



Tackboard

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VSTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Tuesday, May 16, 2017
4pm at Tupper Auditorium**

Mark your calendars for May 16th because you won't want to miss this year's Annual General Meeting. Besides the opportunity to enjoy some good food, maybe win some door prizes and definitely socialize with your colleagues across the district, we have some very important items on our Agenda this year.

There are motions coming to the floor regarding Constitution & By-Law changes:

As always, we will be electing our In-House Table Officers and Executive but with the possible added position of a part time 3rd Vice-President. This year VSTA President Rory Brown successfully ran for Member-at-Large on the BCTF Executive resulting in a part time vacancy here at our local office if Rory is re-elected as an IHTO. Candidates can always be nominated from the floor so there is always the possibility of an election but this year more than one person is running for the same position – see the candidate list at www.vsta.ca.

Our Association will also be deciding on the future of our local Salary Indemnity Fund in light of our far superior BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan, which is available for members who are on extended medical leave and run out of sick days. Come and find out why the SIF may be dissolved and how that will affect current members.

There will be a report on the use of our release days approved in last year's budget, a Financial Report, and of course the opportunity to approve the proposed budget for next year. Check out the details available on our website at <http://vsta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/PACKAGES-SCHOOLS.pdf>. We look forward to seeing you all there!

President's Message

With only a few days ahead of us before the provincial election, teachers need only look around their classrooms to see the evidence of just how important a positive and progressive outcome is on Tuesday, May 9. From the unpainted windows to the unrepaired desks, from the outsized class register to the torn, missing and incomplete textbook sets, it's time for the structures that support our professional efforts to have a massive shift to the left. As I wrote about previously in this space, the VSTA has broken with our non-partisan tradition and endorsed all Vancouver NDP candidates running in the provincial contest. When Katharine, Trish and I visited schools in early April, the sentiment was universal and unequivocal: In this election, public education and teachers, specifically, need a change in government. To this end, we encourage all members to pledge to do everything they can in the last few days of the campaign. Several ridings in the Lower Mainland were won or lost by only a few hundred votes and the suffrage of teachers will make a difference to the bottom line when all votes are counted. In the context of our professional well-being and the financial health and welfare of our families, the question that begs asking of all teachers in British Columbia is who they want sitting across from them in the next round of bargaining.

On another topic of a democratic nature, the VSTA AGM will be held at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 16 at Tupper Secondary auditorium. We

encourage all teachers to attend this important yearly event where our budget is contemplated and adopted and the VSTA Executive Committee is elected. We have received nominations already that indicate an election will be necessary for some positions. It is exciting to see that teachers are this engaged in their professional union!

Finally, as of Wednesday, May 3, schools in Vancouver have received their preliminary allocation of staffing for the 2017-18 school year. It is vital that teachers do all we can to familiarize ourselves with the process and requirements of our new (old) restored contract language. We encourage teachers to use the structures of collaboration and oversight that exist in the contract – Staffing and Timetable and Staff Committee -- to assist open and democratic participation in the staffing process. As well, please also do not hesitate to contact us at the VSTA office if you need support or clarification on any aspect of the Staffing and Timetable process. The VSTA is meeting regularly with representatives of the VSB with the shared goal of fully implementing the newly restored terms and ultimately improving the teaching and learning situation for everyone in Vancouver schools.

As always, take care and remember that July and August are just around the corner.

Best,

Rory

ALL CANDIDATES MEETINGS

As the LEC rep for Prince of Wales, I was having some challenges organizing an all candidates debate with candidates from our riding. My colleague, Jacqueline Moon, suggested that we invite former PW graduates: Spencer Chandra-Herbert (NDP incumbent for Vancouver's West End) and Gabe Garfinkel (Liberal challenger for Fairview).

Both candidates, despite their exceedingly busy schedules, were able to attend on Friday April 28th. Three PW Mini School students acted as host and moderator(s) for this 50 minute debate. The aforementioned students worked very hard to devise questions pertaining to the "big issues" relevant in this upcoming election. We focused on: Healthcare, the Environment, EDUCATION and Housing. The tone between the two candidates was civil and respectful. However, it was clear that Spencer Chandra-Herbert was able to cite specific facts to support his assertions. Whereas Gabe Garfinkel, as a challenger and newcomer, stuck to Liberal talking points. Spencer Chandra-Herbert is clearly more experienced and knowledgeable about the need for increased funding for Education in BC. He countered the Liberal rhetoric, handily. The over 400 students and 25 staff in attendance were totally engaged and learned a great deal about the big issues at stake in this upcoming election.

Jennifer Wagner teaches at PW



BYNG held an all-candidates debate (all 7 candidates from 2 ridings) at the Dunbar Theatre and student vote is a go!

BCTF Metro West Zone Recap 2017

Friday, Apr 28 and Saturday, Apr 29 Vancouver teachers participated in a BCTF Metro West Zone Meeting which included Richmond, New Westminster, Burnaby, Coquitlam, North and West Vancouver, Sea to Sky and Central Coast. Teachers from adjacent districts met and shared issues. Prominent themes this year were; our restored language and MOA, systemic TOC shortages, discipline and the TRB, bargaining and outreach and the upcoming provincial election. This year's attendees were Rory Brown (President), Katharine Shipley (1st Vice-President), Trish Mugford (2nd Vice-President and Ab Ed contact), Treena Goolieff (Bargaining Chair), Leanne Hagglund (Pro-D Chair), Natalia Mayor (Social Justice Contact), Brett Gabelman (Health & Safety Rep), and Madeline Brewster (Local Election Contact).

Important election issues covered by the LECs included Education funding, Bill 11 and government control of teachers' pro-d, the 2019 negotiating table, Teaching Standards revisions, Special Education, and assessment, evaluation and reporting.

The Project of Heart and Justice 4 Women were discussed in the Ab Ed discrete group as well as re-thinking Canada 150 through an Aboriginal lens rather than the more benign settler narrative, particularly in light of National Aboriginal Day on June 21.

TTOC EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SEMINAR: Navigating the EI Claim Process

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

4:00-6:00 PM at the VSTA Office
2915 Commercial Drive

As the end of the school year approaches, TTOCs will start to ask many questions about their eligibility for Employment Insurance to help make ends meet during the coming months. This seminar takes participants through the application process step-by-step, so that the process is demystified, and alerts TTOCs about their ability to keep a claim open all year. This BCTF workshop will help TTOCs understand the steps to follow in applying for and obtaining EI benefits. Facilitated by Nichelle Penney.

RSVP by June 14 to kim@vsta.ca

Registration limited to 15 participants on a first come, first served basis.

Application Process: Change of Salary Category for Teachers

Teachers are reminded that Human Resources has distributed copies of the document, *Information Regarding Teacher Salary*, including Application for Change of Category for Teachers" to all school sites. Please be advised, while completing your Masters degree, if you have completed at least 30 credits of 3/400 level course work, then you may be eligible for 5+. Teachers are advised to consult the document to gain an awareness of the procedure in place and the application form required to get retroactive pay when they apply for a new TQS card for salary change.

The deadlines are: September 30, January 31 or May 31.

All applicants must apply through TQS, the Teacher Qualification Service. Go to the TQS website at www.tqs.bc.ca for further information or call TQS at 604-736-5484.

Spring is Sprung SURT



This year's SURT included a day with two half sessions in which Reps from all 18 high schools and VASS came together to learn about and review the upcoming Spring Transfer Process AND how to work together with our administration on implementing our restored language in our schools. We acknowledge the complexities of trying to reinstate language that has been languishing for over 15 years and the shock of trying to get everything up and running for next year. Teachers had great questions that did not have quick and easy answers – but helped focus the work of your IHTOs in seeking clarification at the local (Board) and

provincial (BCTF) level. This work continues and the engagement of teachers in schools is what will ultimately iron out the bumps on this neglected road.

Some of the questions we are currently grappling with are:

What does the Memorandum of Agreement “best efforts” look like? What if compliance just seems impossible and we are already planning for remedy? How do we deal with CS/CC issues with Alt Ed programs? How do the “opt out” classes (Band, Choir, Drama, PE) work?



HOW IS YOUR MENTAL FITNESS?

National Mental Health Awareness Week is

MAY 1st-8th



Teachers know only too well the sturm und drang of Spring as the year seems to accelerate in what can feel like a sprint to the June finish line. One of the many great resources offered through the BCTF is the Starling Minds online Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Program, which provides education and a mental health toolkit to manage stress and prevent depression and anxiety.

The Starling program is free for all BCTF members and is based on the protocol Dr. Andrew Miki developed specifically for teachers. As a part of Starling, Dr. Miki will guide you through the program, and teach you the basics of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).

Since education is key to reducing all forms of stigma, Starling's vision is to start a grassroots movement with BC teachers. If we as educators can better understand and manage our own stress, we can transform the way we all look at mental health.

Starting May 8 Starling is launching a free 7 day Mental Fitness Challenge for BCTF Starling members. In order to take part in the challenge, you need to register for the Starling program <https://bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx?id=38267> and then sign up for the Challenge (<https://www.starlingminds.com/mental-fitness-challenge/bctf>).

VSTA RETIREES' DINNER



Members retiring this June or who retired earlier this year are invited, along with one guest, to the annual **VSTA Retirees' Dinner on June 20th** at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club.

Also invited are VSTA staff reps, standing committee reps and members of the Executive. Invitations will be sent to schools by June 2nd.

Retiring This Year?

CHECK LIST

Contact the Teachers' Pension Plan at 1-800-665-6770 for a Retirement Application Package. Send the completed application form to the TPP no later than the end of the month in which the pension is to start (preferably at least two months earlier) to ensure prompt pension payment.

Contact VBE payroll to find out when your current health benefits end to ensure you have continuous coverage until the benefits associated with the Teachers' Pension Plan begin.

Consider converting your current group life insurance to an individual life insurance policy.

Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association. Contact the BCRTA re: starting/continuing Medoc travel health insurance. Tel: 604-871-2260 or go to www.bcrt.ca.

Apply to the BCTF for Associate Membership.

Contact the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education to see your options regarding maintaining your BC Teacher's certificate if you intend to teach after retirement. www.bcteacherregulation.ca

At age 60, if you are not working, consider applying for your Canada Pension Plan pension. For an application kit, visit the CPP website at www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/cpp/index.page.

At age 65, apply for Old Age Security (OAS). For an application kit, visit the OAS web site at www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/oas/index.page.

Contact the BCTF Income Security staff if you have questions related to any of the above. Tel: 604-871-1921.

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 and contested positions must be determined by secret ballot. Even if only one person is nominated or has volunteered for a position, it is important that s/he be openly acclaimed by the meeting.

The School Union Team consists of:

- **Staff Rep** (1 Staff Rep for every 25 teachers or fraction thereof on staff)
- **Professional Development Chairperson***
- **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) who attends PAC meetings and reports back to Staff Committee (or as per your School Constitution)
- **Staff Committee Chairperson** (unless a school's Staff Committee Constitution specifies that Staff Committee elects its own Chair. In either case, the Staff Committee Chairperson is a member of the School Union Team).

*Note: This position will also represent the school at the corresponding VSTA Standing Committee)

Members of the VSTA Executive (from the school) are also considered to be members of the School Union Team.

