



WEST VANCOUVER Teachers' Association

Vol 46, no 7 Apr 2024

Notes from your President - Spencer Capier

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and still feeling rested after spring break!

I would like to again thank **Rozhin Emadi** (WVSS), **Matt Glover** (RO), **Geoff Hamelin** (IP), **Jamie Hicks** (TTOC), **Nevena Ivankovic** (WVSS), **Heather Johnston**, (BICS), **Jessica Selzer** (RO), and **Chantalle Wigley** (WVTA VP/ Inglewood Secondary) for joining me at the BCTF AGM which took place over Spring Break. It was great to have some new delegates joining us at the table.

It was a challenging AGM this year.

On the plus side, several housekeeping motions passed to improve the health and security of the Salary Indemnity Plan. SIP is there for members when their sick bank runs out in the short term and provides long term disability if an illness or injury keeps them out of the workforce for longer periods. It's an amazing program. As a result of the changes made at this AGM, SIP is now protected from any future government draining its funds in the event the BCTF were to engage in an illegal strike. Illegal strikes have occurred in the past, and it's not inconceivable they could do so in the future, so this is a positive step.

While the First and Second Vice Presidents of the BCTF were acclaimed (**Carole Gordon** and **Robin Toszak**), **Clint Johnson's** candidacy was contested. His challenger ran on a platform calling for divestment of the Teachers' Pension Plan of all corporations that manufacture military equipment or contribute to climate change. Besides the fact that no president or executive of the BCTF can structurally influence the TPP or its directors, any sudden

divestment of the TPP would result in a significant reduction in our pensions. Clint Johnson was elected by over 80% of the delegates.

A small but vocal group wanted a similar divestment of SIP investments, but their motions were strongly defeated.

The new BCTF executive is diverse, reflecting many identities and viewpoints. For example, the AGM elected the first trans identified person to executive. Their election was warmly celebrated.

Most of the resolutions brought by local associations were lobbying in nature. Most would begin with "We call on...", "We urge...", or "The Federation will create a task force to study..." These kinds of motions are meant to give direction and focus to overall BCTF goals.

One local resolution (107) brought by the Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators Society (VAES) proved controversial. It called for the BCTF to lobby the ministry to mandate the teaching of the war in Gaza and its historical roots from a specific perspective. It required President Clint Johnson specifically to speak publicly in support of this. Without getting into the particulars of the challenges of teaching the history of the Middle East, Clint was concerned that the motion named an individual (himself) rather than the Federation writ large. Though the motion passed by a narrow margin many expressed concern the BCTF was calling for curriculum to be written by political processes. It was an emotional moment as there were teachers in the room who identified as Palestinian or Israeli, Muslim or Jewish.

.... cont.

➤ **Advice from the BCTF for Teaching Controversial Issues**

I wanted to share some advice local presidents were given this week from the BCTF on teaching controversial issues. This would include world events such as the current war in Gaza. My belief is that this advice was given in light of some of the ‘livelier’ discussions at the AGM last month I mentioned above.

➤ **Professional Development**

The BCTF workshop Strategies for Discussing Controversial Issues provides practical classroom strategies to discuss controversial issues in a respectful manner. WVTA can book the workshop if enough interest is expressed by members.

➤ **Professional Autonomy**

There is no autonomy clause in our local Collective Agreement, but there is still the general understanding that teachers exercise their professional judgment to meet the diverse needs of students, determine their pedagogical approach, and decide the instructional and assessment strategies to deliver the curriculum. However, teachers should keep in mind that there are reasonable limits to teachers’ speech on certain topics. For example, there was an arbitration wherein teachers’ expression was restricted regarding their own views on the Foundation Skills assessment (FSA). Teachers are subject to reasonable direction by the employer within the confines of our CA.

If you do feel you’ve been given direction that is contrary to a general principle of autonomy, reach out to your staff rep or to the WVTA office directly.

➤ **Parent Communities**

I don’t think it’s a surprise to hear our parent community is more conservative than most. The vast majority of parents are supportive and respect the work of teachers. However, there have been a few cases in recent years of parents intimidating or castigating teachers for simply doing their job delivering BC curriculum. I’ve had a parent try to get me fired, and I know it is not a pleasant feeling! Knowing I had a strong union backing me when that parent complained meant a great deal to me at the time.

The district has a good track record supporting teachers who are harassed by difficult parents and recognizes as the employer they are obligated to provide a harassment free workplace.

➤ **Teacher Leader Discussions**

The WVTA has concluded consultation and negotiations with the district on the new Position of Special Responsibility: Teacher Leader. The position is part of a three-year pilot program, and we are happy to say there will now be nine positions at each high school, an increase from the previous practice of only six. This will result in more paid representation at Curriculum Council/TL meetings.

As in all negotiations no party gets everything they want, but we believe this was a successful process. The WVTA preserved the three elements members told us in surveys and direct consultation they wanted:

- 1. TLs remain department based,
- 2. TLs are appointed by a panel consisting of a majority of teachers elected from Staff Committees and Curriculum Councils,
- 3. Nine TLs per secondary school (5 major, 4 minor).

The allowance for the new position has changed. While there had been in our collective agreement a minor department coordinator position described there was no language that required its use and there have been no minor department coordinators in West Vancouver Schools since the late 90’s. Once upon a time they were paid 6.5% of a master’s degree at step ten.

There is no language in our current collective agreement as to the number of major department coordinators there should be, though the practice has been six per school. They have been paid 7.5% of a master’s degree, though the position was frequently shared.

Members told us they were willing to adjust the major department coordinator allowance if it guaranteed more paid positions representing the needs of departments. We were able to achieve in writing the increase of positions to nine, following that mandate.

The new allowance formula is this, using our salary increase as of June 30, 2024:

Teacher Leader Major	6.8% (\$7447)
Teacher Leader Minor	4.9% (\$5366)

There is a percentage decrease in the TL M allowance compared to the old Major DC allowance, however there is a 23% increase in remuneration for union

members collective. It is important to note most allowances were split between two teachers but is not a feature of the new TL position. Most people in the role will see a significant increase in real pay.

Please join us for a Members' Social after school on Thursday April 25th at the Tap House, Park Royal South.

In solidarity, Spencer

West Vancouver Teachers' Association
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
3:45 pm, Thursday May 30th, 2024
Kay Meek Theatre
Call for Candidates!

Agenda items include the election of WVTA Executive Members for the 2024 – 2025 school year. ***(The positions of President and Vice President will be confirmed prior to the AGM in a one member-one vote election on May 1st. Calls for nominations for these two positions will be sent out by the Nominating Chair.)***

The following WVTA Executive Committee positions are available for the 2024-2025 school year. All are one-year terms.

Executive Committee:

- President
- Vice President (.5 release)
- Local Representatives (2 to be elected)
- Alternate Local Representative
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Member-at-Large (4 to be elected)

Committee Chairpersons:

- Bargaining
- Professional Development
- Social Justice

Description of positions are available from the WVTA office or Staff Reps. Please contact the WVTA by May 24th if you are interested in being a candidate.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor of the AGM for all positions other than President and Vice President, however, in order to be included in the AGM booklet and any all-candidates' forum, a completed nomination statement should be sent into the WVTA

by May 15th. Please contact the WVTA office if you are interested in being a candidate.

Counselling and Mental Health Supports

It's important to acknowledge that conversations about Israel and Palestine can evoke strong emotions, and that many members have been impacted by anti-semitism and islamophobia, and/or may have personal connections to the area. Here are some resources:

- Extended Health Benefits (EHB)—If a member is covered by Pacific Blue Cross, the details of their counselling benefits can be found [here](#).
- Employee Family Assistance Plan (EFAP)—A list outlining EFAP providers, by school district, can be found [here](#).
- BCTF Health and Wellness program—Contract teachers can be referred by their local or they can refer themselves. Further details can be found [here](#).
- Starling Minds—Starling Minds is an online mental health and wellness toolkit, designed for teachers, which provides education and training to manage stress and prevent anxiety and depression. Further details can be found [here](#).

POST and FILL WORKSHOP

Tuesday, April 23rd
3:30 – 4:30 pm, ILC

This important workshop explains the intricacies of the post and fill process and is highly recommended for all WVTA members with term appointments.

Contact the WVTA with any questions;
info@wvta.ca or 604-926-1617.

BCTF Peer Support Service (PSS) is designed to provide direct, individual assistance to active teachers who are experiencing difficulty with their teaching practice. Any active member who desires help with their teaching, or who is on a plan of assistance, may request Peer Support.

The Peer Support will be provided by BCTF peer support consultants, who have an extensive background in teaching, and training in planning, consultation, classroom observation, analysis, and feedback skills. The consultants support the growth of a teacher's professional practice through a non-evaluative, peer coaching model.

Any active member who desires help with their teaching, or who is on a plan of assistance, may request PSS by contacting their local president who will refer them to PSS, or by calling the PSS program coordinator directly and request the forms to begin the process. The cost of the service is supported by the BCTF and in some cases, by the teacher's school district.

For more information see:

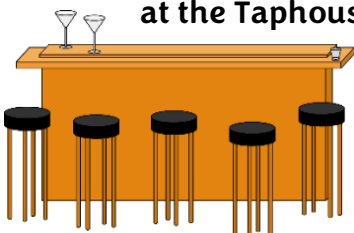
- [Peer Support Services Additional Information](#)

WVTA SCHOLARSHIPS

Find the application form for the **WVTA Scholarship Awards** on the WVTA web site: www.wvta.ca > Teacher Resources > *Forms for Download*.

The applicant must be a June 2024 graduate and a child or legal ward of an active or retired WVTA member. Two scholarships of \$1000 will be awarded. Application deadline is August 31st, 2024.

WVTA Members' Social Thursday April 25th, 3:30 – 5:00 pm at the Taphouse, Park Royal South



Raise a glass with friends, meet some new colleagues. Appetizers on the WVTA!



EARTH DAY OPPORTUNITIES (April 22, 2024)

[Earth Day 2024](#) - Best Earth Day Activities for Schools and Kids



Be the Change Earth Alliance:

Be the Change Earth Alliance is a charitable organization founded in 2005 which supports positive, interconnected environmental and social change in schools and communities. They deliver socio-ecological education and empowerment programs that help youth to take personal and collective action on environmental and social issues. Their mission is to inspire, educate, and empower youth to take personal and collective action for a just, sustainable, resilient, and personally fulfilling world. **BTCEA** offers several student workshops, ProD opportunities, and hundreds of free resources created by and for educators through their flagship program, Student Leadership for Change (SLC). SLC features an online library of learning resources including student Action Packs, worksheets, videos, lesson plans, classroom activities, and more. Register [here](#) for free access.

BTCEA offers several student workshops, ProD opportunities, and hundreds of free resources created by and for educators through their flagship program, Student Leadership for Change (SLC). SLC features an online library of learning resources including student Action Packs, worksheets, videos, lesson plans, classroom activities, and more. Register [here](#) for free access.