

Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association
May 2023 (Mailed out at the beginning of June)



It is spring again. The earth is like a child that knows poems by heart. – Rainer Maria Rilke

Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Everyone,

I hope you had a restful May long weekend and enjoyed the bits of favourable weather that came with it. Now, we are almost halfway from there to a **very long** weekend! The conditions for my Victoria Day weekend were a 30 percent chance of Jazz with periods of Math. Playing in *Triple Band Stand* with great friends and an appreciative audience is my equivalent to someone else's golf game or fishing trip. Yes, this is Band Therapy and is a great mental wellness tool. Be sure to allot time in your days for your own custom-designed wellness sessions, especially with all the year-end tasks at hand!

It was the Math part of the weekend involving calculations that led to my decision to semi-retire. The emphasis is on the *semi* part. Even though I will be stepping away from bell schedules and report cards after my thirty-sixth year, I will focus on union work as well as family commitments associated with being in the sandwich generation. I appreciate your support in having me continue as your vice-president in 2023-2024, and it is my intent to utilize my BCTF training and experience in current CDTA roles to be a direct and indirect support to our membership.

President's Message – Shelley Balfour

Well, here we are in June again! I long for the days when time stood still, and summer lasted forever it seemed! Things have been busy here in the office. Management has been unavailable to meet so we are struggling to get things done and solved in our usual fashion. Frustrating for sure! Staffing season requires lots of discussion and negotiations but when we can't meet, it makes it tricky! As you all know, patience isn't a virtue I possess! Postings should be coming out soon – remember a few rules that have come into play in the last few years. If you have a continuing contract somewhere and want to try something new but maintain your current "home", you can apply for temporary jobs up until August 4th and remain with a position to return to after the temporary job is done. After the 4th of August, and throughout the school year, you can still apply for temporary positions, but you will lose your "home"

position and will have to re-enter through the post and fill process in the continuing band. Management's idea here was to restrict movement, but it hasn't really done that. Some people are happy to lose their "home" school and move on 😊. Maternity top-up stops over the summer 😞 We finally get that and you only really benefit from the whole 16 weeks if your baby is born early in the year or in September when there are 16 continuous weeks of school. I confirmed it with EI and BCTF. Very, very irritating and I'm sad for the parents of the babies born in June– you miss 8 weeks of top-up!

This time of year tends to bring in a frenzy of issues between colleagues. When you are tired and frustrated, issues seem insurmountable. Try to take a break and then try to work it out between the two of you. If that isn't successful, we can ask for BCTF mediators to come in and support.

As I write this message in the week where a family has lost their children and mom and another death of a teacher at a young age, [Greg Sakowicz](#), I was reminded once again to focus on what matters in life and those things that you can control. Life is short and unpredictable! Enjoy what you do! If you aren't enjoying it, take a break and try something different!

Take care everyone! Hopefully the summer provides a rest and time to recharge!

Reports from the BCTF Zone Meetings – April 14 and 15

Over these two days, several CDTA members travelled out of our local to attend Zone meetings. The BCTF has divided the province into eight geographical zones in which local committee representatives meet with other like-minded reps from other locals within that zone. Many thanks to Mitch Zuvela, Karen Bidder, Jennifer Doll, Cara London, and Janice Marschner for taking their weekend to provide input at this information-gathering event. They travelled to the Kootenay Zone Meeting hosted in Nelson to meet with colleagues from our district, north to Golden, and west to Rock Creek. Please thank these colleagues for taking time to deliver our challenges and successes to larger audiences within the BCTF.

Two other local members were assigned to attend gatherings in other zones at the same time as members of provincial BCTF advisory committees. Here are their accounts:

Julie Bond

I attended the Okanagan Spring Zone meetings in Penticton, as a member of the TTOC Advisory Committee. I facilitated the TOC discrete sessions discussions with TOC contacts from the locals in the Okanagan Zone about TOC issues and concerns and plans for TOC Appreciation Week. I enjoyed meeting with BCTF teachers and hearing ideas from them about what they do to as ways to involve and organize TOCs in the union, for example, with TOC Socials and monthly TOC committee meetings.

Larry Dureski

I ended up in Prince George facilitating Health and Safety discussion with reps from as far away as Bella Coola and Fort Nelson. I played the role of note-taker at my assigned zone group of Health and Safety reps, ensuring that information contributed by group members gets to the respective Advisory Committees of the BCTF. In this case, the BCTF Health and Safety Advisory Committee reviews the notes gathered from all zone meetings to recommend actions for the BCTF to take to address issues brought forward.

Paid or Unpaid Discretionary Leave: That is the question.

Article G.18 or G.5? These two options for taking a discretionary day may seem confusing, but the difference lies in how the pay deduction is done. Under **Paid Discretionary Leave (G.18)**, you receive your salary for the day minus the cost of TTOC coverage. In this case, \$460.00 (soon to be \$480.00) is deducted from your pay for each of up to four “paid” days taken. Using **Unpaid Discretionary Leave (G.5)**, you will be deducted a rate of 1/200 of your annual salary for each day taken. Employees are entitled to a minimum of three G.5 days per year.

Which option is better? That depends on your current spot on the salary grid. At the daily TTOC rate charged by the district of \$460.00, anyone with an annual salary higher than \$92,000.00 could afford the “paid” G.18 option. When the TTOC rate charged by the district is increased to \$480.00, you would need a salary of \$96,000.00 to break even. The other difference is that paid discretionary days still count toward pensionable service where unpaid days do not.

Report from the CDTA Annual General Meeting – May 17

Inductions - Welcome to new members Amy Martin (beside Shelley), Graeme Clark, and Busola Adebessin who were formally inducted into the membership of the BCTF.

Motion: *That the CDTA create a sub-committee of two members dedicated to working on the RSA Day event.* – Carried. Thanks to Carmen Bergen and Carol Johns for volunteering to serve on this sub-committee.

Motion: *That the CDTA investigate providing opportunities for members to shadow table officers or committee chairs based on budgetary provisions.* – Carried. Mitch Zuvela found out at the Kootenay zone meeting that other locals provided funding for their members to shadow union leadership positions and attend the zone meeting. A motion passed at the Spring RA will support the provision of these opportunities once the BCTF Executive Committee determines how this will work.

TTOC Union Rep Training Session on June 2nd – There is already a waiting list due to the number of interested participants.

Report from the Spring Representative Assembly - May 26 and 27

President’s Report – Clint Johnston, BCTF President

- The BCTF [Member Survey](#), which began as a data collection tool during COVID, is to become an annual effort for data collection. The survey done this year will serve as a baseline.
- Canada’s highest court has ruled in favour of Glen Hansman when challenged by a Chilliwack trustee. This case was the first real test of Canada’s new [anti-SLAPP](#) (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) legislation. Thanks to Glen for leading the charge in making schools safer for all kinds. The Federation will not stop fighting for safety and inclusion. The Public Education Conference was also a success with a theme on responding to hate in school communities.



- A new advertising campaign will be released this month. The advertisements will feature BCTF members discussing the teacher shortage. So far, there have been 3M hits on social media and 1.5M views of the posted videos. The <https://act.bctf.ca/ittakesateacher/> address on the BCTF website has received 150,000 visits with 100 mailing list subscribers. More advertisements will be coming out in the fall.

Pensions Report – Al Cornes, BCTF Trustee on Pensions Board

Every three years, there is a valuation of the pension plan’s assets and liabilities. If the fund is deficient, there is sufficient time to determine corrective actions to sustain the fund. However, the fund remains strong despite the last year’s investment losses. The fund has previously endured these unfavourable investment conditions in the past. Presently, there is \$1.05 in the bank for every \$1.00 promised to a retiree. When you see a pension plan deduction on your pay statement, that money is going toward your own pension and not paying pension for a present retiree. Just like you, they have paid for their pension during their working years.

Disaster Is Political – This [report](#) features the voices from the BCTF International Think Tank on Responding to Climate Emergencies as well as members who experienced disaster situations including floods. The cost of rebuilding damage from the 2021 heat dome is estimated at \$17B, compared to the total Public Education budget of \$8B. Rebuilding from disaster situations is not sustainable, so we must work on prevention. In Surrey, there are 400 portable classrooms which become “hot boxes” during heat waves. This district is taking no measures to mitigate this situation until the indoor air reaches 40 degrees. Teachers in these situations have been advised by their district to take their classes outside.

Local Representation – Congratulations to **Tara Elliott** and **Cindy Gleb** from the Fernie side of our District for their recent BCTF appointments at this RA. Cindy joins the small cadre of ombudspersons who are prepared to deal with member-to-member conflict situations at Representative Assemblies and the BCTF AGM. Tara was elected to the BCTF Finance Committee. She will be playing a key role in the financial decision-making process of our union.

Key decisions:

- That the BCTF investigate ways including legal avenues to address extreme cases where remedy agreement provisions are not possible within current constraints.
- That the BCTF investigate changes to the long-term disability (LTD) plan. These changes would involve increasing LTD benefit payments over time to align with salary increases. Presently, LTD payments remain as calculated at the time a member enrolls in the plan and remain unchanged after that.
- That the Federation encourage locals to designate a position on their local executive for an early career teacher separate and distinct from any TTOC rep positions.
- That the Federation encourage Provincial Specialist Associations to include hybrid or remote online options for promoting accessibility to members. As in-person PSA activities are held in the Lower Mainland, access to these events is costly for members from remote areas considering release time, travel, and accommodation.
- That the Federation work with the Ministry of Education and Child Care and direct them to work with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to come up with a framework for minimum standards in-service training for teachers related to the duty to report a child welfare concern.

Highlights from the May 3rd Executive Meeting

Staff Rep Concerns

- Lack of support staff – unqualified people are filling positions for our most vulnerable students without proper or any training.
- “Needs” assessment – no training, no explanation, very subjective, forced to make a case for funding. Principals were supposed to be doing this with support from SST team, not the other way around.
- Lack of custodial replacement – schools dirty
- Staffing issues for 2023-2024 – too many unknowns
- Violent students – how do teachers and support staff feel safe in their work environment – both in the classroom and outdoors?

Indigenous Education – Jenn Doll - Acknowledgement piece discussed - who is your audience for land acknowledgement. Resources for members include Aboriginal Education BCTF, Manual for Decolonization (middle school, high school), Enhancement agreement. Teachers are encouraged to look at Red Dress campaign next week (resources on BCTF website). Planning is under way for the District Day Sept 22 (Indigenous ed. day).

Political Action – Julie Bond will attend the Public Education conference May 12-13. The theme was anti-hate and supporting LGBTQ+ students.

Social Justice – Janice Marschner- Sharing leadership course outline. SJ contacts would like a morale survey. Microsoft survey [Suitemoney.ca](https://www.suitemoney.ca) has funding opportunities, and it is not too late for your school to apply. Laurie Middle School got \$100K and Kootenay Orchards received \$35K.

Health and Safety – Larry Dureski/Karen Bidder- Brent is keen to help ensure people who are the least trained receive training (preventive health and safety training for EAs). There is a plan to make Safety boards look the same at all schools and talked about taking ideas from health care (e.g., purple dot means patients have violent tendencies). Can we code for ourselves? How do bus drivers get enlightened about violent students because it is apparently working. How are teachers covered when they go into the school after hours or on weekends? Next DOHSAC meeting is June 9, where we will be discussing the purpose of Threat/Violence report. Trustee Wendy - says having documentation is critical.

French Education – Leann Shade - Check email for Pro-D opportunities

Pro D – Cara London & Jenn Doll - RSA Day received lots of compliments on choices, speakers, food, etc. There will be a meeting in June to debrief and to get a survey out for feedback. Next year’s RSA Day is in Kimberley. Self-directed lens packages are available online. Pro-D forms are fillable online. Teachers need to be accountable for their Pro-D, so keep track of your own Pro-D activities.

TTOC – Elizabeth Jakobsen – Social event at Encore Brewing for TTOC Appreciation week – May 4th, 2023 – 35+ people have signed up. Carol Johns - SURT June 2 will feature workshops on Classroom Management for TTOCs and Code of Ethics.

Last Page Feature – TTOC Appreciation Social

A good number of local TTOCs gathered at the newly opened Encore Brewing Company after work on May 4th for an evening of treats and bowling.

