

The Advocate

In consensus atque unitate stat potentia

"There is strength in unity"

A Monthly Newsletter

April 2024



A message from Doug Smuland, ATU President

The British Columbia New Teachers' Council recently conducted a new teachers' survey that had some interesting findings. The survey was put together with support from several branches of the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Association of British Columbia deans of Education. The primary purpose of the survey was to increase the understanding of the experience of new teachers from their time being enrolled in a teacher education program and into their early years as teachers in our schools.

pointed out that they want more from school districts in respect to recognizing and addressing the concerns they have as they start their careers and that districts make clear the expectations for them in this profession when covering curriculum and in the demands beyond their classroom and the hours of instruction.

Certainly, the findings outline the need for more attention to addressing working conditions for new teachers, but we also know that a great deal more work is also required for all teachers across the system. The recent implementation of the new reporting order is one example where workload for teachers across the spectrum has been ignored in the pursuit of change, irrespective of whether you believe the changes to student reporting are welcome or not.

What the survey found was that this experience is sufficiently negative, to the point that "recruitment and retention issues will not be addressed without improving the transition process." One of the most glaring findings in the survey, but likely not surprising to Abbotsford's teachers, was that working conditions were seen as unsupportive and frustrating. To combat this problem many of the respondents spoke about the need for practical steps to reduce teacher workload be identified and implemented, and that increased student supports be made available.



There is no doubt that our district will continue to face recruitment challenges for many of the reasons outlined in

this report, but they also need very much to address the retention of those teachers already employed in Abbotsford by addressing the very real concerns with workload and burnout that members are facing.

To learn more about the survey, including details of the respondents and their comments, data, methods and the findings, please see the full report at www2.gov.bc.ca

Also of interest, but again not something that teachers don't already know, the first few years of teaching were seen as thankless and exhausting. What the respondents said was needed were practical supports such as materials and resources to equip their classrooms along with much stronger orientation being implemented to help them with their new role as a teacher. They also

*In solidarity,
Doug Smuland
President*

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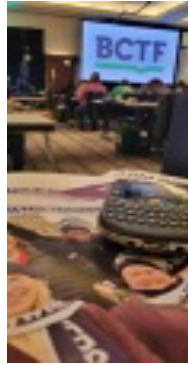
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A Message from Jennifer Pinlac, ATU Labour Relations Officer

Anecdotes from the AGM....

While spending 27 fun filled hours in meeting sessions over 4 days, I decided to keep a diary of anecdotes and outcomes from the meeting to share with all ATU members who I hope were enjoying some warm sunshine and restful days. The only portions of the meeting that I am not permitted to report out on are the motions/discussions that were dealt with during in-committee sessions. To learn more about those outcomes, members are encouraged to access the BCTF website and log as a member to view AGM reports and decisions.



President release grant

The Executive committee put forth a recommendation to rewrite the language for the President Grant. The grant covers portions of the local's President release costs however the formula prevents Abbotsford from accessing any of those funds forcing our local to fund our release completely through dues. As the motion was put on the floor for discussion, our ATU President Doug Smuland put forward an amendment seconded by Paula Sidhu to change the grant wording to cover all president release costs province wide by the BCTF. A lively debate followed for about a half an hour and when Doug's amendment was voted on it was defeated. So sadly, the BCTF Presidential grant continues to be something that Abbotsford is not able to access. But I am happy to report however that the intent received positive feedback from many in the room and brought to light some gaps in the BCTF grant structure that I am hoping will be addressed at future governance meetings.

Fees and other financial resolutions

The Executive recommendation to set fees for the 2024-2025 school year passed very quickly with no debate. BCTF fees are set at 1.69% for contract teachers and 1.59% for teachers teaching on call.

The meeting did decrease the amount we are paying for the Salary Indemnity Plan. We are currently paying 2.09% and next year we will see a reduction to 2.02%.

In addition, the meeting approved BCTF member fees to be spent on:

- \$3000.00 for each local and sublocal to address climate action. (\$270,000 total)

- \$60,000 to establish mentorship funding for racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, neurodivergent and people with disabilities/disabled.
- Approximately \$170,000 to increase the number of school/local union representative training from 4 days to 5 days.
- Approximately \$1.8 million for a grant designed to provide each school site staff representative with up to two working days of release time per school year.
- \$85,000 to form a working group to explore the possibility of providing a PSA membership to all BCTF members at a cost of \$1.47 million dollars
- \$18,000 – \$1.0 million for a campaign to, actively and regularly, promote climate emergency education integration.

Presentations

We had various presentations throughout the meeting sessions.



Karen Ranalletta, President, CUPE, spoke passionately about the needs that she sees to be addressed regarding education and funding the system while addressing workload.

Susanne Skidmore, President, BCFED, spoke about our upcoming provincial election and the need to have a government that is willing to work with union leaders for a healthy province that ensures everyone with the security of housing and a strong financial outlook.



Heidi Yetman, President, CTF, spoke to the ever-changing role of the teacher and the increased workload that we face and how technology and mental health has so greatly impacted the education sector. She went on to share that she doesn't believe that there

is teacher shortage but rather people who could teach are not teaching due to the current working conditions and salaries. She also encouraged all members to get involved in the national campaign for a Pan-Canadian School Food Program. Please visit the Canadian Teachers' Federation website at www.ctf-fce.ca for more details.

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Labour Relations Officer message continued...



Jim Sinclair made a surprise visit to our meeting and is clearly still advocating for labour improvements and teachers.

Arnie Lambert, President BCRTA, addressed the meeting with reports back from the British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association. He shared details of a BCTF sponsored trip to work with the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) in the establishment of a retired teachers' organization.



Robyn Trask



Robyn Trask has been a long-standing member of our BCTF legal team and it is sad to report that this AGM was her last. Robyn has taken on or given advice on many of our local grievances throughout her career with the BCTF. Many of those grievances led to successful settlements in our favour. Robyn has decided to take on new challenges with the Labour Relations Board. We wish her all the best.

Elections for the BCTF Executive Committee for the 2024-2025

There were 4 rounds of elections to work through at this meeting. The results are as follows:

President – Clint Johnston, Chilliwack

First Vice-President - Carole Gordon, Central Okanagan
(elected through acclimation)

Second Vice-President - Robin Toszczak, Greater Victoria
(elected through acclimation)

Member-at-Large Aboriginal – Brenda Celesta, Kamloops Thompson
(elected through acclimation)

Member-at-Large Member of Colour – Hallan Mtatiro, Surrey

Member-at-Large 2SLGBTQIA+ - Chris Perrier-Every, Nanaimo (elected through acclimation)

Member-at-Large Undesignated (three to be elected)
Jelana Bighorn, Vancouver Secondary,
Winona Waldron, Greater Victoria,
Trevana Spilchen, Delta.

They will join the **Members-at-Large** that were not up for re-election and will continue to serve the remainder of their terms next year.

Mariah Franzmann, Prince George

Rick Kumar, Surrey

Marilyn Ricketts-Lindsay, Surrey

Katherine Trepanier, Prince George



*Jennifer Pinlac
Labour Relations Officer*

A Message from Joanne Samuel, ATU Vice President

National Day of Mourning

Sunday, April 28, 2024, is Canada's National Day of Mourning for awareness of workplace safety, specifically recognising and remembering those who have been seriously injured or killed on the job.

We at the ATU are committed to promoting workplace safety to our members. We also advocate for our students in the workforce as young and new workers, who, like any adult, have the same rights to work in a safe workplace.

One workplace fatality is one too many. Although school sites are not considered high-risk for workplace fatalities,

compared to other workplace subsectors, that should not minimise the potential risk of both physical and mental injury to our members due to the nature of our work. Nor should it discourage our obligation as workers to maintain an effective occupational health and safety program at our schools, and to exercise these rights as workers:

- The Right to Know
- The Right to Participate
- The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work
- The Right to No Retaliation

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Vice Presidents message continued...

I encourage all our members to observe the National Day of Mourning in some capacity next week leading up to April 28, 2024. Working with your school-based health and safety representatives, you can consider the following as to how schools can participate:

1. As it is an official national observance day of mourning, all flags at district offices and school sites should be flown at half-mast.
2. Teachers are welcome to incorporate the elements of the National Day of Mourning in their classrooms. Materials and resources can be found on the Day of Mourning Website.
3. Have your school-based health and safety representatives work with their administration to include



the National Day of Mourning in their daily announcements on Thursday, April 25, 2024, and to observe a moment of silence to remember every Canadian worker who lost their life while on the job.

4. Encourage staff and students at your school sites to make a visual observance that day. For example, have everyone wear high-visibility safety gear (i.e. vests, hard hats, reflective cycling clothing, etc.) or simply wear bright-coloured clothing to school on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

There is a ceremony at Abbotsford City Hall on Friday, April 26th at 10:30AM near the fountain. This is facilitated by the Fraser Valley Labour Council.

*Joanne Samuel
Vice President*

A Message from Tami Nicholson, Indigenous Ed. Rep.

National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S)

In Canada and the United States, May 5th is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ Peoples. This day is also known as Red Dress Day which was inspired by an art project created by Jamie Black, a Métis woman. Her art installation used red dresses to remember Indigenous women who have been murdered and gone missing. On May 5th, people across North America are encouraged to wear red and hang red dresses in both private and public spaces in remembrance. For more details about the Red Dress campaign, you can check out this page put out by the Métis Nation British Columbia.

Here is a description and some videos and books you can check out:

<https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/indigenous-initiatives/national-mmiwg-awareness>

You can read through Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls put out by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women at the link below.

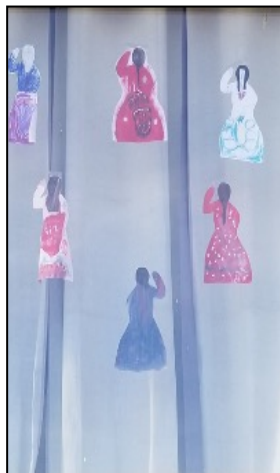
<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

Here is a link to a guide with activities and information for teachers from kindergarten to grade 12. It is titled Their Voices Will Guide Us: Student and Youth Engagement Guide.

<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NIMMIWG-THEIR-VOICES-WILL-GUIDE-US.pdf>

Here is an article from CBC about a teacher who did a red dress silhouette project with students to put up on windows. It includes images of student art.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/redress-window-art-1.5552425>



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Indigenous Ed. Rep message continued

Moose Hide Campaign

Join Canadians from across the country to support ending gender-based violence. The Moose Hide Campaign is happening on May 16, 2024, and you can order free pins now so they can come in time to your school. They take about two to four weeks to arrive, and you can also choose to order animal-free pins. You can request your pins by going to <https://moosehidecampaign.ca/pins/>. For a variety of posters that you can choose from, you can go to <https://moosehidecampaign.ca/downloads/>

The Moose Hide Campaign also has resources and videos for teachers to use at

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/>

The Moose Hide Campaign was started by Raven Lacerte and her dad Paul Lacerte in 2011. They were hunting on their traditional territory located near the Highway of Tears, where so many Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered. Raven was 16 at the time, and they wanted to start a movement that was encouraging and could work towards positive change in society. With the moose she had caught that day, Raven and her sisters

cut up squares of moose hide for people to wear as pins. The pins are a symbol of solidarity and commitment against gender-based violence. Over the last ten years, the Moose Hide Campaign has spread to more than 2,000 communities.



*Tami Nicholson
Indigenous Ed. Rep*

A Message from the T.R.U.S.T. Team

Infusing Aboriginal Content & Perspectives



The TRUST team is hosting an in-person morning workshop from 8:45AM to 12:00PM on the Friday April 26th Pro-D day.

Infusing Aboriginal Content and Perspectives (K-9)

While teachers express interest in incorporating more Aboriginal content in their classrooms, they are sometimes unsure of where to start and how to find authentic materials. This workshop is designed to create awareness around integrating Aboriginal perspectives and quality Aboriginal resources in the classroom through hands on activities.

Space is limited to 30 attendees and there are a few spots left!!

To sign up click the link below

<https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/infusing-aboriginal-content-workshop-rsvp.html>



Upcoming Workshops

BCTF Presented Retirement Webinars



On-going until the end of May, the BCTF will be presenting online pension seminars every Wednesday to help members learn about their pension plan, their pension options, and factors to consider when planning for retirement.

All seminars will take place from 4:30–6:00 p.m. PST. On Zoom. Please see below for the Zoom link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81464426878?pwd=SnBCZjdsU2pkL3pqcVJlaEZrSjVnQT09>

Meeting ID: 814 6442 6878 Passcode: 380638

Members who cannot attend the live online sessions may watch the recorded pension seminars on the BCTF YouTube channel in the Playlists section at their convenience: <https://www.youtube.com/user/BCTFvids/playlists>

If any members have any questions they are encouraged to reach out to Sarbrinder Lalli, Assistant Director, Pensions and Group Benefits, at 604-871-1949

“Understanding your Benefits and Pension Income in Retirement” CPP, OAS and Group Benefits: An Essential Workshop from BCRTA

The important decisions that will determine your retirement lifestyle should not be made at the last minute as you fill out your forms. This seminar will prepare you to confidently make choices that are right for you.

The agenda includes: Teachers' Pension Plan, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and voluntary group benefits. As you will no longer have access to your health benefits from the employer, we include information about choosing your group benefits (dental, extended health and travel), and show some of the differences between the plans to equip you to select the plan that best suits your needs.

All teachers age 50+ should plan to attend one of BCRTA's Pre-Retirement online (Zoom) workshops. The workshops are free. You get great planning materials along with answers to questions you have about your retirement.

Please pre-register at <https://bcрта.ca/workshop>.

Workshop Dates and Times:
May 9, 2024 At 7:00PM
May 29, 2024 At 7:00PM



IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

New Pro-D Applications Now Available

New Pro-D application forms are now available on the Abbotsford Teachers' Union website

<https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/pro-d>

Please be sure any forms submitted are signed by you (the applicant), and your school's Pro-D Rep. A reminder that all Pro-D applications must be submitted as a hard copy at this time.

We are encouraging all members to make the transition to these new forms promptly. Previous forms will no longer be accepted after June 15th, 2024. Any previously released forms received after that time will be returned to the applicant for updating and resubmission.

These forms have been updated to meet the needs of the membership and to allow for the Pro-D Committee to make efficient and well-informed decisions. The new forms have been separated into specific categories.

- CONFERENCE or WORKSHOP EXPENSES
- POST-SECONDARY COURSE WORK
- LESSONS, OR CLASSES OTHER THAN POST-SECONDARY COURSES
- BOOKS, SOFTWARE, SUBSCRIPTIONS, MEMBERSHIPS
- PRE-APPROVED SELF DIRECTED TRAVEL & ACTIVITIES

Self Directed Pro-D Proposals

Self Directed Pro-D Proposals are typically reviewed monthly. Members who wish to have confirmations prior to the summer break need to submit their proposals before the June 15th deadline. Due to the number of proposals the ATU receives, we encourage members to submit their proposals at their earliest convenience to ensure there is time to review and communicate any potential questions or feedback.

Self Directed Pro-D Proposal forms can be found here:

<https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/pro-d>

Please be sure to obtain your Pro-D Reps signature prior to submitting your proposal. Unlike applications, proposals may be digitally submitted to nicole@abbotsfordteachers.ca.

PRO-D APPLICATION DEADLINE – JUNE 15th

Per the Pro-D Policy, the processing of member Pro-D applications for reimbursement will close each school year on June 15th, and will resume on October 15th.

While reimbursement payments will not be available during this time, applications can continue to be submitted. Members who are resigning or retiring June 30th or during the summer should pay close attention to this deadline.

Applications must be submitted as a hard copy to the ATU office (school mail or dropped off at the ATU office), digital application submissions are not accepted at this time.

Pro-D application forms can be found here: <https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/pro-d>

Please be sure to obtain your Pro-D Reps signature prior to handing in your hard copy application.



Questions about applications or Pro-D fund balances?

Contact Nicole Smith, ATU Office Manager
nicole@abbotsfordteachers.ca

Questions about how to use Pro-D or claim eligibility?

Contact the ATU Pro-D Chair
atuprod@abbotsfordteachers.ca

Has Your Address or Name Changed?

If you have moved, changed your name, or have a change in phone number please help us keep our records up to day by notifying the ATU.

You can notify us of any name, address, phone number changes two ways!

The first is filling out our contact form found at the bottom of the "Contact Us" page on our website, [HERE](#).

Or you can also email us at: reception@abbotsfordteachers.ca

ARE YOU PLANNING TO RETIRE BY JUNE 30th, 2024?

Please be sure to let the ATU know of your retirement intentions as we are in the midst of planning our June retirement gala.

Information received is kept in the strictest confidence

Email Michelle at michelle@abbotsfordteachers.ca or by phone at 604-854-1946.

ABBOTSFORD TEACHERS' UNION

Upcoming Events

APR
17-22
POSTINGS
Summer School Job Postings

APR
19-20
MEETING
BCTF Zone Meeting

APR
24
MEETING
Executive Committee Meeting

APR
26
PRO-D DAY
Professional Development Day

APR
26
TRUST WORKSHOP
Infusing Aboriginal Content Workshop

APR
26
ONLINE WORKSHOP
How To Be Anti-Racist Workshop

MAY
1
MEETING
General Meeting

MAY
1-6
POSTINGS
Summer School Job Postings

MAY
8
MEETING
Executive Committee Meeting

MAY
17
PRO-D DAY
Professional Development Day

MAY
17
ATU CLOSED
Annual Educators Conference in Whistler

MAY
22-23
CONFERENCE
BCTF Bargaining Conference