



Advocate

In consensus atque unitate stat potentia

"There is strength in unity"

A Monthly Newsletter

November 2019

In This Issue ...

Labour Relations	p.2-3
News from the Executive	p.4-5
Multicultural Week	p.6
For your Information	p.7-8
Upcoming Events	p.9
A Little Bit of Fun	
Contest	p.10

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Typically, in the November newsletter there is an update on Professional Development allotments for the year, but this year appears to be unfolding differently than most. For the first time in well over a decade the District has requested an 'accounting of disbursements from the fund' as outlined in *Article F.20.2*. To be clear, this is outlined in the Collective Agreement, but the District has not requested this information for over 10 years. The request came as a bit of a shock to the ATU. We have attempted to find out the reasons for the sudden change of practice and have sought clarity from the District on the matter. No reasons have been provided at this time and the ATU is currently working on collecting the information from the 2017-2018 school year (the year that has been requested).

The Professional Development allotment cheque for the current school year was due to the ATU on October 20th and this year we were informed the cheque was ready for pickup. The ATU, however, had to respond to the District's request for the disbursement information before the cheque would be turned over. We have assured the District that we are working on this and have contacted our accountants for official written documentation, but this takes some time as we are not the only client of our accountants. Despite written confirmation on October 22nd, two verbal conversations and further written interactions on October 25th and October 29th that the ATU is following the Collective Agreement and the information is coming, we have still not received the cheque.

So, what does this mean for everyone at this point? There is no Professional Development allotment at this time for the 2019-2020 school year as we haven't received the cheque yet and the ATU has NO idea when the cheque will be given to us. We still have no idea why the District is suddenly requesting this information after not asking for it for over 10 years. Once we receive the cheque, we will process it right away. For now, if you have receipts that you were holding onto until after October 20th for the 2019-2020 allotment, please continue to hold on to them. If you have enough money left over from last year to cover receipts that you currently have, please follow the regular process and submit a reimbursement claim form. We will update the membership as things change.

In Solidarity,

Jennifer Brooks, ATU President

Contact Us:

Jennifer Brooks, President
president@abbotsfordteachers.ca
 Liane Loeppky, Vice President
vicepresident@abbotsfordteachers.ca
 Doug Smuland, Labour Relations Officer
labourrelations@abbotsfordteachers.ca
 Susan Steinhilbert, Office Staff
susan@abbotsfordteachers.ca
 Nicole Smith, Office Staff
nicole@abbotsfordteachers.ca
 Michelle Lineker, Office Staff
michelle@abbotsfordteachers.ca

Our office hours are Monday to Friday,
 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Any inquiries can be directed to the
 emails listed or reach us at
 604-854-1946

Labour Relations Rant of the Month

In the Midst of Bargaining

Finding ourselves in the midst of bargaining once again it is easy to feel that we've all been through this bitter battle over financing education in our province too many times. Teachers in Abbotsford and across the province, who lost economically when we went on strike for better working conditions and wage growth, hoped we would at least keep up with inflation in this round.

However, the BC government's *Sustainable Services Mandate*, which limits wage increases to two percent per year for BC public sector workers, will not meet projected cost of living increases over the course of the proposed three-year deal. Sadly, in response to this mandate there hasn't seemed to be any call across the province from school trustees, superintendents, or principals/vice-principals to broaden the economic mandate in our sector and increase compensation for teachers. This might be an action you'd expect to see from those who profess to support public education, but when their own financial increases have been set at a much greater rate than 2% a year (compensation for senior management ranges between \$186,000 and \$282,000/year following a recent 6.26% per year wage increase and an 8.72% increase in the year previous), it would appear they have little concern about what happens to the teachers.

Our members are not alone though in being on the receiving end of attacks against teachers across our country and across the continent. Recently, four Ontario unions representing teachers in that province strongly condemned the passage of *Bill 124* by the Doug Ford government. The general consensus of teachers' organizations in their province is that the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* tramples on collective bargaining rights and targets public sector workers with unfair austerity measures for the next three years. Sound familiar? The legislation in Ontario, as in BC, ensures that compensation for educators and other public sector workers will continue to fall behind the rate of inflation.

The fight by teachers for increased salary is also occurring in Alberta where the cost of living continues to increase as well, and where Alberta teachers have not seen new wage increases in six of the last seven years. While we in BC often compare ourselves with our neighbours across Canada, it is interesting to note that Alberta teachers' last wage hike was a two per cent salary bump in September 2015. Sadly, in respect to compensation, we here in BC are still economically behind even their modest rise.

And it is not just in Canada where the fight to gain supports for students and reasonable wage increases is taking place. Across North America, including Arizona, West Virginia, Oklahoma, California, and most recently in Chicago, teachers have been on strike for economic gain and to ensure that they have the supports and resources needed in order for their students to thrive. Chicago, the nation's third-largest school district, reached a labour contract deal last Thursday, ending a strike that canceled 11 days of classes for more than 300,000 students. The deal includes

Labour Relations Rant of the Month continued...

a 16 percent pay raise for teachers over a five-year period. By the way, if you are interested in teaching in Chicago under the current Chicago union contract, beginning teachers make a base salary of just over \$54,000 a year, while the most senior teachers will make approximately \$91,000 a year (and yes, that is in US dollars).

Locally, we are also not hearing any support at the table for the concerns of Abbotsford's teachers. The ATU believes that we have brought forward items that would improve working and learning conditions and greatly reduce the number of grievances filed in the district, but it has been to no avail as they have all been dismissed by the employer. This is not to say that there are not good people sitting on both sides of the table who care passionately about public education. The failure to acquiesce to the ATU's suggestions may instead be due to the district's bargaining team being tightly controlled by their BCPSEA overlords, or it may simply be that any suggestion of a loss of managerial rights in the collective agreement engenders a dead stop position for those in control. Whatever the reason, progress has thus far been stunted.

As you are aware, the ATU has tabled nineteen proposals that are non-cost items for the district to consider. Among other things, we have asked for increased: access to district information so we might better represent members; limits to staff meetings that have devolved into forced in-service; health and safety changes to ensure that teachers are safe when at their workplace; posting and filling language that creates open, transparent, and respectful opportunities to encourage the long-term retention of members; changes for part-time teachers; and job-shares which are positions exclusively held by women members. Given the position of the district's bargaining team, it is no wonder then that their ATU counterparts have expressed some resignation that their employer is working in opposition to the interests of teachers and ultimately to students.

What then should be the response of teachers in Abbotsford to the entrenchment of the district and BCPSEA? It should be no surprise to anyone that knows a teacher, that talk of demonstrative job action as a response is a malodorous concept and mephitic in its touch. As much as that is true, it doesn't mean that at some point we will not need to lean harder into our opposition. What that may look like will be something each ATU member will need to grapple with in the coming weeks and months.

While it may not be any solace to know that as a teacher you are not alone in North America in being treated with economic disdain, you can at least feel good to be bargaining for the common good; something the opposition seems to be trying to squash.

Cheers,

Doug Smuland, Labour Relations Officer

News From the Executive

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Before I came into the office as Vice-President, November always seemed like a busy month in my school. As I have traveled around the district visiting many Elementary schools, I have discovered that November is indeed a whirlwind for all of us in the K-5 level. I look forward to visiting with more Middle and Secondary Schools in the upcoming months and learning about the various issues and concerns in these levels.

In the K-8 world, the FSA's are almost behind us and now report cards and parent-teacher interviews are just around the corner. The first weeks of November saw teachers busy with the final push for first term assessments before the countless hours of report card writing. As I do my school visits in the K-8 sites, teachers are talking about the length of the current report card model being used in Abbotsford and asking why do report cards have to be 8 pages long? I think this is a valid question that we should be asking and engaging the district in conversations about possible changes. If a single student report card takes an hour to work on, then the average K-8 teacher is putting in at least 30 hours of time just on report cards. I find that much of this time is occurring on the weekends and this is on top of everything else that the teacher has to do at this time of year. I can only encourage teachers to try and take care of themselves and make sure you are taking some time for fresh air, healthy food and rest.

Liane Loeppky, *ATU Vice President*



TTOC REPRESENTATIVE

I hope your days TTOCing in the classroom are enjoyable and rewarding. As we move into November, here are a couple of suggestions for you:

- Consider keeping the **3 Rs** with you when you go to an assignment **R**ainproof boots, a **R**ainproof jacket and **R**unners, just in case.
- If you feel you have experienced a threat or act of violence this needs to be reported. **WorkSafeBC** defines **violence** as "the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury."

Pat Smith, *TTOC Representative*

pat.smith@abbyschools.ca



News From the Executive

SOCIAL JUSTICE

At our first committee meeting we narrowed our Social Justice focus to two areas:

1) Gender Issues

Do you think Abbotsford members are knowledgeable and comfortable with gender issues? Do you feel this is an area where our thinking needs to grow?

The Abbotsford school district has policy around Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression that protects members and students. The district procedure [AP 339](#) is a policy meant to ensure that all staff and students have a safe and caring work and learning environment. The Social Justice Committee plans to review this policy to identify its strengths and weaknesses. We are looking for feedback from members on the policy.

2) Ending Violence

The BCTF is trying to negotiate Intimate Partner Violence leave in our current round of bargaining. This leave would protect members' jobs as they deal with the aftermath of violence done against them and begin the process of reorganizing their life. The [16 Days of Action Campaign](#) to end violence against women has resources and information around this topic and runs from November 25-December 10.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts on any or all social justice topics. Our next committee meeting is on November 16 at 3:45 at the ATU hall.

Joanne Samuel, **Social Justice Chair**

joanne.samual@abbyschools.ca



HEALTH & SAFETY

Parent teacher conferences occur on November 22nd this year and many teachers will find themselves at the school past normal work hours meeting with parents. The ATU would like to remind all schools to work together and come up with a plan for all staff to be safe. Teachers should not be alone in portables or the only person in a wing of the school. A plan should be worked out well in advance of the day to consider other options, including the possibility of relocating teachers to other parts of the school to ensure that everyone is safe. Exterior school doors should be locked and parents should be directed to the front doors of the school where someone is monitoring who is coming and going. The ATU encourages this topic be added to the next staff meeting agenda and that staff work together to come up with a comprehensive safety plan that considers all staff.

Liane Loeppky, **ATU Vice President & District Health & Safety Committee Member**



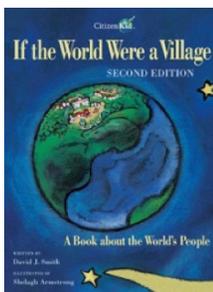
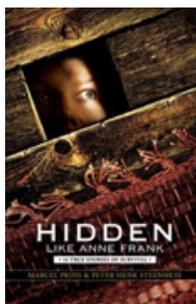
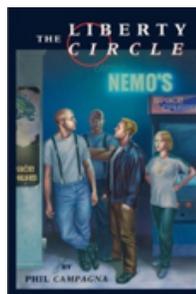
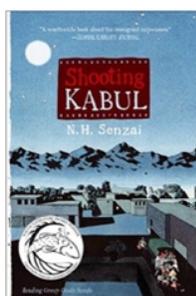
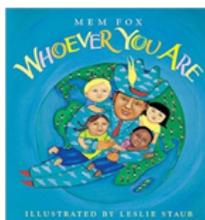
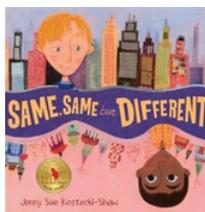
Multi-Cultural Week

We live in a diverse, multicultural community and province. Because of this, the province of BC declared that the third week of November be designated as a time to celebrate. This week came out of the Multicultural Act which was passed in 1993. It was created with the idea of building a society free of racism and intolerance, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, and where all people living in BC have equal opportunities.

Multicultural week happens from November 17th - 23rd, 2019, and is a time when we as teachers can highlight the amazingly diverse and unique school communities we work in. Resources and ideas to help teachers celebrate multiculturalism in our schools can be found on the Social Justice page of the BCTF Website under the [Anti-racism Action Group](#). There are also lesson plan ideas written by BC teachers on the [TeachBC](#) page on the BCTF website.



Resources:



Picture Books

Elliot lives in America, and Kailash lives in India. They are pen pals. By exchanging letters and pictures, they learn that they both love to climb trees, have pets, and go to school. Their worlds might look different, but they are actually similar.

"Little one, / whoever you are, / wherever you are, / there are little ones / just like you / all over the world." So begins the Australian author Mem Fox's joyful picture book *Whoever You Are*, a celebration of the world's diverse cultures, both our similarities and differences.

Novels

This story describes an Afghani immigrant's experience in the United States, touching on issues of stereotypes and racism as the events of September 11, 2001 began to unfold. The book also reaches themes of hope, love, and perseverance.

Gr. 10 - 12. Sixteen-year-old Corey becomes brainwashed into joining a racist Aryan cult. It happens when he goes on a retreat called Camp Liberty. Before he goes to camp he is an ordinary teenager involved in the usual teenage pursuits. When he returns he alienates his friends and family with his hatred and hostility towards any non-Aryan groups. He continues to follow the instructions of the cult's leaders until a former acquaintance is murdered.

Non-Fiction

Gr. 8-12 We all read the compelling story of Anne Frank and want to know more: How many others were hidden away during World War II? How and where? Were they separated from their families? Did they ever find each other again? And what was it really like to live in hiding, in constant fear of discovery?

Gr. K - 7. The reader is asked to imagine what it would be like if all of the people of the world lived in a villages of a hundred people. This book provides a good introduction for students who wish to learn about the world and its people. It might also provide a good starting point for the study of global Citizenship and world and environmental awareness.

Welcome new Executive Members

On Wednesday, October 16 at the General Meeting, the two vacant Member at Large positions were filled with the election of Becky Pagulayan and Nicole Longpre. The **Middle School Representative** position remains **vacant** at this time. If you are interested in running for this position, please let one of the ATU Release Officers know.



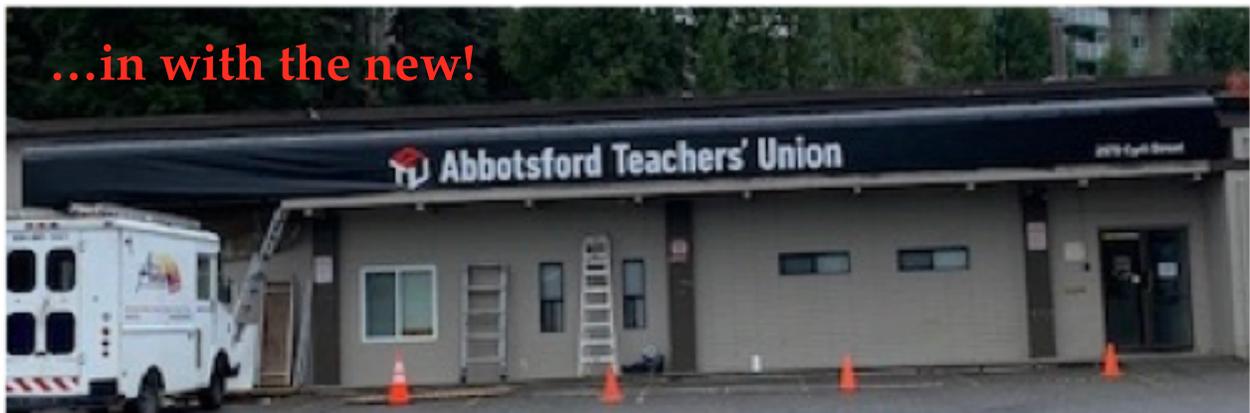
The BCTF Advantage Program provides a variety of benefits and offers from cars and insurance to travel and fitness. With 41,000 members, the BCTF, as an organization, has been able to obtain savings on a number of products and services for members. This program is available to all BCTF members and for many of the Advantage partners, you simply need to state that you are a BCTF member for them to apply your discount or savings to your purchase.

Check out the [BCTF Advantage Program](#) website to start saving!

Out with the old...

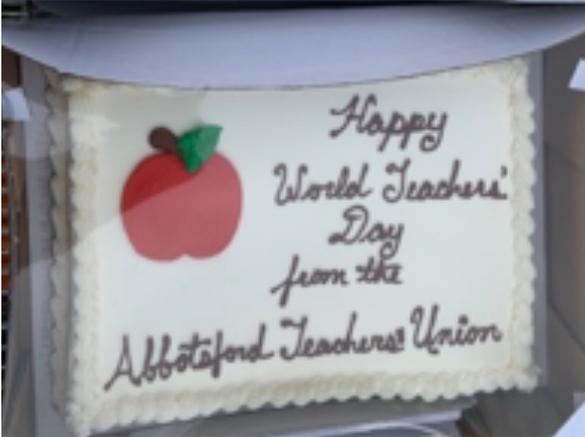


...in with the new!



World Teachers' Day

Thank you to all who participated in the World Teachers' Day Trivia and came to the event at Boston Pizza! We hope you all enjoyed the cake.



Moved Recently?

If you have moved recently, please make sure you update your information with the following groups:

- School District 34 (contact [Human Resources](#))
- [Abbotsford Teachers' Union](#)
- BCTF (log on to the [Member Portal](#) to update your profile)
- Teacher Certification Branch (log onto [bcteacherregulation.ca](#))

Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB)

To teach in the province of British Columbia you must be certified through the Teacher Regulation Branch. It is the responsibility of the School District, according to Article B.34 in our Collective Agreement, to remit the full cost of the annual TRB fees for all continuing and part-time teachers each year when the fees are due. It is the responsibility of the teacher to update the TRB with your current contact information including your mailing address.

The TRB requires regular criminal record checks to maintain your certification. If the TRB mails you a letter informing you that you need to update your criminal record check and the letter gets mailed to an old address you run the risk of becoming uncertified by the TRB.

If you become uncertified you will have to do the entire application process again and it could be months before you become re-certified. In the meantime, the School District will remove you from your teaching role and place you on unpaid leave until your certification is restored.

Recent changes have occurred within the Ministry of Education concerning the Teacher Regulation Branch. The TRB has been split into three sections:

- The Teacher Certification Branch which focusses solely on the certification process.
- The branch which deals with professional conduct remains the same and can be found by searching for Commissioner for Teacher Regulation.
- The Professional Excellence and Outreach branch which supports the work of the BC Teachers' Council.

To check your certification or to make sure the Certification Branch has your correct address, please go to [bcteacherregualtion.ca](#) and click on the link to Log in To Your Account.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Abbotsford Remembrance Day Ceremony

The ATU was honoured to lay a wreath at the Abbotsford Cenotaph on November 11, 2019 on behalf of all Abbotsford Teachers. Lest we forget.

Remembrance Day | NOV 11



Teachers and students honour the sacrifices of the past and work for peace in the future.

BCTF New Teachers' Conferences
New Teachers, New TTOCs, and Teacher Candidates

Wellness Safety Balance
In life and on the job

January 25
Richmond

SHERATON | Marriott.com/YVRVS
7551 Westminster Hwy,
Richmond, BC V6X 1A3
Richmond, British Columbia

January 24, 2020
Pre-conference Welcoming
Reception from 5pm to 7pm

May 23
Nelson

Prestige Lakeside Resort
and Convention Center
701 Lakeside Drive, Nelson BC V1L 6G3
Nelson, British Columbia

May 22, 2020
Pre-conference Welcoming
Reception from 5pm to 7pm

CALENDAR / UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Board Meeting (SBO)	Tuesday, November 12
Pro-D Committee Meeting	Tuesday, November 12
BCTF Federation Leadership Institute	Thursday, Nov14 - Saturday, Nov 16
Executive Committee Meeting	Monday, November 18
Grievance Meeting	Tuesday, November 19
ATU Building Sale Information Meeting	Tuesday, November 19
Non Instructional Day	Friday, November 22
Staff Rep Meeting	Wednesday, November 27
Board Meeting (SBO)	Tuesday, December 3
Executive Committee Meeting	Wednesday, December 4
Rep Christmas Dinner	Wednesday, December 18

Crossword
Contest!

A Little Bit of Fun

To enter the contest go to the ATU website and find the Newsletter link. Enter your name and school and the answer to the secret crossword message.

Contest closes: Friday, November 15

Name: _____

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker

Union-ity

Circle the union words. Then write the unused letters in the spaces here to reveal a secret message. Start with the first unused letter.

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Y O U A R M I N U T E S S N N E D
 T T A D N E G A H E U I O U O P E
 I N U N I S R E B M E M C F I R V
 M E C I T S U J O N G E I T S O E
 E E T A C I N U M M O C A I S F L
 C O M M I T T E E S N V L O A E O
 Y U L V E D U Y E N G A G E P S P
 T S T T E C I V R E S I H R F S M
 I J U A Y C I T E G R E N E C I E
 R A N S E U S S I R C O G L S O N
 A D I F K G L C A R I N G A R N T
 D E T B A R G A I N I N G K I A U
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 O O V D W F H N O I T C A T C R C
 S V W E V I T U C E X E G F G S K
 K F W Q V R L E A D E R S H I P V

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|------------|--------------|-------------|
| ATU | MEETINGS | SOLIDARITY |
| ACTION | COMMUNICATE | ENGAGE |
| ISSUES | BARGAINING | FUN |
| SOCIAL | MEMBERS | EXECUTIVE |
| COMMITTEES | PROFESSIONAL | DEVELOPMENT |
| VOICE | LEADERSHIP | OPPORTUNITY |
| BCTF | CHAIRS | MINUTES |
| AGENDA | JUSTICE | UNITY |
| SERVICE | PASSION | TIME |
| ENERGETIC | CARING | |