

BC
Teachers of
English
Language
Arts

A BCTF PROVINCIAL SPECIAL ASSOCIATION

IN THIS ISSUE

# President's Greeting

by Susan McLean

I hope this finds all of you well into the second part of the school year, and that you are finding a good balance between your professional and personal lives. As the president of BCTELA, I am hoping to connect with you more often, whether here in the newsletter or through our on-line journal we publish, *English Practice*.

Assessment news: I'm sure you were all as pleased as I was with the topic of standardized testing in the news again. On that note, I thought I'd share this quotation with you:

"[The] pupils got it all by heart; and, when examination-time came, they wrote it down; and the examiner said 'Beautiful! What depth!' They became teachers in their turn, and they said all these things over again; and their pupils wrote it down, and the examiner accepted it; and nobody had the ghost of an idea what it meant."
(Lewis Carroll, 1893)

Conferences: If you made it to our October conference this past year, I hope that you enjoyed it, and that you came away with some useful material to enrich your teaching. We felt so fortunate to have Dr.

Jeff Wilhelm as our keynote speaker, and came away feeling inspired by him. We were surprised and delighted by the amazing number of attendees. In addition, I hope that you enjoyed listening to our students reciting the poetry that they had written for our <a href="Student Writing Journal">Student Writing Journal</a> – this is something we were pleased with, and we plan to continue this fall.

This year's conference planning is well under way, and our theme is "Story and the Landscapes of Knowing", with a focus on the role of place in informing our stories, literacies and practice. The conference will be held at McNair Secondary, in Richmond, this year on Friday, October 23, 2015. We sincerely hope that you are able to join us. If you would like to present, or know of someone who would, the information is available at: <a href="http://bctela.ca/share-your-practice/">http://bctela.ca/share-your-practice/</a>

Coming up this spring, several of the executive will be attending and presenting at the Spring Fling in Prince George this coming April. We were excited to be asked to participate in the conference, and look forward to seeing some of you there.

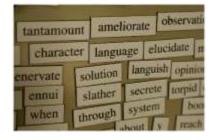
Continued on page 2



## Conferences: Here and Abroad

Announcing the 2015 BCTELA provincial conference: Story and the Landscapes of Knowing.

Members of the BCTELA Executive reflect on trips to conferences in New Mexico and Washington D.C.



# Writing, writing, writing...

Announcing deadlines for our student writing contest as well as the call for submissions to our professional journal, *English Practice*. Share your practice through writing!

# Provincial Conference 2015: Story and the Landscapes of Knowing

by BCTELA Conference Co-Chairs: Leyton Schnellert & Kate Campbell

How does place shape us? What does it mean for our practice? What kinds of learning experiences do we owe our students so they can see themselves in the world? How can we help them write about their own sense of home and identity?

Powerful stories are located in our personal and social geographies. Our stories are shaped by our geographies, and our individual and shared experiences. Come explore the role of place in informing our stories, our literacies and our practice.

Join us in Richmond, BC, October 23, 2015 for BCTELA's Annual Conference "Story and the Landscapes of Learning." We invite you to submit a conference proposal that explores some of the many dimensions of story as the landscape of learning and knowing--story as literary and informational text, story as cross-disciplinary collaborations, story as multiple literacies and genres, story as memory and identity, story as teacher knowledge and research, story as community and culture, story as marginalization, and story as resistance.



# CONFERENCE PRESENTER FORMS ONLINE

Share this call for presenters with a colleague and use the link at the bottom of the post to download one for yourself!

Proposals due February 22nd

JOIN US AND SHARE YOUR PRACTICE! <a href="http://bctela.ca/share-your-practice/">http://bctela.ca/share-your-practice/</a>

# President's Greeting cont.

By BCTELA President Susan McLean

continued from page 1

Curriculum Update: By now you have likely had a chance to check out, and perhaps start to implement, some of the new ELA K-9 Draft Curriculum. If not, you may find it at https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/. Our past president, Cindy Miller, was on the writing team, and we are excited about the changes we see there. The Ministry is still looking for feedback, so make sure your voices are heard - there is a space for feedback on the Ministry site. You may email us as well, and we will pass on your thoughts and suggestions, if you like. So far, we have heard that there has been a lot of feedback, and that the Ministry and the BCTF have come up with almost exactly the same 15 revisions.

On the same strand, I am pleased to inform you that I have been selected as a member of the ELA Gr. 10-12 Curriculum Review Team. As this is my teaching focus, I hope to be able to bring my day-to-day experiences to the table, and contribute in a meaningful way to the newest draft curriculum. Feel free to contact me with your ideas — I am going into this representing BCTELA and the BCTF, which is, of course, all of you.

Novels: I just finished reading a teen lit novel *Blue Gold* by Elizabeth Stewart. It is set in Kitsilano, Africa, and China with three strong, young female protagonists. It deals with the coltan that is mined to make computers and cell phones, and how the mining and production of these affect people throughout the world. Another book, an Aboriginal text, suggested by Pamela Smith is *Tilly: A Story of Hope and Resilience* by Monica Gray Smith. It addresses ways of dealing with depression, family neglect, alcoholism, and the healing journey. It is set in BC. Both of these would be great place based texts to use with secondary students.

Our current BCTELA book club is Medicine Walk, by Richard Wagamese. We hope you will join us on March 8<sup>th</sup>, at 11am for a Twitter chat, and perhaps continue the discussion at your local coffee shop with some others in your district.

## **BCTELA BOOK CLUB**

Twitter chat: March 8th 11am-12noon #bctelabook

If you would like to get together in person with folks to discuss *Medicine Walk*, <u>let us know</u> so we can help spread the word.

For more information go to the BCTELA website

## NCTE ANNUAL CONVENTIONS



## Bring an extra suitcase!

NCTE conventions are known for their extraordinary marketplace. Book publishers sell books at greatly reduced prices and by the end of the week simply give the rest away!



## Canadian teacher steals obelisk

Shelley Moore, Kate Campbell, and Susan McLean attended the 2014 NCTE convention in Washington D.C. They got to squeeze in a bit of sightseeing too!

### CHECK OUT NCTE ONLINE

NCTE has a huge number of lesson aids and other resources online at <a href="https://www.readwritethink.org">www.readwritethink.org</a>



# BCTELA goes to Washington

by Newsletter Editor Celia Brogan

BCTELA is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the national organization of English teachers in the USA As an affiliate organization, we keep in touch with their events and regularly send some of our executive members to the NCTE national convention, held in a different city each year.

BCTELA executive members have attended a handful of NCTE conventions over the last few years. This past November Shelley Moore, Kate Campbell, and Susan McLean represented BCTELA in Washington D.C.

The NCTE convention is a conference on a massive scale. Hundreds of presenters and thousands of teachers come together for a week, or parts thereof, and the atmosphere is electric: the passions for teaching and learning, literacy, and creativity become a driving force to absorb as much (and more) as possible. It's exhausting and exhilarating.

Here, I'll share a few of Susan, Kate, and Shelley's experiences:

## Susan

This past fall I, along with Shelley Moore and Kate Campbell, two of our conference coordinators, attended the NCTE Conference in Washington, DC. It was focused on story, and we came away not only inspired, but also

with some wonderful ideas we hope to be able to share with you at our upcoming conference.

One workshop I attended was entitled "Igniting Change Through Literature: An Inquiry Approach to Social Change", and it dealt with misconceptions. One of the introductory activities started with "I am ..., but I am not ... ". The example used was one of race, and went something like "I am the only black student in your class, but I am not representative of the entire black race in the US." Substitute First Nations, Muslim, (or ...) and Canada, (or your local community or town) and you can get an idea of where one might go with this. It went on to a couple of inquiry research topics – "How can we make a difference in our society", and "Who has made a positive change in our world?"

## Kate

As a first time attendee to the NCTE I was stunned by the magnitude of it all. It was an incredible experience to be with so many other educators coming from all over North America and sharing their enthusiasm for teaching literacy. With countless sessions being offered there was nearly any topic imaginable within English Language learning from devoted educators to participate in. It was inspiring and rewarding to share in their collective passion for teaching.

Shelley Moore @tweetsomemoore Nov 22

If there is a fire in here I will die but I don't care because it's @NancieAtwell #ncte14 @BCTELA #inthemiddle

# How to get unSTUCK: READING, WRITING, AND POSSIBLY PUBLISHING

by Voices Visible Editor Belinda Chi

As an elementary school teacher who flip-flops from teaching primary one year, to teaching intermediate the next, my passion for using picture books in my lessons, no matter what grade, has not wavered. I love incorporating picture books into my lessons. Whether I am teaching about friendship, social responsibility or dealing with complicated emotions, Oliver Jeffers is definitely one of my go-to authors.

The stories are written with simple language and are a wonderful tool to engage students who may not have a lot of language themselves (ELL students). As well, the pictures in his stories are playful, and engaging, in a way that captivates the young and the old (yes, I'm referring to those over the hill grade 7's you might have).

One of my favourite books from Jeffers'collection so far, is *Stuck*.

The story centres on a young boy who gets his kite stuck in a tree, and subsequently

decides to try knocking that kite out of the tree by throwing other things into the tree. After reading this story to my grade 2 and 3 students last year, we discussed the aspects of care, personal responsibility and social responsibility. My students also reflected on other strategies the character could have used, to solve his problem.

In the end, we constructed a giant tree on one of our classroom bulletin boards and I asked them to draw something that they would never want to get stuck in the tree.

Students then had to explain in their reflection journals, why they wouldn't want what they chose to get stuck in the tree.

Many of my students had chosen their mother as something they would never want to get stuck. This story really made my students think about the idea of care and being more thoughtful about the things that matter to them.

This year, I plan to read this picture book to my grade 4 and 5 students, as an activity we can do for our short story unit this term. However, for the post-reading activity, rather than having them reflect in their journal, I will be asking them to create a short

story centered around the topic of, "Something I Never Want to be Stuck."

Once students have finished their short stories, I plan on having them share their work in small groups of three. As well, I will be encouraging my grade 4's and 5's to submit their writing to the upcoming BCTELA Student Writing Journal Contest, coming up this spring!



For more information about the contest, go to: <a href="www.bctela.ca">www.bctela.ca</a> and look under the "publications" tab.

# Voices Visible

# **BCTELA's Student Writing Contest**

By Newsletter Editor Celia Brogan

Are you looking for an opportunity for your students to share their writing with a wider audience? Invite your young writers to submit their work to the BCTELA student writing contest!

BCTELA holds an annual writing contest for members' students; we receive submissions of poetry and prose from around the province.

The contest is open to writers in grades two through twelve, and winning selections are published in an anthology titled *Voices Visible*.

Pieces are judged and published by genre and grade, which makes *Voices Visible* a great resource as a mentor text.

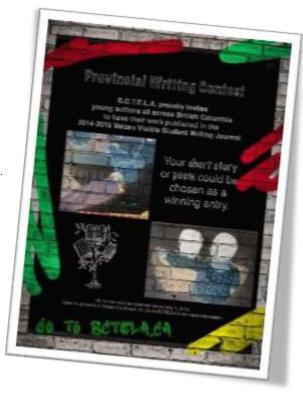
### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Go to the BCTELA website to download the contest guidelines and entry cover sheet.

Deadline for submissions is May 1st

You can download the poster to display in you classroom or around school.

http://bctela.ca/publications/



# Mentorship in New Mexico

by Voices Visible Editors Don Blazevich & Belinda Chi

In October, 2014, Don Blazevich and Belinda Chi had the opportunity to attend and present at the 6th Annual Mentoring Conference at the University of New Mexico. Don and Belinda, classroom teachers in Burnaby, are both mentors in the graduate diploma program through Field Programs at Simon Fraser University. They were part of a panel presentation with six other colleagues from the university. The presentation focused on SFU's model in Field Programs where many of the teaching staff come from within the program: meaning many of them were once students who later became mentors, and some eventually become Faculty Associates. The panel discussed and shared the 'liminal moments' that resonated with each of them in their learning journey which made an impact on working alongside others as a mentor.

# Don and Belinda reflected on their trip to New Mexico and here share some highlights.

It was wonderful to see so many different disciplines at the conference. There were speakers from business, medicine and education, just to name a few. The speakers at the workshops presented a variety of structures and strategies in mentoring.

One of the Keynote Speakers, Lillian T. Ebby, shared evidence based research on 'Facilitating High Quality Mentoring Relationships'. It was reaffirming to hear that research supports many of the qualities one may consider to be essential when working and learning alongside others. She outlined six predictors for quality mentoring relationships. Briefly, they are:

- Deep-Level Similarity (An enormous predictor. e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs and personality)
- 2. Experiential Similarity (e.g. academic discipline, rank, geographic location)
- 3. Interaction Frequency (Can take time to develop.)
- Relationship Length (Time together matters, to disclose, develop a bond, etc.)

- 5. Mentees Come With Social Capital (e.g. support from family unit, from others)
- 6. Institutional Support For Mentoring (e.g. role models, mentor accountability, amount of mentoring in occurring in groups)

We also attended a session on Mentoring Creativity In The Arts. It was interesting to hear creativity being defined through the use of an artist's lens. One of the speakers, an accomplished pianist, spoke of the physicality of being creative and linked his thoughts to the composition of a piece of music. He described how the sound we create is, in fact, music we can do with our body. He demonstrated this through playing and discussing the components of 'Moonlight Sonata' stating that creativity cannot be considered creative, until we examine it. For example, Moonlight Sonata has an introduction, which then develops into a theme. As the music progresses, there is a shift from C Major to E Minor which may cause the performer to feel like they are lost. It is important to handle these moments of frustration or confusion with physical touch upon the piano keys, using overtones and addressing technical challenges to bring emotion to the composition. There is a sort of mindful presence that facilitates understanding where a response occurs. Adjustments and feedback are continuous and part of the creative process.

The message throughout this musical examination of creativity, (aside from the absolutely wonderful sound of the piano) was the reminder that we need to become explorers in our practice. Though we may strive for competence in our respective fields, there is a potential danger inherent to being an expert. We need to release, relax and let go, trust in yourself, trust in the process and be open to innovation. "For both music and medicine, an artistic insight is greater than knowledge and memorization alone."

We enjoyed the coming together of minds, sharing of new ideas, linking what we know as good practice with research and both discovering and strengthening new friendships.

## SOME OF DON & BELINDA'S PHOTOS



Don & Belinda



Don at the University of New Mexico



New Mexico Museum of Contemporary Arts

# Call for Articles for English Practice

by BCTELA Journal Editor Pamela Richardson

We invite you to submit articles for our upcoming issue:

# Starting a Circle: Exploring Aboriginal Education.

This issue is devoted to exploring the vital importance as well as challenges of integrating Aboriginal perspectives, voices, texts, curricula and teaching and learning practices within English Language Arts. We invite educators and scholars from British Columbia and beyond to explore how the First Peoples Principles of Learning are taken up in classroom practices as well as significant issues arising from landmark events and curricular shifts in BC, which reflect larger questions related to the future of Aboriginal Education and English Language Arts.

# Topics may include:

- Reconciliation: What does reconciliation mean in our classrooms? How can we support students in finding their role within reconciliation? What legacies of residential schools remain in BC schools and beyond, and how can we as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators address these in our practices?
- Aboriginal Content: How do we increase our ability to integrate Aboriginal content throughout our educational practice? How do we work proactively as a professional community towards these ends?
- Engagement and Inclusion: What approaches support engagement, inclusion, powerful outcomes and greater success for Aboriginal learners in English Language Arts? What practices support increased Aboriginal graduation outcomes?
- English First Peoples 10-12: How do we meaningfully and ethically integrate First Peoples' texts and curriculum into our practices? What barriers and tensions exist and how do we address these?
- First Peoples Principles of **Learning:** How do we use these in our classrooms to improve learning for all students? How can they guide our course planning and selection/evaluation of classroom resources?

English Practice, the journal of the BC Teachers of English Language Arts, is a peer-reviewed, open access, online publication published twice annually.

Articles may be submitted under the following categories:

- Teaching Ideas (classroom lessons and strategies)
- Investigating our Practice (teacher inquiry)
- Salon (Literary & arts-based pieces)
- Check this Out (book reviews)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Closing date: February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Contact: Pamela Richardson pamela.richardson@ubc.ca, or Sara Davidson <u>sarafdavidson@qmail.com</u>

ONLINE AT WWW.BCTELA.CA http://bctela.ca/publications/englishpractice/call-for-articles-2015/

# Teachers of English Language Arts www.bctela.ca @BCTELA

## **BCTELA Executive Committee**

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Kelley Inden

Belinda Chii Don Blazevich

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