

December 2014

# STA in TOUCH

**A newsletter of the Saanich Teachers' Association  
BCTF members of Local #63 (Saanich)**

*Hello Saanich Teachers! We've nearly reached the December break and even though the school year has an odd feeling overall because of the way it started, we hope the break allows you to find some enjoyment with your families and to enjoy the traditions you participate in.*

*Whether you stay in town or travel to warmer environs, we also hope you get to take a break from the busy life of teaching a full curriculum in a compressed year.*

*The STA executive would like to especially welcome to the fold our new members who participated in the STA induction in late November. While autumn is traditionally a time of endings, this event is an annual reminder that our new teachers enter the profession with optimism, the desire to make a difference and to work in Saanich.*

*So for the final time of 2014: thanks for reading. Season's greetings and Happy Holidays from the STA in Touch editors!*

*-Colin Plant and Angie Savage*

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# President's Report

## by Mark Skanks

Hi everyone. I hope you are all well and that you have a restful and enjoyable Christmas Break when it comes.

As I write this we have just come through municipal elections that saw large increases across the region in voter turnout and which resulted in a change to the composition of our Saanich School Board. I would like to extend a big thanks to all who ran, all who served on our Board who are not returning, all the successful candidates who now have four years ahead to tackle the issues that have eroded public education in this province, and all of you for continuing to be involved by coming out to all-candidates meetings, talking up the election with your friends and neighbours, and by taking the time to get out and vote. Thank you and Happy Holidays.

### Starling Minds

We have all been dealing with an inordinate amount of stress over the last six months, and many of us continue to deal with financial stress, work-related stress, and simply the emotional fallout of an extended period of uncertainty about our jobs and homes.

Starling Minds is an online program to which we all have access thanks to a partnership between the founder, Dr. Andrew Miki, and the BCTF. It is a ten-module course based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and designed specifically for BC teachers that gives you the knowledge, tools, and skills to improve your mental health. The course is both free and confidential.

Dr. Miki and the BCTF conceived of the program as a means to make CBT available to teachers throughout the province. CBT is apparently the gold standard of therapies and yet there are few registered Cognitive Behavioural Therapists in BC, most of whom (like Dr. Miki) are in the Lower Mainland.

Follow the link below to sign up for this self-paced online course. <https://starlingminds.com/#registration>

### Fund Allocation (Signing Bonus)

I received a message on Nov 19<sup>th</sup> from the BCTF to say that – at that point – they had received employment data from all but 15 of the districts. They were hopeful that for these districts (including Saanich, who submitted data to the BCTF long ago) cheques would come in a “timely” fashion. I would assume that by “timely” they mean before the end of the year, so that the amount is taxed in 2014 and not 2015.

As I mentioned in the message I sent on Zimbra a couple of weeks ago, there will be a hold-back of 1.5% of the \$105 million (plus interest earned since October) to deal with appeals. Once the deadline (yet to be set) for appeals has past, the remaining funds will be diverted in their entirety to some form of benefit to all members (probably SIP). Also, Revenue Canada has ruled that the amount is taxable, so the BCTF will be deducting tax and sending a T4 along with the cheque.

If you are looking to review the eligibility criteria, please DO NOT contact the district. They have nothing to do with the allocation of the settlement funds. You can call the BCTF at 1-800-663-9163 or visit the BCTF webpage here: <https://bctf.ca/myBCTF/content.aspx?id=35452>

### Benefits

The following message was sent recently to all Local Presidents about the status of benefits:

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONTINUED

*“We are still working through the details for implementation of the improvements to the benefit plans. BCPSEA is currently confirming the costing before we sign off on a memorandum of agreement.*

*It will take some time for Pacific Blue Cross to make the changes to their system and there are still some issues outstanding regarding the process for dealing with retroactivity. It is impossible at this time to give an estimate as to when the changes will be fully implemented.*

*However, the improvements to the EHB for 2014–15 are effective August 1, 2014. That means that any services provided on that date or later will be eligible for payment under the new schedule. Members who have submitted claims since August 1 will need to resubmit the claim once the system is up and running to receive any additional reimbursement up to the new maximum.*

*Members who have not yet submitted claims for services provided on or after August 1 may want to hold off on submitting them until the new system is up and running, thus eliminating the need to re-submit.*

*Benefit amounts are for a calendar year, January to December. The exceptions are vision and eye exams every two years and hearing aids every four years. The period for these items is calculated from the service date of the first eligible claim.*

*With the exception of fertility drugs, which is new, the improvements to the standard EHB plan are to the amount reimbursed, not to the services provided. To find out whether particular service is covered please direct members to the CARESnet page on the Pacific Blue Cross website at:*

*[service.pac.bluecross.ca/acesweb/pages/Authentication/Signin.aspx?userType=1](http://service.pac.bluecross.ca/acesweb/pages/Authentication/Signin.aspx?userType=1)*

*We will provide updates as more is known.”*

**SURT**

Every year, we hold several events for School Union Rep Training, or SURTs. By the BCTF rules, locals can hold a maximum of four in a year, and these can be used to train Staff Reps, Pro-D reps, Health and Safety Reps, Social Justice Reps, TTOCs and New Teachers.

On January 9<sup>th</sup> (the first Friday back from Christmas break), we will be holding a combination Staff Rep and New Teacher SURT. The morning workshop will be *The Role and Function of the Staff Rep*, and the afternoon workshop will be *Boundary Issues: Teacher/Student Relationships*. The morning session will be exclusively for Staff Reps and the afternoon session will be available to both Staff Reps and other interested teachers or TTOCs.

While I expect that many of those interested teachers will likely meet the strict definition of “new teachers”, I think that the topic of Boundaries is such an important one it is worth opening it up to those who wish to attend.

If you plan to attend, either as a Staff Rep (or designate) for the entire day or as a TTOC/New Teacher (or designate) for the afternoon, please RSVP with Sally or Audrey at [staoffice@saanichteachers.com](mailto:staoffice@saanichteachers.com)

**BC Fed**

Last week, the BC Federation of Labour held its convention in Vancouver and I attended the Wednesday afternoon and Thursday of the convention on your behalf as a BCTF delegate from Saanich. There we helped to elect former BCTF President and current Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Fed, Irene Lanzinger, as the first ever female President of the BC Fed.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONTINUED

**Curriculum Development**

The BCTF is looking for applications for secondary teachers who would like to be involved in the curriculum development for grade 10-12 courses. They are looking for about 30-35 teachers and the deadline to apply is December 17<sup>th</sup>.

Information about this opportunity is posted on the BCTF website:

<https://bctf.ca/opportunities/MinistryCommittees.aspx>

The application form is here:

<https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Opportunities/MinistryCommittees/ApplicationForm.pdf>

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# Local Representatives Report

by Don Peterson & Colin Plant



Don Peterson, Colin Plant and Mark Skanks had the opportunity to represent the teachers of the Saanich Teachers Association in Vancouver for the Fall Representative Assembly that was held over November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The Representative Assembly is the second highest decision making body of the BCTF. Don and Colin, the voting members of our delegation, share 8 votes out of a total of about 530. All information about the Representative Assembly and the decision it

makes can be found at this link: <https://www.bctf.ca/myBCTF/content.aspx?id=22421>

We will mention a few of the items that are covered in these documents:

**Harassment and Bullying:** A whole session of the meeting was dedicated to adopting harassment and bullying policies that would be in line with the expectations of WorkSafeBC. The policies would be of benefit to members attending various BCTF meetings. The RA, in the end, felt that some of what was brought to the meeting needed a second look by a smaller committee and much of it was referred to other committees to be brought back to the Spring RA.

**Finance Committee Election:** There was a vacancy on the Finance Committee that had to be filled. Kip Wood, a teacher from Nanaimo, was elected. Kip served on the BCTF Executive Committee from 2010 to 2012. We bring this up, as our last article was focused on the process that is used to set your annual fee to the BCTF. It is the Finance Committee that makes the first recommendation for the fee before it goes to the Executive Committee.

**Jim Sinclair:** Jim made his final speech to the BCTF as the president of the BCFed. Jim Sinclair has been the president of the BCFed since 1999. We have always enjoyed his speeches. Irene Lanzinger, a past president of the BCTF, has put her name forward to run for election in place of Jim. The result of that election will be known before this article is printed.

**Local Resolution:** Last month, Colin and Don asked for your feedback on a motion that was going to be debated. Though, there were many motions debated, we wanted to hear your feedback on one particular motion. Thank you to everyone who forwarded their feedback to us. The motion was as followed:

## LR REPORT – CONTINUED

**That the BCTF take any and all necessary austerity measures (including but not limited to video conferencing and online voting of motions) to ensure a 3-month picket line fund by the end of the 2018–19 school year.**

When the motion came to the floor, the movers had an alternate wording to the motion which is as follows:

**That the BCTF continue to examine and recommend measures, particularly in relation to the cost of meetings, to ensure a one-month strike fund by the end of the 2018–19 school year.**

The motion was defeated without any debate. Though we cannot say why the meeting defeated the motion, we believed that the BCTF needs to look at using its money more wisely. We do not feel that cutting back on the decision making ability of the federation would be the right way to go.

**Bargaining:** We had an opportunity to debrief with the South Island Zone representatives about the general feel about job action. Much of what we discussed would be considered to be “in-committee”; however, it was interesting to know the different approaches that were taken in the various districts. Let's say there was a little bit of “daily raffle” envy in that room!

Our next BCTF Representative Assembly is on January 30/31, 2015.



## Health and Safety Report

by Les Lowe

Hi all, I hope you are well.

We are now into the cold and flu season, I hope that many of you were able to take advantage of the flu clinics that were held at some of the schools.

In our work environment we are exposed to many students who are not quite up to par healthwise colds, flu are easily spread. With the stress of managing our classrooms and general daily lives our bodies become less resistant to becoming sick.

I would suggest that if you have not been able to get a flu shot, consider going to the local flu clinic.

Check out this web site from the BCTF. <http://ohsinsider.com/search-by-index/illnesses-diseases/new-study-finds-one-sick-worker-infect-half-workplace>

Please also consider staying at home if you become sick, you do a disservice to yourself, fellow staff members and our students by trying to work while ill. You also make your recovery longer.

As the days get shorter we often are leaving our buildings in the darkness, falling leaves, ice and other hazards could cause injuries. Please watch your footing when you are walking to your cars. If you happen to notice that the lighting on the buildings or parking lot poles are out report it to you administrators to be repaired. There have been instances where people have slipped and have been injured. The same can apply to tripping hazards.



# Professional Development Report

by Holly Mair



## WAYS TO USE TWO BACK-TO-BACK PD DAYS: THE NORTH SAANICH EXPERIENCE

By Catherine Robillard, PD Rep

At North Saanich Middle School, our staff decided to take advantage of the back-to-back professional development days in November to bring in Susan Augustyn for the two November pro-d days. Susan Augustyn, from Parksville, facilitates the “Achieving Excellence in Writing” workshop, which provides a structure for writing, from both fictional and non-fictional texts. The staff was well-represented with nearly all our humanities teachers in attendance. Additionally, we opened up the workshop to include the intermediate teachers from our feeder schools, as well as, to other Saanich middle school and high school teachers. We had a total of 18 teachers from NSMS, including our teacher-librarian, and our principal, Kal Russell, three teachers from ROMS and four teachers from Sidney Elementary participate.

One of the advantages of having the two day workshop was the opportunity to explore the topic of writing in more detail. As well, Ms. Augustyn came to North Saanich to facilitate the workshops, rather than the teachers having to go up to Parksville, which saved everyone quite a bit of money. Another advantage was the opportunity for most of our staff to find some commonality in a methodology of summarative writing, particularly because it is an issue that spans the curriculum. Finally, having at least one of our feeder schools available to participate will likely strengthen the writing for students coming into North Saanich, as they will already be familiar with the technique and the language used in the methodology.

The feedback from some of the participants was positive, and even though it meant using both days for a specific topic, it was worth it in the long run. A suggestion of having a workshop day, and then a collaborative day as a follow-up might have been more useful, as there was a lot of information given even on day 1. Someone suggested that having Ms. Augustyn return in the spring for a follow-up session would be useful. The two days of pro-d were definitely advantageous in terms of covering more than just a taste of a topic, and also to give our feeder schools that chance to get a head start on an excellent writing program. We were excited to have Susan Augustyn here at our school.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

By Holly Mair, STA PD Chairperson

- Last school year, there were 471 transactions on the Saanich Teachers' Association PD Account.
- CDC staff members did the best at spending their PD funds, leaving a mere \$2.13 roll-over. Well done! You are small but mighty users of PD!
- Many individual teachers accessed release time with their PD allotment: 123 TTOC call-outs were billed towards our professional development account.
- The Saanich School Board Office just wrote a cheque to the union for \$99, 814.87 to cover the PD costs for this upcoming school-year as per article F.15.1 (b) of the collective agreement.
- Teachers can claim PSA memberships for reimbursement.



# STA Program Report

by Luanne Marchand

We had a lovely BCTF induction ceremony for our new Saanich members on Thursday, November 20th at the Brentwood Bay Resort and Spa.

Thanks to BCTF Executive member Teresa Grandinetti for coming over and participating in the event. Thanks also to STA President Mark Skanks, STA Program Chair Luanne Marchand and our office staff Sally Glen and Audrey Hayes for putting together this special event.

One of the lovely traditions in Saanich is that our Board Chair, Superintendent, Director of Human Resources and several other school district staff attend and offer their greetings to the newly-inducted members.



## Welcome to the BCTF new Saanich Teachers!



*Top Row (L-R):* Christine Falk-Duquesnay, Andra Bergsma, Emma Moray, Sarah Ravensdale, Tristan Clausen, Mark Skanks (STA President), Tejinder Hari, David Burnham, Sarah Loeb, Nadine McIntyre.

*Bottom Row (L-R):* Caroline Shuh, Becky Horton.

# Contest

Congratulations to Holly! SIDES teacher Holly Mair correctly identified a location for municipal voting and was randomly chosen from the correct submissions for this month's prize.

## December's Trivia Question:

*Name the former BCTF president who was recently elected President of the BC Federation of Labour.*

Submit entries **by Dec 30th at 5pm** please via an email to Colin at [cplant@sd63.bc.ca](mailto:cplant@sd63.bc.ca).

We will award **five \$10 Starbucks** to randomly drawn names from those who correctly answer the question.

Thanks for reading!

# Let's Get Social!

The STA is getting more and more connected to the world of Social Media. Join us!

Our website is:

[www.saanichteachers.com](http://www.saanichteachers.com)

Follow us on Facebook at:

[Saanich Teachers' Association](https://www.facebook.com/SaanichTeachersAssociation)

Follow us on Twitter at:

@BCTF63

Phone us:

778-426-1426

Our mailing address is:

6843 Central Saanich Road Victoria BC V8Z 5V4



If you have any feedback on this newsletter,  
or would like to submit an article, please contact:

Newsletter Editors:  
Colin Plant & Angie Savage





# IMPORTANT DATES FOR STA TEACHERS

## 1 HR TO FACILITATE PARENT/TEACHER INTERVIEWS RE. STUDENT PROGRESS

### DATES

Brentwood Elementary	<del>Oct 16</del>	<del>Nov 5</del>	<del>Nov 6</del>	Feb 24
Cordova Bay Elementary	<del>Oct 28</del>	<del>Oct 29</del>	<del>Oct 30</del>	Feb 11
Deep Cove Elementary	<del>Oct 22</del>	<del>Oct 23</del>	<del>Nov 20</del>	Feb 26
Keating Elementary	<del>Nov 4</del>	<del>Nov 5</del>	<del>Nov 6</del>	Mar 3
KELSET Elementary	<del>Oct 7</del>	<del>Oct 9</del>	<del>Nov 19</del>	Apr 1
Lochside Elementary	<del>Nov 4</del>	<del>Nov 5</del>	<del>Nov 6</del>	Feb 26
Prospect Lake Elementary	<del>Oct 8</del>	<del>Oct 9</del>	Feb 18	Feb 19
Sidney Elementary	<del>Oct 8</del>	<del>Oct 9</del>	<del>Nov 20</del>	Mar 5
Bayside Middle	<del>Oct 15</del>	<del>Oct 16</del>	Feb 12	May 21
North Saanich Middle	<del>Oct 8</del>	<del>Oct 9</del>	Feb 4	Mar 6
Royal Oak Middle	<del>Oct 28</del>	<del>Oct 29</del>	Feb 4	May 28
Claremont Secondary	<del>Oct 2</del>	<del>Nov 27</del>	Feb 5	Apr 30
Parkland Secondary	<del>Oct 2</del>	<del>Dec 4</del>	Feb 26	May 7
Stelly's Secondary	<del>Oct 2</del>	<del>Nov 27</del>	Feb 25	Apr 29

## ALL SCHOOLS (TWO WEEK SPRING BREAK IMPLEMENTED)

<del>Friday, October 24, 2014</del>	<del>Province Wide</del>
<del>Friday, November 7, 2014</del>	<del>School Based</del>
<del>Monday November 10, 2014</del>	<del>School Based</del>
Friday, February 20, 2015	Individual (Province Wide)
Friday, April 24, 2015	School Planning Day
Monday, May 4, 2015	School Based

**LAST DAY OF CLASSES: FRIDAY JUNE 26<sup>TH</sup>** (Not that we are counting)