

# Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association  
December 2022



*My family is my life, and everything else comes second as far as what is important to me.*  
– Michael Imperioli

## Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Everyone,

“Take care, and find time to do something for your own overall wellness.” There. The last sentence from the previous newsletter is now complete. I stopped halfway through this while working on the November newsletter to consider the ending, and never got back to it. Somehow, report cards and several rides to Vancouver on the horseless sky carriage (not all of which got back to the farm on time) distracted me from checking this before I hit “send.”

One of those Vancouver rides was to attend the Federation Leadership Institute a few weeks ago. I attended workshop sessions on mentorship, workplace harassment, and dealing with difficult situations. Julie Bond also attended as a member of Women in Negotiation (WIN) where she took in sessions on grievances and investigations. Of particular interest was a presentation featuring the perspective of new teachers in BC, of which I took notes to share with you in this newsletter further down.

If I was to pick positive experiences from this term, they would all involve in-person events. Having students gather for school assemblies, entertainers visiting school sites to do shows, and being able to welcome the parent community back to school Christmas events feels more like how things should be. I am even booked to play piano at Kootenay Street Village during an afternoon snack time over the break. The last time I played in a facility like that was March 7, 2020.

I hope that you kept your needs near the top of the list as you navigated these weeks leading up to now. Visiting **Max's Place** for your snack or drink on the CDTA would be a good place to start. May your break be filled with opportunities for reconnection and relaxation. Do take care, and find time to do something for your own overall wellness.

## President's Message – Shelley Balfour



I am writing this message from Winnipeg! I came here on Friday to visit my 4-month-old grandbabies Declan and Rory for the weekend! What a joy! They chat, they hug, they love with all their heart! It has given me the break I needed to get myself back on track. This has been a very difficult fall for most of the teachers and support staff that I have spoken to. Not sure exactly what the reason is but it really feels different. Yes, COVID had lots to do with what is happening in the classrooms, but the approach and energy levels seems different. Take time to recharge. If January comes and you can't face the idea of returning, call me and we will figure out what to do.

A shout out to my co-chair from the Fernie District Teachers' Association who is retiring at the end of December. I have worked with Chris Kielpinski for 4, 5 or maybe even 6 years now. He was often able to calm me down after meetings which I truly appreciated. Chris always took a thoughtful approach to his decision making which, in hindsight, was probably something I should have learned over the past 11 years! Thank you Chris and best wishes in your retirement. Adrienne Demers, Vice-President of the FDTA will step into the seat until February when a General Election will be called. Welcome Adrienne!

I just wanted to remind folks to watch their boundaries with students this week. We are tired and perhaps stressed and this is when we may say or do something that will be perceived differently than you intended. One of the boundaries to really keep in the forefront is that students are not our friends and we are not theirs. We are their teachers! I know we are encouraged to develop relationships, but those relationships still must be student-teacher and professional. If students are struggling, please refer them to the counsellor or administrator. You are not able to be the problem solver for everyone. Remember never to be alone with a student, to always keep the door open in your classroom if a student drops by and keep the chat about school. Sorry to be on this again, but boundaries are really important in our world and often we don't realize we are crossing them.

As Larry mentioned, please take time to stop at Max's Place this coming week. They are open at 7:00 am Monday to Friday so stop by on the way to work one day. We apologize for the lack of party this year but hopefully we can manage a get together in the dark days of January or February!

Finally, for anyone who knew the Labour Activist Troy Cook from United Steel Workers 9346 in Sparwood, you knew a one-of-a-kind person. Troy lived his life watching out for the little guy, keeping TECK on their toes, and making sure that everyone, including those from non-union worksites were safe and treated fairly. Troy Cook died this morning with his life-partner and wife Debra holding his hand. He will be greatly missed by all of labour.

Have a restful and peaceful break. If you are heading somewhere warmer than Cranbrook, be safe! If you are staying home to celebrate, take some time to get outside and enjoy the beauty in the place we call home.

Shelley

## What is New in our Collective Agreement?

At the Bargaining Conference in October of 2021, members made it clear that a salary increase was top priority. The input from several BCTF advisory committees also placed salary at the top. Here is a breakdown of items, starting with salary, that are new or updated from our previous collective agreement.

### Changes to salary:

Year 1 – retroactive to July 1, 2022:

- An increase of \$427 to each step of the salary grid.
- A general wage increase of 3.24%.
- The permanent elimination of the first step of each salary grid.

Year 2—effective July 1, 2023:

- A general wage increase ranging from 5.5% to 6.75% (dependent on CPI). This provision guarantees a minimum 5.5 percent even if inflation is below that. Beyond 5.5, the salary increase parallels the Consumer Price Index up to maximum of 6.75 percent.
- A 0.3% increase to the top step of the salary grid.

Year 3—effective July 1, 2024:

- A general wage increase ranging from 2% to 3% (dependent on CPI).
- A 0.11% increase to the top step of the salary grid.

**Preparation time** for elementary teachers is increased from 110 minutes per week to 120. This provision will take effect at the beginning of the next school year.

**Experience recognition for work in First Nations schools:** A new provincial article allows members who have taught in various First Nations schools in B.C. to have all their experience recognized for placement on the salary grid. This change is retroactive to July 1, 2022, and members must apply for it by June 30, 2023 (unless their local collective agreement provides for a different timeframe).

Expanded allowable timeframe from the current 90 days to 120 days in which members can initiate the process of **porting seniority** from and **sick leave** other districts.

Expanded definition of **Non-Sexist Environment** to clarify that no discrimination will be tolerated based on sex, gender identity or expression, or by refusing to acknowledge one's gender identity. This also provides for a review of anti-sexist programs, materials and resources during a staff meeting to be held prior to October 31st of each school year.

**Harassment/Sexual Harassment** updates the definition of harassment and incorporates harassment based on grounds listed in the B.C. Human Rights Code. This article can change during the term of this agreement to stay aligned with updates to the Code. The changes also clarify the different processes that may be used to resolve complaints of harassment. As the Informal Resolution Process may involve the assistance of an administrator, it has been updated to comply with current WorkSafe BC requirements. The Formal Resolution Process now emphasizes the possibility of an alternative dispute resolution process (as opposed to a formal investigation) and allows for a complainant to request a mediator, investigator, or facilitator who is Indigenous or is a person of colour.

A new provincial article on **Professional Development funding** effective July 1, 2024 provides for employer funding for professional development of no less than 0.20% of the Category 6 maximum step in each district, multiplied by the total teacher FTE (as of September 30 of the previous year). This language will replace local language that provides equal or less funding from the employer. It establishes a provincial minimum standard for professional development funding that will be linked to increases to salary. Following each round of bargaining, the provincial language will take effect if it exceeds the funding provided for in the local language. The projected calculation for our local with a FTE of 234 would be \$47,396.67. This is an improvement over the \$60,000.00 we have received annually, which we split 60/40 with Fernie.

In the rewriting of **Bereavement Leave language**, the definition of "immediate family" continues to evolve away from the traditional view. A member is entitled to paid leave in the case of the death of a current ward.

The new Provincial standard for **Maternity/Pregnancy Supplemental Employment Benefit Plan** will see all members topped-up to 100% of pay for 16 weeks of maternity/pregnancy leave; 100% of their current salary for the first week of the leave (the one-week EI waiting period), and for the remaining 15 weeks of the EI benefit period. If they receive EI benefits, the employer will top up to 100% of their current salary. Current local provisions vary widely and will be replaced by this article. In some districts, teachers on maternity/pregnancy leave currently receive no pay at all from the employer, while in others, the employer provides for 95% of current salary for 17 weeks. SD 51 has a SEB plan that provides for 95% pay for 27 weeks. In addition, there are some existing local provisions that include two weeks of partial pay for teachers who do not qualify for EI benefits. There is also language in SD 36 that provides a specific SEB benefit for 17 weeks for members who do not qualify for EI benefits. These superior local provisions have been maintained.

## Letters of Understanding

**Employment Equity** for Indigenous Peoples Updates the terminology to Indigenous Peoples and clarifies the process for districts to apply for a special program to attract and retain more Indigenous educators in all areas of teaching. This revised LOU now includes the development of a provincial Implementation Guide to assist in the application for and implementation of special programs.

**Teacher Supply and Demand Initiatives:** A joint committee will be established to review the criteria used previously to determine which schools/districts qualify as “remote” as the current list is outdated. This committee will also review the current demographics and data related to remote recruitment and retention. The information coming out of this committee may inform future rounds of provincial bargaining.

**Provincial Extended Health Benefit Plan:** Effective January 1, 2023, registered **counsellors** and **social workers** will be added to the existing Psychologist coverage, and the combined coverage will increase from \$900 to \$1200. Coverage for **Dexcom continuous glucose monitors** will be added to the plan. The limit for services of **chiropractors, massage therapists, physiotherapists, and acupuncturists** will increase from \$900 to \$1000 each. The parties will determine additional improvements to health and dental benefits with ongoing allocations of \$1.5 million effective July 1, 2023, and an additional \$2.0 million effective July 1, 2024.

**Committee to Discuss Indigenous Peoples Recognition and Reconciliation:** A new provincial LOU that will see a joint committee established to discuss ways the provincial parties can support the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action, including how to support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous teachers. The committee may mutually recommend potential changes to the collective agreement.

**Structural Review Committee:** A tri-partite committee of representatives from government, BCPSEA and BCTF will be established to review the split-of-issues between provincial and local matters.

A new provincial LOU on **Employment Equity—Groups That Face Disadvantage** that encourages districts to seek the support of locals in applying for and implementing a special program that will see the hiring of more teachers who belong to “groups that face disadvantage” (as defined by the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner) such as people with disabilities/disabled people, racialized people, LGBTQ2S+ people, etc. The provincial parties will develop communications and training to support such applications, in conjunction with that developed in LOU 4 (Employment Equity—Indigenous Peoples).

**Moving forward:** Although there have been positive changes in this agreement, it has received criticism for not addressing concerns around working conditions. Particularly teachers in Adult Education and Distance Education have limited or nonexistent workload protection language when compared to teachers in more traditional roles, and they have seen no improvement this time around. There is still work to be done, for there is so much unfinished business to take to the next round of bargaining. Before the term of this agreement runs out on June 30, 2025, there will be another BCTF bargaining conference where goals and priorities will be set.

## Voices of New Teachers Across BC

The following notes are from the Mentorship workshop presented at the Federation Leadership Institute in Vancouver on November 25 and 26. Participants in a province-wide interview-style survey were asked to reflect on their experience as a new teacher and offer their thoughts. Here are some of the results.

One thing I would say to a new teacher:

- For the sake of your mental health, take days off.
- Enjoy, have fun!
- Have an open mind, be positive and flexible.
- Introduce yourself, become part of the community.
- If someone else is doing something, it is okay if you are not.
- Make connections, be friendly.

What surprised me in my new job:

- Fun, but so much multi-tasking.
- How necessary collaboration is.
- Loss of voice, crying a lot.
- Let it go.
- Lots of hands-on emotional work. Academics come after establishing a safe learning environment.
- Learning from students and other staff. Allow yourself to be open.

Wished I was told before I started teaching:

- You do not need to know everything.
- Some days will be awesome, some days you will fumble.
- Have a toolkit for the unexpected.

Passion or gift I bring to the profession:

- Humour, ability to have a good time with students.
- My concern for the environment, taking care of Earth.
- Being positive.
- Understanding that it is how kids feel, not just what you can teach them.

## Highlights from the December 7th Executive Meeting

**East Kootenay Heritage Fair** – May 12, 13 at the Royal Alexandria Hall. Former trustee Gail Brown did a presentation to the Executive. The event is open to students from Grades 4 to 10, inviting students to “find a discovery”. Individuals or groups may participate. Registration deadline is January 27. Although completed projects are to include a presentation board with referenced material, the addition of a dance, video, play, comic, etc., are welcome. For more information go to [East Kootenay Heritage Fair](#).

**Back Pay from New Agreement** – Shelley - This should be in your bank account by Friday, December 16.



**Mentorship** – Deleen Adams – New teams continue to sign up. Applying is easy. Go to the CDTA website for the [application form](#).

**Pro-D** – Jenn Doll – Planning for RSA day continues. Deadline for local presenters is Jan. 10, so get your workshop proposal in if you would like to share your talents or facilitate discussion of a timely topic.

**French Education** – Leann Shade – The recently-hired French Immersion TTOC is being under-utilized, as they are on the regular TTOC callout system and get dispatched to wherever. There needs to be a method for manually booking this person specifically for French Immersion classrooms or using the Unique Replacement option to ensure that their time is spent supporting FI programs.

**Report Card Comment Banks** – If you have been using the comment bank feature on MyEd to complete report cards and store comments you have developed, you may be **at risk of losing your work**. There may be changes coming that involve moving away from the use of comment banks. Some teachers have already seen their comment bank from last year disappear. Save your banked comments on a Word document to ensure their safekeeping.

#### **Staff Rep Concerns in General**

- Coordinating bells in elementary schools, especially the lunch break, would make life easier for TTOCs who work a morning in one school and an afternoon in another.
- Rollout of new technology at some schools resulting in old technology being removed and not being replaced with same number of items returned. Also, some of the “old” technology being removed includes devices that were purchased by PAC.
- Ongoing EA shortage.
- Be kind to your TTOC colleagues. Acknowledge them when you see them at your school. A greeting goes a long way.

#### **Mark Your Calendars!**

**Have a Snack or Drink on Us** – At Max’s Place on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue any time. They close on Friday, December 16 for the holidays, so do not wait until you are off.

**December 16, 3:05** – Need we say more?

**Next CDTA Executive Meeting** – Wednesday, January 11, 4:00 in the CDTA Boardroom with an online option.

**DON’T FORGET TO CHECK OUT THE [CDTA WEBSITE](#) FOR ALL THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION**



## *Merry Christmas!*

*Wishing you all the best over the  
Holidays.*

*Your friends at the CDTA office,  
Shelley, Pearl, and Larry*