

Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association
April 2023



***The educator has the duty of not being neutral.* – Paulo Friere**

Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Everyone,

“That was far too short.” This was the comment I heard from colleagues several times since our return after the break. For a few of us, four of those days were spent in Vancouver attending business sessions at the first in-person BCTF Annual General Meeting since 2019. There were also opportunities for fun in the form of karaoke or an instrumental jam session after each day's 9:30 pm adjournment, but those had to be enjoyed at the expense of sleep. The last night of post-meeting entertainment concluded with rousing renditions of *Solidarity Forever* resonating from the karaoke room and the instrumental/vocal jam session upstairs within minutes of each other to drive home the message about working together to be strong. Please check the AGM report in this newsletter as well as the photo feature on the last page showing some of the work and play over these four days. I would like to thank Julie Bond, Janice Marschner, Gabriel Vizcaino, and Shelley Balfour for taking time over a scheduled break to attend the business of our union.

I would like to pass along advice from the address of Sam Hammond, president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, to the BCTF AGM. From his extensive travel schedule, he noted how the routine airline safety demonstration recommends putting on your own emergency oxygen mask first before assisting others. In a similar manner, teachers must look after themselves first before assisting students. Please take care of yourself, for teachers never seem to say “no”.

President's Message – Shelley Balfour

Thank you to Larry as well for attending the AGM on your behalf. I am Captain No-Fun so I didn't attend the Solidarity Nights but it sounded like a lot of fun as I wandered around.

As you know, it is spring staffing right now and the chess pieces are moving rapidly. Please try to be patient as we try and figure out what the chess board looks like and how we can help Brent do the least number of moves. It is based on enrollment and the district only looks at class size not class

composition at this point. We have some schools in trouble with low enrollment so there may be movement but we have other schools posting for 3+ jobs. I will contact you directly when I know that you are moving so that it doesn't come as a surprise when Brent & I show up at the door to deliver the notice. Please don't push people out of the door by trying to guess who is leaving. It isn't as simple as "last one is first to go." Keep Calm and Carry On!

I would like to take a moment to talk about Pearl Singer, our office manager for the past 17 years and 3 presidents. She is one of the hardest working people I know. Her dedication to our union and our teachers is without fault. She has kept all three presidents she worked with organized and looking like we knew what was going on when often we didn't. I am happy for Pearl to be down to one job so she can have a life outside of her 12-hour workday. SD5 is very lucky to have Pearl working for them – I hope they appreciate that! I know we will miss Pearl here, but she has taken time and energy to get us prepared for her replacement. It has been a seamless transition so far. Thank you, Pearl, for all you have done for me and our membership. You will be missed but we will see you in the schools.



Welcome to our New Office Manager

Congratulations to Jenn Galvin who was hired as our new office manager, replacing Pearl Singer who has served us in that position for the last 17 years. Here is Jenn (left) working with Pearl (right) during the transition.

A **HUGE** thank-you to Pearl for helping keep our office and treasury running smoothly. She has been of great benefit to our members over all those years. Pearl reluctantly leaves her position here to concentrate on her Youth Care Worker position which she has worked in addition to her office expertise with the CDTA.

Report from the BCTF Annual General Meeting – March 18-21

Local Delegate's Report - Let us begin with some local content before hearing from those who presented to the meeting. Here is an account of the AGM as experienced by Janice Marschner. Thank you, Janice for contributing this report:

Over the first week of Spring Break, I had the exciting opportunity to attend my first BCTF AGM. If you are not familiar, the AGM is the Annual General Meeting and it's where all the business of the union really takes place. Don't get me wrong, locals work hard all year long, but without the AGM the locals wouldn't have the support they need to work on our behalf. Sound dry? Nah. Sound complex? A little. Sound out of your wheelhouse? Definitely not! Before the AGM, the local sets up a session with all the local delegates and the local president and vice-president where all the recommendations are discussed, and any questions can be answered. You will go to the AGM prepared and with enough background information to feel competent. For those of you who are wary, some of the old procedures that ate time and grew frustration have been mitigated through better time management resolutions from previous AGMs. No longer do you spend the day debating changes to the agenda and accomplishing little. This year's AGM was noticeably more efficient than prior ventures. The AGM did have long days. I recommend staying in a different hotel from the sessions, purely so you get out a few times a day. Each day was broken by a generous lunch and dinner break and there is always some entertainment offered

in the evenings, if you can call 10pm evening! March in Vancouver is a beautiful time. Even after being busy over long days, you'll get the chance to visit the seawall (photo), look at the beautiful daffodils, and smell the night blooming trees that line the wide sidewalks. I thoroughly enjoyed the work and the play that comes with the AGM, and I would love to go again. This is a chance to work within the union to shape language and procedures that affect all teachers. When the call goes out next February, I hope you will consider putting your name forward. You'll be glad you did.



President's Report – Clint Johnson

I am so glad to be back in-person after four years (applause). This is like seeing your BFFs in elementary school. There is an upcoming ad campaign that focuses on the transformative effect teachers have on students, and make magic happen every day. New commercials this spring and into the fall will raise awareness of the shortages but not chase people away from the Public School system. The underlying message will be that teachers just need help in the form of staffing levels and additional supports for students. Although we have a new Collective Agreement with improvements in salary and benefits, we are still facing the "same old" working conditions.

Your work matters. We have endured the pandemic; now we face a teacher shortage. One way to address this shortage is to pay teachers more. We need to get into the offices of MLAs and approach the parent community.

There is concern over the number of uncertified teachers in the system and the new designation "Uncertified Teachers Teaching on Call (UTTOC). We have been calling on School Districts to disclose information about the number of uncertified teachers they have hired. We need more certified teachers in the system.

The new Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Office (ARAOO) is now open, addressing barriers in our union being one of their first tasks. We are also pushing back against anti-2SLGBTQ+, as there are still pockets of hate. These pockets are a small minority, but they are loud. There will be a Public Education conference in May with one PAC contact from each local attending.

Canadian Teachers' Federation Report – Sam Hammond

Every teacher union is now part of the CTF. The new BCTF Collective Agreement, especially the salary increases, has inspired teachers across the country. This is proof that there is money to invest in teachers.

There is still so much more to do. Classrooms have become more complex, and working conditions need to be addressed. The teacher shortage is a national problem. Mental health is not discussed enough, for 97 percent of teachers surveyed were dealing with mental health struggles. We talk about cancer with much greater ease.

Currently, 200,000 teachers across Canada are working without Collective Agreements. A related survey showed that 90 percent of Canadians surveyed viewed Public Education as the pillar of society.

Treasurer's Report – Delwin Yung

The SIP fund investments fell by 4.5 percent last year, but overall is still in good shape. We have had unfavourable investment years before. Present cost items to our union include the move back to in-person events since May 2022, the special COVID-19 grant, equity and inclusion initiatives including the

renovation and staffing of the new Anti-Racism/Anti- Oppression Office. Preparations for the new round of bargaining will begin soon. The total operating costs have returned to pre-pandemic levels. When there is debate on setting the next year's membership fee, each change of 0.001 percent represents \$34,100.00 in dues.

Report from CUPE BC President – Karen Ranalletta

We have faced 16 years of anti-worker legislation, but advocacy must continue beyond the ballot box. Universal childcare is still a CUPE vision. Presently, childcare spaces are private for-profit. NDP investments in subsidizing childcare are progressive, but parents are still marginalized from joining the workforce. Check out <https://childcarenow.ca/>. Thanks to the BCTF for financial support for 55,000 Ontario Public Education support workers who were facing fines that would have bankrupted them.

BC Federation of Labour – Susanne Skidmore

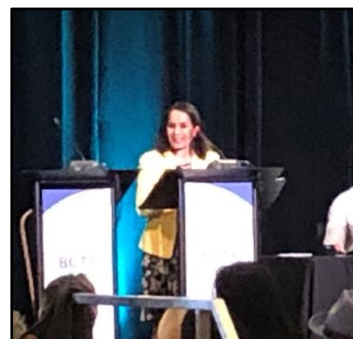
Thanks to unions, the following changes have taken effect in BC including five days paid sick leave. Now, we need to push for 15. Collecting anti-racism data has also been done. We now have the highest minimum wage in Canada, which is also indexed.

However, there is always work to be done. The Employment Standards system needs to be more supportive to workers who are not treated well. The WCB should be treating psychological injuries just like the physical ones. Housing affordability is also on the list of urgent needs.

Honourable Rachna Singh – Minister of Education and Child Care

My parents are retired teachers, and I am the only one in my family who is not a teacher. We continue to deal with a labour shortage, and this is not a local issue. More seats have been added in teacher education programs. Through the new K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan, there are new training opportunities and resources to make schools more welcoming and safe. BC's largest Education budget of \$8.4B includes \$3.4B in capital projects. There is also an enhanced \$2.4B fund for school supplies and fees for families affected by the cost of living.

*(After her presentation, she left the room without opportunities for questions or feedback. Some delegates voiced how we donated 30 minutes of meeting time to an elected official. A subsequent **motion was passed** that elected officials who are invited to speak from any level of government are to be followed with a question period.)*



Report from the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico – Mercedes Martinez, Miguel Angel Rivera, and Edwin Morales Laboy

Citizens have faced two hurricanes and two earthquakes before the pandemic. Schools were damaged and not fixed; schooling was disrupted from the lack of emergency protocols and 780 schools have been closed since 2009. In 2017, health clinics were set up around the island to provide children with a safe place to return while trees and debris were being cleaned up. The government was refusing to reopen schools, and the union engaged in protest acts of civil disobedience. After arrests, schools were eventually reopened. In the meantime, "schools without walls" became the new pedagogy in alternate learning locations where school buildings were damaged.

Not all issues in Puerto Rico were related to physical damage to buildings. There were struggles against salary losses and an 8.5 percent decrease in pensions. All unions “had the flu” for one day, resulting in the largest salary gains. Now, teachers who worked in the private schools want to move to the Public System.

BC Retired Teacher Association – Arnie Lambert

Our association currently has 17,218 members. When people retire, report cards and bells are the things least missed. There are retirement workshops available to active members, including YouTube videos and webinars on the BCTF website. Log in to your BCTF portal, then select *Pensions and Retirement* from the scroll-down menu. Active members are encouraged to [set up their account](#) on the BC Teachers’ Pension website. Retirees recommend keeping your information up to date on their accounts and naming their beneficiaries. If buying back time from leaves, DO IT NOW to avoid significant cost increases. Also, get your teeth fixed. Dental coverage in retirement is not as good as what is offered through your employer.

Some Key AGM Decisions

- Membership fee remains the same at 1.69 percent of salary with TTOCs set at 1.59 percent. Fees for affiliate and associate members will also remain unchanged.
- The Cranbrook motion about investigating a more environmentally friendly approach to the FSA campaign was defeated, but not without productive discussion about the FSA campaign as a whole.
- That the Federation discontinue using the term “non-enrolling teacher” and replace it with a term that encompasses the work these teachers do.
- Over time, divest the Pension fund from fossil fuels through a cost-effective, fiduciarily sound implementation process.
- Creating a tenth position on the BCTF Executive Committee to be occupied by a 2SLGBTQ+ member.
- Continue funding the Special COVID-19 Transition Grant Part A: Release-Time on an ongoing basis.
- That the Federation actively advocate for the five sick days as set in the Employment Standards Act be increased to 15.
- That the BCTF establish a working group through the BC Federation of Labour to lobby the provincial government to amend the Employment Standards Regulations to remove teachers and other workers from the list of those exempted from Part 4 (Hours of Work) in the Employment Standards Act.
- That the Federation audit all programs and committees to identify gaps and barriers to member participation and use the information to assist with increasing overall member engagement.

CDTA Annual General Meeting

4:00, May 17 at the College of the Rockies Lecture theatre Rm. 250

The agenda includes inductions and elections.

Come participate in the business of your union!

You are invited to the

CDTA TTOC Appreciation Social

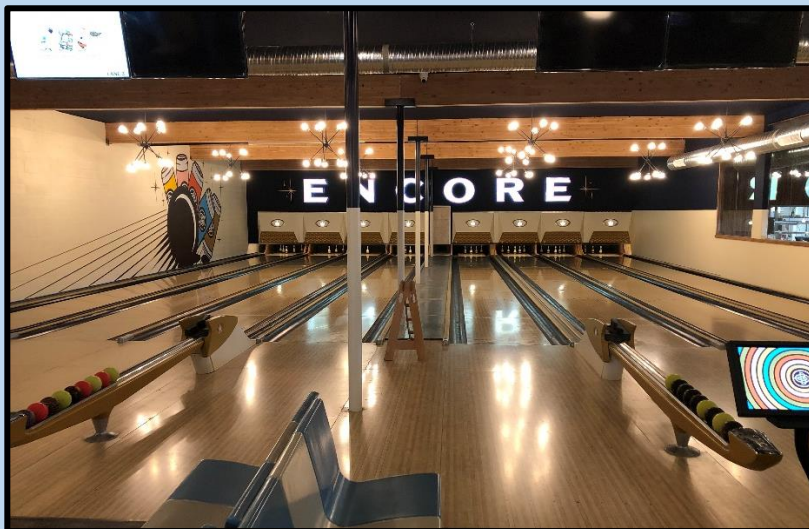
At Encore Brewing Company (Bowling Alley)



Thursday, May 4, with bowling starting at 4:00

Come enjoy bowling, snacks, and great company!

RSVP by May 2nd!



Highlights from the April 12th Executive Meeting

Community Fund Use – Carol Johns - \$500.00 to \$1000.00 from Retired Teachers for school lunch programs and identifying voids such as proper clothing and food for kids.

Morale Survey – Carol Johns – Give management a more detailed picture. Carol is seeking questions for the survey. Email your suggestions to cjohnsprimary47@gmail.com by the end of April.

Mentorship – Deleen Adams – We added two more groups: one is using the collaborative Mentorship Opportunity as a group effort. Go to the CDTA website for the [application form](#).

Political Action – political Action Contacts will be meeting in Surrey in May. Julie Bond will be attending.

Social Justice – Janice Marschner - A full course is being offered at Parkland next year on self-advocacy, public speaking, and debating. If there is not enough enrollment to run the course, the content will be offered in an extra-curricular club setting.

Pro-D – Jenn Doll – Many great events took place on February 3rd. Huckleberry Books will be featuring a Teacher Appreciation discount before the RSA day. A lot of schools are planning Pro-D retreats this spring. Pro-D motions carried:

- To advocate for a survey that can be sent out about the RSA before the fall committee meeting.
- That the Professional Development Committee write a letter to continue the funding to CBEEN that provides environmental education.

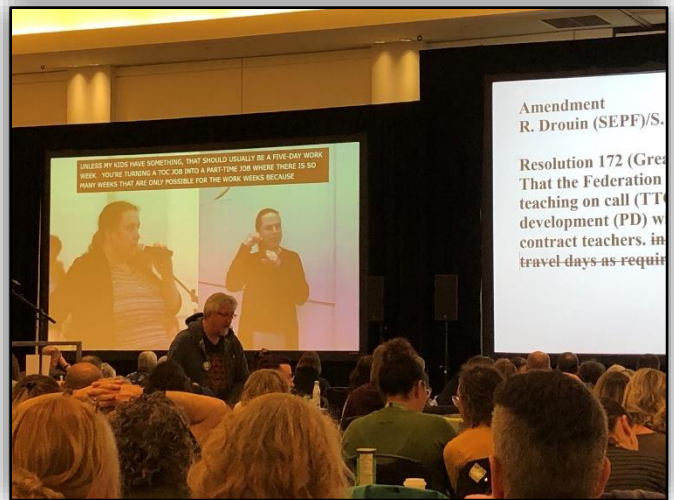
French Education – Leann Shade – April 26 is National French Immersion Day. FI budget coming up on May 1st. If you need to order related resources or technology for Core French, Grade 5 and 6 teachers, and Middle School, the deadline is May 1st. Get your requests into Diane.

TTOCs – Remember that TTOCs can access one PSA membership through the CDTA and free registration for the RSA Day. There is also **TTOC Pro-D** coming up on June 2nd. TTOCs, get your workshop choices in as soon as possible. Participants will receive a day's pay for attending. **TTOC Appreciation Week** is May 1-5!

Staff Rep Concerns

- Teachers being expected to download resources to supplement their planning. Who pays for this?
- **Lack of support staff**, including counsellors. Unqualified EAs being called in. Lack of custodians resulting in dirty classrooms.
- Lack of access to computers at certain school sites.
- School catchment area boundaries need to be adjusted for changing demographics. Presently, there are schools that are beyond full while others are experiencing declining enrolment.

The AGM in Pictures – A last-page photo feature



Getting down to business.

Instrumental and Karaoke Jam nights.



Gabe checks out Headquarters after the meeting.



East Kootenays meets for dinner, with delegates from Creston, Cranbrook, and Fernie.