

Vernon Teachers' Association VOICES

Volume 72

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Ph: 542-0456

www.vernonta.com



Happy Thanksgiving

Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan

Reflections.....

Dear Colleagues,

As we settle into the school year of 2015-2016, we can reflect on last year's long battle toward our current Collective Agreement, and we look ahead to pedagogical and curricular changes that broaden our learning and skills as professionals.

Last year's bargaining is not a distant memory, but at the forefront as we face this year's large classes including increased numbers of special education students and not enough of our CUPE colleagues to offer the supports we need. We may not have "won" with bargaining in that arena, but we had a major victory by raising parents' awareness and support for improvements to class size and composition. We also preserved the important right to redress if we are successful within the justice system. This government is not off the hook when it comes to parents' views on education funding, and the media is still holding onto this issue with articles and critical opinion pieces. We earnestly await the response from the Supreme Court of Canada. I encourage you to continue conversations with parents, neighbours and friends regarding the continued realities of underfunding in our system.

With some reprieve from the bargaining table, we are able to turn more of our local and provincial attention to professional issues and professional learning. Last year's introduction of Bill 11 acts as an impetus for BC teachers to be engaged, visible and vocal with regard to their professional development. We have developed a strong foundation of inquiry in this district and teachers are interested in preserving the autonomous direction of their PD time. This is a year of exploration of the new curriculum; this process can be inspiring, as we will have time to reflect on our pedagogy and collaborate with our colleagues. I hope you enjoy looking deeply into your practice and that you find new innovation and motivation with these changes.

Finally, it is an important time in Social Justice for Canadians and for BC teachers and students, as we engage with Aboriginal education and teaching of reconciliation. The new curriculum provides space for Aboriginal content and understandings, and we have an opportunity to share and explore amazing resources that have been developed over the last few years. Our district's Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement asks teachers to reflect on content, materials and our relationships with students and their families. We are ready for this change and I hope that we can each find ways to embrace this learning and to open the doors.

May you each have a wonderful and healthy school year.

In support and solidarity,
Lisa

Your PD Funds

PLEASE BE REMINDED that if you are changing schools you **MUST** contact your current PD Rep and ensure that the balance of your available PD funds are transferred to your new school in September. It is your responsibility to ensure that your funds 'travel' with you.



ORANGE SHIRT DAY!!

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Ghislain Picard is encouraging people across the country to mark Orange Shirt Day on September 30, a day to recognize the experience of former students of Indian Residential Schools and affirm a collective commitment to ensure that every child matters.

"On September 30th, I encourage everyone in Canada to wear an orange shirt to commemorate and remember the experience of the thousands of children who were taken from their families and placed in Indian residential schools and to show a commitment to work towards reconciliation," said National Chief Picard. "September 30th is a day to engage in discussions with one another - First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians and commit to a future where every child matters."

Orange Shirt Day is an outcome of the St. Joseph Mission Residential School Commemoration Project and Reunion events that took place in Williams Lake, BC in May 2013. It stems from a story told by former residential school student, Phyllis Webstad, who had her new orange shirt, bought by her grandmother, taken from her as a six-year old girl. She spoke powerfully of how it seemed to her that nobody cared and, in this personal way, it speaks to the many harms experienced by children in the residential schools.

The AFN asks all Canadians to join First Nations in wearing an orange shirt on September 30th in the spirit of healing and reconciliation.





YOUR PENSION, YOUR FUTURE

New to the plan or mid-career?

See how decisions you make today can impact your future pension.

Learn about:

- The value of your pension
- Leaves, buyback and your future pension income
- Your *Member's Benefit Statement*
- Online pension plan tools and resources



Date	Time	Location
February 25, 2016	6:00 - 7:30 PM	Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre, Kelowna

THINKING ABOUT RETIRING

Within five years of retirement?

Let's talk about your future.

Learn about:

- Your *Member's Benefit Statement*
- Pension options
- Determining your retirement income
- Online pension plan tools and resources



Date	Time	Location
November 18	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre, Kelowna
February 16	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops
February 23	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre, Kelowna
February 24	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Vernon Lodge & Conference Centre, Vernon
April 26	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Ramada Penticton Hotel & Suites, Penticton
April 27	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops

NOTE: If a seminar is full you may add your name to the waitlist by selecting the seminar. Please note, you may either register or add yourself to the waitlist for only one seminar at a time.

REGISTER FOR EITHER SEMINAR AT: <http://www.pensionsbc.ca/>



Pension Consultation — Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will potential changes occur?

If a new model is chosen it is proposed to take effect January 1, 2018. Salary and service prior to that date will be used to calculate your pension based on the current plan rules. All service earned after January 1, 2018, will be based on the model selected through the consultation process.

2. How will the proposed changes impact my current service in the plan?

All service earned in the plan prior to the proposed changes will not be effected by plan design change. Service earned after the effective date will be calculated on the new benefit formula. Service earned under the current plan rules will continue to have those rules apply to that portion of their pension (e.g. access to an unreduced pension at age 60 or at factor 90). Example: A member begins their career on January 1, 1990, and retires as of December 31, 2020. The member would have 28 years of service under current rules and 2 years of service under the new rules. (Based on the assumption that the new rules are effective January 1, 2018, and that the member works full time for their entire teaching career)

3. What would happen to the bridge benefit?

Under the current formula, the bridge benefit is a temporary portion of the pension paid to members (no entitlement to beneficiaries) prior to age 65. At age 65, the member no longer receives the bridge benefit and they continue to receive the lifetime portion of their pension. This was conceived in 1966 such that at 65, when the CPP started, the bridge benefit stopped. Effectively you received a 2.0% pension until 65 and then dropped to a lifetime pension of 1.3%. The proposed options would fold the bridge benefit into the lifetime pension (entitlement to beneficiaries) with an increased lifetime pension of 1.80%, 1.85%, or 2.0%. Any CPP remains outside of our plan to be collected when the member is eligible.

4. Why is the Plan considering a change?

The current benefit formula in the Teachers' Pension Plan was designed in the 1960s. Since that time teacher's lives at work and in retirement have significantly changed. Teachers are entering the profession later in their lives and are working past age 60. As a result fewer and fewer members are eligible for pension prior to age 60. In addition, teachers are living longer and have the highest life expectancy of public sector employees in Canada. Currently the benefit formula and contribution rates are linked to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Changes are being considered to CPP that could impact the benefits and contribution rates of members in the Teachers' Pension Plan.



YOUR VTA EXECUTIVE FOR 2015—2016

President:	Lisa LaBoucane
1st Vice President:	Barry Dorval
2nd Vice President:	Rhiannon Johnson
Past President:	Heather Malcolm
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Lilly Smith
Local Association Rep:	Richard Santos
Bargaining Chair:	Chris Brandle
Professional Dev Chair:	Robyn Ladner
Social Justice Reps:	Sue Ghattas Greg Ellis
Occupational Health & Safety Chair:	Craig Leverman
Local Aboriginal Education Contact:	Joelle Belanger
Members at Large:	Andrew Affleck Maureen MacLachlan Eli Silver
OCTAV:	Vacant

Please check the VTA website at
www.vernonta.com for contact
information.

BCTF Pension Plan Consultations

The BCTF is consulting all members of the Teacher's Pension Plan including teacher, principals, vice-principals and superintendents on the future of our pension plan. Please attend the info plan design changes.



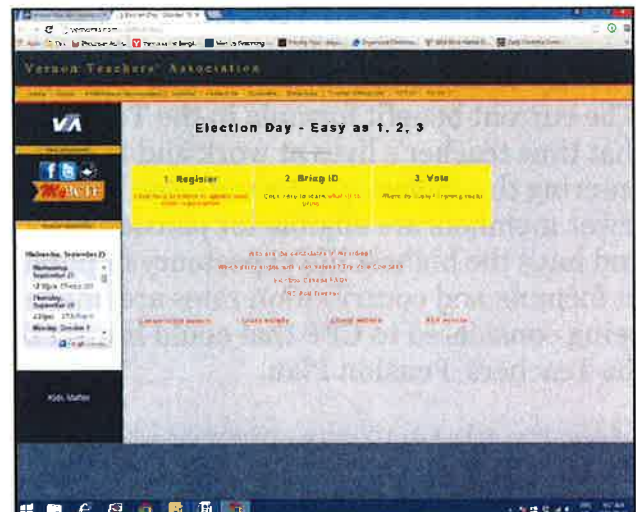
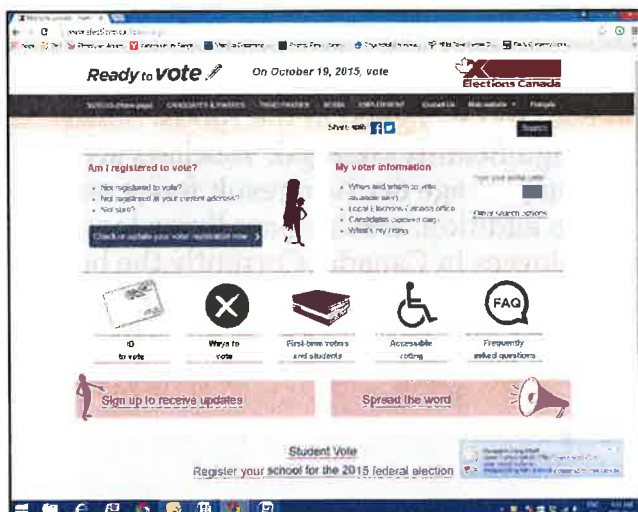
When: *Monday, October 8, 2015*

When: *4:00 PM*

Where: *VSS Theatre*

Upcoming Federal Election - October 19, 2015

Take the time to ensure that you are registered to vote in the upcoming Federal election, and then more importantly - VOTE!! For information please visit the Elections Canada site at elections.ca and the VTA site at vernonta.com/electionday/



I Teach, I Vote!!!

On October 19th, we all have the opportunity to vote in the Federal election. It is essential that we make the commitment and effort to do so. It is currently predicted that B.C.'s vote will truly make a difference. This election will determine the future of Canada and the direction it will go for quite some time. What direction do you wish it to take?

Why is the federal election so important to teachers in Vernon? It's the old trickle down effect. Millions of dollars that come to the provinces from the federal government for health care is being downloaded onto the provinces within the next two years. This is called the Health Accord. Somehow our province will have to step up and cover these costs, and there could be future cuts to education and other social programs as a result. There are also concerns including the lack of evidence-based policy on a federal level regarding child poverty, child and mental health issues, environmental concerns, refugee sponsorship, etc.

Become informed. Do go to the local forums where the candidates speak about the issues, go to the BCTF website, read about the candidates and parties and their stand on important issues, watch the news, talk with family and friends. One helpful website is Canadians.org/voters-guide. The VTA website has links for each party to help you become familiar with our local candidates.

What you can do:

- A. Make sure you are registered! Our VTA website has a link to Elections Canada to help you check.. Some individuals who have lived at the same house for many years discover that they are not registered to vote. It takes just a few minutes to ensure that this does not happen to you.
- B. Find out your polling place. It will be on your polling card which is being mailed out on September 23, 2015. Election day is on a Monday and people are busy with family and work. I urge you to take advantage of advance polling on October 9 (a Sunday), 10, 11 and 12th. As of yet, it has not been publicized as to where these polling places will be but that information will be available on your polling card and on line through Elections Canada.
- C. Have the proper I.D. when you actually go to vote. You need either a driver's license, provincial I.D. card or any government I.D. with a photo, your name and current address. If you aren't registered, you need TWO pieces of government approved ID to vote.
- D. If you have decided which party/candidate you wish to support, seriously consider donating your time, outside of work, to help in that campaign or donating money to the party of your choice. Each individual in a family can donate up to \$400 and receive 75% back in taxes, (if you donate \$100, it would really cost you only \$25).

Do make the commitment to vote this year! Encourage everyone you know who is eligible to vote to do so as well. Make this year's election one with an increase in votes turnout so that our country's future direction is a true reflection of what the majority of Canadians wish.

Karen Vance
VTA Elections Contact

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

VTa Site Based Occupational Health and Safety Representative

The District Joint Health and Safety Committee has scheduled the first training event for the morning of October 13th (Tuesday). It will be held at the Anglican Church on 27th Street. Refreshments from 8:15 to 8:30; Marli Rusen will be presenting "Addressing Dysfunctional Workplaces" at 8:30. **Please book your TTOC's as soon as possible.**



Every school is required to have a teacher representative on their Health and Safety Committee. If you cannot make the training, please send an alternative. The District Joint Committee organizes these training sessions to meet the 8 hours of training you are entitled to for serving on your site based committee.

Important reminders for VTA members.

The VTA and the District have made available on their respective websites the form (Form 6A) required to report any accident, whether it results in an injury or is a near miss. It is recommended that you bookmark these pages for handy reference.

Violence is not part of your job. Please report all incidents, even near misses. If you do not report, the condition cannot be remedied.

With the start of the school year, you will be participating in fire drills. If your teaching assignment includes working with hazardous or flammable materials, you should be reporting the location of those materials to your administration at the same time that you are reporting that all your students are present. Emergency response teams need this information to ensure their safety.

Craig Leverman
VTA Occupational Health & Safety Chair

EBLASTS!!

We are receiving a large number of 'undeliverable' messages after eblasts are sent out. This means that there are many members who are not updating their 'home' email addresses in their BCTF Members' Portal. Please log into your Members' Portal and ensure that all of your contact, work, personal information is current and correct.

It is important that we are able to distribute information to you in a timely manner therefore it is very important that we are accessing a valid email address for each member. Thank you for your attention to this matter, it is greatly appreciated!

SOCIAL JUSTICE

With the increased attention given to the plight of refugees these past few weeks, many teachers may be wondering what they can do to help and how they can address this issue in their classrooms.

"Humanitarian crisis—how to help." has recently been posted on the BCTF website.

This article provides information on a number of ways that teachers can become involved, including:

- agencies accepting donations to support refugees overseas
- contact information for agencies that sponsor and help settle refugees
- suggestions for strategies to use to advocate for refugees
- information on steps to take to encourage your school district to pass a Sanctuary School Policy
- links to classroom learning resources.

Teachers can find this article on the BCTF website at www.bctf.ca by clicking on "Humanitarian crisis-how to help."

Sue Ghattas/Greg Ellis
VTA Social Justice Reps

Stay informed!

As the new year gets underway, take the time to

- ✓ check your Blue Cross statements when you make a claim – one recent example was a teacher whose spouse has the same first initial – Blue Cross was making mistakes with the deductible!
- ✓ check your pay statements from the District..., mistakes can happen! This is particularly true for those of you who are not in 1.0 assignments such as TTOC's and part time teachers. If you lost your password for the electronic pay statements, contact payroll to let them know.
- ✓ check your pension statements but also go on line with the pension plan to check information recorded about you and your employment record, your beneficiary, your spouse's name and so on. If there are 'gaps' it might be to your advantage to buy back those portions.
- ✓ check your collective agreement (on the VTA or the SD22 websites or hard copy in your staffroom). Some choice topics are seniority, transfers, layoff, recall, TTOC issues, part time teaching, resignation dates, different types of leaves, teaching autonomy, supervision, pay options, evaluation, harassment, staff meetings, and on and on!
- ✓ check your position on the seniority list to be sure it is accurate. For people below the layoff line, it determines the order of recall; for people above the layoff line it may determine who gets transferred out due to declining enrollment in your school. Watch for the updated list in November.
- ✓ check your representation in the VTA at the school level for 2015-2016 staff rep(s), PD chair, OH&S rep, Social Justice rep, Staff Committee.

Curriculum change: What teachers need to know

Curriculum change is a hot topic in PD circles all across BC in the coming year, as the new curriculum documents are circulated and teachers begin to examine them. I spent a several days this summer immersed in professional conversations with other PD reps and BCTF staff about the new curriculum and this is what we know.

Background

Curriculum change has been a collaborative process involving teachers and Ministry of Education staff. Teams of teachers appointed by the BCTF, the Federation of Independent Schools, and the First Nations Schools Association have worked collaboratively, with Ministry staff facilitating, to update the K–9 curriculum. First drafts of the new Grades 10–12 curriculum are expected soon.

Why do we need new curriculum?

In general, the revisions are intended to make the curriculum more manageable for teachers, and to provide more opportunities to focus on particular topics of interest in their schools and communities. The learning outcomes in several subject areas have been reduced, thus providing more time and flexibility to explore topics in depth. Currently, there are 11 curriculum areas and new core competencies posted on the Ministry's [Transforming Curriculum and Assessment website](#).

What is expected of teachers this year?

This is an **exploratory** year, so the use of new curriculum is **voluntary**. If they wish, teachers are free to explore the new curriculum, but no one is required to use it this school year and ***no one should feel pressured to do so***. The Ministry has communicated this message to superintendents as well, so there should be no confusion about this issue. During this exploration year, teachers can use either the old or the new curriculum, or a combination of both. However, there is still the expectation that teachers follow Ministry curriculum documents.

Distinguishing between curriculum and pedagogy

The changes in the curriculum do not necessitate any particular teaching method. The Ministry sets the curriculum, while individual teachers make pedagogical choices. Our collective agreement professional autonomy clauses ensure that decisions pertaining to teaching methods are up to individual teachers. Teachers make decisions on curriculum delivery based on the needs of their students, the supports available, and the working conditions in their classrooms.

Teachers need support

The BCTF continues to advocate for sufficient implementation funding to support the draft curriculum. Any funding committed to date falls far short of what we know is required to make implementation successful. It is important to make the distinction between implementation funding and teachers' autonomous use of professional development funding, based on teacher choice.

In solidarity,

Robyn Ladner

PD Chair



Professional Development in SD.#22

A YEAR OF PD

PD DAYS FOR 2015/16:

- ◆ Friday, October 23, 2015 - Provincial Professional Development Day
- ◆ Monday, November 23, 2015 - School Based
- ◆ Friday, February 19, 2016 - Okanagan Zone Conference
- ◆ Friday, April 22, 2016 - School Based
- ◆ Friday, May 20, 2016 - District Wide Inquiry Day

With the specter of Bill 11 looming in the future, it is more important than ever for teachers to maintain control and autonomy over their professional learning. This looks like actively seeking out opportunities according to your needs and potentially finding others to take that journey with you. Funding will always be an issue but it's not a reason to disengage from the professional responsibility to learn and stay current.

It has been my goal as PD chair to help maintain a culture of professional learning that is teacher driven. With the upcoming change in curriculum and the threat of Bill 11, I see this as an opportunity. It's an opportunity for teachers to assess their needs for professional learning and seek out support and resources. We should be deciding what we need before someone tells us what we need. For curriculum implementation or any new initiative to be meaningful, it has to come from us.

So consider which part of your practice you want to enhance. Seek out opportunities and resources to help you. Research and discuss your thinking. Share your learning or wonderings with others. Those who came before us fought for our professional development days. They are valuable and precious to our profession and it is our task to use and protect them.

In solidarity,

Robyn Ladner
PD Chair

