



## STA Connection April 20-24, 2020

### When will we be returning to schools?

There were reports in the media late last week about students possibly returning to school buildings before the end of the school year, and possibly by mid-May. Members have expressed many concerns about this prospect. Health and safety are obviously the greatest concern, but people also wonder about workload for teachers, having to adapt their instruction yet again, and about the impact of the changes on students.

It is important to note that already have students in schools: the children of Tier 1 essential services workers are receiving child care at a number of sites, staffed by CUPE workers and TTOCs who were hired for those positions. The categories of workers whose children qualify for the child care is broadening, so the program is expected to grow. STA table officers visited those sites and were satisfied with the health and safety precautions that were in place. (We had advocated in the planning stages to have low student-to-adult ratios.) Following a government directive, the school district is looking at opening further sites so that some vulnerable students who are capable of social distancing can also receive in-person support.

Throughout this time there has been good collaboration between the union and the employer. Provincially, the BCTF has been in extensive contact with the Ministry of Education on COVID-19 issues since before Spring Break, and Teri Mooring speaks regularly with the Deputy Minister of Education, BCPSEA, and the BC School Superintendents' Association. She speaks with local presidents in meetings three times per week to report on provincial developments, and local presidents had an online meeting with one of the government's medical experts. At the local level, I have had extensive communication with the Superintendent about COVID-19. Over Spring Break and for the first week back we met daily, and it tapered to three times per week, and now once per week. I pushed from the outset for all STA members to be able to work remotely (which is something that many other school districts have resisted), and for child care to be staffed by hiring TTOCs who want to work there, rather than by redeploying other teachers. I have also raised other issues with the Superintendent including two-way videoconferencing, frequency of

staff meetings, professional autonomy and the right to choose whether or not to teach online or via other means, and access to technology. The STA Table Officers meet every day from 1-2 hours to compare notes on what we are hearing from members and to collaborate on finding solutions to problems.

Ultimately the decision about having more students return to schools will be up to government (through the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry), and the union does not have any veto in the process. Our understanding is that Dr. Henry is looking closely at the example of Denmark, where elementary students have returned to school, to see what the results are there. The modelling suggests that BC is not following the same trajectory as Hubei Province in China or Italy, and this will drive government decisions about what precautions are necessary. For information about this modelling, see this link:

[https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/COVID19\\_Update\\_Modelling-DIGITAL.pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/COVID19_Update_Modelling-DIGITAL.pdf). We have been assured that if students in BC return to schools, it will be well-planned, gradual, and based on the most current available evidence about the health and safety risks involved, and the steps required to mitigate risk. If there is any reopening of schools, the union will advocate for the greatest possible health and safety precautions, and also for accommodations for members who would be a greater risk (such as those who are immunocompromised, or live with people who are). The situation is unfolding rapidly, but we will share further updates as we receive them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge how hard you are working, and how flexible to changing circumstances you have been throughout this process. I appreciate the opportunity to work alongside and support STA members at this time.

- Matt Westphal, STA President

## Telephone Town Hall

To provide further opportunities for teachers to learn about what's in the tentative collective agreement and why the BCTF is recommending you vote yes in the upcoming ratification vote, the Federation will host telephone town hall meetings. A telephone town hall is similar to a radio call-in show, with the focus being on listeners' questions. **To ask a question, just press \*3 on your telephone**, and you'll be connected to an operator who will help moderate the flow of questions and answers.

**Our town hall meeting is scheduled for 7:00 pm on Thursday, April 23.**

On Wednesday, you should receive a phone call and an email with instructions on how to participate. **It's as simple as answering your phone at 7:00 pm.** when the town halls start. To ensure that you will be called, please check that your correct phone number(s) are listed on the BCTF Member Portal. If for any reason you do not receive a call by 7:05 p.m. on the evening your local is scheduled for the town hall, please call toll-free 1-877-229-8493 and enter ID code: 119463.

## Preparing for the Online Ratification Vote

Thank you to all of the Surrey teachers who advocated for public education by wearing red for ed, talking to friends and families, emailing their MLAs, participating in walk-ins and rallies – your support has helped us achieve a tentative agreement in this round of bargaining! As you probably heard, we reached a deal on March 26 which the BCTF Executive Committee is unanimously recommending. Information about the tentative agreement is available **on the portal**.

Once you log in, you will see a space that says, "Click here to learn more and read the latest update." The portal also has several other helpful documents in the Bargaining 2019–20 section. Use the dropdown

menu under Bargaining 2019–20 to select “Agreement-in-Committee documents” to access the full tentative agreement, a more detailed summary, an annotated explanation of the terms of settlement, and a timeline that clarifies what gains kick in each year of the agreement.

**A secure online vote will be held from April 28–30, 2020.** We will have much more information to you about how that will work soon.

In order to ensure that you receive information about the ratification vote, we need members to make sure the BCTF has your correct contact information. If the BCTF does not have any email address on file, or has an address that you no longer use, you will not be able to vote. To check what email address is on file for you, go to the BCTF Member Portal home page, <https://www.bctf.ca/mybctf>.

[Read more](#)



- April 23 – Town Hall Meeting @ 7 pm
- April 24 – Ramadan begins
- April 28 – Day of Mourning
- April 28-30 – Ratification Vote
- April 29 – STARA Meeting
- April 30 – Starling Minds Live Webcast @ 11 am
- May 1 – STA Convention

## Update on STARA and AGM

The STARA meeting, which had been scheduled for 4:00 this Wednesday, April 22, has been postponed until 4:00 next **Wednesday, April 29**. We will be conducting the meeting online and need more time to complete our preparations. An email will go to reps with information about how to register, but all members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The STA Executive Committee has decided to postpone our local AGM from its original scheduled date of May 20, 2020. We want to take more time to investigate different models and platforms for conducting virtual meetings, as well as to learn from the experience of the online STARA and the BCTF AGM, which will be taking place online May 25-27, so that we can select the best model for the STA.

## STA Convention - REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

Welcome to the 2020 Virtual STA Convention! We hope you are all well and staying safe during these unprecedented times. The Convention Committee is hard at work bringing to life a re-envisioning of Convention as we all abide the directives of the Public Health Authority to socially distance ourselves and to stay safe at home. All workshops are free for Surrey teachers and will be delivered online using Zoom. You can join the Zoom meeting on a desktop computer, laptop, tablet or even a smartphone.

**Simply follow these easy steps to register and attend the Virtual Conference:**

1. **Pick your workshops:** Browse the Convention website to find the workshops that you are interested in. Click the button to add a workshop to 'My Workshops'.

2. **Complete the registration:** Click the Register NOW! link in the menu to start the registration process. Enter your email address and follow the steps to complete the registration.
3. **Receive a confirmation email:** You will receive a confirmation email. Check your Spam folder if the email can not be found in the inbox.
4. **Receive the access information:** Shortly before the Convention as well as on the day of the Convention you will receive emails and/or text messages with the information on how to access the keynote as well as the workshops you had registered for.
5. **Access the Keynote:** If you have registered for the Keynote follow the instructions on how to access the Keynote.

Access the Workshops: For each workshop follow the instructions provided.

#### **Shape of the Day: May 1, 2020**

8:30 – 9:30: Keynote: Ryan McMahon - Anishinaabe comedian, writer, and media maker.

9:30 – 10:00: break

10:00 – 11:30: Session One

11:30 – 12:30: lunch

12:30 – 2:00: Session Two

General questions about the Convention? Email the STA at [convention@surreyteachers.org](mailto:convention@surreyteachers.org).

Technical Support? Send a text message to 1 (844) 928-2338 or email us at [support@staconvention.ca](mailto:support@staconvention.ca).

## **Annual General Meeting Call for Nominations**



We are in the process of determining the timing and format of our STA Annual General Meeting in light of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. We will provide more details once we have completed our planning.

If you are interested in running for a position (whether as a full-time table officer working in the STA office, as a member of the Executive Committee, or as a member of the Resolutions Committee), please review the "[Call for Nominations](#)" document. If you are considering whether you would like to run for a position, or are curious to know more, please contact Matt Westphal at [pres@surreyteachers.org](mailto:pres@surreyteachers.org). If you wish to provide a candidate statement (for Executive Committee and Resolutions Committee) to be distributed to the membership before the AGM, **please submit it to the STA office by May 15, 2020** (please note we

have extended the deadline from April 30), via email to [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org) or via fax to 604-594-5176. The maximum length for candidate statements is 600 words.

## Time to Prepare for Transfer Rounds!

We have reached an agreement with the District to [adjust the transfer round timelines](#) slightly, as seen in the attached document. **If you are a teacher with a continuing contract, you are eligible to apply for positions in Rounds 1 and 2.**

Last year, the STA filed a number of grievances related to the transfer rounds. In our discussions with Human Resources and school principals, we got some insight into the inner workings of the process.

There are three parts to the transfer process. [Read more](#)

## STA Awards

Every Spring, the STA sends \$1,500 to each Secondary school-site and \$500 to each Learning Centre for scholarships and bursaries for graduating students. As well, awards scholarships, bursaries and the Jennifer Wadge Memorial Social Justice Award.

This year, we offer two new awards of \$2000 each to graduating Surrey students who self-identify as Indigenous (Indigenous Student Bursary) in addition to four \$2000 Jennifer Wadge Social Justice Awards which are awarded to graduating Surrey students who are active in Social Justice pursuits. The [criteria for these awards](#) are available on our website. If you require any additional brochures or flyers for your school, or have any questions in regards to these awards, please feel free to contact the STA at [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org).

Deadline for applications is **May 15, 2020** so encourage your students to get their application in as soon as possible.

## Leaves and Your Pension

Members on a **paid** leave of absence (LOA), such as, sick days, Salary Indemnity Plan's short-term disability, or long-term disability, will receive full pension crediting. That is, there is no pensionable service (PS) to buy-back.

Members on an **unpaid** LOA, may buy-back PS up to the limit allowed by the collective agreement (CA). This purchase is done as a lump sum payment to Teachers' Pension Plan after you return to work, or in one-year portions. The buy -backs of PS include periods of reduced assignment, arrears (missing contributions), non-contributory service, or child-rearing credits (as you near the end of your career—this one is free of charge). Unlike other leaves, there are special leaves as categorized by Part 6 of the Employment Standards Act (current to March 25, 2020), whereby the member pays only their portion of the pension contributions. These include, but are not limited to: pregnancy leave, parental or adoptive leave, family responsibility leave, bereavement leave, and compassionate care leave. Details can be found here: <https://tpp.pensionsbc.ca/taking-time-off-work-and-buying-service>. Always check in with our local office as there may be top-up provisions in our CA.

**Starting May 1, 2020**, a new payment option is available. Members may choose to continue making contributions during the leave by direct payment to Teachers' Pension Plan, and they will invoice your

employer separately for their portion of the cost. The details will be published on the Teachers' Pension Plan website ([tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca)) by mid-May.

## BCTF Dispatch Newsletter for TTOCs

TTOCs, please see attached the latest issue of the BCTF Dispatch. This is a special issue which covers timely topics such as navigating EI, applying for CERB, and looking out for your mental health.

### Day of Mourning



Did you know that if a worker is injured or killed in BC the likelihood is that it is a young worker. It may be a former student or a current student in your class. We remember the workers, young and not so young on **Tuesday, April 28, 2020**. We want to impress upon the students that they have the right to go to work and come home safe at the end of the day.

Due to the closure of schools in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Day of Mourning Project will be updating their content to better support online learning for 2020. You can check it out here: <http://domschools.ca/download-materials/>

### Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19 on Teachers

The STA Status of Women Committee usually puts on wellness events for our members, and recently met via Zoom to brainstorm ways we could support out members during this high stress time. We reached out to Dr. Andrew Miki, Chief Science Officer of Starling Minds, to request some wellness support for our members and were happy to hear that he will be holding a live webcast on Thursday, April 30 at 11 am on the topic of the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on teachers. He will be offering advice on how you can navigate the stress, anxiety, and worry brought on by these unprecedented times.

To register, please go to:

<https://info.starlingminds.com/live-webinar-the-mental-health-impact-of-covid-19-on-teachers>

## Ramadan

Ramadan Mubarak! Friday, April 24 will be the first day of Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims. Many of our Muslim students will be fasting for the next 30 days and they are going to be exhausted! Traditionally, families wake up before dawn (which is currently around 5:30 am and will continue to get earlier over the next 30 days) to have a meal before beginning their fast. They will also stay up late to pray, and since we are no longer allowed to pray in large groups, they may be attending virtual worship activities instead, further increasing their screen time. You can learn a lot and find more resources about teaching during Ramadan here: <https://www.teachingwhilemuslim.org/teacher-blog/2020/4/18/ramadan-considerations-for-teachers-during-distance-learning>

## Winter/Spring Social Justice Newsletter

The Winter/Spring Social Justice Newsletter was published just before spring break. While the articles in this edition were written before the onset of the pandemic and social distancing measures in Canada, we think you will find them thoughtful and inspiring. Written by BCTF members, these articles touch on a wide range of social justice issues that continue to merit our attention during these challenging times.

To download a copy of the Winter/Spring Social Justice Newsletter, visit the Publications page of the BCTF website or follow this link: <https://www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=56452>

Wishing you happy reading!



We are so proud to be Surrey Teachers and we know there are amazing things happening around the district that we would love to hear about. In the spirit of acts of kindness, we would love for our members to send us a “shout out” about a colleague who inspires you and who you think deserves recognition, whether it is for their kindness, a great resource they shared recently, or an awesome lesson they teach.

### **This week’s shout out goes to Susan Stich from Nancy Porter:**

*“This is a BIG shout out to Susan Stich at Hillcrest Elementary. Susan has worked tirelessly throughout the initial weeks of on-line learning preparing, researching and helping both her own parents and students as well as her colleagues at school. She shares everything she finds or creates and is never too busy to help someone figure out a technical problem...even late at night! Her help and support has been invaluable to me and others. Thank you Susan!”*

Thank you Nancy, you and Susan are now entered into our monthly draw for a \$25 Indigo! gift certificate. Please submit your “shout outs” to Angela via [communications@surreyteachers.org](mailto:communications@surreyteachers.org) to spread the kindness around our local and for your chance to win a gift card too!