

Cranbrook Chronicles

Newsletter of the Cranbrook District Teachers' Association
November 2022



If you're angry, just blow it out your saxophone. It has always worked.
– Vaughan Fleischfresser, addressing the 2022 BC Music Educators' Conference

Vice-President's Message – Larry Dureski

Hello Everyone,

I hope you have had opportunities to enjoy social outings of some variety, whether it be a dinner out with family or attending a large concert. I reported on the positive vibe when I wrote about the Summer Conference and of summer concerts in the parks, and I felt a similar energy at the B.C. Music Educators' Conference that I attended on the PSA weekend with local colleague Gabe Vizcaino. (My thanks to Gabe for his help in handing out materials and setting things up at my brass instrument repair session.) I am sure that all of us humans were pre-programmed for social interaction when we came off the assembly line, explaining our eagerness to take part in anything once restrictions were off. Be watchful for news about a CDTA Christmas social activity as well so that this gathered momentum can carry on.

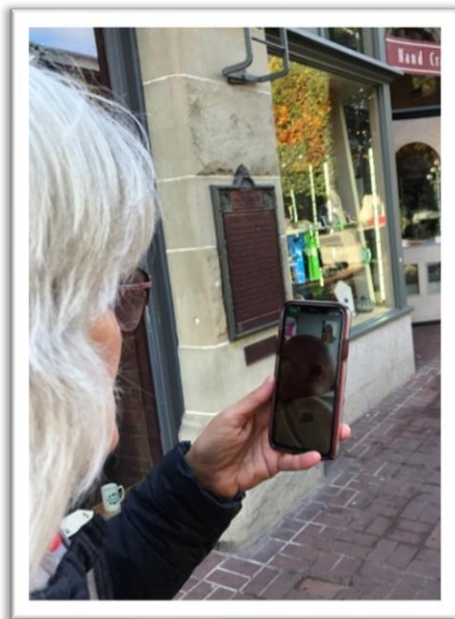


We will soon be writing the next chapter of BCTF history when we engage in the ratification vote of the tentative agreement from November 28th to 30th. I have been reading an endless email thread of local reps advocating for and against this deal. Tune in to our CDTA online General Meeting on November 23rd at 4:00 for information that will help you cast your vote.

On the Safety front, I have attended conversations about teachers feeling overwhelmed or crashing at the local Union/Management table, zone meetings, and on the BCTF Health and Safety Advisory Committee. The same topic has been passed on to our trustees at our Executive Committee meetings. An uphill climb in addressing this mega-trend in the teaching profession. Do not hesitate to say “no” to a voluntary activity that means extra work unless you are confident that in doing so feeds your own

mental health. Please refer to Shelley's November 10 email with the attached poster of supports available and click [here](#) to access the BCTF Health and Wellness program. Take care, and find time to do something

President's Message – Shelley Balfour



Larry snapped this picture of me talking to my grandsons Declan and Rory while we were stranded in Victoria for a couple of days due to the WestJet debacle! There are worse places to be stranded but at the same time, so many trips to the airport with a promise of getting off the Island, starts to wear thin!

As Larry mentioned, we are all tired and possibly even fed up with the number of 'extras' being asked of us these days! If you are unsure whether the information/assessment/extra job is being asked as part of the requirements of your job, just ask whomever it is to give you the directions in writing. That generally stops people from pursuing it. **We are not responsible to be the data collectors for the district** especially if it is asked for on top of what you are already doing. If something is being dropped off the plate, then maybe you could consider it. Until then, practice saying no! I have a button at the office that when pressed, just keeps saying

"NO!" and then another button that can be pressed to say, "that was easy!" Come on over and practice! I just returned from the Teacher Magazine Advisory Board meeting and am reaching out to you to see if you are interested in writing an article for the magazine. If you have a fabulous idea for an article but don't want to write it, send an email to teachermag@bctf.ca and they will call and interview you and write the article for you! I would love to see more articles from the Kootenays! I have put forward the idea of a story about the Gordon Terrace School in Nepal, built and funded by our very own Gordon Terrace School here in Cranbrook. How are you infusing Indigenous pedagogy into your classroom, how are you using the outdoors to teach the curriculum, how are you

Our [Cranbrook District Teachers' Association website](#) offers lots of information, including our Collective Agreement, Professional Development forms, SD5 and CDTA Handbooks, list of Supports available, information for new teachers, etc. so please check it out!

Winter holidays are fast approaching! If you need a day or two break from the upcoming chaos, take it! Both TTOCs and contract teachers have sick days available as per your agreement. Don't push yourself to the brink so that the entire two-week break is spent recovering in bed. Take a break now! I am heeding my own advice and heading to Winnipeg to see the boys for a weekend in December! I need some baby snuggles!



Report from the Fall Representative Assembly – November 4 and 5

This is one meeting where the process for Shelley and I to get to Victoria for this meeting and home was longer than the meeting. Shelley's story of getting here involves planes, buses, and a boat. Both of us had our flights home cancelled twice because of WestJet's recent computer problems. The attempt to get off the island on the third day involved bus and ferry transportation to the Vancouver Airport where we had access to an Air Canada flight home. I could go on about the black cat (owner unknown) that

adopted the hotel lobby furniture as its afternoon nap location at the hotel where Shelley and I spent the two extra nights in our attempt to get home, but instead I will get on with the business of the meeting.

Report of the President – Clint Johnson

Thanks to the bargaining team and local bargaining chairs for the work they have completed. Maternity leave top-up and continuous glucose monitoring are new items in the tentative agreement.

The Fall PSA conferences have gone well, and planning is underway for two New Teachers' Conferences in the spring. There have been some victories at the municipal elections. In Victoria, all five new trustees were on the teachers' endorsement list and successfully ousted the old board. In Chilliwack, progressive trustees were elected.

Treasurer's Report - Delwin Yung

In 2017/2018, the mortgage on the BCTF building was paid off and the BCTF is now debt-free. Recent renovations in the building included new gender-neutral washrooms and new space for the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression office. The purchase of a second housing unit for Full-Time Table Officers is being considered.

Membership Engagement in the Tentative Agreement E-Blast

On Sunday, October 30th, an email notification of the tentative agreement was sent to 42000 members. Within the first minute, 2500 of these emails were opened and viewed. As of the Representative Assembly, 60 percent of these emails were opened. The bargaining page on the BCTF website received 88000 hits over two days.

School Trustee Report – Carole Gordon, BCTF First Vice-President

Of the 412 trustee positions in BC, 158 have now been taken by new trustees. Irene Bischler is one of those 158 from our district. More than a quarter of school trustees this round were acclaimed. However, the number of new trustees does open opportunities for teachers to engage with their Boards. Although we are fortunate here to have trustees who are open to dialogue with teachers and attend a part of the regular CDTA Executive meetings, such is not the case in other districts. School

Board meeting agendas are developed with little or no speaking opportunities, and trustees are directed by their superintendents not to engage with teachers. In one district, the union has had to resort to doing press releases because of their dialogue with their Board being so limited. One suggestion at the RA was to prepare a Toolkit for locals trying to increase their involvement in School Board business. The BCTF is currently planning an in-person Political Action conference with a discrete session the previous day for local Political Action contacts.

Pensions Report – Chung Yan Ip

The Teachers' Pension Plan is currently the second-largest pension plan in Canada. Investments are down 7.4 percent this year, leaving a balance of \$35B. This year will probably be another negative, but this fund has endured highs and lows in the past. Membership contributions make up a quarter of this fund, and the remainder comes from investment returns. The plan has over 103,000 members with 74 percent being female. The 25-30 and 55-60 age groups account for most of the pension plan membership. The ratio of 1.24 active members per 1 retiree has remained unchanged since 2017. Recent pension payment increases include 1.9 percent in 2020, 0.5 percent in 2021, and a projection of 4.4 percent in 2022. Since 2001, pension payments have increased by 42 percent through COLA.

Key Decisions

- That the Federation advocate for in-service training when any new reporting standards are implemented. - Carried
- That the Federation develop and promote a new Climate Justice 101 workshop that presents an introduction to climate science, an analysis of real versus false climate solutions, an explanation of why current climate policies are inadequate, and an understanding of how climate crisis exacerbates racial, gender, and class inequalities. – Carried
- That the Representative Assembly donate \$5000 to First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, in addition to the \$5000 already donated by the Executive Committee, for a combined total of \$10,000, and that both these donations be charged to the Contingency Fund.
- That the BCTF provide up to \$1M to support CUPE in Ontario. – Carried without dissent. These funds will come from the BCTF Bargaining Defense fund.

Highlights from the November 2nd Executive Meeting

Trustee Candidate Forum – Was held at the College of the Rockies by the CDTA. All candidates attended. The crowd was small, but there were excellent questions from those in attendance.

Health and Safety – Karen Bidder attended the Fall Zone meeting for the Kootenay Zone, and discussed the function of District Health and Safety committees including our own DOHSAC. Also discussed were workplace violence and refusal of unsafe work. Larry Dureski attended the North Central/Peace River zone meeting where workplace violence was also top of the list. Both Karen and Larry express thanks for our trustees after hearing stories of ineffective school boards in other locals.

Mentorship – Deleen Adams reports that there are currently eight mentorship teams. We have teams looking to access the Collaborative Mentorship Opportunities fund.

Pro-D – Jenn Doll reports that a meeting was held recently to plan the RSA day next April. A call for presenters has been put out for half-day and full-day workshops.

French Education – Leann Shade also expressed gratitude to our trustees for making positive change. They did create EA positions specifically for French. However, the positions are yet to be filled after five rounds of postings. Federal funding has been secured to allow for a French Contract TTOC position and a full-time curriculum support position. Both positions have been filled.

TTOCs – Liz Jakobsen attended the Kootenay Fall Zone meeting and discussed TTOC shortages that are prevalent in all locals in our zone, and are thankful for retirees who are TTOCs. Younger TTOCs cannot find affordable housing, and with the rising cost of commuting, TTOC work is becoming less viable. There is inconsistency in call-out practices from one local to another, making favouritism an issue in some locals. Potential violence hazards and worker safety plans must be made available to workers coming in as TTOCs.

CDTA Gets Tech Savvy – A motion was passed to purchase an “Owl” device (a video camera that automatically turns to the person in the room who is speaking) to facilitate hybrid meetings and improve the experience for those participating online.

Red Cross Station Sign-Up – Saturdays November 19, 26, December 3, 10, 17. If your school is interested in taking a two-hour shift on one of these Saturdays, please let the office know.

Staff Rep Concerns in General

- FSA math questions too difficult for students.
- Students struggling with academic pace.
- Staffing shortages, especially in EAs.
- Overloaded classrooms without support.
- New students arriving from other schools without meetings occurring.
- With the possibility of increased prep time next year, will prep coverage spill into the Fridays?

Mark Your Calendars!

School Union Rep Training – Wednesday, November 23rd at the CDTA Boardroom in the morning and online in the afternoon.

General Meeting and Local Discussion Re: Tentative Agreement – Wednesday, November 23rd, 4:00 online. Check your November 14 email from Shelley for the Zoom link.

SURT for New Teachers and TTOCs – Tuesday, November 29, 3:30-5:00 online. Learn about the BCTF and all the great stuff in our local!

Tentative Agreement Ratification Vote – Monday, Nov. 28 to Wednesday, November 30. Watch for an email on your home email with your opportunity to vote. If you don't get it, check your Junk mail folder.

CDTA Executive Meeting – Wednesday, December 7, 4:00 in the CDTA Boardroom.