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President's Newsletter

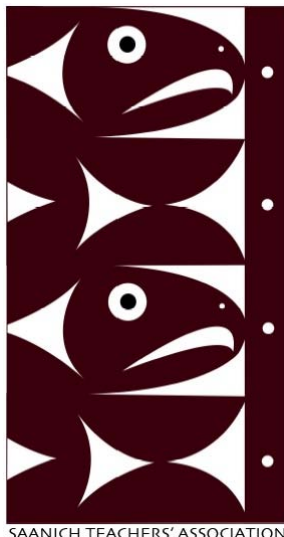
Teachers' Council Election

As you know, the College of Teachers is no more and has been replaced with the new BC Teachers' Council. This new structure includes new rules around teacher representation on the Council. In addition to the three teachers that have been appointed by the BCTF (Becky Blair from Creston Valley, Patricia Gudlugson from Vancouver, and Cathy Lambright from Terrace), five positions will be filled via an election (the remaining seven positions will be filled by government appointees).

All teachers should have received voting instructions in the mail by now, and all completed ballots must be received by the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education by March 20th. In order to have public school teachers' voices present on the new Council to the greatest extent possible, it is important that teachers not only vote, but that they vote for BCTF endorsed candidates.

In our zone (Vancouver Island Region), the BCTF has endorsed Fred Robertson. If you would like more information about Fred, please see his statement in the March issue of Teacher magazine (<http://www.bctf.ca/publications/NewsMag.aspx?id=25465>). Every vote counts!

New STA Logo



Those of you who attended our last General Meeting will already know that the STA has recently adopted a new logo. This logo was commissioned through local Coast Salish artist Chris Paul. Chris developed this graphic to be used in both the vertical orientation (left: to be representative of a totem) and in the horizontal orientation (above: to be representative of a box, containing treasure - our students, and gifts - the gift of knowledge). The salmon are symbolic of our schools.

In addition to using this logo on our website, letter head, and other STA communication, the STA Executive Committee and Representative Assembly have approved the development of keepsake items, featuring this logo, to be given to all future retiring Saanich teachers.

STA General Meeting Results

Over 100 teachers attended our February 8th General Meeting to hear a presentation called “Connecting the Dots” given by BCTF Member-At-Large Denise Moffatt. This meeting also acclaimed our delegates to this month’s BCTF Annual General Meeting. The following teachers will be giving up half of their Spring Break to represent their colleagues in Vancouver:

Mike Ewan	Claremont (Local Representative)
Donnie Peterson	Prospect Lake (Local Representative)
Sean Hayes	President
Patsy McCarter	SIDES
Irina Ostrovsky	Stelly’s
Colin Plant	Claremont
Marnie Scaife	North Saanich
Mark Skanks	Claremont
Amanda Wilson	Parkland
Joe Winkler	Deep Cove

If you would like to give some feedback to the Saanich AGM delegates on the issues being considered at this year’s AGM, please have a look at the AGM *Reports and Resolutions* book (there should be a copy in every staffroom).

The other main responsibility of the AGM delegates is to elect next year’s BCTF Executive Committee. For the first time in years, the position of BCTF President will be contested. Candidates’ statements for all Executive Committee positions can be found in the March issue or Teacher magazine (<http://www.bctf.ca/publications/NewsMag.aspx?id=25465>). Please have a look, and share your thoughts with the Saanich AGM delegates.

Group RRSPs

The deadline for RRSP contributions for this year has just passed, and I for one did not put aside as much as I would have liked. I suspect most teachers would like to find a way to save more for retirement (or, given the current state of public education, find a way to retire earlier!).

Here is an option you might want to consider. Since 1993, Assante Wealth Management has had a relationship with the Saanich district (as contemplated by article B.5 of our collective agreement) allowing teachers to have regular deductions from their paycheques. These monthly deductions can be invested in a wide range of investment options designed to suit the risk tolerance of each participating teacher. The advantage of this program is that the money is “source deducted” from pre-tax income, meaning ~\$65 would be deducted for an investment of \$100 (instead of deducting \$100 and waiting to get \$35 back at tax time)... which is a pretty neat trick.

Call or email Bernie Dahl (bdahl@assante.com) or Dave Gemmel (dgemmel@assante.com) at Assante Wealth Management (250-383-9266) if you are interested in learning more about this Group RRSP program.

STA on Facebook and Twitter

As 18 lucky people already know, I am on Twitter. I have the luxury of time in my day (that most of you don't have) to keep up with media reports, BCTF missives, etc., so I am starting to send out tweets in the hopes that they will help keep teachers in the loop. I also expect that Twitter will become an integral communication tool should we ever find ourselves out on the picket line. So, for those of you who are technologically inclined, feel free to follow along @SaanTeachPres (you might also want to follow the BCTF).

... and if you haven't already done so, please consider joining your colleagues in Saanich (well, 81 of them so far) on the Saanich Teachers' Association Facebook Page.

Have You Signed Up For *MyBCTF* Yet?

The BCTF members' only portal, *MyBCTF*, is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool for teachers. It serves as a communication conduit for the BCTF, an information resource for members, and a place for teachers to share their thoughts with colleagues around the province. If you have not yet signed up to access the portal, I highly recommend you do so immediately (there are still 2 iPads to be won, by the way).

Recent additions to *MyBCTF* include:

- **Your Union Cares For You** – a one-stop information access point for services offered by the BCTF (Pensions, Health and Safety, Salary Indemnity, Health and Wellness, Living with Balance, WCB Advocacy).
- **BC Education Plan discussion forum** – a place for teachers to post their thoughts on the BC Education Plan.
- **The Message is Out** – a collection of teacher-supportive media reports, letters to the editor, etc.

To sign up, visit www.bctf.ca and click on the "BCTF Member Portal" flag on the left.

I am very mindful that a President's Newsletter might seem like a trivial communication given the much bigger issues we are all facing at the moment. Nevertheless, there is important information to be found in this newsletter, so I have decided to send it out (abbreviated to three pages) in the hopes that teachers will find the time to read it.

Thanks,

Sean