

Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association

March 2022



"Recovery is an important word and vital concept. It means renewal of life and energy. Knowing how and when to recover may prove to be the most important skill in your life." — James E. Loehr

Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds your inbox while you are anticipating time to relax and recover. If you do not have the time to read all of this, scroll to *Highlights from March 2nd Executive Meeting* (p.5) for the current stuff and *Dinner and a Movie Pro-D* (p.2) for some enjoyable learning opportunities followed by an evening out. As I have no new Covid information to report as of the "send" date for this newsletter, I put in an article about the inner workings of our union. Of my years of composing these newsletters, this is something I should have done a long time ago. With a short newsletter and a long break coming up, now is the time for a few pages on this subject. If you are thinking of getting involved in the union, I hope this article gives you some ideas. In the meantime, I wish all of you a relaxing Spring Break. If you have no grand travel plans in the works, enjoy the time with your families and friends. Even a break from masking up is a simple pleasure we can all enjoy!

President's Message – Shelley Balfour

Happy Spring Break! I am of two minds – how are we at Spring Break already AND are we only at Spring Break?! I really want folks to take the next two weeks and rest, go skiing, hiking, travelling or whatever settles your brain and body because the month of AprilMayJune will be upon us shortly. School budgets have just been decided and there is so much work to do before the staffing season begins. I am begging you to let the process happen and not to worry about layoffs, transfers, changes of administrators, etc. These decisions are made based on numbers of students coming and going from your school which is just speculation at this point. This all gets done in a sequence which we don't control. A couple of things to remember, have your leave or transfer requests by email into brent.reimer@sd5.bc.ca by 4:00 on March 31st to be considered. I have a meeting with Brent in that first week back to look at staffing shortages and overages and will have a better idea of what is happening for everyone by then. Another reminder – if you and another teacher want a change of pace, you can arrange for a mutual transfer if your FTE is the same and the principals sign off on it – that is due to Brent by April 30th. **Enjoy the break!**

Dinner and a “Movie” Pro-D Offerings

This is a new idea we are trying this year, providing opportunities to attend some great online BCTF facilitated workshop sessions after school. Each session is scheduled from 4:00 to 6:00, and each participant receives a \$25.00 gift certificate from the CDTA to a Cranbrook restaurant of their choice for taking part. The first session was about *Staying Well at Teaching* on Feb. 22. There are four more sessions coming up, so give this some thought:

Dealing with Stress, March 29

Assertive Communication, April 5

Creating Positive School Culture, May 3

Addressing Mental Health in the Classroom, June 7

Look for posters in your staff room or check with your Staff Rep for a more detailed description of each workshop’s content. To **register** and receive the Zoom link, email Shelley at lp02@bctf.ca.

New Member’s Pocket Guide to the BCTF – Larry Dureski



This article is for any new BCTF member or anyone wondering how decisions are made in our union or how to become involved. You may have seen this building before. This is the BCTF building located in Vancouver at the corner of 6th Ave. and Ash Street, near the South end of the Cambie Street bridge. Before the pandemic, this place played host to in-person committee meetings and will hopefully do that again. Teachers would travel here to meet with their assigned committees and collaborate with office leadership and staff. Along with an extensive support staff, teachers have also left their classrooms to work here. Barb Ryeburn and Sherry Payne are two former Cranbrook teachers who accepted positions to work in various roles to support members. Openings for such work, workshop facilitation, and committee involvement are sent out in those short *BCTF News* e-letters as **“Postings and Opportunities”**.

I must emphasize that the face of our union and means to participate reach far beyond the corner of Sixth and Ash. My latest period of involvement began in the early 2000s when I was Staff Rep and part of my job was to post the paper notices that the Federation sent out to the schools. One such notice was soliciting for workshop facilitators. I read the description and took interest. Before I posted the notice, I copied the application form on the back and sent it in. I received a letter one week later with an invitation to attend summer facilitator training. All expenses were covered, and the resulting

workshop bookings provided countless opportunities to network with colleagues from around the province both in-person (release time and travel expenses covered) and online.

That was my own experience. Your BCTF story might be ready to begin now. Here are some groups and events that steer our big ship on which we all ride, as well as opportunities for you to help steer the ship.

Annual General Meeting (BCTF AGM)

This four-day event in March has roughly 700 delegates from across the province. An elected Local Representative (or more in larger locals) and additional delegates elected at local general meetings are sent to this event, usually held in Vancouver or Victoria. Again, the number of delegates attending depends on the size of the local. Along with significant policy decisions, this body sets Federation priorities for the upcoming year. Each delegate is issued one voting card. The AGM elects full-time table officers (President, First and Second Vice-Presidents), and eight additional members of the BCTF Executive Committee that includes the past president in years following the election of a new president. Other business involves debating proposed actions (Recommendations from the BCTF Executive Committee and Resolutions that were developed and submitted by locals) and voting on each one. This event typically includes high-energy debate, interest-group lunch meetings, and evening social events. Unfortunately, this event has been forced to an online format but with intention to return to in-person vibrancy after the pandemic. When locals are calling for interested delegates, put your name forward. Every teacher should attend at least one AGM during their career!

Representative Assembly (RA)

A Representative Assembly, often referred to as an RA, takes place three times over the school year; the Fall RA at the beginning of November, the Winter RA at the end of January, and the Spring RA in late May. Usually held in Richmond, this two-day event is structured like a scaled-down AGM. Each local sends its president and elected Local Reps (referred to as LRs) to these meetings which number about 200 in attendance. Larger locals send multiple LRs, but the Cranbrook and Fernie locals send one LR each. Voting cards are issued to the LRs in attendance. This assembly has the responsibility of approving the budget for the upcoming year, electing a Judicial Council (more on this later), and making policy and procedure decisions of the BCTF. Recommendations from the Executive Committee and Local Resolutions make up the business of these meetings. All delegates can engage in the debate, but the voting is done by the LRs. Again, this assembly has moved to online during the pandemic. Although the official business can be completed this way, the parallel agenda of establishing contacts and having conversations with participants from around the province in the room and during breaks gets lost in the on-screen version. The Zoom chat feature is disabled and videos are turned off during these larger meetings, making member-to-member interaction almost impossible.

BCTF Zone Meetings – Prior to the pandemic, Fall and Spring zone meetings were held around the province to represent eight regions. They still occur online. Our zone is the Kootenay Zone comprising of 11 locals from the Alberta border to Rock Creek with the two-day meeting occurring in Cranbrook or Kimberley once in-person can happen. With a total attendance of about 70 delegates each, these meetings include breakout sessions with specific working groups such as TTOCs, Health and Safety, Social Justice, Professional Development, Aboriginal Education, and Local Presidents. Each breakout session, facilitated by a member of a BCTF advisory committee, is intended to gather information of

triumphs and challenges that have occurred in that zone. This information is collected from the eight zones and reviewed by each advisory committee when they get together (this is when meeting rooms were booked at Sixth and Ash). Patterns or trends can be revealed by collecting member input in this manner and help guide business for future RAs, AGMs, and actions of the Federation. By chairing a local committee, you may be invited to participate in the Zone meetings. Expect to be asked what is working in your local and what challenges you are facing.

Other BCTF Work to be done

One part of the BCTF structure I have come to appreciate is the opportunity to participate from wherever you reside in BC. You do not have to live across the street from the main BCTF building, for travel and accommodation needs are looked after for meetings that do occur there (pre- and post-pandemic) as well as release time. Not all of the business trips I took were to larger centres, for I have travelled to other small communities like Dawson Creek and Vanderhoof to carry out BCTF work. Yes, this work too has switched to the rectangular world of Zoom.

However, I wanted to mention that I am not the only one in this local involved on a provincial level. Here is a breakdown of East Kootenay representation on various BCTF committees.

Judicial Council – I feel fortunate to participate on this 18-member council for what is now my second three-year term. After being endorsed as a candidate by the CDTA, my name was forwarded to the Spring RA, placed on the ballot, and elected to serve on the Judicial Council. Cindy Gleb from Fernie also participates in this group. This council appoints its members to serve on screening panels to examine alleged breaches of the BCTF Code of Ethics. In each case, both the party making the complaint and the party whom is alleged to have committed the breach get to submit their side of the story before a screening panel reviews the case.

TTOC Advisory Committee (TTOCAC) – Julie Bond is a local TTOC who serves on this committee. This group discusses TTOC-related concerns and advises the BCTF Executive Committee on recommendations to take to the RAs and AGM. Like other advisory committees, this group divides to attend Zone meetings and brings their findings from around the province to one table for discussion.

Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HSAC) – This nine-member group has been very busy since the pandemic. Like Julie, I attend Zone meetings to gather Health and Safety information from an assigned zone and bring it back to the next HSAC session.

Magazine Advisory Board – Shelley participates in this working group that helps determine the content of the BCTF magazine that is published for our 46,000 members. She has been doing this work from home or from the local office.

Primary Program Revision Committee – Carol Johns (Cranbrook) and Cindy Gleb (Fernie) have been selected to work on this committee with the Ministry to revamp the Primary program. They are also on the executive of the BC Primary Teachers' Specialist Association of the BCTF (A Provincial Specialist Association or PSA).

How do I get involved? – There are always opportunities in our local to take on a union role for the first time. My first official role was treasurer for the Golden Teachers' Association years ago when they were still School District No. 18. I was a second-year teacher when I was asked to volunteer (The annual

budget for the Golden Teachers' Association at that time was around \$22,000). Again, watch for *BCTF News* in your inbox. You can also go on to the [BCTF Website](#), sign into your member portal, and select "What's Happening" from the top. A drop-down menu will appear on the left side. Select "Postings and Opportunities" from this list to view what is currently available. Membership in a [Provincial Specialist Association](#) (PSA) is another fulfilling avenue of involvement. PSAs are a way connecting like-minded teachers from around the province. As a CDTA member, you can have your membership to one PSA paid for. Each PSA has their own opportunities for participation should you choose to concentrate your efforts to a subject area to which you are passionate about.

Highlights from the March 2 Executive Meeting (Via Zoom)

Staffing Shortages – There is ongoing concern of staffing shortages that have resulted in excessive workload and student needs that are not being met.

Report Cards – The short term from Christmas to now has been problematic for teachers on a three-term schedule, and others are feeling like they are doing reports all the time.

Dinner and a "Movie" Pro-D – Nine teachers attended Staying Well at Teaching after school on Feb. 22. Check your staffroom board and emails for four more workshop opportunities.

Pro-D – The RSA 2022 registration website is now closed. RSA has been made available to student teachers.

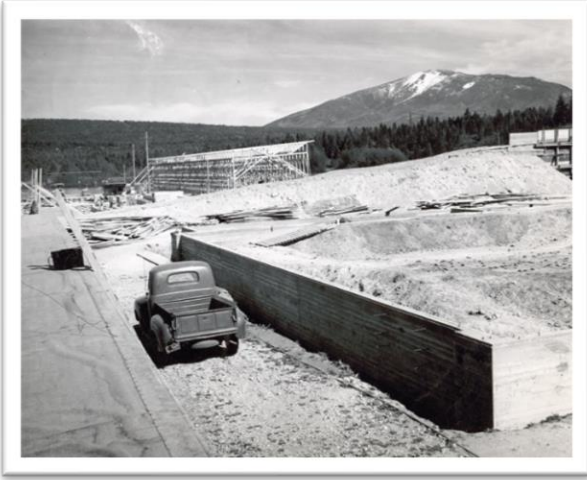
Health and Safety – District Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee and the Violence Prevention working groups have met in February after being postponed in January.

Arbitration Re: Continuing Status – Shelley has sent out an email explaining the new rules about using newly-acquired Continuing status to apply for other positions in the district.

BCTF AGM – March 19th to 22nd, 2022. Thank you, Alison for volunteering to attend four days of Zoom as an AGM delegate.

Looking Back . . . A Shiny New Floor

Continuing the story from the last newsletter, here is the former MBSS gym from foundation to finish. That shiny new hardwood (minus the finishing touches of the floor markings and basketball hoops) is now occupied by the seating area of the Key City Theatre. An upper mezzanine, from where the photo on the right was taken, offered a birds-eye view of the game or musical event too big for the auditorium. This mezzanine is now gone, replaced by the theatre stage area. The angled lobby of the theatre was added to the side with the windows, and the outer shell of this building was used to house the theatre. The flat ceiling was removed during the transformation to expose the roof trusses now visible from your seat at the next concert.



Photos courtesy of the Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History