



# TACKBOARD

*The monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association*

## Message from the office

**THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE** and we know that everyone is looking forward to the promise of summer. Like every year, it has been a varied and busy one at the VSTA office supporting members, attending meetings on behalf of the VSTA and keeping our School Union Teams up-to-date and informed as they support teachers in schools.

At the time of this writing, provincial bargaining is still underway and it is not clear if we will have a deal by June 30<sup>th</sup>. We are hopeful now that a mediator has been assigned; you can read more about the mediator in the newest bargaining update from BCTF that was emailed. If we don't reach an agreement by the 30<sup>th</sup>, it means that we will continue under our current contract until a new one is negotiated and ratified. The Bargaining team appreciates all the support it has received from the membership and we hope that teachers stay up to date through the Portal. The good news is the political action that teachers across the province are participating in seems to be working. More MLAs are feeling the pressure and even the Greens are using bargaining to their advantage to address the Minister of Education on how negotiations are going. Public support appears to be good. Please continue to urge the government to get a signed deal by telling BCPSEA to get the concessions off the table. Continue to check your email from the BCTF as they will send new form emails to send to your NDP MLA or John Horgan. Let's help the BCTF reach their goal of 20 000 emails sent.

At the local level, the VTF (Vancouver Teachers' Federation – VSTA + VESTA)



Terry, Treena, Katharine & Shelby

were able to negotiate changes to the Post & Fill Process and interviewing. While there were challenges, the relationship with the Employer remained cordial and productive.

As we wrap up this year, we look forward to the next – we hope all members will be able to attend our November General Meeting to vote on proposed Constitution & by-law changes. The VSTA Executive has voted to propose that two Member-at-Large positions on our Executive Committee be reserved for Equity Seeking groups – one position for a teacher of colour and one position for a 2SLGBTQ+ teacher, in order to purposefully create space for members of those groups to see themselves represented at the Executive level. We are also planning an evening for our Indigenous teachers in the fall – we have a reserved spot on our Executive for an Aboriginal teacher and want to create a stronger connection with our Indigenous colleagues.

At the District level, the VSTA is seeking conversations regarding the future of Secondary schools in Vancouver. We are seeing the slow demise of elective programs due to low Grad requirements, which results in fewer jobs for our members and fewer educational opportunities for our

see MESSAGE FROM OFFICE next page

## TQS change of policy

### The TQS Graduate Degree Capstone Requirement Has Been Eliminated

Effective May 1, 2019 an acceptable graduate degree no longer requires a capstone. All other requirements of an acceptable graduate degree are still in place. This change does not affect graduate degrees that contain an initial teacher education program.

If you are currently in TQS category five plus with an acceptable master's degree you MUST apply to the TQS to be considered for an upgrade. No upgrades will be processed automatically. Complete the "Category Upgrade" application on our website and follow the instructions for upgrading. If you have already forwarded transcripts to our office in the past, you need not send them again.

If you are currently in TQS category five or lower with an acceptable graduate degree, this change will not affect your category placement, but may affect your upgrading requirements. If you are in category five or lower with an acceptable graduate degree and require clarification on whether this change will affect your upgrading requirements, please inquire through the "Contact Us" page on our website <https://www.tqs.bc.ca/>

## Change of Group Life Insurance Carrier effective July 1, 2019

There has been a change to the group life insurance carrier as of July 1, 2019. The contract is now under BC Life, which is a subsidiary of Pacific Blue Cross. There is no impact to coverage or contractual language of the district's group life insurance policy.

**MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE, from front page**

students. At least two Secondary schools in Vancouver are experimenting with course selection and vision at the high school level in order to keep students engaged. We would also like to spur a Provincial conversation on the role and future of Secondary education in this province. Students are learning differently and we want to be able to respond to changes pro-actively.

In the meantime, the VSTA office wants to wish all members a wonderful summer break. We salute you and your hard work with our children – we know what a difference you make for the youth of Vancouver. We look forward to seeing you in September.

**Summer reading suggestions from the VSTA Office**



Katharine –

*Washington Black* by Esi Edugyan – Historical fiction with some magical realism spanning the slave trade, Colonization, Victorian mores and the human spirit. Beautifully written & immersive.

*Fragile Bully: Understanding our Destructive Affair with Narcissism in the Age of Trump* by Laurie Helgoe – What is “healthy narcissism” vs “unhealthy narcissism”? How does Social Media and Trump style discourse encourage unhealthy narcissism in all of us? How can we reclaim our civility? Non-fiction from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Shelby – *Educated* by Tara Westover – An incredible true story of a self-educated woman from Idaho who grew up in a prepper’s (survivalist) household.

*Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese – From the acclaimed Indigenous writer, a tale of what it was truly like growing up in residential schools in Canada.

Treena – *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown – The ultimate playbook for developing brave leaders and courageous cultures. Daring leadership is a collection of four skills sets that are 100% teachable. It’s learning and practice that requires brave work, tough conversations, and showing up with our whole hearts.

*The History of Love* by Nicole Kraus – A beautiful story within a story, which follows sweet 14-year old Alma as she endeavors to cure her mother’s loneliness. Alma meets elderly Leo Gursky and she believes that Leo’s magical novel he wrote and lost over sixty years ago in Poland holds the cure to her mother’s happiness.

Terry – *The Golden House* by Salman Rushdie

**Post and Fill SOME KEY DATES TO NOTE:**

<b>JUNE 24</b> onwards	Interviews and offers for continuing positions only <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews and offers for temporary positions may only proceed upon approval from HR (may be used for placements)</li></ul>
<b>AUG 13-19</b>	Summer Posting Period
<b>AUG 19</b> onwards	Interviews and offers for SPP continuing positions only <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews and offers for temporary positions may only proceed upon approval from HR (may be used for placements)</li></ul>
<b>SEPT 3-9</b>	2019-20 Posting Period 1

School Interview Committees will need to be convened to conduct these interviews. The VSTA position is that the school union representative on the interview team must have attended the post and fill training provided at the April School Union Rep Training session. If none of your school’s reps will be available for August interviews, please contact the office to arrange for a table officer to conduct the interviews. A limited amount of compensatory “time in lieu” will be made available by the VSTA for those staff reps who conduct August interviews.

**DAY OF MOURNING SCHOOLS PROJECT**

On Friday, April 26th, secondary schools in the district participated in the **Day of Mourning Schools Project**. The project aims to create awareness with our student workers about workplace safety, and to remember all those who have been injured or lost their lives while on the job. As teachers, it is important that we work with our students, especially those already in the workforce, to recognize that they have the same rights to safety that any adult has:

1. the right to know and be informed about potential dangers and hazards,
2. the right to refuse unsafe work, and
3. the right to participate in Health & Safety activities as a representative.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Day of Mourning Projects at their respective schools, especially to our school Health & Safety Reps, School Administrators, VSTA Executive, and the BCTF for their support in this very important annual and national initiative.

Michael-Don Borason  
VSTA Health & Safety  
Committee Chair

**Congratulations to  
Britannia and  
Michael-Don and his  
students for winning the  
DOMS Apple Gift Card!**



Michael-Don Borason & Troy Hardwick

# Perspectives on Teaching at a Los Angeles Charter School



## I taught at a charter school in Los Angeles for three years. I've never appreciated my union more.

When I began my job as an English teacher in a low-income area of Los Angeles, I knew I would face challenges. But what I didn't know was that the hardest part wouldn't be in the classroom but in the way my charter school was run.

### What is a charter school?

Charter schools are publicly funded and privately run; they are meant to offer an alternative to so-called "failing" public schools and encourage innovation through freedom from rules and regulations. In practice, a lack of transparency and accountability has allowed for companies and individuals to benefit financially. Most charter schools are run like businesses. Most do not have a union.

Without a union, every employee negotiates their own salary. During our two week mandatory summer training,

teachers were called in one at a time to sign contracts. I would discover that the discrepancy between teachers with similar experience and education was greater than \$20,000 USD in some cases, including mine. There was no recourse, of course. During our contract signing it was also made clear that we could be fired at anytime without notice or cause. No one dared to push back - job security was paramount. There was also a rumour that if you crossed our executive director - who knew everyone in the charter school movement - she could prevent you from being hired anywhere in the city.

My colleagues were young; at 35, I was the second oldest on campus. Many of them were first year teachers, and more than half the staff was brand new to the school. This kind of turnover is normal in charter schools. Sometimes teachers would quit part way through the year, to be replaced by a substitute who was not a teacher. In California, anyone who has taken and passed the CBEST (a basic English and math test) can work as a sub.

To save money, and because there is a teacher shortage in California, teachers were often hired through [Teach for America](#) (a program that trains recent college graduates for 5 weeks before giving them their own classroom) or as interns (without any training as long as they are enrolled in an online teacher

training program). This meant they could be paid less than other teachers, as little as \$20,000 USD.

By contrast, our two schools, each with 350 students, had a total of 10 administrators, not including office or supervisory staff, all making good salaries. A third of these administrators had never been teachers; at least one didn't hold a bachelor's degree. The top two earners made \$177,330 USD and \$218,295 USD in salary and benefits in 2016. These 10 administrators oversaw only 34 teachers and yet our schools did not have counsellors, a library, a gym, or a proper playing field. One toilet served all staff.

Although the school had been operating for 10 years, it had a lack of clear procedures for addressing a range of issues. Family members were commonly hired. Sexual harassment went unchecked. Mandatory meetings outside of school hours were called without warning. The company that provided our school lunches, paid for with a federal grant, gave kick-backs to the school. I could go on, but I think you get the picture.

My experience working at a charter school in Los Angeles has made me appreciate all the more what we have in our public school system here in British Columbia. We cannot take it for granted. It is a system worth fighting for.

*G. Day is a Teacher Teaching On Call*

## VSTA AGM 2019 Report

**MANY THANKS** to all who attended the VSTA AGM on May 14 at Tupper to vote on important issues and elect the 2019-20 Executive Committee.

The membership

- received a report and passed recommendations on the Salary Indemnity Fund (SIF);
- adopted the Audited Financial Statements for Year Ended July 31, 2018;
- passed the VSTA Budget 2019-20;
- appointed Auditors for 2019-20;
- received a bargaining update

## Congratulations to the elected In-House Table Officers and Executive Members for 2019-20:

PRESIDENT: **Katharine Shipley**  
1ST VICE-PRESIDENT: **Treena Goolieff**  
2ND VICE-PRESIDENT: **Terry Stanway**  
TREASURER: **John Silver**  
LOCAL REPS to BCTF: **Shelby Calman, Preet Lidder, Alyssa Reid**  
MEMBERS-AT-LARGE: **Paul Falardeau, Nikitha Fester, Phil Lee, Sara McGarry, Sylvia Metzner, Nancy Palejko, Nigel Reedman, Jesse Taylor**

### STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

HEALTH & SAFETY: **Michael-Don Borason**  
PRO-D: **Kathryn Walks**  
SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: **Madeline Brewster**  
TECHNOLOGY: **Peter Halim**  
TTOC: **Lindsay Donaldson**  
WLC & BARGAINING: **Scott McKeen**

Many thanks to outgoing members Leanne Hagglund, Shannon Moore, Trish Mugford and Karine Ng and the rest of the 2018-19 Executive Committee for their dedication and countless hours of service over the past year.

## BC LABOUR HISTORY WALKING TOURS' APP

available on the Apple Store and Google Play

Locals as well as travellers will be able to visit sites of significance to workers' heritage that commemorate the importance of labour unions, individuals, collective actions, along with archival photos and short educational videos to enhance the experience. New locations and routes will be added regularly to expand and include routes around the province of BC.

[www.labourheritagecentre.ca/projects/walkingtour](http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/projects/walkingtour)



## Building Understanding for Diversity and Inclusion in our Community

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the VSTA co-hosted a full Pro D Day with VESTA's Social Justice and International Solidarity Committee as well as VSB's Diversity team and Indigenous Education. The event was called *Building Understanding for Diversity and Inclusion in our Community*. It was an opportunity to provide teachers, K-12, with tools to discuss issues surrounding social and environmental justice, diversity and inclusion in their classroom, schools and community.



Shannon Moore, Michael Rosen, Renee Hock

## School Union Team Elections

As per established practice, elections for members of the VSTA School Union Team take place in the spring, or in the case of a school that expects significant staff changes, in the following September. Elections should take place at a Staff Organization Meeting. Uncontested positions should be acclaimed while contested positions must be determined by secret ballot. The School Union Team consists of:

- Staff Rep (1 Staff Rep for every 25 teachers or fraction thereof on staff)
- Professional Development Chairperson (1)
- Working/Learning Conditions & Bargaining Committee Reps (up to 2)
- Health and Safety Committee Rep (1)
- Social & Environmental Justice Committee Rep (1)
- Technology Committee Rep (1)
- Parent Advisory Committee Liaison Rep (1)
- Election/Political Action (1)

Members of the VSTA Executive are also considered to be members of the School Union Team. Committee Reps will also represent the school on the appropriate VSTA Standing Committee.



## Congratulations to the Retiring Class of 2018-19!

Bonnie Burnell, Esther Carelse-Borzel, Lori Clarke, Odette Creanga-Kurth, Sandra Drummond, Sohan Dulai, Robert Ehler, Geoffrey Gabbott, Wendy Gilmour, Julia Giurato, Robert Greenshields, Ray Irvin, Irene Lanzinger, Rocky Locke, Stuart Mackinnon, Eliner Maxwell-Smith, Shelley McPherson, Peter Mueller, Mylene Olivier, Alex Ora, Paul Richardson, Maria Schwab, Beth Taggart, Sharon Tanabe, Glenn Usselman, Samuel Wang, and formerly long-time VSTA members Pamela Hansen and Stephen Scrimshaw.



VSTA Retirees' Dinner, Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, June 18, 2019

Photo gallery: <http://vsta.ca/2019/06/retirees-dinner-2019/>