



# TACKBOARD

## President's Message

WHILE THE NEW YEAR IS WELL UNDER WAY, I cannot help but reflect on the tumultuous fall of 2011 and the many challenges (and ensuing frustrations) that teachers encountered. United in our resolve to put pressure on the employer to restore guaranteed learning and working conditions and to negotiate a fair settlement at the bargaining table, teachers have been engaged in a "teach only" job action. Despite our collective efforts, however, there has been no progress at the provincial bargaining table.

To break the log jam, the BCTF tabled a revised package of proposals to the provincial bargaining table on January 18<sup>th</sup>, a significant move from its opening position. A number of proposals were eliminated, and many of the new proposals involve a reduction on a number of cost items. For example, the proposal on preparation time went from 25% to 15% (secondary). As for salary, the BCTF tabled 15% over three years: a 3% cost of living increase in each year of the agreement plus a 3% market adjustment in years two and three. That this proposal is very modest is best evidenced by the fact that B.C. teachers are \$20,000 behind Alberta teachers (who received a 4.3% increase this year). Not surprisingly, Education Minister George Abbott all too quickly declared that the BCTF's reduced package still violates the Liberal government's net-zero mandate, clearly a public disavowal of his willingness to acknowledge the value of teachers and to negotiate a settlement with the BCTF. Teachers can find details related to the full package on the BCTF members' only portal.

In January, the BCTF bargaining team invited three locals (Vancouver being one of them) to the provincial table to make the case for local bargaining. The VTF began by detailing the unique characteristics of our local, and presented a detailed description of two items that we would like to bargain directly with the school board, Employment Stability and Layoff/Recall. After the presentation, BCPSEA chose to not ask any questions or provide any comments apart from saying that declining enrolment is a provincial issue. Like the teams from Nanaimo and Prince George, we were dismayed by BCPSEA's response and overall refusal to acknowledge our rationale for issues to be addressed locally. Our VTF bargaining chair, Jody Polukoshko, stated: "We are disappointed not to receive a response from you here today. We have come with evidence of a profound amount of work that is being done in our local

to address and compensate for the failings of the provincial bargaining model."

Another topic I wish to address is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our day of protest of Bills 27/28. January 27<sup>th</sup> has been marked as a **Dark Day for Public Education in B.C.**, a day when teachers around this province will wear black in their classrooms to send a message to the government: *A decade of cuts is too much.* It is time for this government to reinstate the working and learning conditions language that was illegally stripped from our Collective Agreement in 2002, to address the ongoing damage that has been done to students and the public education system by years of chronic underfunding.

In closing, thank you for "staying the course" as we continue with our provincial job action. Additionally, I encourage all members to attend our General Meeting on January 31<sup>st</sup> at Tupper Secondary where we will elect our delegates to the BCTF AGM. You may even want to consider putting your own name forth as a delegate!

*Debbie*



## VSTA GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, January 31, 2012  
4pm at Tupper Auditorium

### Call for Delegates to the BCTF AGM

The BCTF Annual General Meeting is scheduled from Saturday, March 17, to Tuesday, March 20, at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver. Approximately 700 colleagues from around the province attend this professionally enriching event. If you are interested in participating, please attend the VSTA General Meeting at Tupper on Tuesday, January 31, where the membership will elect or acclaim 21 delegates who will represent the VSTA. See your staff rep or [www.vstaweb.ca](http://www.vstaweb.ca) for the delegate nomination form, and return it to the VSTA. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor of our general meeting.



**All teachers are encouraged to attend to elect delegates to the BCTF AGM and to receive a bargaining update.**

## Social Justice 12 gaining momentum



Janet Nicol, teacher at Killarney Secondary

PROJECT-ORIENTED, RELEVANT, and reaching beyond classroom walls, Social Justice 12 (SJ12) has gained momentum since first offered as an elective in 2008. My own experience at Killarney Secondary, reveals this course is a valuable addition to our curriculum.

"Homelessness is a really important issue," writes Rosa Serdar, a student in my SJ12 class. "I had a chance to get to know a man who is victimized by homelessness (in a class project) and truthfully, throughout the interview, I felt

really sad for him and wished there was something I could do to help."

As Serdar's comments illustrate, many students who gravitate to this course want to explore ways to help others. Topics generating the most interest among students have been homelessness, homophobia, and bullying. All are issues relating directly to teenagers' experiences of power, sensitivity, and vulnerability. We grappled with a much wider range of topics over the course of the year, however, expanding students' knowledge, tolerance, and empathy.

"A moment that stood out for me was when we had Trent come in," wrote Jonathan Nguyen, in reference to a visit by Killarney's First Nations' counsellor. "He was someone I learned a lot from. There are many First Nations issues being overlooked by our government and it is quite concerning."

School copies of fiction and non-fiction books on social justice topics were distributed and for Alyson Lohada, was an effective lesson. "While I read *The Book of Negroes*," she writes, "I did a lot of thinking. The insane amounts of racism that occurred then, has lessened and is seemingly hidden. I feel that there is still a lot of racism today. I hope one day soon, all of this racial profiling will come to an end."

Several students read *Under the Bridge*, by BC born author Rebecca Godfrey. The non-fiction account is based on the bullying and murder of Victoria teenager Reena Virk.

Ming Lin writes: "*Under the Bridge* led me to contemplate the power of the mob, peer pressure, and the capacity for evil within us all. This cemented my belief that one should stay true to herself/himself."

"The power of the pen" was apparent when Rebecca Godfrey visited our classroom. As she came through the doorway, students spontaneously clapped. Following Godfrey's talk, some students approached her to sign their own store-bought copy of the book.

Sami Sekhon, was among those inspired and writes, "I was blown away by Rebecca Godfrey's analytical approach to the case and I became very interested in youth crime and the restorative justice process."

Currently only a quarter of Vancouver's 18 secondary schools offer SJ12. Interest continues to grow, as was apparent at a BC Teachers' Federation Conference on Social Justice last year. The consensus among colleagues was clear: youth studying important issues will create a more positive community.

For more information, visit the BCTF website and click on Social Justice. This article is re-printed, in part, from the *BC Teacher* magazine, Nov/Dec 2011.



## BCTF New Teachers' and Student Teachers' Conference

March 2-3, 2012

Radisson Hotel, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond

visit the resource fair, attend workshops, meet with Susan Lambert, BCTF President, network with other new teachers, collect valuable classroom materials

For registration info and program: [bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2012/](http://bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2012/)

Registration opens January 2012

For more info:

Marion Shukin, 604-871-1804, [shukin@bctf.ca](mailto:shukin@bctf.ca)

or Dawn McCormick, 604-871-1869,

[dmccormick@bctf.ca](mailto:dmccormick@bctf.ca)

**Just an average classroom?**

At first we think of class size, special learning needs, etc...

**What else is there to see? Take a closer look.**

40% of immigrant children and 40% of Aboriginal children live in poverty\*

27% of children in BC are living in poverty\*

BC has the highest rate of child poverty in Canada\*

Working together we can make the difference for children living in poverty.

**Classism—A culture worth changing**

Poster available on-line at

<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/Poverty/JustAnAverageClassroom.pdf>

## BC Education Plan

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT has put forth an education plan for British Columbia that it claims will be transformative. The pace of transformative change being proposed is untenable. The approach is akin to a poorly thought out business plan with a focus on an artificially imposed deadline (that pesky May 2013 election) for completion without thoughtful consideration given to a number of factors. For example, is there a solid, educationally based rationale for the changes being proposed and has the full scope of the changes been assessed? Has there been meaningful consultation with the stakeholder groups (including teachers) needed to determine appropriate goals and the impact on students or parents? Also absent is any fully thought out plan as to how this transformative change will connect with or meet the needs of future post-secondary educational opportunities, future employers and society as a whole.

In a radio interview on the Bill Good Show on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, Charles Ungerleider (UBC) described the BC Ed Plan as less a plan for education renewal than a statement of intentions. In response to the need for transformation in education he points out that we continue to learn as we always have. The sources of information have changed but the need to take information and turn it into knowledge has remained the same. According to Dr. Ungerleider, the direction the plan



outlines in broad strokes will remove the government from direct responsibility for the performance of students, instead downloading much of the responsibility for the planning and financing of their child's education onto already over-stretched parents. Its implementation would take British Columbia further away from the development of the very values of connection and citizenship that support our democratic society.

The ideas of student-centred learning and personalized education plans are not new within the realm of educational philosophy. Student-centred learning and motivating students through connecting to their own passions have long been recognized within the teaching profession. The concept of an Individual Education Plan, initially developed for special needs students, has expanded to encompass the needs of diverse learners including ESL learners and aboriginal students. It is interesting though, that even within the principle purporting to address personalization, the plan quickly mutates into delineating a set of core competencies, skills and knowledge, and a call for fewer but higher level outcomes. If the concept is to unceremoniously dump the "subject-based" learning outcomes currently in place and replace them with generic competencies that span curriculum, I wonder if they have

*see BC Education Plan on back*

## Child Poverty - The time for action is NOW!

BC HAS HAD THE HIGHEST CHILD POVERTY RATE in Canada for eight years in a row. It is a truly **alarming** situation with poverty rates for Aboriginal families and recent immigrants ranging from 36 to 49%. ***The time for action is now!***

As we have seen highlighted in our local press this fall, classroom teachers are often front-line witnesses to the devastating impact of poverty on children in their communities.

While campaigns like The Empty Stocking Fund, Adopt-a-School, and food bank donations address an urgent need in the short term, they are in the end stop-gap measures that mask the symptoms of child poverty. They cannot eliminate it. Children living in poverty don't need seasonal charity. They need systemic, transformational change to address the root causes of poverty.

For more information read the vision outlined in **Better Schools for BC** (<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/BetterSchoolsForBC.pdf>). There is also a wealth of resources on the BCTF website at <http://www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=6308>.

## Poverty in BC - Teachers Taking Action and Making a Difference

Friday, February 17, 2012

8:30am-3:00pm at Carleton Elementary  
3250 Kingsway (and Joyce)

Keynote Speaker: Seth Klein, CCPA

Panelists: Janey Lee, teacher at Thunderbird School  
Adrienne Montani, First Call BC Child & Youth Advocacy  
Trish Garner, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition  
Suzanne Holden, teacher at Carleton School

Participants will gain a better understanding of the causes of poverty and the barriers that people living in poverty face. Participants will develop strategies to ensure that all students have equal access to resources, support and opportunities through long-term systemic change.

Registration deadline February 10, 2012. Register with Vilma at VESTA, 604-873-8378, [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca).  
*Organized by VESTA and Surrey Teachers' Associations Anti-Poverty Committees.*

### BC Education Plan cont'd

consulted with those who will be receiving the end product of this experiment in education. How will the universities view these graduates and their new "competencies"? Will they match what future employers will be looking for on a resume? Will a prospective chemical engineering candidate still need to have qualifications in chemistry and math or will having accomplished a set of "core competencies" in communication and technological skill be sufficient for program entrance?

Quality teaching is an area of the plan that is poorly addressed. The regulation of teachers, along with the granting of professional qualifications, is in no way connected to the implementation of curricular competencies or the use of technology. There is already a fully developed system in place, as well as mentoring programs and professional development. To state that direct ministry, school board and administration control is necessary for these to be effective flies in the face of decades of research and teaching reality. Evaluation proposals are a thinly disguised attempt to strip contracts back to the most minimal provisions of the labour code.

The high standards principle is an example of using language to support the opposite of your intentions. Standardization of assessment has not proven to improve student learning outcomes (international evidence); and, in fact, has often proven to affect the opposite results (much as putting more people in jail does not lead to a reduction in crime, or a safer society). There is also no indication that intervention and supports will be available. The frustration now is that much needed supports are not available; in fact they have been eroded out of existence in many classrooms. The requirement to document is there, as is the requirement to write a report, file it correctly and submit to an audit, fully backed by a threat to remove monies, but the funding to provide actual teacher time in the classroom to support students to achieve these standards, is not.

What is startling as I review the examples of where it is already happening (as reported on the ministry's own website) is that what is really needed is funding for technology and support for teachers to engage in professional and pedagogical growth that they themselves direct. That is the way to unlock teachers' creativity, innovation and passion. (Funding and support have always worked to motivate just about anyone. Teachers are human too!). Instead, the ministry proposes to direct the work of teachers—here's what you do, restrict the work of teachers—here's when and how you do it and then follow it up with a good dose of accountability measures. Measures that not only take much needed dollars out of resources and support, but serve to dampen, rather than foster, professional growth and enthusiasm. The fact is that what the ministry purports to promote through these sweeping transformative changes is already happening in schools like David Livingstone Elementary and John Oliver Secondary, and doesn't require any contractual changes at all. What it requires is an infusion of funding and a will to support the evolutionary (and thereby transformative) development of education that teachers already envision. After all, it's what we do. *Sylvia Metzner, VSTA 1st Vice-President*

FEBRUARY 1, 2012

## ALL OUT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION!

### Canada Wide Day of Action

The Canadian Federation of Students is calling for union members and activists of **all ages** to join them for their February 1st Day of Action.

There are rallies, sit-ins, teach-ins and events going on in cities around BC.

To find out more about the day of action or to sign up for events in your area, visit <http://act.bcfed.ca/student-day-of-action/>.



for missing and murdered women

**FEBRUARY 14, 2012**

**March** - 1:00 pm from Carnegie Community Centre

**Healing Circle** - 3:00 pm at Oppenheimer Park

**Community Feast** to follow - Japanese Language Hall

For more information, call the Women's Memorial March Committee at 604-665-3005.

### IWD Dinner with Judy Rebick

Friday, March 2, 2012 at 5:30 pm  
Fraserview Hall - 8240 Fraser Street

(1/2 block south of Marine Drive)



The Vancouver & District Labour Council (VDLC) is pleased to announce that Judy Rebick will be the keynote speaker at our annual **International Women's Day Dinner**.

Doors open 5:30, Buffet dinner 6:30

Tickets: Regular \$45 / \$35 Low income

Primarily a women's event but open to all, with ASL interpretation provided.

For tickets or more info, contact the VDLC at 604-254-0703 or [office@vdlc.ca](mailto:office@vdlc.ca)



**Always happy to hear from you!**  
Debbie, Sylvia, Shaun, Kim & Mo