



TACKBOARD

The monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

Health and Wellness in the Age of Anxiety; Bargaining; Remedy; Seismic

An internet search of the “age of anxiety” will bring up many hits – from W.H. Auden’s eponymous poem to Turkish writer and Ted Talker Elif Shafak to newspaper and magazine articles. We mention this as the VSTA Office hears much about anxiety – teachers are experiencing it, their students and students’ parents are experiencing it and it would appear that much of modern society is experiencing it. While some anxiety is necessary to get us going, too much of it is crippling and even debilitating. We encourage members who are experiencing anxiety, or whose family members are, to seek support through Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which is provided by the Employer. It is completely confidential. While they offer service on the phone, you can request an in person meeting. The VSTA office would welcome any feedback on the EFAP program so that we can share it with the Employer. See tinyurl.com/vsb-wellness-resource for VSB Wellness Resources. The BCTF also has mental health resources. Starling Minds is an online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) tool with a modular approach to helping to regulate your thought processes and manage anxiety. See members.starlingminds.com to create an account with Starling Minds – the organization to name is the BCTF. It is also a completely confidential service. For further Health & Wellness



Terry, Treena, Katharine & Shelby

resources recommended by the BCTF see tinyurl.com/bctf-sal-ben.

Teri Mooring, the BCTF 1st VP attended our January 22nd General Meeting. She is one of the three main negotiators on the Provincial Bargaining Team and she gave an overview of where Provincial Bargaining is at the moment. While the discussion was in committee, it was informative and the BCTF and the BCPSEA are in discussions. Members will be able to get bargaining updates through the BCTF Portal. All VSTA members can access the BCTF Portal by clicking on “Portal” on the BCTF home page - <https://bctf.ca/>.

The Vancouver Teachers’ Federation (VTF – VSTA and VESTA combined) continue discussions with the Employer regarding last year’s (2017-2018) Remedy. As per a recommendation from the VSTA Working and Learning Conditions/ Bargaining Committee, VSTA members will be receiving a survey about Remedy via email. We would like teachers to weigh in on this issue so please complete the survey. It is especially important for those teachers whose class(es) generate Remedy both this year and last, to provide feedback.

see **PRESIDENT**, next page

VSTA GENERAL MEETING REPORT

Thank you to all the VSTA members who came out to our January 22nd General Meeting where we elected the VSTA Delegates to the BCTF AGM (Michael-Don Borason, Shelby Calman, Lindsay Donaldson, Nikitha Fester, Treena Goolieff, Oliver Kollar, Shannon Less, Preet Lidder, Scott McKeen, Sylvia Metzner, Karine Ng, Sarah Ng, Nigel Reedman, Alyssa Reid, Jay Rudolph, John Silver, Terry Stanway, Nancy Tait; Alternates Trish Mugford, Paul Falardeau).

The Delegates will be bringing forward the following motions to the BCTF AGM:

THAT the Simplified Rules of Order, Part 5, Section 3 (page 171) [of the BCTF Members’ Guide] be amended as follows “One of the main responsibilities of the chairperson is to use their authority to ensure that all people attending a meeting are treated equitably.”

THAT the BCTF lobby the provincial government to amend Article 54 of the Teachers Act to limit the publication of Consent Resolution Agreements to cases in which discipline has resulted in dismissal.

THAT the BCTF lobby the provincial government to see that public schools are equipped with AEDs.

A motion was also passed to amend the VSTA Constitution and By-laws to add a standing TTOC Committee. Karine Ng, our VSTA TTOC Chair will be preparing Terms of Reference for this Committee.

Congratulations to Shannon Moore who was also elected as the new VSTA Social and Environmental Justice (SEJ) Committee Chair.

FEBRUARY is **BLACK HISTORY MONTH** —Resources—

1. The VSB Diversity Teacher, René Hock, has created a diversity toolkit that has tools that teachers can use in their classroom to create lessons for Black History Month: tinyurl.com/vsb-toolkit (To access the link, you will need to log in with your VSB email account information)
2. BCTF Black History Month resources: tinyurl.com/BCTF-blackhistory
3. A guide for online resources for teaching about Black history in Canada: tinyurl.com/unwritten-histories
4. A website with links to Black history in Canada: tinyurl.com/black-history-canada

LOCAL RESOURCES

1. Black Strathcona: Profiles the little-known black community that lived in the Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver from the late 1800s to approximately the 1960s. Click on the numbers on the map to screen the short films: blackstrathcona.com

2. Black Lives Matter Vancouver: The Black Lives Matter Vancouver chapter is a cause that supports the organizing work of black folks and allies in undoing systemic racialized violence. Black Lives Matter is a cause cognizant of the ongoing struggles of all marginalized folks and strives to honour that in the work that they do. Visit blacklivesmatternvancouver.com/ for more information.
3. BC Black History Awareness Society: "The British Columbia Black History Awareness Society (BCBHAS) celebrates the achievements of Black people in British Columbia by creating an awareness of the history of Blacks in B.C., stimulating interest in the contributions of persons of African ancestry to B.C. and Canada today, and celebrating historical and current achievements in the arts, education, government, sports, science etc." bcblackhistory.ca/learning-centre/black-history-month/

BOOK AND VIDEOS

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates on words that don't belong to everyone | We Were Eight Years In Power Book Tour tinyurl.com/8yrs-in-power
2. So you want to talk about race by Ijeoma Oluo
3. Self-Awareness, Education & Professional Development: Me and White Supremacy—Workbook, by Layla F. Saad. Every white person should read/actively engage in this free and incredibly eye opening resource. Take the 28 day challenge. You will never be the same. Note: A free downloadable copy of this resource can be accessed at: meandwhitesupremacybook.com/

PRESIDENT, from front cover

The Eric Hamber seismic upgrade has caused a great deal of concern amongst community members. In the VSTA's opinion, the Area Standards developed by the government in 2001 are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of students in a comprehensive high school. We are in the process of gathering background information and formulating a response to the Long Range Facility Plan process in general and the proposal for Hamber in particular.

With bargaining upon us it is important to stay connected so we encourage you to reach out to your staff reps, to attend a VSTA committee meeting, and sign into the BCTF portal for updates. Also be reminded of what 'sparks joy for you', to quote the ubiquitous Marie Kondo! We welcome a call to the office to hear about that or any of your questions or concerns.

Know Your CA: Leaves

Article G in our Collective Agreement covers all of the types of leaves. To apply for a leave (even most half day leaves), email leaves@vsb.bc.ca. Ensure that you know the type of leave you are requesting, as there are different deadline dates depending on the leave. The Board **is not flexible** on deadline dates.

The various types of leaves found in Article G are as follows:

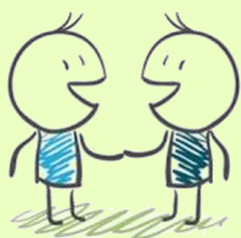
- Compassionate Care Leave (G.2)
- Family Responsibility Leave (G.3)
- Bereavement Leave (G.4)
- TTOCs Conducting Union Business Leave (G.7)
- Sick Leave (G.20)
- Accident, Adoption, Attendance at Hearings, Circumstance Beyond Employee's Control, Citizenship Court Appearance, Deferred Salary Leave

Plan, Disabilities Covered by Workers Comp/Not Covered by Workers Comp, Educational, Educational Ceremonies, To Engage in Activities Closely Associated with Teaching or Speech/Language Pathology, Exams, Funeral, Illness, Illness of an Immediate Family Member, International Amateur Competition, Jury Duty and Court Appearance, Maternity, Minister of Education/Universities/Other School Districts or Teacher Regulation Branch Business, Negotiations, Other Reasons, Parental/Parenthood, Personal leave-Without Pay, Public Office, Religious Holidays, Secondment, Teachers' Union Duties, Travel by Exchange Employees, VTF/VSTA/BCTF/CTF or Education International Business, (G.21).

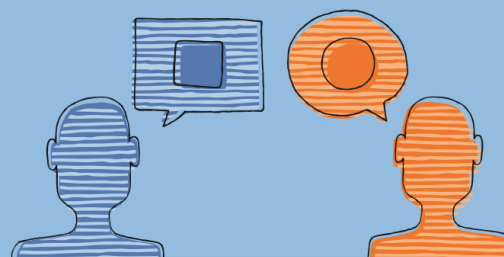
Personal Belongings and Respectful Use of Space

Sharing a space with someone can at times be difficult, especially if you are used to your own classroom. With building upgrades, restrictions on timetabling, and various other factors, more and more teachers are sharing classrooms. TTOCs are also coming in and using classrooms, from single day callouts to long term temporary contracts. The following tips will help you navigate sharing a space with others:

- *Respect the belongings of another teacher if you are temporarily in a position. Even though no teacher "owns" a classroom, when someone has posters up in a classroom, or binders with resources, out of courtesy to the teacher that you are covering it is best practice to leave the room how you found it.*
- *Bring in your own personal belongings at your own risk. The Board is not necessarily liable for things that go missing. Ensure that you remove items from your classroom if you are going on leave.*
- *Be mindful of professional conduct when sharing a classroom with a colleague. Once again, no one teacher is the proprietor of a classroom. To ensure you maintain a collegial relationship with your classroom mate, it is prudent to be respectful of one another's resources. Ensure that you communicate about the use of the room in a professional manner, such as classroom setup and equitable space on walls for class work.*



10 TIPS to Handle a DIFFICULT CONVERSATION



The VSTA wants to encourage members to consider these ten things before starting a difficult conversation.

1. Be aware of your mindset

Changing your mindset from a fixed to a growth mindset can help you overcome barriers to start a hard conversation. An example of a shift from a fixed to growth mindset thought would be: "I'm not going near this stuff. I just want it to go away." → "I know this is important so I'm going to make a point of dealing with it."

2. Make a request to talk

Choose the best time and place for your conversation to happen and check with the other person to set up a time to talk. Decide if you want to give the reason for the conversation in advance or not.

3. Maintain privacy

It is better to approach a colleague directly first, unless it is a follow up to a difficult conversation. If it is with a non-BCTF colleague or community member, a Staff Rep can be there for you to discuss matters in confidence.

4. State your intent

Think about why you want to discuss the issue and let the other party know your intent. For example, "Could I speak with you about something you said yesterday? I think that speaking directly to you is important to keep a professional relationship and so I wanted to have this conversation as soon as we can."

5. Keep the conversation safe

If you want to effectively communicate your concern to the other party involved, they will need to trust you, and so your messaging will be more likely received well if you can discuss the issue respectfully and without accusing or blaming the other person.

6. Make unbiased observations

Try to explain what occurred without

using biased language. Be specific with your examples and stick to the facts.

7. Be aware of the underlying forces – express your feelings/effect/impact and try to understand theirs

Begin with doing a mental check of your own emotions and where they are coming from. You can mention your own emotions without blaming the other party. It is normal to experience high emotions – the challenge is to regulate them.

8. Divulge all of your thoughts

Don't beat around the bush, be direct and forthright about what you are thinking.

9. Be curious about other viewpoints

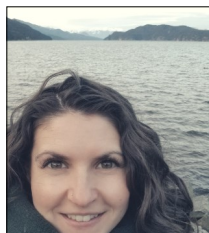
A big component of what can help you deal with difficult issues is by approaching the situation with a sense of curiosity for others' viewpoints. Listen to where they are coming from in an open way, without judgment to try to understand where they are coming from. Use repetition, or paraphrasing to check your understanding: "You are frustrated also..."

10. Suggest a how to move ahead based on common interests and account for differences

Be transparent about the fact that you want to work together in resolving the issue. Try to find common interests to come to a preferred resolution to the issue together. (Source material from a workshop)

Your school site can also book BCTF workshops to go into even more detail around effective communication bctf.ca/PD/workshops.aspx: Assertive Communication; Having Conversations. The VSTA Office can also assist with framing difficult conversations with colleagues.

Women in Leadership



Shelby Calman
VSTA VP and
French teacher
at Lord Byng

I still hear time and time again that we don't need feminism in North America. I ask why is it then that the third annual Women's March occurred all over BC and North America on January 19,

2019? This march stemmed from the rising discrimination that women are facing, especially women who are visible minorities, and as a direct reaction to the presidential election of Donald Trump. Hate crimes reached an all-time high in Canada in 2017, up 47% from the previous year (tinyurl.com/hate-crime-stats-2017). These include hate crimes targeted at all types of marginalized groups, such as visible minorities, the LGBTQ2S community, minority religions and women. This is not a coincidence in timing and what has occurred south of the border has seeped into our country. There is still a contingent of our society that think that feminists are marching solely for the rights of women, but this

is nothing farther from the truth. We are there trying to fight for the rights of any marginalized group.

This month I attended a Canadian Labour of Congress Winter School course on Women in Leadership. This course included female union members from all types of industries, including the trades, the Canadian Postal Workers, BC government workers, members of the health care industry and education. The same group of people who believe we don't need feminism also may assume that female union members in leadership roles would be there just to discuss how to promote women in leadership roles. That was only a component of our learning experience.

We had a presentation from a lawyer from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) regarding trans rights in the workplace and unions and what we can do in our own locals to support seeking equity for trans people. We discussed international solidarity and how women working in certain developing nations who are trying to create unions have no independence and may have to give all

of their wages to a male in their household to control. We also discussed how to promote getting women to enter workforces that are predominately male such as some trades. We spoke about how workers in certain industries that are mainly women of colour face rampant discrimination and inequities in the workplace, even with a union to back them up. For example, community health workers who go into seniors' homes do not get paid for the full hours they work.

We have made a lot of gains in Canada for the rights of all people, but we still have a long way to go in our own nation, as well as the rest of the world. We as educators know that the best way to combat injustices in society is through education and we can help with that by promoting that feminism is not dead, and the term stands for equity for all members of society. Learn more about the history of women and minorities in the labour movement at the BCSSTA "Teaching Labour History: Making Connections" Conference on February 15 at Van Tech: tinyurl.com/making-connections-tickets

Moose Hide Campaign



"The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. Wearing this moose hide signifies your commitment to honour, respect, and protect the women and children in your life and to

work together to end violence against women and children" (moosehidecampaign.ca/)

On February 13, 2019, the annual Provincial Gathering and Day of Fasting is occurring. You can participate by wearing a moose hide pin and talking about what it means. The VSTA has ordered a set of the pins. Contact Shelby Calman at shelby@vsta.ca to get one sent to you.

If you do wear a pin, please consider sharing with the campaign so they can see the support. The organization suggests taking a photo and letting everyone know what you're up to with the pins by tagging them.

Facebook - @moosehidecampaign.ca

Twitter - @moosehide_BC

Instagram - @moose_hide_campaign

28th Annual

Women's Memorial March

For missing and murdered women

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2019

10:30 AM — Family and community members gather

NOON — March from Carnegie (Main and Hastings)

