

Vernon Teachers' Association VOICES

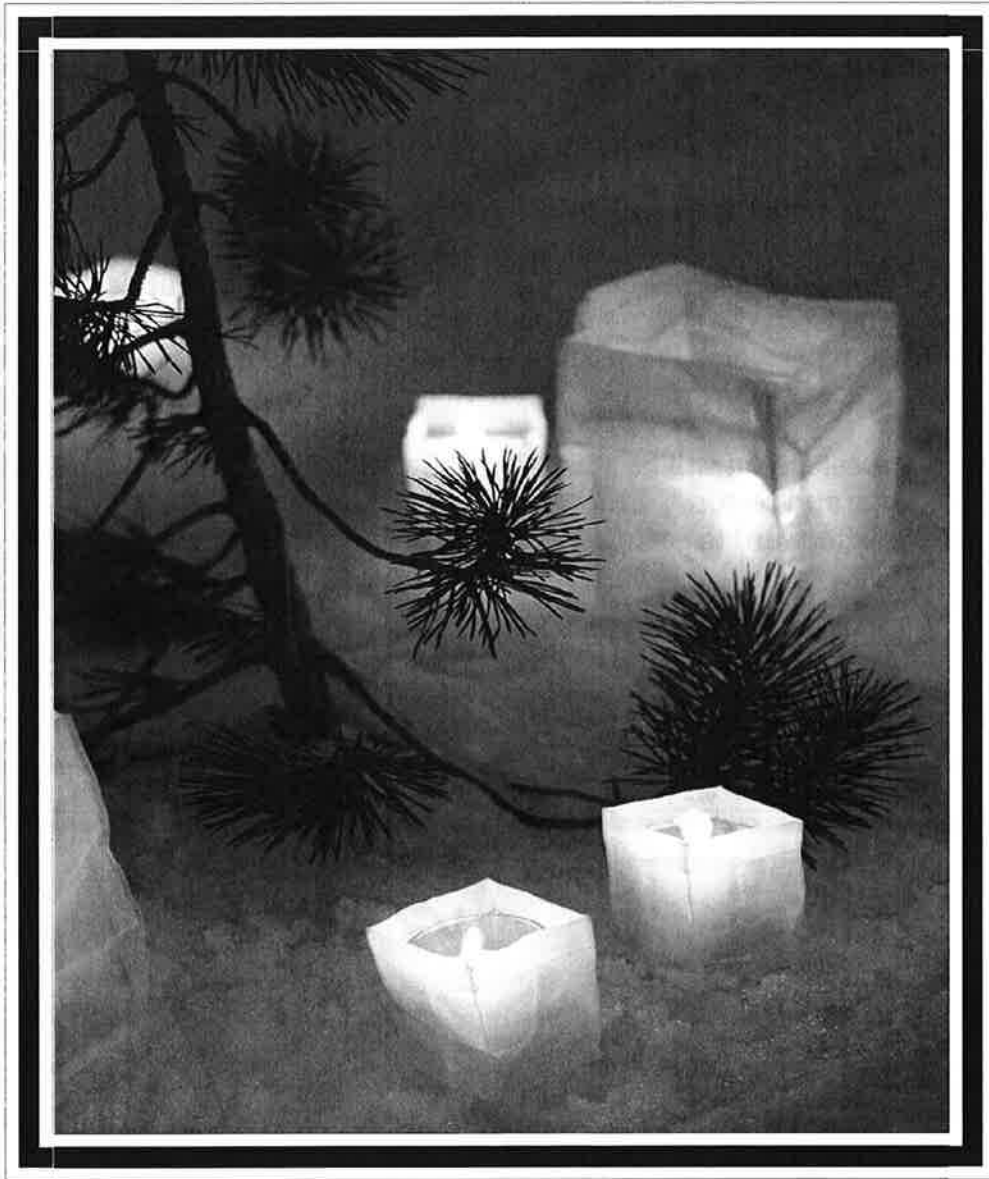
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*May Peace, Joy, Hope and Happiness be yours during this
Holiday Season and throughout the New Year*

Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan

Reflections.....



Greetings and Merry Christmas!

Well the holiday season is upon us - Christmas concerts in schools around the district are over and at home the trees are up, the smell of shortbread, and soon turkey :) fill the air and social calendars are filled up. It was a funny fall, we almost didn't have one as it felt like we jumped from summer into winter, starting up weeks late certainly contributed to that 'oddness'. Time has just flown by but on the other hand, the winter break has come none too soon!

Please remember that we are still coming off a rather prolonged period of strike. It may take some time for colleagues to heal from the stress that we collectively went through. I would ask you to still be gentle with each other. While time does heal all wounds, some teachers may still be smarting from the strike that was. And, teachers continue to do what they do so well and so professionally which is to make connections with students and to ignite the spark that lights up their faces every time they "get it".

Hopefully the two week break will be a wonderful time to rest, catch up with family and friends and 'recharge and restore'. Enjoy your well deserved time away from the classroom and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year, ready for the next go around!

On behalf of the Executive of the VTA, Alana Pethick (our office manager) and myself, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Heather



VTA Family Play Event

The annual Family Play Event featuring 'Anne of Green Gables' will be held the evenings of January 13th and 14th at the Seaton Theatre. There will be 30 tickets available each evening on a first come basis. An email with all the details has been sent to all VTA Staff Reps at each school, look for the information on your bulletin board or by the Day Book. Ticket requests will be processed in the first week after Winter Break.

Dear Teachers,

I have been meaning to write this letter for a long time! It is a letter that I feel is long overdue and with the elves getting all ready for my long ride, I finally found the time! I have been watching teachers for many years and I am amazed at the work they do. I have come to a conclusion that the teaching profession, like my own, must be filled with bits of magic! Please let me provide ten statements of evidence for my belief.

- 1.** I travel the world one night of the year visiting all the boys and girls of the world. The teaching profession works with every boy and girl all year long. This equates to each teacher fulfilling educational needs for 30 – 200 children each and every school day. Seems like magic to me!
- 2.** I deliver presents to all the boys and girls. From my Toy Repair Shop statistics I find many of these gifts are broken or no longer garner a child's interest within months! Yet teachers find inner gifts in every child. Teachers nurture these inner gifts until they develop into true presents that will last a lifetime. These kinds of gifts sure seem like magic to me!
- 3.** I keep my naughty and nice list for every child. Some people believe this job is pretty amazing! Yet when I look at the teaching profession, teachers provide a constant evaluation of all their students! Their list covers all the aspects of developing and learning which they report to children's parents and to the children themselves! This evaluation is based on a wide variety of observations, data, and student performance. Teachers will then use this list to help improve each and every student! Wow, keeping track of every student's ability and prescribing ways to be successful must really be magic!
- 4.** I leave presents to students who are on the nice list and who believe in me. Teachers work with all children because they believe in every student. Teachers continue to do so, even when students stop believing in the educational system's ability to help them achieve. That type of persistence has got to be magic!
- 5.** I have operated my workshop using the same technology for hundreds of years and it has worked for me. Then again, I work with children when they are asleep, delivering presents in my own way. Teachers work with children when they are awake and they have spent time learning how to engage children using googles, blogs, phlogs, glogs, prezis, and all these other words I really don't know! Being able to teach, transform, and accommodate for this new digital generation must really be magic!
- 6.** I have made it a practice to leave coal behind for children who do not make my good list! It seems every year the same children always get the coal. Teachers refuse to leave coal, in fact, they are working hard at leaving no child behind. To work towards a goal of leaving no child behind is a true act of magic!
- 7.** I read the news and I am always so thankful to read all the nice articles about my work. It really does provide me with motivation to keep up my vocation. I read news articles about the education profession and it seems that most articles are unsupportive. Yet, teachers keep working hard at providing success for their students! These teachers must be operating on a little bit of magic!
- 8.** I have thousands of elves, of course the reindeer, and the community of the entire North Pole to assist me. Teachers work every day, many times by themselves, as they provide new opportunities for their students! Carrying that load alone must be much heavier than my bag of toys. It must really be magic!
- 9.** I receive many a thank you and millions of pictures of happy faces as children open their presents each year. Teachers don't always get a thank you, or may never see the present get eventually opened. When they do, appreciation may come from decades later! A thank you that appears after many years must be the result of pure magic!
- 10.** I discovered a light in Rudolph brightens up a dark, foggy, or snowy night so that I can deliver joy to all the children across the world. Teachers provide the light that brightens our world in both the darkest night and brightest day! It is the light of learning and knowledge! The ability to keep that light burning bright must take a quite a bit of magic!

You see, I have found that magic does not come easily! It is made possible only by those who work hard and keep believing, and seek what they know is possible! As you can see, there must be a great deal of magic in the education profession! Please continue to keep this magic alive and know that you are all on my good list! After all, I had to learn all that I do from somewhere! So from across the years I know I have many teachers to thank! Last, to all teachers across the world... I really do believe in you!

Thanks for all the magic,
Santa

Occupational Health & Safety

Teacher vs Student Activities

Every year in most schools teachers engage in staff vs. student games.

Teachers need to be aware that WCB coverage, based on the latest decision from the Review Division, is not likely, if the activity occurs outside of instructional time and is not directly supervised by a member of the school's administration.

On May 28, 2014 BCPSEA provided the BCTF with a letter from Roberta Ellis, Senior Vice President, WCB, confirming that teachers retain usual WCB coverage during the partial lock-out in regard to all extracurricular activities sanctioned by school districts. BCPSEA attempted to use the letter to convince our members that they would receive compensation from WCB if they were injured while participating in an extra-curricular activity during the lockout period. The BCTF advised members to be cautious about accepting the letter as "proof of coverage" given the number of recent WCB decisions denying members' claims for injuries suffered during extracurricular staff vs. student games.

In early June one of our members was denied his WCB claim for an injury suffered during a lunchtime floor hockey game between students and teachers. We provided Ms. Ellis' letter to the WCB Review Division in addition to a comprehensive argument in favour of WCB coverage. The Review Division confirmed the case manager's decision to deny the claim based on the following factors:

- the worker did not teach physical education during the 2013/14 school year
- fitness was not a job requirement
- the game occurred outside of instructional time
- the game was not directly supervised by a member of the school's administration, and
- the worker participated by voluntary choice.

In discussing the impact of the letter from the WCB's Senior Vice President, the Review Officer stated:

The SVP provided a one-line letter to the employer's association in May 2014, stating that "where extracurricular activity being performed by a worker is sanctioned by the employer, the worker is covered by WorkSafeBC—that remains the case in the current situation of partial strike/partial lockout." I do not take that communication to mean that the regular application of the Act and its associated policies is somehow changed. The SVP's letter is just a statement that in situations of partial strikes or lockouts, extracurricular activities are treated the same as they are during periods of no strikes or lockouts."

The BCTF continues to advise members who wish to play in a staff vs. student game to schedule it within instructional time or ensure that a member of the school's administration is either playing in the game or directly physically supervising it if it must be played outside of instructional time.

Social Justice Page

Holiday Shopping the Social Justice Way

Have a very relaxing break and enjoy your family and friends! As you shop for your loved ones, here are some ideas to consider. At this time of year, we are surrounded by requests from social services who fill an immediate, usually short term need. These are important services; which one of us doesn't want to see everyone have warm clothes, food and shelter? Many of these services also incorporate an advocacy role into their mandate. Shopping by donation to service organizations has become more popular lately and these may be charitable, environmental, political etc. Some questions you may want to consider are: does everyone have access to their services? do they enable their clients to become agents of change for themselves? do they advocate for long lasting change in a systemic way? do they partner up with local organizations to create action for change? Shopping for "things" is harder in a smaller area but there are still places to find local products that you know are "sweat-free" and there are stores that carry "fair trade" items. Make choices about what you shop for and where you shop for it.

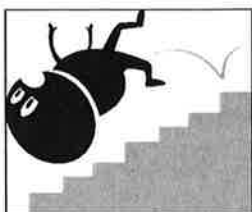


Have a safe and refreshing holiday - you deserve it!!

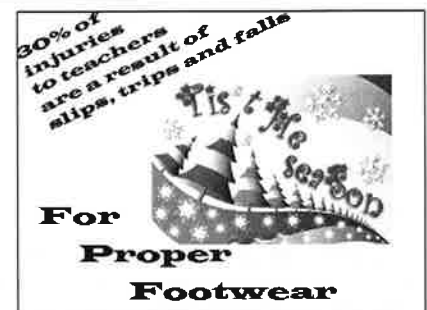
Nancy Ingersoll, Sue Ghattas VTA Social Justice Reps

Occupational Health and Safety Training Day

The District Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee will be providing a training session for all school based OHS committee members; VTA CUPE and Administrators on January 13 at the Anglican Church, 8:30 to 11:30. If a committee member is not able to attend, please send a replacement.



Please book your TTOC's ASAP



Professional Development in SD #22

PD FUNDS:

At the time of writing this, the PD funds provided in our Collective Agreement still have not been transferred from the District. I have requested that this be made a priority.

TEACHER INQUIRY:



I applied to the BCTF for one of eight Teacher Inquiry grants they provide. Our application was rejected but we have left over funds from last year, the yearly contribution of \$3500 from the VTA, and the district is putting in \$5000. This gives us about \$13,500 to work with, without the BCTF Grant. The application forms have been distributed to PD chairs to share with teachers and the deadline is January 15th, 2015. Application template is on the VTA website.

LSA (Local Specialist Association)

I've been trying to encourage and support the start up of LSAs. If a group of teachers in a specialty area want to start or revive an LSA please let me know. It is another source of PD money for release and activities.

UPCOMING PD DAYS:

January 19th is a school based PD day. Please thank your school PD rep and committee for their time in planning activities and dealing with funds :)

2015 ZONE CONFERENCE:

Plans for the February Zone Conference at George Elliot in Winfield are more or less finalized. Our keynotes are set and scheduling for workshops is being done now. We are pleased to offer a variety of engaging and entertaining speakers as well as the opportunity to learn from your colleagues. Registration will open in January. You can find the presenter information on the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association website: www.mycota.ca under PD.



Thank you for everything you do to support, lead, or engage in professional learning.

Please don't hesitate to contact me,

Robyn Ladner
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Investors Group
Walk for Memories
ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF B.C.

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015
Kal Tire Place
One in three Canadians know someone with Alzheimer's disease. Who do you know?