

# Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association

February 2022



*"If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading." — Lao Tzu*

## Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Colleagues,

I hope you have had a restful break. Considering all the rule changes since the December newsletter, the only thing that has stayed consistent has been the rate of change. When I sent that newsletter to Shelley for a mail-out, I was being advised by the BCTF to make travel arrangements for upcoming in-person meetings in January. A week later, I played a COVID-compliant musical engagement in Kimberley only to see restrictions return two days later. Same thing happened in the summer. (Maybe I should stop playing music for now if this is what happens every time.) Anyhow, I refrained from calling the travel agent while watching the news of Omicron over the break. At their first meeting in January, the BCTF Executive Committee passed a recommendation to return all events to virtual format, at least until March 31 for small provincial committees and until the spring RA for larger gatherings. Who knows what will happen and what will be decided by then? Stay tuned.

Please be mindful of your own mental well-being as we navigate all the uncertainty. The prospect of switching to virtual instruction at any time or trying to dodge the most infectious version yet has not been easy for any of us. To quote our very frustrated Prime Minister in a recent televised House of Commons session, "this pandemic sucks!" Pretty much wraps it up.

## President's Message – Shelley Balfour

Considering Larry's message above, please remember that on Tuesday February 22<sup>nd</sup>, we have a workshop from 4-6 pm via Zoom on **Staying Well at Teaching**. Please email if you would like to register. You will receive a \$25 gift certificate to your favourite restaurant for each workshop you attend over the next 4 months!

We have just wrapped up bargaining without any articles being signed. It wasn't due to a lack of trying – that is for sure! Thank you to Larry Dureski, Julie Bond, Mitch Zuvela and Cindy Gleb for all your work on behalf of your colleagues. The issues we brought to the table were of no interest to the district and what they brought to the table was of no interest to us, but we had lots of discussion about practices and changes we needed to see. We will be making some changes through Mid-Contract Modifications which is the mechanism to make temporary changes to provincial language when we can't make permanent changes to the Collective Agreement. The district has agreed to continue paying TTOCs twice a month in exchange for us allowing temporary 0.1 and 0.143 fte blocks to be awarded without posting. We are still working on the workload issue for middle school elective rotation teachers and the 192-student contact language for both middle schools and Mount Baker. Brent remains convinced that Grade 7 students don't count as contacts in a middle school which has caused me no end of grief and hairpulling! It looks like this issue may need to go to arbitration to be resolved. Provincial bargaining starts in March so stay tuned.

The CFTA budget presentation to SD5 Budget is on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Every year I ask for more support in the classrooms, more SST, Teacher-Librarian, counselling time, more itinerant teachers, a five-year plan for shops/labs to be upgraded and kept in working order, support for the FI program, increased literacy and numeracy support and resources, etc. If you have a particular issue, you want me to bring forward on behalf of your school or your department, please let me know before March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Thanks!

My work on the BC Teachers' Council continues to be interesting. The Commissioner for the Teacher Regulation Branch Discipline Panel meets with us at each meeting and reports on what has come to his attention which is always interesting! We have been working on promoting Standard 9 of the Professional Standards and you will see a video coming on that in the next while. I am on the subcommittee for the New Teachers' Survey and encourage all new teachers who graduated from a Teacher Education program in BC between 2015-2020 to participate in the survey. It was sent to you by the TRB several times so check your junk mail folders if you didn't receive it.

I also sit on the Teacher Magazine Advisory Board and would love to see more articles from the Kootenays in the magazine. If you have ideas and/or stories to share, please send them my way and I'll make a pitch or send them directly to the [Teacher Magazine](#).

Spring Break is only 14 teaching days away and I have never been so excited to see a break on the horizon in my life! If you need time off before the break – take it! You have sick days so use them! If you are out of sick days, you can apply for Short Term Indemnity but please don't stay at work if you are feeling edgy and close to losing your mind!

Stay safe! Shelley

### **Report from the BCTF TTOC Advisory Committee – Julie Bond**

The TTOCAC sent a recommendation to the BCTF Executive Committee that TTOC concerns be prioritized during Provincial Bargaining, such as paid Sick days for TTOCs (especially during a COVID pandemic), paid Professional Development days for TTOCs (if TTOCs register and attend workshops or conferences on a Pro-D Day) and paid Health & Safety Orientation and training days. Portability of experience credit for TTOCs was also discussed. Before and after school childcare on site in all elementary schools for TTOCs with their own children to allow them to access paid work and improve the TTOC shortage. We met with HSAC to discuss health and safety issues pertinent to TTOCs.

We also discussed upcoming BCTF events, such as TTOCAC workshops for the New Teachers Conferences, the BCTF AGM, and planning for the Spring Zone meetings TTOC discrete sessions. We also discussed follow-up to previous TTOCAC recommendations such as *That the Federation advocate for personal voice amplifiers for all Teachers Teaching on Call to prevent vocal strain.*

### Report from the BCTF Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HSAC) – Larry Dureski

This eight-member committee met over Zoom on January 21 and 22 to discuss current concerns including the mental stress of knowing that instruction could be moved to online at any time, but the threshold for closure remaining unclear. There have been reports from other districts of classes being consolidated when too many students were away. Not only does this run contrary to Dr. Henry’s advice against mingling, but also poses the burden of planning instruction for a reconfigured class.

HSAC advised the BCTF to continue advocating for the provision of N95 masks for workers during the pandemic. Our BCTF dues have paid for the first lot that Shelley brought around to the schools. It is time for the Ministry to provide this proven layer of protection to help keep workers safe.

Indoor air quality was also discussed, including ventilation and filtration. An ideal scenario is an upgrade of all HVAC equipment to handle MERV 13 (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value, scale from 1 to 16) filters. However, installing these dense filters on equipment not designed for them would cause strain and eventual failure of these units. Other options include increased air circulation on existing equipment, which was done in our district. When the weather permits, opening windows to increase air flow is highly recommended. The provision of portable HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) units was also on the list of strategies, along with regular inspections and filter changes of both built-in and portable units.

A productive discussion ensued the next day with the TTOC Advisory Committee. This was a good opportunity to become more informed of TTOC concerns while sharing squares on a screen with Julie.

### Report from the Winter Representative Assembly – Larry Dureski

Participation at the RA before the pandemic.



Participation at the RA during the pandemic.



**President’s Report** - Teri Mooring began with an address that included how challenges to the teaching profession this year caused by the pandemic and weather extremes has taken a toll on BC teachers’ mental health. The active lobbying by the BCTF has resulted in extra provincial funding for HVAC upgrades and prompted the donation of 100,000 N95 masks to teachers.

**Pension Report** – Chung Yan Ip – There are currently 101,606 members participating the BC Teachers’ Pension Plan including 39,803 retirees, 12,451 inactive members, and the remainder being active and contributing members. Twenty percent of pension funding comes from member contributions, and the other eighty is generated by investment returns. Between 2016 and 2020, the average return rate was 8.6 percent, exceeding the expected return of 6 percent. The future expected return rate has been reset to 5.75 percent. Cost of Living Allowance is not a guarantee for those receiving pension but will be paid if investment returns exceed the expected rate of return. So far, so good. Chung reminded us to register for an [account](#) if you have not already done so. Never too early! Have your BCTF PIN number that appears on your pension statement or any correspondence from the BC Teachers’ Pension Plan and the last three digits of your SIN ready when you register. Having an account will give you easy access to an online pension estimator to help with your financial planning.

### **Key Decisions**

- The BCTF is committed to providing a safe, secure, and respectful environment that is free from *discrimination, as defined by the Human Rights Code*, bullying, and harassment at all BCTF-sponsored meetings and events as is reflected in Procedure 25.A.26-4., the Commitment to Solidarity. *(New part is italicized)*
- Donations: Financial support was given to a legal proceeding to remove a controversial school trustee, to assist a First Nation in a legal dispute with the Federal government, to support the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, and flood relief for the town of Princeton.
- That the Federation advocate for Government to publicly share school closure information and percentage of student/staff absences by district on the Ministry website.

### **What is the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP), and who can use it? – Part Two**

In the December newsletter, we examined the short-term benefits of the Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP). However, your circumstances may prevent your return to work when your short-term benefits run out. Here are the frequently asked questions and answers that relate to the long-term part of the plan as they appear on the BCTF website.

#### *Am I eligible to receive SIP long-term disability (LTD) benefits?*

BCTF members employed on a regular full-time or part-time contract, who become disabled through injury or illness, shall be eligible for benefits immediately following the termination of sick leave and SIP short-term benefits, when no fewer than 120 days of benefits have been paid for that claim. BCTF employees participating in the Plan pursuant to Regulation 1.1(b), and who become disabled through injury or illness, shall be eligible for benefits, or as set out in a collective agreement with the Federation, immediately following the termination of sick leave benefits.

#### *You have my claim; how long do I wait for a decision? What is the LTD claim process?*

If they have the necessary information, Canada Life often turns around a decision within a few weeks. However, it is not unusual for Canada Life to require further medical information, or a clarification on the medical information submitted, as part of the application. If this is the case, members are notified by Canada Life. It is likely Canada Life will telephone a member for an interview prior to the decision. Once a decision has been reached, the member is contacted by telephone with a follow-up letter.

*How much do I receive in LTD benefits?*

Long Term Disability benefits are 65% of the salary of the first \$40,000, 50% of the next \$40,000, and 40% of the remainder of your gross salary, as reported to us by your employer. The benefit is **non-taxable**. In addition, the member does not pay, but receives credit for having paid, their pension, as well as local and BCTF fees.

*Do I have to attend assessments arranged by Canada Life?*

Yes, plan members must attend medical or vocational assessments requested or approved by Canada Life or the SIP Administrator. These assessments assist Canada Life to determine how to manage your claim, return-to-work process, ability to perform gainful employment, etc.

For further reading, go to [BCTF SIP Information Page](#) on their website.

### **Highlights from the January 12 Executive Meeting (Via Zoom)**

**New Local Leaders** – Thank you to Cara London for stepping into the role of Elementary Pro-D Rep and to Julie Bond for taking the Political Action position.

**Beyond September 30: Doing the work** – Look for this recently-circulated pamphlet at your school. Based on input from BCTF members during a Fall Zone Meeting panel discussion with members of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, this document features suggestions for small actions everyone can take to advance reconciliation and decolonization.

**Pro-D** – The RSA 2022 committee is finalizing the list of workshop offerings. We are still seeking a Secondary Pro-D rep.

**Health and Safety** – The un-enforceable student mask mandate is causing frustration and anxiety. There is no intent on the Ministry's part to change this anytime soon. Meetings of the District Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee and the Violence Prevention working group scheduled for January have been postponed to free up replacements for workers off sick.

**Arbitration Re: Continuing Status** – This arbitration hearing concluded on December 16. A new hire could use their continuing status from the date they accept a continuing contract to bid on all postings until July 15 and on Continuing jobs until noon of the first Friday in August. Outside applicants cannot use their new status until they have worked a day in their new job.

**Omicron. . . and On . . . and On** – Book your booster shot if you have not already done so. If you have to self-isolate, plan for a TTOC the usual way. A couple of days planned out, your year plan to show the overall direction, class lists, schedules, etc. to help TTOCs with their work.

**BCTF AGM** – March 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. There are three delegate spaces available.

### **Highlights from the February 2 Executive Meeting (Via Zoom)**

**Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Territory** – When discussing the recent story of remains found near Williams Lake, use words such as “revelation” or “confirmation” rather than “discovery” to be more aligned with the facts. This scientific work revealed or confirmed the existing stories of missing children in residential schools.

**After-School Pro-D Workshop Proposal** – Every month, a virtual BCTF-facilitated workshop session would be offered from 4:00 to 6:00. Participating members would receive a \$25.00 dinner voucher for sessions attended. Stay tuned!

**Staff Shortages** – We continue to experience EA and teacher shortages from workers being away.

**More of the Same** – Discussion included how we felt that we have been doing the same thing over and over for a long time due to the pandemic. It is ironic that our meeting occurred on Groundhog Day. Who needs to stream the movie when we can live it in real-time?

**Proposed Change in the CDTA Constitution** – to move the Annual General Meeting to the last week of April or first week of May rather than the third week of May. This will need to be voted on at a General Meeting of the CDTA.

### Coming Up Next: Union-Related Information for New Teachers

In respect for the number of new hires and young teachers in our membership, the **next newsletter** will have an article that will unpack the BCTF committee meetings and events that drive our Federation. This newsletter referred to some of these committees as well as a Representative Assembly. Find out what all of this is about as well as how to access opportunities to get involved.

### Looking Back . . . A Solid Foundation for Education

Seventy years ago, the first classes to attend the new Mount Baker Secondary School for the full year were meeting in shiny new classrooms. Classes in the previous year moved to Mount Baker from Central School after the Easter Holiday for the last part of their year. These photos, courtesy of the Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History, show the initial groundwork for the “new” building. Did anyone embed a quarter into the new concrete?

