice is not only about being against oppression. It is about changing the world, and it starts in our very own backyards."

She affirmed that the work of the Program Against Racism, the Status of Women Program, and the Children's Rights Committee will carry on through the new social justice model. "We want to encourage more networking, have people share ideas, find solutions, and break down isolation. In other words, our intention is to give voice," Croll said.

She concluded with a quote from Frances Moore Lappé: "Honest hope derives from a belief that positive change is possible in the world. And we will only believe this if we experience ourselves changing. The key is risk, doing that which we thought we could not do."

Another key speaker at the meeting was Luis Abreu, secretary-general of the Cuban Teachers' Union, who spoke

President's message



Kit Krieger

The 83rd BCTF Annual General Meeting will be best remembered for the commitment teachers made to address long-standing issues faced by aboriginal students in B.C. schools. The interim report of the First Nations Task Force, powerfully presented by co-chairs Frank Connibear (Victoria) and Debbie Jeffrey (Prince Rupert), challenges teachers to acknowledge that the B.C. public schools have not been welcoming places for the vast majority of First Nations students.

Making schools better for Aboriginal students will be a tremendous challenge as we work to undo the legacies of residential schools, poverty, assimilation, and racism. When I consider the history and the fact that only a third of aboriginal students complete Grade 12, I am heartened that aboriginal communities still look to public schools as key institutions for their children. With the acknowledgment by the courts of the inherent right of self-government, there are other options available if public schools fail to respond to the challenges identified by the task force.

In the months ahead, BCTF members will have opportunities to consider many of the issues raised by the task force. Your responses will inform the final report of the task force, due to be presented at next year's AGM. The task force asks us to consider what constitutes success for aboriginal students. How must curriculum and the school environment be changed to be more respectful of First Nations people? How committed are B.C. teachers to ensuring opportunities for First Nations teachers? Are we willing to adopt affirmative action policies that take precedence over some cherished provisions of collective agreements?

Those discussions and the decisions that follow will ultimately determine whether our public schools can become as valuable in the lives of aboriginal students as they are for other youngsters in B.C. This is a historic opportunity that must not be lost.

Delgamuukw a win for First Nations

The article, "British Columbia Treaty Process Awareness Test," (Nov./Dec. 98) caused me serious concern. The errors in the article require a response.

I was legal counsel for the Gitksan at all levels of the court in Delgamuukw.

The article states that the Delgamuukw decision was won on technical grounds. Incorrect. The Supreme Court of Canada, on December 11, 1998, overturned the assumptions made by the trial judge as to how to address aboriginal title. In Canada, this case has far-reaching implications. The court could have limited its decision to technical grounds.

The Supreme Court of Canada, in Delgamuukw, addressed a number of various issues, including the legal test to prove aboriginal title. The test adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada was a test argued for by the Gitksan appellants. The court rejected the trial judge's findings that the oral history of aboriginal people could not be relied upon.

The Supreme Court of Canada sent the matter back for a new trial because the original claim had been brought by individual house groups, and the court determined that aboriginal title would be held by a people, such as the Gitksan, together. This may be called a "technical" pleading point.

In summary, the Supreme Court of Canada decided, in Delgamuukw, that aboriginal title is alive and well in B.C. and established the criteria to prove aboriginal title, which was much simpler than the test proposed by the trial judge.

In this sense, the conclusion that Delgamuukw was a "win for all First Nations" is correct. However, it is a serious error to suggest that this was a "technical win" as the case has far-reaching implications for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in B.C. and across Canada.

Peter Grant
Counsel for the Gitksan in Delgamuukw

Democracy is choice

We live in a kaleidoscopic society. Fragments of institutional policies revolve randomly in attempts to blend a pattern of democratic perfection. Detached organizations vie to be proclaimed guardians of our highest ideals—their intransigence promoting intolerance for dissent.

Thus do organizations undermine the essence of our democracy—freedom for the individual as expressed through his or her inviolable right to choice.

Choice in belief, Choice in speech, Choice in association. And Choice to exclude from association those from whom he or she would prefer disassociation.

Indeed, why belong to a union of professionals if not, in part, to exclude those who do not meet our criteria for inclusion?

With choice the foundation of individual rights within our democracy, faith in humanity would have us accept there is no one right way to its expression. Therefore, as public school educators, when we see parents making a choice of preference among educational alternatives away from our influence, this same faith should regard their decision not as diminishing equity, but as increasing freedom.

Parents will gladly support the public educational system as superior when they perceive it offers benefit to their children. So when they choose to seek other options, their decision should not be a cry for us to retreat behind vacuous statements of democratic principle, but an opportunity to open dialogue, learn, and build upon the point of confluence where principle and benefit merge.

Either/or propositions that would have us believe equity and exclusivity are inverse relationships are only counterproductive to effective action. If the public educational system is truly the one best way to inculcate future adult citizens with democratic ideals, then we should relish the challenge to be its most articulate advocates.

Ross Butchart
Vancouver

Everyone gets the same menu

This is a response to "Would you like fries with that? The folly of school choice" (Nov./Dec. 1998). A lighter look at the issue. A parody that contains some relevance in its humour. An old friend has arrived at our house, and would like to take my wife and me out for dinner this evening. "What kind of food do you like?" she asks.

"Oh, there is only one restaurant in our town now," I reply. "The city fathers decided that our city should provide a menu of common foods to all patrons. We place such a high value on equity and access in public eating only because we wish to assure a more equitable society of equal opportunity."

"Public eating places are supposed to be places where people share a common and communal eating experience that gives them all an equal opportunity to be happy, participating, and satisfied citizens. It's part of their education. To en-

sure a more democratic society, we cannot cater very far to particular tastes or beliefs."

"No more Christmas turkey, right? What about Greek food? I like that. Or Chinese food?"

"Only what is served in the public food mall. There is a wide selection of foods. Everyone has the same choices. But no ethnic foods in exclusive surroundings. We are endeavouring to be a democratic town."

"Hmmm, I see. Okay, no private eating places. Like schools. Now what's our choice?"

Cy Hemus
Retired teacher, Revelstoke

\$60 Unjust

I was surprised at having "dismayed" Judith Giles by referring to the Van der Zalm imposed College of Teachers as a "ploy" to "money grab" retired teachers' hard-earned wages (Jan./Feb. 1999). If the college were as responsible as the councillor claims, it would surely reduce or abolish retired teachers' membership fees thus demonstrating compassion and fairness. The Sacred government in no way benefitted me as a professional by creating a College of Teachers; it introduced another bureaucratic body demanding a handout. The BCTF was more than adequate to the needs of the teachers before the introduction of the college.

As for being able to afford to live in the most expensive city in Canada, I can only conclude that she is financially well-off or earning good money in her field of employment. By the way, the membership fee has now risen from \$45 to \$60 per annum while my pension has increased by a whopping \$6 per month.

Audrey Lucyszyn
Dawson Creek

Parents have legitimate rights

This is in response to "A teacher's perspective on the Surrey book ban" (March 1999).

On the one hand, McMurty claims his right as a parent to censor material he decides is unsuitable for his children. This is his job as a parent, and he is entitled to it.

On the other hand, he appears to support the school system's right to override the sensibilities of the communities it serves. I suggest that educators do not have a mandate to unnecessarily offend significant numbers of parents, however politically incorrect they may (or may not) be.

While it is all very well to wrap oneself in the cloak of thinkers like Northrop Frye, it must be remembered that parents have a legitimate right to question, challenge, and object

to whatever stuff is being spooned into their children's heads that runs counter to deeply held beliefs (however wrong those beliefs may be, according to others).

My guess is McMurty wouldn't like it if some teacher took it upon himself/herself to make *Southpark* a part of elementary school viewing. He would be quite right to protest.

I believe that when educators set themselves up as experts whose attitudes and knowledge are above and beyond that of the communities in which they operate, they are asking for trouble that is destructive and unnecessary.

M. Lang Collura
Campbell River

The best in a big city

After reading "The best in a small community" (March 1999), I was moved to write my praise of Vancouver's school community.

As an area counsellor, I am privileged to offer compassionate support to the people in several big city schools. Every day I have the opportunity to listen, to care, to empathize, and to journey with others.

But the caring comes back in full. Like the Ritchies' son, my son also lived for three weeks at Children's Hospital. He had developed osteomyelitis in his left leg at the age of two months. We also experienced the outpouring of the community. We received flowers, cards, visits, and prayers from MacCorkindale, Cavell, Renfrew, and Nootka elementary schools and the circle of area counsellors. It helped me to stay hopeful by phoning and updating the schools, who really cared.

People say that a city is a cold and isolating place. We have experienced Vancouver as a city of warmth...and I'll tell my son all about you as he approaches his first birthday.

Thank you, Vancouver schools.
Marilyn Yee
Vancouver

déjà vu at the AGM

Having just attended the AGM after an absence of several years, I was struck by how strong a feeling of *déjà vu* I had.

Once again, I saw delegates and candidates for office focused strongly on repeating the patterns of internal division and infighting that have become so ingrained in the internal politics of our organization. The two parties, Teachers for a United Federation (TUF) and Teachers' Viewpoint (newly named the Coalition for Change) demonstrated yet



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again how capable they are at fighting the seemingly endless internal battle over who has the monopoly on truth and, by extension, the better policies and candidates for office.

At a time when we have the ear of government and a fairly supportive Ministry of Education, perhaps these fights are only a relatively harmless form of theatre that can be fun to play. What I fear, though, is what will happen to our policies and our programs to support members when we face a less sympathetic government and ministry, one that will listen more to the Fraser Institute, the Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, and the religious conservatives, who will bring agendas for more corporate involvement, management control, and censorship in the public schools.

Sadly, I saw little at the AGM to convince me that the two parties, consumed as they are by their internecine warfare, can unite to counter these forces waiting in the wings. It is my wish, as it is of many members I have talked to at the AGM and in the field, that the monies we submit to finance the Federation be spent on more constructive activities, and less on activities that have as their focus the jockeying for control of its offices.

Wayne Wiens
North Vancouver

Cuba worth a visit

Jacqui Birchall's sympathetic account, "Cuba" (March 1999), reminded me of my stay there in 1997.

Staying at Varadero's resort hotels gives a different perspective of the possibilities. Thousands of well-heeled tourists from Canada, Western Europe, and South American countries land in Cuba to enjoy the sun, sand, ocean, good food, and night clubs. Despite the U.S. embargo, a few thousand Americans every year manage to fly into Cuba from Canada and Mexico. Cubans welcome American dollars and people with open arms.

Air-conditioned Volvo buses built in Brazil take tourists to Havana, Trinidad, and other cities. The tour guides, most of whom are ex-teachers, speak impeccable English, French, German, or Italian as needed. Waiters in the five-star hotels make more than professionals.

Communism is good at universal education and health care. No other South American country can match Cuba's 100% literacy and health care. However, communism is inefficient, and it cannot create wealth; hence the difficulties of Cuba, which used to be subsidized by the Soviets. The extreme decadence of capitalism under the dictator Batista made communism and the charismatic Castro inevitable.

Canadian involvement in mining, tourism, and other industries in Cuba is commendable. After Castro departs, the inroads made by capitalism will become wider. Canadians should continue to visit Cuba in large numbers before it becomes indistinguishable from other South American countries.

B.A. Kamath
Vancouver

A social justice union—What does that mean?

We are now a social-justice union. Who would argue against belonging to a union that supports social justice? Without any dialogue with the six locals that brought the motion forward or the Feminist Caucus formed to save the SW Program, the members of the SJ Committee were lined up to speak against the SW resolution. They argued that the Social Justice Committee needed more time to establish a program. If the SJ Program was not a success they would personally bring motions to reinstate the committees.

The mover of the motion, Greer Kaiser, from Terrace, and member of the Provincial Status of Women Committee, had made it clear that supporting a discrete Status of Women Program did not mean that feminists did not support a Social Justice Program. She simply stated that Status of Women work needed the SW Committee and networks to efficiently continue the work of eliminating sexism in our schools and promoting the interests of female teachers. Individual projects and special grants will not support the core of a program to eliminate sexism.

The vote was very close. The Status of Women resolution was defeated 311 to 341. Later in the AGM, the resolution to continue the Committee Against Racism was also defeated. I watched delegates of both genders cheer when the votes were announced. We are now a union divided in half over the delivery of social justice. I cannot fathom why anyone would cheer loudly about that.

I always thought that the BCTF was a social-justice union. I was very proud of the work that was done by the Committee Against Racism, the Children's Rights Committee, and the Status of Women Committee. We did not need to give ourselves a title to show what we stood for because we had active committees and networks doing important SJ work. It was obvious that BCTF members were truly working for social justice.

I strongly question how this important work can really continue with fewer people, no networks, and fewer dollars committed to support it.

Karen Kilbride
Surrey

BCPVPA president responds

Kit Krieger criticized the B.C. Principals' and Vice-principals' Association (BCPVPA) report on the impact of the Agreement in Committee and accused principals and vice-principals of not being supportive of teachers and students (*Teacher*, March 1999).

I reject his arguments totally and would like to share my response with your readers.

At the beginning of this school year the public was bombarded by advertising campaigns from the government and the BCTF extolling the virtues of the Agreement in Committee. The campaign focussed on positive elements such as the reduction in size of

Top 10 BCTF lesson aids

1 A Quality Approach to Primary PE: A Resource Guide for Teachers—Game Activities. Published by the Vancouver School Board. 90p. 1993. This second edition document contains lessons and suggested resources for teaching game activities to primary students in physical education. Recommended by the B.C. Ministry of Education. K-3. LA 8320—\$16

2 Believe It or Not: A World Religion Resource Package. Frank McCormick. 30p. ©1996. This resource package is intended to give students a deeper understanding of the world's major religions. It rests upon the assumption that learning about the beliefs and philosophies of others will lead to increased tolerance, to a more conscious awareness of the learner's own position and to a keener curiosity about further study. Three different types of materials are presented: introductory activities; templates on Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, and a bibliography with suggested resources for the study of religion. Grades 8-12. LA 2028—\$4

3 Kids Create: Art and Craft Experiences. Laurie Carlson. 160p. ©1990. Paper and paste, clay and dough, print making, and seasonal projects make this a wonderful resource book for primary students. A pioneer log cabin, a dinosaur bone, making your own fossil or a robin's nest with eggs—more than 100 activities to incorporate into your lessons. Ages 3-9. LA 8608—\$23

4 What Would You Do? A Kid's Guide to Tricky and Sticky Situations. Linda Schwartz. 184p. ©1990. This book is written to help kids and their parents discuss and decide in advance how they will handle peer pressure, strangers, fears and feelings, cuts, bites and stings, fires and leaks, and

natural disasters. Ages 9-16. LA 2319—\$14.95

5 Salmon Alphabet Poster. Produced by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 48cm x 80cm colour poster ©1992. This full size, full colour poster provides a salmon-related drawing and word for every letter of the alphabet. K-7. S 60—\$10

6 Career and Personal Planning. Published by the Vancouver School Board. 197p. ©1995. Integrated with curriculum and combined with work experience, this resource provides a guide for developing programs for all intermediate and secondary general students and students with special needs. The three broad topics dealt with include self-awareness, personal management, and career development. An extensive resource list augments the text. This valuable resource book is filled with reproducible worksheets for student use. Grades 6-12. LA 2207—\$26

7 Exploring Literacy: How Teachers and Parents Can Collaborate to Support Early Literacy. Produced by the BCTF. 193p. ©1999. This resource book, produced by a team of four teachers and three parent partners, contains a wealth of ideas on how schools can work with parents of different ethnic backgrounds to help them improve their children's literacy skills. The team explored the concept of literacy in its broadest sense and recognized that home and school literacies can differ. The exploration resulted in practical suggestions for teaching parents to teach their children to love to read. LA 8096—\$15

8 Reading Instruction That Makes Sense. Mary Tarasoff. 224p. 1993. A teacher's guide to effective literature-based, learner-focussed reading programs. Includes: how to create an environ-

ment for all students and provides activities and resources for individual learners; assessment using classroom materials; outlines for 20 beginning reading lessons; word recognition, fluency, comprehension and responding strategies; resources for beginning and reluctant readers; overviews of 25 strategies; and blackline masters for reading responses. Recommended by the B.C. Ministry of Education. Ages 5-11. LA 8015—\$29.95

9 Blackline Masters. Mary Tarasoff. 80p. 1993. Designed to accompany LA 8015, this collection presents a variety of ways students can respond to reading. Suitable for students with a wide range of abilities and needs. Ages 5-11. LA 8016—\$19.95

10 Soil Secrets: An Integrated Intermediate Science Resource. Dr. Gladys Stansbury and Cathy Ready. 150p. ©1995. Resource book includes 11 lessons that explore different concepts basic to the study of soils. Students learn about land forms, geology, biology, and the physical process of weathering, sedimentation, and capillarity of soil. Integrated activities are suggested to extend the unit across the curriculum and 13 integrated activities are included. LA 9510—\$21.95

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.

primary classes and the hiring of many new teachers.

Our study identified issues of concern. We feel it is our professional duty to bring these forward for public discussion. Our purpose is not to attack the collective agreement but to show how it is flawed and that, with some adjustments, its positive objectives could be achieved in a cost-effective way with no negative impact on kids.

Our study indicated that at least 750 children have been refused admission to their neighbourhood school "because of the class-size requirements of the AIC." This represents 0.125% of all students in B.C., not 0.0018% as Krieger states. He says this is not a significant problem. I wonder if 0.125% of BCTF members (50 teachers) were summarily transferred in September to new schools, would he consider it insignificant?

We have never criticized the concept of reducing primary class size as a strategy to give our youngest students a better start to their educational career. On the contrary; we have suggested ways to make it work to achieve the minister's stated objectives in a more cost-effective way. We argue for flexibility. We argue that teachers and principals in individual schools are better qualified to deploy staffing resources in the most effective way possible. Teachers are just as frustrated by elements of this agreement as we are.

Free and open debate of public education issues is healthy. All perspectives deserve to be heard. I am not surprised that Krieger disagrees with us, but I am disappointed that he has reacted so negatively to our contribution to this particular debate. However, I will continue to present

strongly the perspectives of principals and vice-principals on these and other issues, which have a direct impact on the quality of education we provide for our students.

John Rizzuti
President, BCPVPA

LOOKING BACK

70 years...

"In the Middle Ages, each citizen had his place—as in the guild—wherein he fitted. Today when unemployment direly stalks all unskilled labour, the opposite is painfully true."
The B.C. Teacher,
May 1929

50 years...

"That education should have as its primary motive the turning out of young ladies and young gentlemen practiced in the social graces, interestingly conversant, considerate, and open-minded there can be little doubt. But against this battles the materialism of the outside, the cold, hard facts of life, the necessity of earning a living, the increasing demands of material comfort, the technical background necessary for professional ends."
The B.C. Teacher,
December 1948

30 years...

"The differences in perspectives of the generations is beautifully illustrated in *The Graduate*, a film in which the main character is a little worried about his future. When he is angrily asked by his father, 'What did I send you to college for?' the graduate replies, 'You got me, Dad.' I am told when this scene is viewed by student audiences they break out into wild cheers."
The B.C. Teacher, January 1969

10 years...

"Sadly and even dangerously misinformed about the realities of the working world, many teenaged girls across the country are repeating their mothers' mistake, a mistake that has propelled the majority of Canadian working women into low-paying dead-end jobs. In high school, they are dropping out of science and math."
Teacher, January 1989

A Midsummer Night's Nightmare

by Constance Rulka

When I wrote, some years ago, in praise of our school librarians, I said that Shakespeare had created their prototype in Prospero. The erstwhile duke of Milan took his books with him into exile on his strange island, and in them, he found sufficient company for himself and enough material to teach Miranda. The books brought the whole world to their few acres of rock.

This seemed to me to be what the teacher-librarians were doing in the schools: bringing all areas of learning within reach of students and showing them how to admire, reject, or absorb what was to be found there, giving them a critical judgment and set of standards.

Ariel, I was whimsical enough to think, with his ability to circle the globe and extend the scope of Prospero's guiding wisdom, symbolized all the technological aids that have come into the schools.

I was wrong. I had my plays mixed. We are not dealing with the pure spirit of Ariel, carrying out Prospero's orders to achieve harmony and a distinct goal. Something has gone awry. The ill-natured Robin Goodfellow has replaced him. With no well-thought-out plan, this mischief-maker has gone about in the dark, indiscriminately sprinkling a lotion on our eyes. We have opened them to fall in love with the first object seen—even if it bears an ass's head.

Only a midsummer night's madness could explain what we have done during the last few years. Pleading lack of funds, we cut back librarians' time and consigned their wide experience and ability to connect children with books, to some area where they could act as silent supervisors. Then, having exercised such economy, we turned around and poured out hundreds of thousands of dollars for rewiring schools to become adequate temples of a new idol, the computer.

We all jumped on a train with flashing lights as it rushed through a narrow tunnel to an unspecified

destination. Parents helped us to get on board, because they hoped their children might be taken to some future where they would arrive well-equipped for some as yet unknown job market. Fear was driving us, as well as the train.

No wonder Robin Goodfellow shook his head and said, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Funds were raised to put computers into the schools, with a hopeless goal of one per student. Unfortunately, it was not a one-time investment. Computers became obsolete, in no time at all, as more and more changes were made in technology, and different models (at ever higher prices) were constantly in demand. Worst of all, the delicate machines would break down; they needed highly skilled maintenance and repair. Parents and boards, having performed superhuman feats of fund-raising to get the whole thing started, found themselves back at square one every two or three years.

Robin Goodfellow could sometimes be the will-o'-the-wisp that lured travellers through bogs and brambles, pretending to show a light ahead, to mark a destination that never materialized. Now, we are mired in the needless costs of our magical technology and torn by the ever-increasing pressure to move this way or that in a hurry—before we are left behind.

Nobody seems to be measuring the effect on the children (especially in the earlier grades) of weaning them from librarians and plugging them into machines. Fond grandparents watch as the seven-year-olds manipulate the mouse and control the keyboard—willing themselves to believe that the

future is now secure. Those children have been given the key, and the world is now theirs. Moral standards, social skills, and all that we mean by *humanity* seem no longer to count.

Fear forces us on, because other countries are rushing in the same direction. We may not know where we are going, but we dare not stop. We may not know what we mean by *computer literate*, but we despise those who are not. We see those who question our obsession with the machine as clods who would have suspected Copernicus because of his Polish accent and condemned Galileo for littering the streets of Pisa.

We think back, though, to Ada Lovelace (Byron's daughter), after whom the high-level universal computer programming language *ADA* was named. Her "Sketch of the Analytical Engine," in 1843, made clear the work of Charles Babbage, the computer pioneer. She foresaw that the machine could some day be used to write music. However, she lost her money on using the machine to help her calculate the winners in horse-races. At least she knew where she was going and what she wanted the machine for.

There is a vast difference between that kind of control and our loosing adolescents onto the Internet (or vice versa) and telling them that all the information is theirs. All they have to do is use their discrimination, as they decide what to do with it.

Like the people lost in the woods in Shakespeare's play, I wish we could wake up, shake off the bad dream, and go home to Athens.

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



BCTF Public Education Conference

Technology, teaching, and learning

by Janet Amsden

"What must we do to ensure that all students derive the full educational benefit of new technologies?" was one of the questions that Deputy Minister of Education Charles Ungerleider took away from the Public Education Conference: Technology, Teaching, and Learning.

"The 1999 BCTF Public Education Conference was unusual," acknowledged Stanford University's Larry Cuban. "To hear technology discussed critically was unusual," he explained. Cuban was addressing the 250 teachers, parents, trustees, students, academics, and representatives from government, the Ministry of Education, and related agencies who gathered in Richmond on February 6, 1999. Some were technophiles, some technophobes, and others somewhere in between. All were reflecting on how technology is being used in schools.

"Two decades after the introduction of desktop computers into U. S. schools," said Cuban, "teachers vary considerably in their classroom use of information technologies." Having studied the factors influencing classroom use of computers, Cuban said that "The historical legacy of technological innovation in school and how policy-makers have framed the uses of technology in classrooms have affected classroom use."

Presenters brought forth many other considerations regarding technology in schools. Alison Armstrong, a Toronto parent and a co-author of *The Child and The Machine*, raised questions about student literacy and ergonomics and school economics in her keynote speech.

"Like all other parents," said Armstrong, "I raised my hand when it came time to vote to spend most of the home and school money on computers and software for

our local elementary school. It was not until I looked into the quality of the software we were buying and the huge cost we were incurring that I became concerned that this was a huge shift in thinking about education, and I began to wonder how it was affecting our students and...our teachers."

In sessions, conference participants explored the question of privacy in the wired world, the effect of technology use on children's consumerism, and the perils and potential of the Internet and online learning. Opinions were varied, and the questions in workshop sessions were thoughtful and provocative. At the end of the day, participants deliberated in small groups about the benefits and challenges that technology brings to schools.

Participants agreed that computers offer students unprecedented access to information and opportunities for world-wide communication and community building. They recognized that technology has a contribution to make to student learning; it can add fun and motivation and can be a boon to students with learning challenges. Participants also agreed that, to ensure the appropriate use of technology in our schools, we must establish a shared vision for its use. Participants agreed that a significant share of funding should be allocated to teacher training and maintenance if the vision is to be realized.

They also agreed that the teacher must have a central role in learning. Zahra Ebrahim, a Grade 10 student at West Vancouver's Rockridge Middle School, told the conference, "We must understand that technology is a valuable tool in our society; however, it is not the curriculum. Technology will not replace the foundation of a good education, and as we move into the 21st century, it is important that we understand that the decisions we make today on partnership between technology and education will dictate and set the standards for tomorrow."

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

A summary report of the conference is in progress and will be mailed to participants. If you want a copy, contact Bev Humphries at the BCTF, bhumphries@bctf.bc.ca

Teach English in Cuba during the summer of '99

The Cuban Teachers' Union and the BCTF have agreed to sponsor a program to improve the English facility of Cuban teachers of English.

The pilot program will be carried out over about four weeks during July and August 1999, with 10 volunteer teachers from British Columbia working with Cuban

teachers in Havana. English teaching will take place during the mornings, and the Cuban union will organize cultural and educational programs in the afternoons.

BCTF members are invited to apply if they meet the following criteria:

- Nativelike fluency in oral English
- Knowledge of communicative approaches and resources
- Experience in teaching languages or English as a second language

- Ability to work with adults
- Ability to work as part of a team with little supervision
- Ability to adapt to different conditions and limited resources
- Ability to work in a hot climate.

Applications and further information are available from Leona Dolan, at the BCTF, or on the BCTF Web site.

The deadline for receiving applications is 17:00, May 14, 1999. Applicants will be informed of the results as soon as possible after that date.



Stanford University's Larry Cuban, with a participant at the BCTF Public Education Conference.

MAI Hearings

by Gavin Hainsworth

Teachers from across the province made their voices heard against the MAI and similar free-trade initiatives in presentations to the B.C. Legislative Assembly Special Committee on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. They spoke out alongside other unions and community groups in defining the profoundly negative effects of unrestrained corporate influence on the public good and on the autonomy and power of democratically elected governments.

The hearings are the second phase of the special committee's examination of the MAI. They follow on the expert hearings in the fall, during which BCTF President Kit Krieger presented a brief. Communities the committee visited included Kamloops, Shuswap, Surrey, Terrace, and Vancouver. Teachers' associations from all five (including Vancouver where the Vancouver Secondary and Vancouver Elementary teachers' associations made a joint brief) made strong presentations concerning the perceived damages and dangers of transnational corporate influence on their students, schools, and public education.

"The effects of globalization are felt in every classroom, school, and district in B.C. and Canada," said the Surrey Teachers' Association brief (which I presented). "From the fashionable clothing worn by students at school (which were produced by sweatshop labourers of their own age in the nations of the South) to the sellout of school autonomy through the tacit or open endorsement by school staff for corporate sponsors (for a few funding dollars, souls can be bought cheap), a vital and

valued public education system is under attack as never before."

Reflecting on the NAFTA, presenter Fawn Knox, Kamloops-Thompson Teachers' Association, foresaw that "the MAI would be more intrusive and would grant extensive powers to transnational corporations. The notion that our education system is driven by this paranoia to prepare our clients (who used to be 'pupils') with 'useful skills' and a 'businesslike attitude' to succeed in this world is somewhat frightening. The looming MAI catapults this notion closer to reality."

Dr. Ed Harrison, Terrace District Teachers' Union, outlined the historic context (political and cultural) in which the MAI and Free Trade in Canada (economic) have been advanced, and, to some extent, restrained. According to Harrison, the MAI tips the balance completely against local self-determination in return for meagre economic benefits. "As I interpret the treaty from an educators/union perspective, I do not find the safeguards necessary to protect our culture and thus our sovereignty," said Harrison. "Treaties like the MAI and the global corporate environment in which they function are very powerful, seductive, purveyors of unfettered capitalism...which push forward their own agenda of open and free trade at any cost."

Six primary themes came through strongly from all of the presentations—a clear recognition of the real negative effects of unrestrained corporatism through its influence on public education.

First, education is being made fiercely competitive. By replacing the values of co-operation and equity with the

drive for individual achievement and entrepreneurial spirit and the imposition of career and work experience, corporations and companies have effectively downloaded labour training upon the public education system. This "career readiness" approach can occur only with the reduction of time devoted to the teaching and encouragement of critical thinking and democratic values.

Second, access to education is being restricted. Students must assume huge debts while working doubly hard for reduced wages to obtain their right to education—unless, of course, they come from wealthy families. Under the MAI proposal, the government is open to attack by countries and companies claiming that frozen tuition fees are a form of trade subsidy.

Third, education is being reduced to job training. Work-experience hours provide a cheap labour pool that undermines job security and bargaining power of the workers in the businesses these students "attend" in lieu of going to school. "Far too many students are doing jobs such as folding sweaters in department-store stockrooms rather than exploring the 'dream jobs' such work experiences tout in the public eye," stated the Surrey Teachers' Association brief.

Fourth, standardized testing is impoverishing the curriculum at every level and is used to restrict access to higher education and the professions. The current mania for standardized testing (including the enormous burden of provincial exams for Grade 12) now drives the curriculum as teachers, schools, and students alike are gauged by this criterion and then compared by the tabulated results in the media and in the public eye.

"What we can test and measure through formal exams are concepts that are basic and limited," stated Fawn Knox (Kamloops). "Our public system has thrived and excelled because educators recognized that a balance of learning styles, content, and a variety of assessment tools are required in order to prepare students." As a hidden curriculum, standardized testing is the parking brake on the engine of educational innovation and excellence.

Fifth, decentralization of administrative and fiscal accountability, linked with centralization of curricula and funding, undermines community values and structures. By separating policy from funding, democratic accountability and influence are reduced. Centralized goals are pitted against each other within the straitjacket of fiscal restraint, with local governments forced to fight higher levels of government to obtain enough money to do what those governments have mandated. Public funding for education is under attack as the higher levels of government cry "fiscal responsibility," while at the same time allowing corporations to defer or escape enormous amounts of corporate taxes in the fear that they will pull out of their countries, taking much-needed jobs with them.

Finally, funding pressures make public schools more open to "partnerships" with business. Funding pressures can lead to outright privatization of services. Harrison (Terrace) asked, "Once one board permits this, what, within MAI, prevents corporations from arguing that they should be permitted these rights in other districts?" "The more education becomes a mix of public and for-profit systems," said Knox (Kam-

loops), "the more the MAI will apply." Once a service is mixed, public and private, the rights of corporations to hold or extend their influence within that "market" would be open to legal recourse against any government foolish enough to take them on.

If the MAI (or similar agreements) are signed, the special committee was told, corporations already entrenched in the public education system would be almost impossible to expel. Likewise, universities could also be defined as enterprises; private colleges and institutes would then have equal rights to access public funding or could launch legal challenges for the right. Companies could even assert rights of access to produce schools' and universities' exams and curriculum documents.

As a result of these present and anticipated dangers to conserving a vibrant and vital public education system, the locals were united in urging the special committee to reject the MAI, and to work instead for global human rights, including education. Corporate rights must be linked with corporate responsibilities, and democratically elected governments must be able to call them to account and not shirk their responsibility to do so. Teachers through their associations must play an energetic and articulate role in this. As I concluded in the Surrey Teachers' Association brief (quoting Alice Walker), "Activism is my rent for living on this planet." B.C. teachers clearly paid their rent for February and March at the Special Committee on the MAI.

Gavin Hainsworth teaches at North Surrey Secondary School, Surrey.

BCTF locals speak out

Projectionists locked out for five months

Locked out since December 7, 1998, B.C.'s unionized projectionists continue their dogged fight against employer demands for huge wage concessions. Asked about the five-month anniversary, Projectionists' Union President Damon Faulkner acknowledged that "these are the kind of milestones you don't really want to celebrate."

This dispute pits a tiny union (the British Columbia local of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators has only 64 members) against the entertainment industry giants.

The projectionists question the demand for a 60% wage cut when the parent companies of both theatre chains

enjoy enormous profits. Cineplex Odeon, owned by Sony, last year earned more than \$50 billion U.S. Famous Players, owned by Viacom, took in about \$13 billion U.S. in the same period.

These employers have decimated projectionist union locals across Canada and the United States. "Either sign or starve is the message," says union business agent Dave Jones.

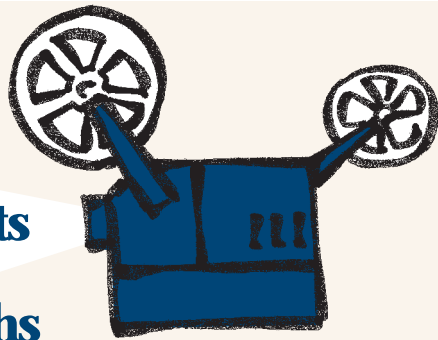
At press time, the two sides had just agreed to two days of talks through mediator Brian Foley. "At least it gets us back to the table," Faulkner said. "With the summer season coming up and the opening of some new theatres, we hope they'll be more open to a reasonable settlement."

Faulkner and Jones appealed to teachers to respect picket lines. The theatre chains have been attempting to undermine the projectionists by liberally distributing free tickets to schools, Guide and Scout clubs, and other youth groups. At various times during their long labour dispute, the projectionists have been dismayed to see teachers taking advantage of the freebies to take their classes to the theatres on field trips.

"We need teachers and everyone to get the message that this is an emergency situation," Faulkner said. "It's like two Goliaths against one David."

Members are reminded of Procedure Statement 44.02 in the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*, which states that "members should respect the position of employees who are legitimately picketing and should not cross a picket line."

For more information about the lockout or about what's showing at the independent theatres not behind picket lines, call the Projectionists' Union (IATSE Local 348) (685-0007), or tap into its Web site (www.bcprojectionists.com).



BCTF Web site

www.bctf.bc.ca

The BCTF Web site has grown to include more than 1,300 pages of information and eight resource databases. The number of visits to the site has tripled over the last 12 months.

E-zine Online

www.bctf.bc.ca/ezine/

Teacher is published and archived online so that members and researchers have ready access to the key stories and articles that have appeared in the last two years.

In an effort to improve our timeliness in Web publishing, we are producing the publication in PDF format as well as HTML, beginning with the January-February 1999 issue. The PDF version, identical to the print publication in format and layout, includes the classified ads. To view the document you need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader. We provide online instructions and links to several Web sites, including the BCTF, to facilitate downloading the software. Also, your computer

display will have to support more than 256 colours.

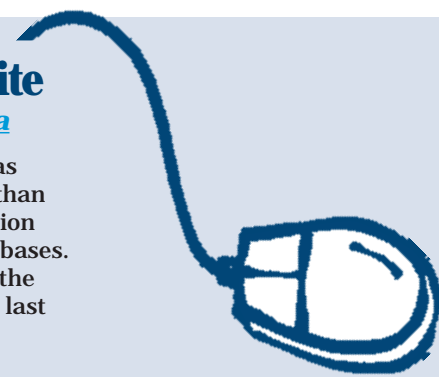
E-mail your comments dbroome@bctf.bc.ca or use the feedback link on the e-zine's Web page.

First Nations and Métis education home page

www.bctf.bc.ca/Social/FirstNations/

Delegates to the 1999 AGM passed a series of recommendations developed by the eight-member Task Force on First Nations Education. Its comprehensive report, background articles, teaching resources, ministry aboriginal education funding policies, and a calendar of workshop and events are on the Web site.

- Diana Broome



Occupational Safety and Health Week

Workplace safety is important to us all. The Province of British Columbia has officially proclaimed May 17 to 23, 1999, North America Occupational Safety and Health Week (NAOSH Week).

NAOSH Week is an annual event sponsored by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE), in association with the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C., the Labour Program of Human Resources Development Canada, and the B.C. Ministry of Labour.

The tri-national theme for NAOSH Week 1999 is Occupational Safety and Health: It's Everybody's Business. The theme emphasizes the role we all play in ensuring safe and healthy workplaces and the economic benefit of safer workplaces.

For more information, visit www.wcb.bc.ca/resmat/pubs/naoshwk.htm

To receive your free participant guide, write to: Rempy Johal, c/o BC Biomedical Laboratories Ltd. 3300 Boundary Road, Burnaby, BC V5M 4A4, F: (604) 255-6994

Dear Colleagues,

In October 1995, I thought I had a bad case of viral laryngitis. After three weeks of hoarseness, I went to see my doctor. He sent me to an otolaryngologist who, after examining my vocal chords, prescribed voice therapy and medication to reduce the swelling in my throat.

Health and safety

By the end of teacher interviews in November/December 1995, I was having episodes of complete voice failure. I decided to arrange for speech therapy starting in January 1996.

My speech pathologist showed me how to avoid the bad habits I had developed. I had to learn to breathe from the diaphragm instead of the chest, to use better posture when addressing or reading to the class, to drink water regularly to prevent drying out my vocal chords, to project my voice properly, to humidify my environment, to do daily vocal exercises, and to make numerous other changes.

I reduced my teaching time to 0.9 by using my sick-leave days, so I could attend voice therapy sessions Wednesday and Friday afternoons. After three months, my speech pathologist prepared a program of vocal exercises

that I could do at home. I decided to apply to the WCB to recover my sick-leave days. I continued to need two to four days of voice rest per month.

The WCB denied my initial claim. I appealed the decision, and a BCTF representative helped me prepare for an oral appeal held in Nanaimo on January 15, 1998. The appeal was denied.

For the next appeal, I underwent an assessment at the Pacific Voice Clinic, in Vancouver, in June 1998. The report supported my claim that my disability was due to vocal misuse and abuse caused by my employment. My voice dysfunction developed over many years because of constant strain on my voice. The clinic recommended that I use a portable voice-amplification system.



The BCTF representative gathered more research supporting my claim and, with the report from the Pacific Voice Clinic, resubmitted my claim in the form of a written appeal. The appeal was allowed on January 5, 1999. My sick-leave days were replaced, and I am awaiting the purchase of my voice-amplification system.

If you are experiencing any voice dysfunction, I urge you to see a specialist as soon as possible.

Carol Minchin, Ladysmith Intermediate School, Nanaimo.

6.8 Voice Dysfunction

Teachers use their voices all day at work, whether with an entire class or with an individual student or colleague. An occupational injury common to teachers is voice dysfunction, damage of the vocal cords, which causes loss or weakness of vocal functions. You can prevent voice dysfunction by taking the following precautions: warm up your voice prior to the teaching day, do not use excessive volume, vary your teaching style so that you do not lecture for prolonged periods, and drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. The employer must provide acoustically designed workplaces that do not require overexertion of the vocal cords. Drama, band, music, technical education, and physical education teachers, in particular, are susceptible to voice dysfunction. Workload (class size, hours of work) has an impact on this type of injury.

- BCTF Occupational Health & Safety Manual

You are not alone

by *Graham Rudd*

The fourth annual BCTF Beginning Teachers' Conference took place February 12 and 13 at the Delta Pacific Conference Centre in Richmond. This increasingly popular event, which has become the second largest BCTF-sponsored gathering after the AGM, was attended by 430 participants from across the province. They were attracted by an offering of almost 40 workshops, including "Survival Skills for the First Years," "Use of Criterion-Referenced Assessment," "Focus on Bullying in Elementary Schools," "Inclusion: Strategies and Support," and a variety of subject-specific sessions.

Delegates were welcomed by Charan Gill, the principal conference organizer and a BCTF assistant director for Professional Development, and by Kit Krieger, BCTF president. Krieger recalled the inauspicious start to his teaching career: an inopportune fainting spell at the beginning of his first class as a student teacher at Kitsilano Secondary School, in Vancouver. Fortunately he had both a soft landing and empathetic students. Charan Gill noted the importance of the conference in preparing new teachers on the eve of what she termed "the bulge," the imminent wave of teacher retirements expected in the next five to ten years. She also noted the importance of the conference as a way for the BCTF to offer support to beginning teachers, those of us in the first five years of our careers, and to help us build connections both with our colleagues and with our Federation. Finally, she noted that as teaching is becoming more and more stressful, beginning educators need to know that they don't have to go it alone, and that support and advice are available at the school level, at the district level, and at the provincial level.

The most popular how-to sessions were on how to manage stress, how to manage time, how to survive, and how to maintain enthusiasm, passion, and wellness in the classroom. Delegates recognized the need to balance the demands and expectations placed on new teachers with a healthy and fulfilling life outside the school and the classroom. Suggested strategies include avoiding comparison with the experienced teacher down the hall, focussing on one curricular area per year rather than trying to do it all at once, and starting healthy work habits at the outset of one's career. Perhaps the most valuable and appreciated advice is to realize that occasionally saying no to requests for one's time for extracurricular activities in the first year or two of teaching is not only acceptable but advisable.

Many time- and stress-saving suggestions were from the workshop leaders themselves, who shared with the

The value of learning languages

by *Guillermo Bustos*

The Vancouver School Board is considering a policy that will allow the parents' advisory committee of each elementary school to determine which will be the second language taught. Such a policy will revive the debate about the role of heritage languages and the role of French as the other official language of this country.

At the secondary level, second-language teachers report the alarming drop of students taking any second-language course. On the other hand, 380 students (13 classes) challenged Mandarin 12.

Why are fewer students choosing second-language courses? Why are students who speak a heritage language trying to get credit for a second-language course?

Some students need space in their timetables for the extra math and science courses that will pave their way to university. Students who do not see themselves as university material do not believe they need a second language either. Many parents believe we should focus on Asian languages in order to do business with Asia. And, of course, many believe that learning languages is so difficult!

Finally, who cares about French in the West? Quebec wants to separate anyhow!

Although there is a university requirement for a second language, students discover or are advised that a beginners 11 course will do. Can you imagine trying to enter university with a beginners math or a beginners English? What makes people think that second languages should be treated differently?

In European countries that streamed students at the end of Grade 6, students in vocational or trades programs were not taught a second language. In the new European community, this handicap limits their mobility. This will soon happen to us. Geologists and mining technicians and workers going to Latin America have to cram Spanish in night courses. In an increasingly interdependent world, speaking two or three languages is a real asset.

Then, why not focus on Asian languages and forget European languages? The answer is in Asia itself. Dozens of Canadian graduates are in Asian countries teaching English and French. There is an advantage to being a bilingual country!

There is a difference between a language spoken by many and a universal

language. All over the world, people strive to learn English and French in order to communicate, to study, to trade, to research.

By rejecting French, some communities are doing themselves a disservice. Because French is an official language, millions of dollars have been spent over the years developing resources and training teachers. Those resources are not available for heritage languages. Also, having native speakers take their heritage language as a second language course is a form of self-delusion. Would we find it normal to have a student who has finished the conservatory take a Beginners Music 11 course? What is that student learning?

Immigrants have come to this country to make it their own. And part of this country's reality is its bilingualism. We should not deprive newcomers of the opportunity to learn both official languages. And if we take the example of certain immersion programs in areas of Vancouver with high ESL populations, learning French has been very rewarding because children do not need to know English to learn French.

But what if Quebec separates? Why learn French? If Quebec separates, we will

have one more country with which to trade in French, and the rights of the francophone minorities outside Quebec will become paramount to a democratic and inclusive Canadian society.

Now, are languages difficult to learn or is it a frame of mind? Certainly as in any domain, some people are more gifted than others. But as teaching of second languages has changed from the grammatical to the communicative approach, the number of students who can speak and read a language at the end of Grade 12 has also increased tremendously. The French public-speaking contest "Le Concours d'Art oratoire," held yearly at UBC, now has an established FSL component. B.C. students travelling abroad suddenly appreciate having learned a second language in secondary school.

But all this will amount to very little if we educators do not model appreciation for the learning of languages, as we model all other learning, and if we do not fight the misconceptions on language learning, as we fight all other biases. The ball is in our court.

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

delegates their considerable experience and wisdom gained over years of teaching. Most leaders built some sharing activities into their seminars. Participants could discuss and problem-solve issues peculiar to beginning teachers, and the leaders could offer solutions based on their experiences. Hearing that the longtime teachers had experienced many of the same predicaments we are now encountering was refreshing and encouraging. This mentor/beginning teacher relationship was a hallmark of the sessions, and the importance of this relationship in the development of confident and effective new teachers cannot be overstated.

Other sessions were more subject- and situation-specific. Workshops were offered on assessing and evaluating student writing, incorporating drama into the classroom, planning and implementing artist workshops and residency programs, exploring social issues through theatre, and finding lesson ideas online. Some sessions offered practical, hands-on ideas in math, science, social studies, French, music, and PE. The number and the high quality of the workshops at the conference made choice, and occasionally availability, problematic. As a partial solution and in order to give delegates a window into sessions they were unable to attend, all conference leaders were asked to provide a summary of their sessions for the BCTF Web site: www.bctf.bc.ca/career/beginning/conference

Many of the subject-specific sessions offered excellent ideas and strategies that could be immediately implemented in the classroom. For example, after attending "Connecting Kids with Math," with Catherine Sheard, I was able to integrate her excellent ideas for teaching stem and leaf, and box and whiskers data graphing and plotting into my Grade 7 math unit on data analysis. Grant Stewart from Ocean Grove Elementary School, in Campbell River, offered some handy tips in "Report Card Writing and Criterion-Referenced Assessment" that were immediately useful in planning for and writing Term 2 reports.

Being a beginning teacher is both immensely challenging and rewarding. Most of us work in very supportive environments, where our fellow teachers and administrators remember what it was like to be a new teacher. They are eager and willing to lend a hand and to offer advice, but new teachers also need to share their experiences with other new teachers. The BCTF annual Beginning Teachers' Conference provides an ideal forum for beginning teachers from across the province to begin forming the interpersonal relationships that encourage them to continue growing personally and professionally throughout their careers. It was a truly invaluable experience that I would highly recommend to any beginning teacher.

Graham Rudd is a first-year teacher at White Rock Elementary School, Surrey.

Parent loves her public school

by Tracy Sherlock

The debate over the traditional school issue in Richmond has focussed on what parents perceive to be lacking in our schools. I believe that with more knowledge and parental involvement in our schools, the traditional school debate will simply dissipate. For this reason, I would like to recognize what I love about my neighbourhood school.

I love the way my child learns. Already this year, she has done several author studies, expanded her reading vocabulary at least a hundredfold, learned the meaning of hyperbole, and picked up all four of the math functions. That is just a scratch on the surface of all that she has learned.

I love the way she is enthusiastic about her homework, which is usually a full hour of reading each night and then some sort of assignment each weekend. I love the way she sets her weekly agenda and makes sure I initial it each night. I love the way she lets me know what she has learned through her increased awareness of the world and all that is in it. Did I mention that my daughter is in Grade 1?

I love the way her teacher structures her day with routines that give her a sense of security so that she can know

what to expect when she goes to school. I love the way her teacher takes the time to discuss such weighty issues as hurt feelings or cheating, which helps develop well-rounded, caring human beings. I love the way these issues are discussed with firm yet kind understanding.

I love the way our school values each child...

I love the way her teacher celebrates achievements with an awards ceremony each day. I love the way the children are taught to share compliments and goals in terms of their work. I love the way the teacher communicates with the parents through a "rap book" that comes home each day. The book includes a daily planner as well as an opportunity for parents to convey to the teacher anything of note that is happening at home. I love the way her report cards discuss her individually rather than by letter grade. At this point I am much more interested in how she is learning to learn and love learning rather than in what percentage she can learn.

I love the way her school offers only combined classes so that she is guaranteed the opportunity to experience learning as both an older child and as a younger child.

I love the ways that the older children are given opportunities for leadership. The responsibility and accountability given to playground leaders, office and library monitors, and the various sports teams teach valuable lessons in self-discipline, integrity, and citizenship. I love the way that older children have younger buddies in the school for reading programs.

I love the way our school values each child as an individual and the way that the school honours children's achievements through assemblies. I love the way the school values its various communities through all sorts of special events.

I love the way the administrators communicate with the parents through casual coffee and conversation sessions that tackle tough issues. I love the way the entire staff is open and approachable.

This school offers everything that would be provided by a traditional school, and much, much more.

For these reasons, and many more too numerous to mention, I love my school.

Tracy Sherlock is a parent of a child at Archibald Blair Elementary School, Richmond.

Source: *Richmond News*, February 28, 1999



If you say it often enough...

We educate a greater proportion of our students to higher levels than ever before in human history. Canada has achieved the highest level of post secondary participation of any country in the world. Parents from other countries send their children to Canada to be educated in our public schools, parents who can obviously afford private schools. We have a public school system second to none. But that doesn't deter the critics. A book titled, *The Way We Were? The Myths and Realities of America's Student Achievement*,* looks at some of the criticisms leveled at American schools over the last 150 years. Note the dates.

Horace Mann, secretary of public instruction in Massachusetts "reported that three hundred Massachusetts teachers were forced by riotous and violent students to flee their classrooms in a single 12-month period—the year of 1837."

"An 1898 writing exam at the University of California (Berkeley) found that 30% to 40% of entering freshmen were not proficient in English."

"In 1902, the editors of *The New York Sun* opined that when they had attended school, children 'had to do a little work...Spelling, writing and arithmetic were not electives and you had to learn.' Now, however, schooling was 'a vaudeville show. The child must be kept amused and learns what he pleases.'"

"The National Association of Manufacturers charged in 1927 that 40% of high school graduates could not perform simple arithmetic or accurately express themselves in English."

"The refusal to use proven phonics methods 'is gradually destroying democracy in this country; it returns to the upper middle class the privileges that public education was supposed to distribute evenly...' *Why Johnny Can't Read*, Rudolph Flesch, 1955 (reissued in 1986).

Most of these criticisms sound hauntingly familiar. If these critics were at all accurate we would now have an illiterate society incapable of maintaining the technological advances developed over the same period.

Perhaps if people began hearing the facts rather than the myths, they would have a clearer vision of the real strength of our public schools.

— Peter Owens

**The Way We Were? The Myths and Realities of America's Student Achievement*, Richard Rothstein, 1998. The Century Foundation Press, New York.

The death knell for charter schools

by Mavis Lowry

During the spring break, I attended the annual conference of the American Education Finance Association, in Seattle. There I heard the death knell for charter schools operated by private firms on a for-profit basis. The session by Dr. David Arsen, of Michigan State University, would convince even the most ardent advocate of charter schools to rethink his/her convictions.

Dr. Arsen explained that Michigan is an especially good place to study charter schools since that state has more than any other state except California and Arizona. Michigan has a more deregulated, permissive, autonomous system than you will find in most states. There one can see what charter schools will do given free reign. Charter proponents say that more will be spent on instruction. Opponents argue that more will be spent on administration. Which is true? Arsen sets out the facts.

Three-quarters of the

The amount spent on instruction in these charter schools is...half of the per student expenditure in the regular public schools.

charter schools in Michigan are operated on a for-profit basis. That is, a private firm contracts with the chartering agency—generally the university—to manage the school.

The amount spent on instruction in these charter schools is—believe it or not—half of the per student expenditure in the regular public schools. Yes, I was stunned. We suspected it might be bad, but this was outrageous. The charter schools run up large surpluses (profits) to the tune of \$1,590 per student per year.

The amount spent on administration, on the other hand, is 25% higher (\$700 more per-student per year) in charter schools than in the regular public schools. There was no explanation as to what all the extra money for administration was being spent on. But this fact seemed all the more ironic when, in another session, a researcher from the University of Delaware presented preliminary results of his school-based-outcomes study in Florida: the more dollars spent at the school level on administration, the poorer the student performance. Where there was "high influence" by the principal and less involvement of the teachers in operation of the school, the student performance was reduced.

Reduced expenditure on instruction in Michigan charter schools was explained in terms of the lower salaries paid to charter-school teachers and the fact that no pension payments were being made on behalf of any staff in the charter schools. Poor compensation has resulted in a great deal of "turbulence" in staffing. Yet the NEA and the AFT (American teacher unions) reported in another session that charter-school

teachers generally feel they do not need a union. However, on average, the teachers appear, in a preliminary survey, to

Charter schools, if...handed over to the private sector, mean less spent on instruction, more spent on administration, poorly compensated staff, and, at the same time, the generation of enormous profits.

work only two years in the charter school before either returning to the public system or finding another career.

Not all charter schools are alike, however. About 5% of the Michigan charter schools are operated by a school district. Where this is the case, the situation is very different. The large overexpenditures on administration and large underexpenditures for instruction are not found here. The teachers in these charter schools remain in the union and are compensated as other district teachers are.

So let this be a lesson to us. Charter schools, if taken out of the public realm and handed over to the private sector, mean less spent on instruction, more spent on administration, poorly compensated staff, and, at the same time, the generation of enormous profits.

Mavis Lowry is an assistant director in the BCTF's Bargaining Division.

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about the central role of public education in Cuba. Prior to the revolution, he said, only 56% of children went to elementary school, and only 28% of youths attended secondary school. Millions of Cubans were illiterate. Today UNESCO rates Cuba's quality of education as the top in all of Latin America.

Abreu painted a stark picture of the extreme shortages facing Cuban teachers and students as a result of the U.S. economic blockade and the Helms-Burton bill. More and more students lack such essentials as food, shoes, uniforms, and grooming supplies, while schools lack textbooks, stationery, computer components, desks and other basic furniture, and lab and audio-visual equipment.

"Despite these shortages," Abreu said, "not one school has been closed, and none of our 250,000 teachers has been laid off. Furthermore, not one museum or library has been closed. Not one child lacks access to schooling."

Abreu thanked the BCTF members for their material and spiritual solidarity. "You have a very special place in our memory and in our hearts. Your support for our efforts to strengthen our public education system has been crucial. We will always honour your trust," he said.

Education Minister Paul Ramsey also addressed the AGM on a range of topics:

increased education funding, continued class-size reduction in K-3, support for non-enrolling teachers, preparing students for "the new literacies of the 21st century," and educating them for engaged citizenship.

He pledged continued funding for the class-size initiative, which he said has support from teachers and parents. "Teachers across B.C. have told me what a difference having smaller classes makes to them, and how it enables them to pay more attention to each student. Parents have told me how much better things are becoming for their children now that they have more one-on-one attention and better access to librarians, counsellors, and other classroom support teachers."

He acknowledged that schools must do a better job for First Nations students and he commended the Federation on its initiative in this area. The new "Shared Learnings" resources and the Nisga'a teaching modules are intended to help support teachers who are unfamiliar with how to bring aboriginal history and culture alive in their classrooms.

The minister also took aim at the Fraser Institute and its ranking of schools based on average exam marks. The ministry's new booklet, "Bright Lights," features some of the fine work going on in some schools that ranked poorly according to the business lobby group's simplistic analysis.

He urged parents to take time to go to schools and "find out the real story instead of listening to the offensive and insulting propaganda released by self-interest groups like the Fraser Institute." He urged teachers to make their voices heard by writing letters to the editor or calling radio talk shows to challenge the uninformed critics.

Ramsey received a standing ovation and an enthusiastic round of applause for his strong stand in opposition to the incursions of Youth News Network into B.C. classrooms. (See page 9.)

He concluded with thanks to all the teachers of B.C., saying, "When it comes right down to it, the most important relationship, the one the entire public education system exists to support, is the relationship between the teacher and the student."

- Nancy Knickerbocker

What is genuine accountability in schools?

by Janet Amsden

Linda Darling-Hammond's address on genuine accountability was well received by AGM delegates, who are used to teacher unions' being called "self-serving" or "wanting to avoid accountability" when opposing the use of province-wide test results to compare schools.

"Accountability is not testing," said the Stanford University professor of education. "Where American states have put in place test-based accountability systems, they have created dysfunc-



PETER OWENS PHOTOS

tional incentives...In a number of states...we've had an increased retention of students in grade so that their test scores look better, an increase in pushing kids into special education, where their test scores won't count, and an increase in excluding kids from school altogether to get the average scores of the school up because the easiest way to get your average score up is to push kids out of school."

She noted a similar phenomenon in medicine in New York State. "They began to rate cardiology surgeons on mortality rates. They did!... They discovered that in western New York most of the doctors were sending their most egregious cases to Ohio because they were afraid to treat the most medically needy patients..."

Darling-Hammond asked delegates to learn from American mistakes and not to replicate them. Since the early 1980s, Georgia and North Carolina have had a test-based accountability system where students' test results at every grade level have been reported. Students were held back if they didn't do well; teachers were given merit pay or probation according to student performance. Over the decade national mathematics assessments (in Grade 4, 1992-1996) showed "not one whit" of improvement, but drop-out rates did increase. The states that scored the highest had the highest standards for teacher licensing and did not have a state-level assessment program in place at the time.

The lesson Americans learned was that testing does not improve learning, teaching does. Darling-Hammond urged delegates to focus on professional accountability, "...The kind of accountability that pertains in activities where professional judgment is needed to make good decisions of behalf of clients."

"Professions have three features that distinguish them from other kinds of occupations," said Darling-Hammond. "First of all, they have a knowledge base that is widely shared by all the members who enter the profession. Second of all, they pledge to use that knowledge on behalf of the welfare of the child or of the client. They make decisions based on what is best practice rather than what is most politically expedient, easiest to do, or most convenient. And finally, they take responsibility for defining and transmitting those standards of practice to new entrants in the profession. They take responsibility for ensuring that what goes on outside of their own purview is also professionally responsible."

"If we want genuine accountability in schooling," she said, "we need to emphasize professional accountability for making good educational decisions on behalf of children and helping teachers have access to the knowledge they need to make those decisions well."

Darling-Hammond called the BCTF's proposal for an alternative to accreditation, School Self-Evaluation and Planning (SSEP), an important proposal that would put "the engine for change" back in the school. The SSEP, "...would enable teachers to create their own system of professional accountability" that is based on continuing school improvement.

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

Copies of Darling-Hammond's address to the AGM are available from your local president, on the BCTF Web site www.bctf.bc.ca/parents/speeches/darling-hammond.htm, or for loan on video from the BCTF Resources Centre.

A letter to The Province

by Ralph Sundby

The following letter was sent to *The Province* newspaper in response to its publication of The Fraser Institute ranking of schools. The portion in boldface is what the paper printed.

As a parent of a Grade 9 student in a Vancouver school, I want to register my strongest objection to your comparison of secondary schools based on a purported "study" by the Fraser Institute.

Such simplistic comparisons have been repeatedly discredited for a variety of reasons. For one thing, they represent a very narrow measurement that is of debatable validity. Further, they are devoid of any adjustment for economic, ethnic, or social factors.

Show me an analysis of the secondary schools with respect to these factors, and I can tell you with a high degree of accuracy how the schools will compare on test scores. This is not new information to *The Province* and yet you persist in publishing these invalid comparisons in spite of harmful effects.

The Province knows very well that many schools serving students from deprived and troubled backgrounds are doing a marvelous job and saving society enormous future costs by putting such youngsters on a positive path. Such schools will be degraded by the publication rather than credited for the fine work they are doing.

My daughter attends what the province would call one of the better schools. I think it is a good school, too, but I don't want her teachers to sacrifice any part of her education as a result of being forced to teach "to the test."



KAREN KILBRIDE PHOTO

Clockwise from upper left: President-Elect David Chudnovsky; Kit Krieger, with Roy C. Hill Award winner Pamela Hagen; Julia Goulden, winner of the BCTF's G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award; David Chudnovsky, Luis Abreu (secretary general, Cuban Teachers' Union), and Kit Krieger; Linda Darling-Hammond, with Peggy Salaberry, Central Okanagan Teachers' Association.

The right wing Fraser Institute is not "prestigious" and *The Province* discredits itself in becoming an organ for its very conservative agenda.

Ralph Sundby is a retired teacher and BCTF staff person.

How grass roots beat deep pockets

by Dan Blake

It was a classic David and Goliath story, or, in a more contemporary vein, a story of how grass roots organizing won out over deep pockets. The deep pockets belong to the Youth News Network (YNN). YNN offers interested secondary schools about \$200,000 worth of

Given the fact that schooling is compulsory, we are, in effect, compelling students to be the subjects of a marketing campaign.

technology (TVs, software, computers, VCRs, video cameras, and a satellite dish) in exchange for a guarantee that 90% of the students in the school will watch a 12.5-minute news broadcast, which includes 2.5 minutes of commercials. YNN says that it needs to sign up 200 schools by September 1999, when

broadcasting of the news program begins. At \$200,000 per schools, that's 40 million dollars up front before YNN can earn any money from advertising. Deep pockets indeed.

The grass roots are the parents, teachers, community organizations, and concerned individuals from Halifax to Sechelt, who, through the Internet, have built a groundswell of opposition to the sale of our kids' minds to the highest bidder. John Pungente, president of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO), has been in the forefront of organizing the resistance. Since the current initiative (YNN attempted to get into the public school system in 1992 and in 1995, but both were turned back by the same coalition of parents, teachers, and community organizations) came to light in January 1999, Pungente has issued 80 bulletins to 50 individuals and organizations. On some days, Pungente has issued as many as three bulletins, each one three pages long.

Erika Shaker, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, has provided invaluable research on the personalities and corporate structure of Athena Educational Partners, the latest incarnation of YNN. The CCPA research has revealed that there is really only one "partner" in Athena and that's YNN. One of the other so-called partners is Gage Publishing, a major supplier of textbooks to elementary schools across Canada. I spoke recently with Chris Bessie, president of Gage Publishing, and expressed my concern with the company(!) he was keeping. He quickly assured me that his only relationship with Athena is that of a supplier of software. He explained that his company is anxious not to alienate its established customers. YNN's strategy is clear: surround yourself with credible business "partners" (read suppliers) in a desperate effort to make yourself palatable to the educational community. YNN also lists the company that supplies the satellite dishes as a "partner."

This latest YNN initiative serves to crystallize the moral question around corporate involvement in public education. Corporate involvement is primarily self-interested involvement. For example, Coca Cola agrees to pay a school a certain amount of money in exchange for exclusive rights to market its product to the students (consumers) in the school. Given the fact that schooling is compulsory, we are, in effect, compelling students to be the subjects of a marketing campaign. The students will

be confronted by strategically placed vending machines in the cafeteria and hallways. They will probably have corporate logos painted on their gym walls. They may also be wearing school team uniforms with the same corporate logo, and if they are students at the last school at which I taught, they may even see some of their teachers wearing sweatshirts with that ubiquitous logo on the front. It certainly lends new meaning to the old invocation, "Look up at the teacher!"

From Coca Cola's (and other corporations, too) point of view, this is not just about selling product. This is also about building a customer base. Marketing research has shown that customers who "bond" early with a product are more likely to stick with that product when they become adults. The advertising trade journals are shamelessly frank about their eagerness to market to young people. The Canadian Teachers' Federation's Heather-jane Robertson, writing in *The Toronto Star* on March 8, 1999, says that the youth market is a \$20 billion business.

The YNN plan takes the notion of a "captive audience" two significant steps further. First, instead of just one product (say, Coca Cola) being marketed, you can now market five or more products on any given day (the typical TV commercial lasts 30 seconds, so 2.5 minutes of advertising gives you five ads). Second, and more insidious, the students have to watch the ads. Marketing executives must feel that they have died and gone to heaven!

Fortunately, here in B.C., it

...compulsory viewing of advertising does not constitute instruction.

looks as if it's game over for this latest YNN effort. At the BCTF AGM, Minister of Education Paul Ramsey announced that YNN is not welcome in B.C. He has also instructed his deputy minister to write to all superintendents to inform them that daily compulsory viewing of advertising does not constitute instruction. It boggles the mind to think that it is necessary to tell superintendents this. The fact that a number of them had met with Rod MacDonald, president of YNN, the Friday before the AGM suggests that Ramsey's statement was both necessary and timely.

Dan Blake is English language arts helping teacher in the Surrey School District.

Teachers pass historic initiative in First Nations Education

by Nancy Knickerbocker

To heartfelt applause and a standing ovation, First Nations Task Force co-chairs Debbie Jeffrey and Frank Conibear smiled and raised their hands in celebration of the start of a new relationship between the teachers of British Columbia and their Aboriginal students and communities.

"When I started this journey a couple of years ago, I was like a single paddler in a small canoe," said Conibear. "Now we need a much bigger canoe so that all our cultures can start paddling together."

Emotions ran high as more than 650 teachers from all over the province discussed a comprehensive report by the eight-member First Nations Task Force and then passed a series of recommendations aimed at improving the success of the 40,000 Aboriginal students in B.C.'s public schools.

"I think we're on the threshold of some very positive change," says Jeffrey. "We would like to see our children succeed in the mainstream society and still be strong within themselves as Aboriginal people."

Because of a variety of historical and contemporary factors, B.C. schools are not meeting the needs of Aboriginal students with the same degree of success as for other students. The statistics are compelling: only about 31% of First Nations students graduate with their Grade 8 cohort. The enduring damage caused by the residential-school experience is at the root of the problem. Pervasive poverty and significant cultural differences also have a profound effect upon educational success.

"Canadian society as a whole is in a great deal of denial about our history," Jeffrey said. "People are reluctant to talk about difficult issues like racism. And if you're from the mainstream culture, you can't really understand it, because you don't experience it."

The task force report calls for a new cross-cultural understanding in public schools and in the practices of teachers. Awareness and commitment are at the heart of this endeavour. The task force asked BCTF members to consider 18 statements of ways they can support First Nations children and youth.

"Aboriginal students spend a great deal of time defending

who they are," Jeffrey said. These children need skills to protect themselves at school and in the community, especially now that they face a growing backlash over the Nisga'a treaty and other gains by Aboriginal people.

The task force members urged that new places be opened at the tables where education decisions are made—within the BCTF, in each school, in board offices, and at the Ministry of Education. They also suggested criteria for schools to assess how inclusive they are of Aboriginal students. This self-examination is essential, they said, because as long as the cultural basis of the school and its practices remain unchanged, public schools will be unable to serve the needs of students from indigenous cultures.

Jeffrey said she is haunted by the words of a 15-year-old student who once told her: "Even though I'm Indian, I know I can make it." Jeffrey felt inspired by the girl's strength and determination, but saddened by her feeling "that being Aboriginal was such a huge strike against her."

In the hope of turning that situation around, the members of the task force articulated their vision for teachers of First Nations children: Each child has a gift. Look for that gift and how to help nurture it. Strengthen the spirit of the children, and help them to find balance and ways of being that are rooted in land, community, and culture. Help them to succeed in education and career, as well as choices of lifestyle.

Jeffrey herself grew up in a family that emphasized pride in their heritage and courage to defend it. "My father was very strong and taught us to defend our Aboriginal rights. But I'd rather my daughter could just be happy as a young Tsimshian child, fully accepted for who she is."

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF's media relations officer.

Task Force on First Nations Education

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Vancouver Elementary

Lexi Charlie

Cowichan Valley

Frank Conibear

Greater Victoria

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George Jay marks 90th anniversary

Victoria's grand old George Jay School will mark its 90th anniversary in May, and both staff and students are learning about "the olden days" at the school.

To mark the occasion, teacher-librarian Bob Warren has written an affectionate school history, entitled *George Jay School 1909: A glance back at elementary public school education*.

Today George Jay is an inner-city school just blocks from downtown Victoria, but it was once the largest school in B.C. Built in 1909 on the fields of a dairy farm, it was named after the chair of the city school board, a lawyer who devoted tremendous energy to advocating for public education and services to youth, especially sporting opportunities.

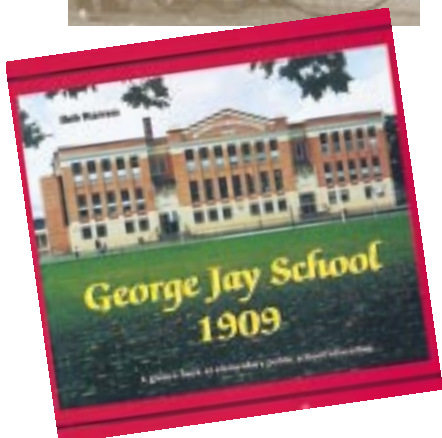
The first principal of George Jay School was H.B. Maclean, famous to generations of school children as the creator of The Maclean Method of Handwriting.

The 75-page book features scores of historic photos, including one of a smiling Mr. Maclean. Classroom shots reveal that in the early years, teachers coped with 40 or more pupils. Two of the classes of 1912 had 49 students each.

From the early years of pen and ink through the baby boomers and ballpoints, Warren's book offers a fascinating glimpse of the history of public education.

Students and staff of George Jay are planning three days of open-house activities in celebration of the 90th anniversary. For more information, or to order your copy of Warren's book, please contact the school at 1118 Princess Avenue, Victoria, BC V8T 1L3, (250) 385-3381, or georgejay@sd61.bc.ca

- Nancy Knickerbocker



THE SURREY WELLNESS STORY



BCTF PD staffperson Nancy Hinds with Sandra Foley, Surrey. Sandra has been instrumental in ensuring that Surrey Wellness workshops continue and are available to all staff.

Laughter does more than crack you up

by Karen Kilbride

The Surrey Wellness initiative is no laughing matter, but laughter and fun are a definite and planned part of the program. David Granirer, a professional counsellor and comedian, was the presenter at a recent Wellness Site Reps meeting for Surrey School Board employees. He delivered his serious message about preventing workplace burnout and stress-related illnesses in a most fun way, with stand-up comedy, rubber chickens, balloons, prizes and candy, and "barrels of laughter."

Medical science has proven that laughter in the workplace is good for productivity and workers' health. The old adage "No pain, no gain" is not true. Laughter is not a distraction from getting the real work done but is a happy, healthy way to increase workers' wellness, satisfaction, and productivity. Schools need healthy staff members to meet the demands of students, technology, and curriculum. Happy schools are places where teachers, students, and parents want to be. Laughter helps create the comfortable environment essential for students to learn and for teachers to do their best teaching.

Laughter:

- burns off calories
- relaxes your muscles
- lowers your blood pressure
- oxygenates your body, thereby boosting your energy level
- stimulates the release of endorphins, your body's natural pain-killers
- works out your cardiovascular, respiratory, and all other major internal systems
- stimulates your immune system, offsetting the immunosuppressive effects of stress.

Why do we all enjoy Fridays at school? We enjoy the prospect of a relaxing weekend, but we also give ourselves permission to relax and enjoy more fun social interactions in our class and in the staffroom. How many school staffs plan to hold their special luncheons, staff birthday cakes, and student recognition assemblies on Fridays? How many classroom teachers tell their students that they must wait for Friday to play their favourite math game, to earn that extra period in the gym, or to go outside for art? Why don't we choose to enjoy these activities on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday?

Lightening up is a personal choice. David Granirer believes that it is important to connect with the laughing, joyful part of ourselves. We can choose our behaviour and our thinking, and thereby manage what we experience in our bodies. Laughter is like any other new skill, the more you practise, the more natural it becomes.

Research also says that faked laughter is just as good for the body as the real thing. Your head can tell the difference, but your body cannot. So on those tougher days when you normally wouldn't choose to laugh, try using humour in your teaching repertoire and see if your tension headache is fooled into disappearing.

The Surrey Wellness Project is funded by the Surrey School Board and all employee groups. Each work site has a wellness rep, and training sessions are held two or three times a year. Schools are encouraged to promote wellness as a professional development activity and to include all staff in wellness activities.

Karen Kilbride teaches at Kennedy Trail Elementary School, and is a member of the Surrey District Wellness Committee.

Does B.C. really have a debt problem?

by Marc Lee

The recent provincial budget was, for many commentators, a real dog. After all, \$890 million is an awfully big number for a late-1990s provincial deficit. But there is good reason to step back and put the numbers in their proper context. Despite all the barking, the bite is not that bad.

Even with this year's large deficit, B.C. is still in relatively good fiscal shape. Economists generally assess the overall debt level not in straight dollar terms, but in relation to the size of the economy. Like a household or a business, the bigger you are, the more debt you can hold.

This year will see a rise in B.C.'s debt-to-GDP ratio to 24%, but this is still the third lowest of all the provinces. The federal government's debt-to-GDP is 65%, almost three times larger. Among the provinces, the recent Quebec budget predicts a debt-to-GDP ratio of just under 50%, while Ontario, after years of deep cuts, has a ratio of 30%. Quebec may have a debt problem; B.C. has a long way to go before it is anywhere close.

What matters most, for any government, is the ability to pay off the interest incurred on the debt. In the coming year, B.C. will pay 8.6 cents per dollar of revenue in interest payments. Only Alberta, Manitoba, and B.C. have debt-service costs in this ballpark. The other seven provinces pay at least 13 cents per revenue dollar, with Ontario at 17.7 cents and Nova Scotia at a whopping 19.1 cents.

Commentators are right to be concerned about future build-up of debt. Large increases in public debt ultimately lead to restrictions on the ability of governments to pay for programs like health care and education. But B.C. is nowhere near a "debt wall." Predictably, the province's credit rating was downgraded, but the evidence suggests that this will only marginally increase the cost of borrowing.

Clearly, government cannot run large deficits year in and year out. This would not be sensible and would indeed lead us into severe debt problems. But for B.C., now is the time to run a deficit, not a balanced budget that would exacerbate the existing economic downturn.

The best time to attack the overall debt is when the economy is growing. During an expansion, governments

face increasing tax revenues and lower demands on expenditures. The last opportunity to do so came at a time of deep federal cuts to provincial transfer payments. B.C., unlike other provinces, chose to absorb the cuts to maintain funding for health and education.

At the start of 1999, B.C.'s economy is not expanding, largely because of factors beyond our control: slumping Asian demand for our exports and depressed international commodity prices. When times are tough, it is simply good public policy to stimulate demand in the economy through fiscal measures.

Another consideration is what sources are driving the deficit. The biggest chunk of new spending comes in health care, an increase of \$615 million. Few would argue that this money is not needed. Opposition critics have chastised the government over health-care issues, like waiting lists for surgeries. This year's budget targets money specifically for this purpose.

Another area is \$45 million in new education spending. This is simply a good investment with a large payback. Estimates of the economic return for completing additional schooling (through higher incomes to individuals; hence, larger tax revenues to government) range from 15 to 30%—not a bad return when the government can borrow at 5%.

The budget also placed an additional \$100 million into a contingency reserve fund to ensure that fiscal targets will be met. Prudence is in vogue, but it does add to estimates of the bottom line. With this cushion, the final deficit numbers may even come in at less than estimated.

These are all political choices. Many commentators coveted the prize of tax cuts for big business and the wealthy in this year's budget. This choice would have provided a weaker fiscal stimulus, would also have led to a deficit outcome, and would have increased inequality.

Increasing spending for health, education, and capital projects at a time of economic downturn is a better choice. The province needs it and can afford it. The critics should stop their barking.

Marc Lee is research economist for the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, www.policyalternatives.ca

Factor 88? Age 64?

Reminder: SIP-Long Term

Teachers who have reached the age of 64 or the factor 88, age plus contributory service with the teachers or municipal pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan: Long Term. If you have reached age 65 or factor 90, you are no longer eligible for long-term benefits and should

withdraw. It is necessary for you to apply to withdraw as the SIP does not have information about your age or contributory service.

If you fit one of the above criteria and wish to withdraw from the long-term part of the plan, write or fax (604) 871-2287 the BCTF Income Security Department for withdrawal application forms.

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SUMMERLAND. Small cottage on Okanagan Lake avail. 2 wks. in Aug. \$650/wk. (250) 494-0299.

KAYAK BC'S WEST COAST. Choose a 7-day adventure in Clayoquot Sound or a combination 3-day Johnstone Strait & 4-day Cape Scott tour. \$585/person. Ogoogo Kayak Tours, ph/fax: (250) 548-3676.

WHISTLER CREEKSIDE. Studios to 2 bd. condos, \$45-\$100, 2-nite min. Discount 3 nites or more, book now for summer. (604) 988-6600, outside Van. 1-800-792-2089.

SHUSWAP LAKE. July 1 thru Sept. 30, 3 bd. house, private beach, dock, boat anchorage, near golf and marina. Sleeps 6. \$900/wk. (604) 536-8647.

SUNSHINE COAST Powell River, quiet 1 ac. low bank sandy waterfront, 1 bd duplex, sleeps 2, fully equipped, 350/wkly. Barb (604) 485-5418.

SAIL FIRST CLASS CHARTERS Skippered charters in the Gulf of Georgia, skippered circumnavigation

of Vancouver Is. Aug. 1-21, pick up and drop off at chosen destinations. Ph/fax: (604) 898-5668.

REDISCOVER ROMANCE Executive retreat avail. on Gabriola Island, private, .6 ac., jacuzzi, TV/VCR, stereo, designer decorated & furn., state of the art kitchen, covered porch, deck. Walk to beaches, galleries, stores, restaurants, pubs, ferry, HAVEN by the Sea. Couples only, no smoking, pets or kids! \$125/nite (2-nite min.), \$700/wk. (or offered for sale at \$125,000). (604) 541-8777 or (250) 247-9842.

SHUSWAP BEACHFRONT cottage avail. June-Sept. \$700/wk. (250) 374-3675.

WHISTLER/BLACKCOMB Alpine Meadows, 3 bd. chalet, sleeps 6, forest setting with mountain views, fully furn., F/P, TV/VCR, stereo, W/D, microwave, close to Meadow Park Arena, valley trail and transit. John (604) 987-7619.

PARKSVILLE/QUALICUM. large studio suite, private garden. Close to beaches, golf, etc. July 3-Aug. 20 \$1200 or \$200/wkly. (250) 954-1638.

N. FRANCE. 1 bd. house, fully equip. biwk. \$380. (250) 474-3929.

RENTAL/EXCHANGE

SWAP YOUR HOUSE FOR MINE IN WALES? 2 people would like to exchange house & car in Cardiff for same in Victoria or Vancouver. Edwardian terraced house, sleeps 4 (2 bd.), must like cat. Attractive city, easy reach of beautiful countryside. Up to 3 wks. from last wk. of July. MariaBrenton@compuserve.com or tel/fax: #44 (0) 1222-495911.

PORT COQUITLAM. 1 bd. and den condo, near Coast Meridian and Priarie. July & Aug. '99. N/P, N/S. \$750/mo. (604) 945-7596.

SUMMERLAND. 3 bd. house on 3 ac. hobby farm for rent. 10 min. from Okanagan Lake. \$400/wk. (neg) July only. (250) 494-5274, gnorthco@summer.com

VICTORIA. Summer sublet, 1 bd. top fl. near downtown & ocean. Avail. July & Aug. \$500/mo. (250) 388-0375.

ROOMMATE. Fby teacher requires roommate, 1 furn. bd. in 2 bd. condo. N. Burnaby. Bright, spacious, secured parking, top floor, indoor pool, hot tub, sauna, in suite laundry. Avail now. (604) 421-3573.

VICTORIA. Fairfield, fully furn. 1913 character home, 3/4 bd., hot tub, ocean views. Rent wkly. or mthly. (250) 592-0664.

VANCOUVER. Quiet location near UBC. 2 bd. N/S, N/P, for similar wk. exchange in Penticton/Summerland, July/Aug. (604) 228-0651 or hwalker@sfu.ca

VICTORIA. Quiet cozy 1 bd. house with panoramic views of Olympic Mts. and Strait of Juan de Fuca. 10 min. to UVic and downtown. July & Aug. \$850/mo. (250) 598-5885.

VANCOUVER. 1 bd. deluxe condo, Robson St. (nr. Blue Horizon Hotel) Daily & wkly rates. (604) 608-4268 or (250) 561-0162.

SOUTH OAK BAY, Victoria. Fully furn. cozy 2/3 bd. house with very private garden, hot tub. July 15/99 thro July 2000. \$1,700/mo. (250) 387-9472.

BIRCH BAY. 35' Villa Royal Trailer. Edgewater Park. Located on beachfront road. Clean, lots of safe, open grassy area for children. Sleeps 6. (604) 522-7710.

QUADRA IS. Quiet cabin, waterfront property. Ideal for swimming, kayaking, hiking, cycling or relaxing. For more info, call (250) 285-3458.

VANCOUVER. Apt. in West End. 1 bd., 1 blk. from the beach avail in July and possibly Aug. (604) 688-5809.

BURNABY. Large, sunny, furn. townhouse. Min. to SFU. Exchange for cabin, condo, house, 1-2-3 wks. summer '99. Prefer Whistler, Gulf Islands, Van. Is. (604) 420-1521.

VICTORIA. Sunny 2 bd. furn. townhouse. Rockland area near downtown and ocean. July & Aug. \$900/mo. (250) 592-5215.

VICTORIA METCHOSIN. Quiet spacious country home on 2 ac. Oceanview, 35 min. from Victoria centre. July 11-Aug. 15, reasonable rent with care of older dog, cat and 10 chickens. (250) 474-1282.

FLOATHOME.</

VANCOUVER. New furn. West End studio apt. Close to Sea Wall, downtown and Yaletown. (Burrard/ Pacific) 25 min. to UBC/SFU. F/P, all appl., exercise rm., pool table, study rm., secured parking and bicycle storage. July & Aug. \$750/mo. all incl. Dates/price neg. Marnie (604) 806-0838.

VANCOUVER. June/July/Aug. 1 bd. clean quiet house, 15 min. to UBC by car, N/S, no partyer, \$325/mo. plus util. (604) 266-5153.

KITSILANO. Top floor, 2 bd. apt. in newly renovated heritage house, summer sublet. July, Aug. 6-8 wks. \$1,000/mo. incl. (604) 731-6521.

WANTED: 2 bd. sublet in Vancouver for July near Granville Is. Teacher and 2 sons. **HOUSEKIT:** Fort St. John home in July, 3.5 bath., 2 bd., decks, gardens, woods. (250) 785-3767, F: (250) 785-5043 (Donna), shah@bulldog.prn.bc.ca

VANCOUVER False Creek, 2 bd., 2 level furn. townhouse with patio. Avail. July & Aug., \$1200/mo. incl. light/heat/cable/laundry/pkg. N/S, N/P, (604) 733-1033.

COQUITLAM. House for summer time. 3 bd., deck, rec room, studio. Mthly or wkly. Close to SFU. (604) 939-4779.

COMOX VALLEY furn. deluxe 3 bd., 3 bath, oceanfront juczuzzi, cooking and laundry facilities, avail. all year round, daily and weekly. (250) 338-7339.

UBC & BEACH beautiful Kitsilano Point sublet. Fully furn. 1 bd. apt. avail. May thru Aug. \$850/mo. incl. parking, payable in advance. (604) 737-7741.

VICTORIA. Fully furn. teacher's 3 bd. house, July 4-Aug. 22+. Near beaches, parks, bus and shopping. 20 min. to core or university. \$1300 for 7+ weeks includes care of two friendly cats (250) 474-4264, ref.

UPPER LONSDALE. North Vancouver on bus stop with 4 buses. Fully furn. bd. with TV, computer, own full bathroom in large 2 bd. apt., large patio, in suite laundry, underground parking, util., use of all linens, dishes incl. Share kitchen with mature adult. \$700/mo. available May 1. (604) 980-9828.

VICTORIA. Large furn. 2 or 3 bd. house, 5 min. from UVic, fenced yard, avail. July 1-Aug. 31. Util. incl. for \$1,400/mo. (250) 477-8894 or remery@coastnet.bc.ca

VICTORIA. 1 bd. own bath, living rm. lower level in modern home. 15 min. to UVic \$125/wk. N/S, N/P. (250) 744-1053.

N. VANCOUVER 3 bd. house. Large, private decks and yard, hardwood floors, F/P, new kitchen. Avail. July & Aug. \$250/wk. (604) 986-7186.

VANCOUVER. Sublet 2 bd. furn. apt. in artist's co-op in east Van. Avail. May 15-Aug. 31 for \$950/mo. No smoking, kids, pets. (604) 253-2053.

SUMMER IN VICTORIA. Beautiful heritage home for rent for the month of July. Near downtown, quiet, large fenced backyard, views of the city, \$800 + util. and refundable deposit. (250) 389-0282.

WHISTLER 3 bd. 2 bath, multi-level townhouse, view, sleeps 8+ (604) 535-3447.

OCEAN PARK South Surrey. Large family home avail. reasonable rent, near beaches, summer months. Call for details (604) 535-3447.

WHITE ROCK Garden cottage nr. beach, quiet street, lease our home, fully equip. 1 bd., 1.5 bath, avail. July and/or Aug. N/S, N/P, \$1,000/mo. incl. (604) 538-6898.

VICTORIA. 4 bd. house avail. July to Aug. 24. Very close to beaches, shopping, and on bus routes. 10 min. to downtown and UVic. Very private garden. \$1200/mo. N/P. (250) 370-2815.

TSAWWASSEN. Nr. Vancouver. Cosy furn. 2 bd., 2 bath character home. Yard, deck, lovely garden. 1 blk to beach. July & Aug. \$1000/mo. neg. for dog-sitting. (604) 943-4003.

VANCOUVER 1 bd. deluxe condo near UBC. Avail. July & Aug. Great view, close to downtown. \$1400/mo. Call Patricia (604) 738-5859.

BURNABY 1 bd. share bath., living, kitchen with one other. Clean, furn., laundry, parking, bus, N/S, convenient to SFU, Douglas, King Edward. July/Aug. \$400/mo. (604) 420-1778.

WHITE ROCK quiet seniors' park, 55 yrs. min. Pool and ex. rm. 65' mobile home, 2 bd. plus, fully furn. \$750/mo. incl. util. 2-4 mo. between Aug. 1 and Jan. 4. (604) 538-4766.

LADYSMITH 4 bd. character home, ocean view. Child friendly. Avail. July \$800. (250) 245-3080.

VANCOUVER furn. 1 bd. apt. for sublet. Across from beach. Excellent bus route. Close to UBC and downtown. July. (604) 739-9594.

BURNABY private room, quiet executive townhouse, near SFU. Shared kitchen. W/D. N/S. \$350/mo. (604) 421-5292.

EXCHANGE-PENTICTON between July 15-Aug. 15, 4 bd. home, view, large yard, pool, for home on coastal island, Kootenays, close to hiking and kayaking. (250) 493-5750.

LANGLEY fully furn. 3 bd. home. July & Aug. only. \$1300/mo. (604) 534-3750.

VANCOUVER May 1, lovely new 2 bd. partially furn. basement suite near UBC/beach/park. 8 ft. ceilings, alarm, laundry. \$1100/mo. spring/summer or long term. (604) 221-4432.

VANCOUVER Kits sublet July, Aug. 2 bd., 2 bath townhouse, 5 appl., deck, F/P, close to UBC, bright. Options: shared 1 bd. 1 bath only \$700, entire townhouse \$1300. (604) 732-6881.

VICTORIA 3 bd. character house. Interested in housesitting last week of July to middle of Aug.? Reduced rent in exchange for cat and small dog care. (250) 360-0651.

PANORAMO PARK Surrey, 3 bd. executive home for lease May 1 or June 1. Large sunroom and hot tub area attached to rear of house. 10 min. from Crescent Beach. N/S, N/P, \$1400/mo. neg. (604) 462-9951.

VICTORIA sublet 1 bd. furn. apt. near UVic, beach, buses. July-Aug. (or portion) \$550/mo. (250) 592-4563.

FOR SALE

MANUAL FOR PARAGRAPH & ESSAY writing. Designed for teachers/parents of weaker or remedial students. To order send \$10.75 plus \$1.45 postage to Avstan Publications, 8850c Young Rd., Chilliwack, BC V2P 4P5. Phone/Fax: (604) 792-0839.

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RECOMMENDED BY BC DEPT OF EDUCATION. "My Life with the Samurai" Tony Cowling, MEd., CD. M.Ed. Kangaroo Press. A fascinating first-person account of survival in Japanese POW camps. Excellent global reviews. Tony Cowling is a retired Richmond teacher/librarian. To order (604) 271-6313, F: (604) 241-9994. Signed copies avail. at \$20 plus postage. Discount on 10 or more. **TUTORING STOREFRONT** Kerrisdale. Large clientele, inventory + income, retiring, will train, \$60,000. F: (604) 269-2499.

SOUTHWEST FRANCE well-kept 3 storey stone house facing south in vibrant medieval village. Figs and grapes in garden, close to Atlantic, Spain, and Mediterranean. (250) 358-2897.

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PEACEFUL SATURNA ISLAND Private 1/2 ac. across from ocean access. Bunkhouse with electricity. \$50,000. (604) 855-7237.

MISCELLANEOUS

ENRICH YOUR INUIT UNIT! Experienced teacher presents dynamic 2 hr. classroom presentation: slides, music, stories, games. Hands on! Authentic Inuit tools, clothing, toys. Serving Okanagan and Kootenays. \$199 includes supplies and teacher's kit. Classroom Expeditions (250) 352-3598.

TRAVEL-TEACH ENGLISH. 5 day/40 hr. June 23-27/99 or Sept. 22-26/99, TESOL teacher cert. Course (or corresp.) 1,000s of jobs avail! Free info pack, 1-888-270-2941.

PENSION ADVICE and counselling (personal and confidential)? Small group pension and retirement workshops? Call Ken Smith at (604) 435-5907, F: (604) 435-5917, kjsmith@istar.ca

25-YEAR REUNION for those in the UBC 3rd-year transfer group (1972-1974), graduation June 1974. If you remember Ron Hlady, Greg Caulfield, Don Ballantine and others, you're "one of us"! Let's celebrate this July 3 & 4, 1999 in Ladner, BC Phone/fax George Rust (604) 940-9694 for details.

REGISTERED EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS PLAN Federal government grant \$16,200 max., 100% guaranteed investment, tax sheltered,

highest interest earnings, RRSP rollover, free information, Chuck Lipp F: (604) 327-1413.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY Opportunity. Earn \$2K-\$5K per month (part time) Home based business (not MLM) 1-800-345-9688, ext. 1314.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING opportunity. The Centre for British Teachers in Brunei (SE Asia) is accepting applications from Canadian educators. The NEW qualifications are: undergraduate degree preferably in English. Teaching Certificate, 5 yrs. experience teaching secondary English. ESL experience and/or qualifications. Send your resume to CfBT Rep., 121 - 2017A Cadboro Bay Rd., Victoria, BC V8R 5G4.

BIRCH BAY furn. modular home in secure community. Near beach, golf courses. Log clubhouse, pool, tennis. \$55,000 CDN. (604) 898-5420.

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ALPACAS The "huggable investment" High returns with tax advantages. Magic Meadow Alpacs has the expertise to board and manage your top quality investment while it compounds. Information? Phone (250) 768-2493, rosemary@ecotourism.com, Web site: www.ecotourism.com/mma

WOMEN'S WHISTLER WELLNESS Retreats: Join the group at Marnie's Gables for a weekend of fitness, relaxation, & learning about healthy living, Yoga, Tai Chi, Ayurveda, mediation workshops are featured. Enjoy healthy gourmet meals & surprise evening entertainment. The chalet is spacious and wheelchair accessible. May 22-24, June 19-20, Sept. 18-19, s2club@whistlernet.com or ph/fax (604) 938-9606 for information and bookings.

CLAY SCULPTING & WHEEL WORKSHOPS in the beautiful Creston Valley. Discover your creative potential. Private, full kitchen accommodations. Book by May 31 for opening discounts. Established Western Canadian Clay Institute. Brochure 1-800-899-4199.

LEARNING RETREAT Oct. 22/99 Explore the Value of the Teacher's State of Mind. Participants receive a copy of the new book "The Missing Link." Early reg. by Sept. 15 is \$75. Please register by Oct. 15 at \$85/person. • For Salt Spring Island location, contact Proactive Training Inc., 230 Broadwell Rd., Salt Spring Is., V8K 1H3. Ph/F: (250) 537-1015 or bcampsall@saltspring.com • For Vancouver locations, contact Selah Group, #2, 1718 Marine Dr., W. Vancouver, V7V 1J3. (604) 926-7589, F: (604) 926-7515. earle@bc.sympatico.ca • Register by mail, call for flyer, or for more information.

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NEW ZEALAND teacher looking for employment, registered teacher and trained in early childhood ed. 6.5 yrs experience currently employed working with children aged 0-11 years. Start employment end of '99 or the year 2000. Ph:(03) 332 7981 or F: (03) 332 5743.

AUSTRALIA EXCHANGE for 2000 in Visual Arts with the New South Wales Dept. of Ed. Far North Coast region. Please contact Exchange Program or ballihii@yahoo.com

MAY

8 Burnaby. Saturday Science: Mind Over Matter, SFU. \$25. Explore matter and materials to facilitate a better understanding of the three states of matter with students while introducing innovative rules for classification. Contact Let's Talk Science, c/o SFU, (604) 268-6583 or gmg@sfu.ca, www.uwo.ca/letstalkscience/

8 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices, an annual conference for critical reflection on the what, how, and why of teaching. UBC. Contact OCPE, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, V6T 1Z4, F: (604) 822-2013, or Gaalen Erickson 822-2733, gaalen.erickson@ubc.ca

8 Terrace. Spring meeting of the B.C. Section of the American Association of Physics Teachers. Northwest Community College. A full day of demos, teaching ideas, discussions and presentations to which all teachers of physics and physical science are invited. Contact Don Mathewson, (604) 668 6500, 668 6509, dmathewson@richmond.sd38.bc.ca

8 Surrey. Surrey Teachers' Association Convention '99, five strands in four sites: rapprochement/conflict resolution, global education, teaching to diversity, wellness at work, and fine arts. Out-of-district teachers may attend by pre-registration only: \$50. Contact Lynda Toews c/o STA, 201-9030 King George Hwy., Surrey, BC V7V 7Y3; 1-800-967-5353; F: 1-800-255-5176, lmtoews@home.com

14-15 Banff. Meeting the Millennium, a conference for English as a second language professionals, sponsored by TESL Canada and Alberta TESL, Banff Centre for Conferences. Contact Phyllis Pankratz, (403) 240-5521, ppankratz@cccadmin.mtroyal.ab.ca, www.tesl.ca

18-19 North Vancouver. Fast Forward Educational Media Showcase, for media users who wish to preview video, CD-ROMs, and multimedia before purchasing. 30 companies bring programs from kindergarten to university level. \$105. Contact Susan Weber (604) 323-5533, sweber@langara.bc.ca, www.langara.bc.ca/ffwd

20-21 Vancouver. Telling Our Stories, B.C. First Nations Studies 12, sponsored by the First Nations Education Assn, a provincial specialist assn, and Metro Region School District, in partnership with the Museum of Anthropology and the UBC First Nations House of Learning, UBC Museum of Anthropology. Contact Jan Gladish (604) 795-7295, jgladish@chill.org or Lorna Mathias (604) 713-5214, lmathias@vsb.bc.ca. Register www.chill.org/fns12/mayconf.html

22 Burnaby. Saturday Science: Batteries Not Included, SFU. \$25. Energy is essential for all life, but it is one of the most difficult concepts to understand and teach. This workshop introduces hands-on activities. Contact: see May 8 above.

30-June 2 Prince George. Children, Families, Communities 99, Nurturing Dignity and Respect, brings together parents and professionals. Ramada Hotel and Civic Centre. Contact CFC 99, c/o Direct Care Training Services, 230-1990 S. Ogilvie St., Prince George, V2N 1X1, (250) 561-2431, Fax: (250) 561-1253, cfc-conf@unbc.ca, www.unbc.ca/cwrc_page/confrcnrc.htm

JUNE

3-5 Kelowna. 3-day intensive Leaders Training Program certifies registrants to facilitate Developing Capable People to parents, educators, and support staff. \$495 + GST includes \$250 worth of training materials. Contact Developing Capable People (Canada), 1-800-327-1090, F: (250) 545-1270.

12 Burnaby. Saturday Science: Science, So What? SFU. \$25. This workshop illustrates the importance of basic research by exploring the link between research and the products we use in everyday life. The unit is cross-curricular and multidisciplinary, and it can extend over a few periods or an entire school term. Contact: See May 8 above.

24-27 Victoria. WHA 99, 8th Annual World History Assn International Conference, Colonialism: Its Impact and Legacies, UVic. Contact Ralph Crozier, History Dept, UVic, Box 3030 Stn CSC, Victoria, V8W 3N6, WHA99@uvcs.uvic.ca, www.web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/conference/wha99

24-30 Victoria. World History Assn institute for secondary teachers offered as a credit course, ED-E 480 Special Topics in Education: Learning from World History (1.5 units), UVic plus 3 days follow-up in your district. \$226.50 plus \$125 for resources and

WHA conference sessions. Contact Lona McRae, (250) 721-6192, F: (250) 721-6603, lmcrae@uvcs.uvic.ca,

www.uvcs.uvic.ca/csie
25-27 Vancouver. Healing Your Family; Healing You. Contact Gestalt Training Institute, 1747 Gordon Ave., West Vancouver, BC V7V 1V4, T/F: (604) 925-2012.

28-August 6 Burnaby. Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism in the B.C. Public School System, a 3-credit special-topics course, Summer Session 1999 (2 three-hour classes per week), at SFU, offered by Murray Warren, PDP faculty associate. EDUC374-3, Section D1.00.

28-July 1 Calgary. Level 1: Solution-Focused Therapy (4-day intensive) with Nancy McConkey, MSW. Contact Solution Talk, (403) 216-8255, F: (403) 949-3321, soltalk@telusplanet.net

JULY

5-9 Victoria. Advanced Placement Summer Inst., Camosun College. AP English; French Language and Lit; Calculus; Biology; and European History. Grad credit available. \$595. Contact Dr. Jim Sexton, (250) 370-3352 or 3294, F: (250) 370-3417, sexton@camosun.bc.ca

5-9 Langley. Beginner Video Production for Secondary Teacher; starting a video-production program; practical theory behind camera work, editing, lighting, audio, and scripting; curriculum ideas and materials. \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604) 530-2141, dawne.tomlinson@bc.sympatico.ca

7 New Westminster. Justice Inst. of B.C. School Safety Summer Institute: Classroom Management: Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour (CP110), a 1-day, interactive workshop on dealing with disruptive classroom behaviour, setting limits, and avoiding power struggles. \$100. To register, call (604) 528-5590. (Register for both courses, July 7 and 8, and save \$20.) Contact Sheila MacCallum (604) 528-5625, smacallum@jibc.bc.ca, www.jibc.bc.ca

8 New Westminster. Justice Inst. of B.C. School Safety Summer Institute: Enhancing School Safety: Creating and Maintaining a Safe School Environment (CP100). A 1-day comprehensive look at how to create a safe school environment and manage intruders, as well as school-based safety audits, verbal skills for defusing situations, and intervention strategies. \$100. To register, call (604) 528-5590. (Register for both courses, July 7 and 8, and save \$20.) Contact: see July 7.

9 Victoria. How To Empower Your Clients To Be Accountable and Responsible. John Solano provides insights into the paradigm of Empowerment. Experience greater levels of leadership, compassion, inspiration and effectiveness. \$150. SD 62 (Sooke) Community Education on Royal Roads University campus. Contact Bonnie Keleher, (250) 391-9002, conted@islandnet.com, www.islandnet.com/conted

12-15 Victoria. Here's Looking at You: The World of the Visually Impaired. Learn the processes for integrating the visually impaired in school, community, and workplace. \$220. SD 62 (Sooke) Community Education on Royal Roads University campus. Contact: see July 9 above.

12-16 Victoria. Introduction to Consulting, an opportunity to become familiar with the processes of consulting and gain skills needed to succeed as a consultant. \$1000. SD 62 (Sooke) Community Education on Royal Roads University campus. Contact: see June 9 above.

12-16 Langley. Intermediate Video Production for Secondary Teachers, evaluation of student work, scripting, basic film analysis, various video genres, and work on a production from concept to final. \$399. Contact Dawne Tomlinson, (604) 530-2141, dawne.tomlinson@bc.sympatico.ca

14-16 Victoria. Curriculum Development and Tools: Using the Computer To Aid You, with Margaret Carmichael. Recommended for teachers and schools wanting to create multimedia self-paced courses for students using popular software. \$500. SD 62 (Sooke) Community Education on Royal Roads campus. Contact: see June 9 above.

For a complete copy of the BCTF PD Calendar, access our Web site www.bctf.bc.ca/events/PD-Calendar.html

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| October PD Day 1999-2000 | October 22 |
|-----------------------------|------------|

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

Program Against Racism praised, commemorated



North Vancouver's Ridgeway Elementary School Grade 6 & 7 students, with teacher John Palmer, ended the program with a presentation of drumming and dancing.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

With Margaret Mead's ringing words, PAR co-ordinator Viren Joshi opened a lively and moving commemorative celebration to mark the end of the BCTF's discrete Program Against Racism as its work becomes interwoven with the Social Justice Program.

BCTF First Vice-President Grace Wilson welcomed the guests and addressed their unspoken question, Why conclude a program that is "unique and unparalleled in Canada." Facing an increasing number of social justice issues, she said, the BCTF is developing a more inclusive model for social justice programs and has designated \$120,000 for local projects. Wilson assured the activists, "Your work will continue, and anti-racism will remain high on the social justice agenda."

The event, held February 26, 1999, was attended by anti-racism activists from many different locals, as well as representatives of Multiculturalism B.C., the B.C. Human Rights Commission, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C., the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Vancouver and Burnaby Multicultural Societies, and several school boards and districts.

Wes Knapp, one of the first BCTF staff assigned to the anti-racism initiative, recalled the controversy over an early slide-tape program that documented the history of racism in B.C. "We never thought it would get the reac-

tion it did," he said. "Langley and Surrey school boards actually banned it on the grounds that to talk about racism would cause it to exist! Of course, it was the best thing that could have happened. We couldn't keep up with demands for that production." Given the recent controversy over the Surrey board's decision to ban three books dealing with same-sex families, audience members laughed heartily.

June Williams recalled the enormous enthusiasm and intense debates among the early teacher-activists, but most of all she remembered the students' tremendous response to "the feeling that they finally had permission to talk about this serious problem that was facing them in the classroom and the community." She spoke of the character of the program—"its commitment and dedication, its spirit of optimism"—and of the tremendous respect it has earned across Canada.

Joshi said that for him, as for many PAR activists, "this is not a job; it's a mission." He presented plaques to activists Carl Beach, Sid Bentley, Dan Blake, David Chudnovsky, Valerie Dare, Sandy Dore, Sam Phillipoff, Gavin Hainsworth, Alex James, Inder Mehat, Janice Walling, and many others.

Attorney-General Ujjal Dosanjh said he was touched by the teachers' words and deeds. "All the work you've been doing has made us a better and more compassionate people. You're moving us towards where we need to be in the next millennium," Dosanjh said. "It all leads to a better society where there's more justice."

The program ended with a dynamic presentation of drumming and dancing by 26 Grade 6 and 7 students from Ridgeway Elementary School, North Vancouver.

— Nancy Knickerbocker

BCTF Wins national race relations award

The BCTF's Program Against Racism has been recognized by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation with a national award of distinction for innovation and excellence in race-relations practice.

The award was presented March 26, 1999 at a ceremony in Ottawa. Viren Joshi, program co-ordinator, was invited to accept the award on behalf of the Federation.

The awards jury, chaired by Ed Broadbent, described the BCTF's program as a unique example of social responsi-

bility in educational unionism, not only in North America but the world over. The program has been cited in North American educational literature, and has won national and provincial awards.

The Media Awareness Network, a non-profit organization that uses Internet technology for their anti-racism programs, won the Award of Excellence and \$10,000. To see "Challenging On-line Hate," its latest anti-racism resource, check Web site: www.media-awareness.ca

Below: clockwise from upper left: B.C. Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh; Program Against Racism co-ordinator Viren Joshi, with Valerie Dare; former PAR co-ordinator Sam Phillipoff, with Colleen Tsoukolas; and BCTF President Kit Krieger, with Committee Against Racism Chair Elaine Sturgeon.



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Announcing the first annual *Teacher* newsmagazine photo contest.

We're looking for striking photographs that depict the joys and challenges of teaching—your students' successes and struggles, the daily dramas in classroom and schoolyard.

Winning photos will be published in the December 1999 issue of *Teacher*. Prizes include the coveted BCTF sweatshirt, bag, and t-shirt.

A blue-ribbon panel of editors and photographers will judge the entries. Its decision is final.

Only photos taken by BCTF members are eligible. Each entrant may submit up to five photos, unmounted. Send a brief description of the activity depicted, names of the subjects, and any other pertinent information for captions. Please include your name, school, and both work and home phone numbers.

Deadline is October 15, 1999.

If students' pictures are to be published, written consent from their parent or guardian is required. Photo consent forms are available from the BCTF. Call 604-871-1876 or toll-free 1-800-871-2283, local 1876.

Send your best shots to:
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