



NWTU UNION NEWS

FEBRUARY 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sarah Wethered

I know that the next few weeks are the most challenging in the entire school year, but in eleven school days, we will all be on Spring Break. I'm looking forward to some time off to sleep in, binge watch my favourite movies and TV shows, and read a few good books. Throw in a lot of soft, squishy yarn, and I know that my break will be great.

For the last seventeen years, Spring Break for me has also included four days at the BCTF AGM. Last year's was postponed and it was a condensed online AGM, only including items that absolutely had to be dealt with, including setting our fee and the SIP fee. This year, it will also be online, however, it is

reverting back to the four-day AGM, where delegates will vote on a wide variety of resolutions from locals around the province. I would like to thank our AGM delegates, who will be representing the NWTU at the AGM. A big thank you to Tammy Dewar (EGMS), D'Alice Marsh (FRMS), Bruce McCloy (NWSS), Darryl Nakashima (NWSS), Kristie Oxley (District), Lisa Seddon (QMS), and Carmen Woo (EGMS) who will join me online for the AGM. Sam Wang (FRMS) has also agreed to be our alternate, should the need arise.

This month, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of our 1921 strike. This strike was chosen by the BC Labour Heritage Centre as one of the top 5 most important events in BC teacher union history, as it led to the beginnings of our salary grid, and the creation of the BCTF strike pay fund. We have included in this newsletter a reprint of an article I co-wrote with Ken Novakowski, former BCTF president, that appeared in the January/February Teacher Magazine.

I am excited about two meetings that I have arranged for next week. On March 3, the local presidents who are in the Fraser Health region, including myself, will be meeting with Dr. Ariella Zbar, the medical health officer whose portfolio includes schools. As always, we will be bringing forth our concerns about contact tracing and health and safety guidelines, including a more stringent mask mandate, for schools. On March 5, Kristie, D'Alice and I have a meeting with the Minister of Education, Jennifer Whiteside, and the MLA for Richmond-Queensborough, Aman Singh. I have been trying to secure this meeting since the general election in November. If you have any questions you would like us to ask at this meeting, please do not hesitate to email me at lp40@bctf.ca and I will try to get an answer for you.

Lastly, it's time to start thinking about our election for table officers in May. We will be holding a nomination meeting online on May 4. All positions, including my own, are up for election. If you have any questions about the job description of our various positions, or the time commitment, please email or call me and I would be happy to discuss this with you.

As always, I would like to end this message with a big thank you for all that you do to make our schools a safe, kind, and caring place for the students of my adopted home time. I hope that you all have a safe and restful Spring Break.

IMPORTANT DATES

March 11 - Job-Share Partnership Meet & Greet

March 15 - 26 - Spring Break

March 29 - Schools Reopen

April 2 - Good Friday

April 5 - Easter Monday

April 21 - Non-Instructional Day

New Westminster teachers make BCTF history—100 years ago

By **Ken Novakowski**, Labour Heritage Centre board member and retired teacher, and **Sarah Wethered**, New Westminster Teachers' Association President

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO on February 14, 1921, 84 New Westminster teachers, most of whom were women, went on strike. The seven primary and two secondary schools were closed, affecting 3,000 students. This was remarkable because BC teachers did not obtain the legal right to strike until 1988, and it was quite uncommon to see women taking strike action during the early part of the last century.

New Westminster teachers had significant reasons to go on strike when they did. They were paid based on a salary schedule established unilaterally by the school board. Years of experience and education were not considered in determining what each teacher was paid: it was an unfair and inequitable system. The New Westminster Teachers' Association (NWTa) proposed a new salary grid with significant increases so New Westminster teacher salaries would be more in line with those in surrounding school districts. The school board ignored the teachers' submission, so teachers made a very reasonable request that the matter be referred to arbitration. The board refused to agree to arbitration and the strike was on.

Despite board threats to fire teachers who continued to strike, teachers remained out and united. Teachers also had strong community support that eventually resulted in the board agreeing to arbitration. The strike lasted five school days, and the subsequent arbitration award favoured the teachers' proposal.

The board had not budgeted for a salary increase, so a supplemental estimate had to be approved by city council. Teachers carried on teaching until the end of the year when it became clear that the board did not intend to include any provision for back pay. In response, the teachers' association delivered the signed resignations of all the teachers in the district to take effect if the board failed to provide the arbitration award.



Teachers at Lord Lister School, New Westminster (192-). New Westminster Museum and Archives, IHP9860-278.

At the civic election in January 1922, the recalcitrant members of the board were swept out of office. The new school board quickly agreed with the teachers' association and finally paid their arbitrated salaries.

The New Westminster teacher strike was an important event in BCTF history. New Westminster teachers demonstrated that unity and strength helped obtain their collective goals. They achieved a fairer form of salary allocation, and their salaries were more in keeping with those in surrounding districts. The New Westminster Teachers' Association was now recognized by their employer as the official bargaining agent for teachers in the district. Further, two NWTa teachers, Ernest Lock and George Ford, went on to become BCTF presidents and winners of the BCTF's G.A. Ferguson Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to public education.

The New Westminster teacher strike took place only four years after the BC Teachers' Federation was founded; the NWTa was one of seven teacher organizations that came together to create the provincial body. But the strike exposed a major weakness of the BCTF as it was then structured. The BCTF did not have a membership structure independent of local teachers' associations and proved ineffective in being able to provide the New

Westminster local any substantive support. This experience would eventually result in changes to the BCTF that would allow it to become the effective body it is today in assisting locals.

Supportive messages came from teacher organizations across Canada, and teacher associations in BC sent funds to the New Westminster local to help them in their struggle. As it turned out, these funds were not needed and the local turned them over to the BCTF, which used them to establish the BCTF Reserve Fund. This fund became an important emergency fund for the BCTF over the next 65 years when it then morphed into the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund. One of the main uses of the fund was to provide strike pay to teachers.

In 2017, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the BCTF, a plaque was installed by the BC Labour Heritage Centre across from New Westminster City Hall, on 6th Street and Royal Avenue. This is the approximate location where the 1921 school board offices stood. This plaque commemorates the 1921 New Westminster teacher strike and acknowledges its important role in the ongoing struggle for fairness and full bargaining rights. It is one of five local events recognized around the province as contributing to the eventual gaining of full bargaining rights in 1987-88. 9

Jan/Feb 2021 **TEACHER** 7

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PRO-D OPPORTUNITIES

Start with Joy Book Club for K-3 teachers

Facilitator: Tanis Anderson
District VP of Early Learning,

Time: 3:15-4:15

Date: March 4

Register: <http://bit.ly/2YpncfD>

New Teachers' Zoom Gathering

BCTF is hosting a series of Zoom chats for new teachers.

Facilitator: BCTF

Date: March 10

Time: 3:30 - 4:30

Register: <http://bit.ly/3qUEyOy>

Spring Conference

BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML) and the Provincial Intermediate and Middle Years Teachers' Association (MyPita).

Facilitator: BCATML & MyPita

Date: Friday, May 21

Location: Attend from Home or Away

Register: <http://bit.ly/3pTW03U>

Looking for more Pro-D?

Check out the Upcoming Events link on our NWTU website for more Professional Development opportunities.

<http://www.nwtu.ca/pro-d.html>



DID YOU KNOW? A REVIEW OF OUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

Article C.23.5 is from the new Collective Agreement (CA), while Article E.23.6 below is from the working 2013-2019 CA, as contract melding is still in progress for the newest CA to be finalized.

ARTICLE C.23.5 JOB-SHARE PARTNERSHIP POSITION

5. Job-Share Partnership Position

a. Access

i. Two (2) employees, each with continuing appointments, may jointly apply for a job-share partnership, by April 30, for a single continuing position for the subsequent school year. Such application shall be: [...]

Please note, the above language is only a small portion of the full article on Job-Share Partnerships,

There will be an information meeting. Gordana Ballarin will outline how to apply for the job-share partnership. Additionally, there will be breakout-rooms to help facilitate partnerships.

Event: Job-Share Partnership Meet & Greet

Date & Time: Thursday, March 11, 3:30 pm

Location: Zoom Link to be provided to those registered

Registration: <http://bit.ly/3ktKZWc>

ARTICLE E.23.6 PERSONNEL FILES

"Where material critical of the teacher, or in the nature of a reprimand, is placed in the file, the teacher may make written request to the Director of Human Resource Services to have the material removed two (2) years after the filing, provided that no further material of that nature has been subsequently filed."

We felt that this article was important enough to highlight again this year. If there were ever a time that a member may be subject to a new investigation any material contained within the personnel file can be used against them during the investigation during the process.

REMINDER

PINK SHIRT DAY



Photo retrieved from

<https://newwestschools.ca/pink-shirt-day-a-celebration-of-lifting-each-other-up/>

Participating in Pink Shirt Day has become a February tradition, one that the teachers in the K-8 Online School wanted to continue for their online students. The Pink Shirt Day committee, consisting of Dr. Jeanne Kentel, Kate Copely, Amy Stephen, Sabeha Ramji and Sabine Decamp, organized online students to present readings, poems and dances on the theme Lift Each Other Up. You can view the assembly recording on our website under [News & Events](#), <http://bit.ly/3pSkqLf>.

What did your school do to celebrate Pink Shirt Day?

PRO-D FUNDS FOR TTOCS

A friendly reminder to all Teachers Teaching On Call, you are able to apply for \$100 to be spent on Professional Development opportunities. This can include things such as conferences, Provincial Specialist Association (PSA) memberships, and much more.

The form can be accessed here, <https://bit.ly/2PcMix7>.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Do you know an NWTU member that has received special recognition for their work as an educator? Or do you know a member that you would like to highlight work they are doing in their school?

If so, please send an email to D'Alice, vp2@nwtu.ca, to have them included in an upcoming edition of the NWTU Union News.



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New Teacher & TTOC Email List

http://bit.ly/NWTU_NT-TTOC_Email



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