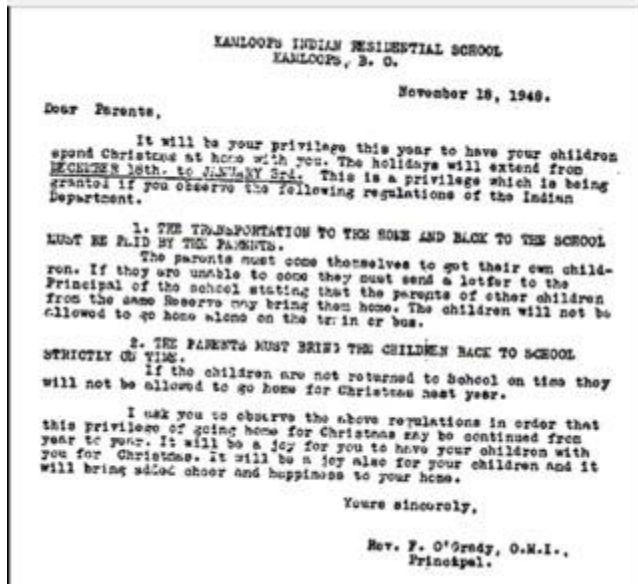


FIRST HAND: GLORIA JENSEN AND HER RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Aboriginal Education Issue 11

November 24, 2016



Gloria's dad Charles Elmer Jensen was born in Montana and did not speak Cree. Her mother Marie Margaret Hodgson was a First Nations girl from Fort Nelson who only spoke Cree and did not read or write English. When Margaret and Charles met; Charles did not speak Cree, however, over time, he learned. They were married and had nine children.

Charles moved to Fort Nelson because the trapping was bountiful. He made enough money to purchase a tug and barge. He then started a company hauling freight with his tug and barge; he hauled freight to Inuvik, Fort Simpson and Fort Liard from the Fort Nelson barge landing.

After Charles' death, Gloria's mom could not gain access to his estate and there were nine children to support, so the first year after his death, the family lived off wild meat, berries and plants they gathered and what had been grown in the garden.

When their dad was alive, the family attended the Alliance Church. After his death a local Catholic priest began to visit and suggested the children be baptized in the Catholic faith and that Margaret send some of the kids to school at the St. John the Baptist convent school in McLennan, Alberta. Today, McLennan is about a seven hour drive from Fort Nelson, back in the sixties, it would have taken about 12 hours or so on the bus.

In 1961, as Gloria's mom could not read or write English, Gloria's older sister Ruth sent Gloria and two of her brothers to convent school. Gloria was 7, William was 11 and David was 9. The children were sent on the bus to Donnelly corner, where the brothers from the St. John the Baptist convent school picked them up and took them to the convent. Gloria was sent to the girls' dorms and her two brothers were sent to the boys dorms. The boys were not allowed to mix with the girls, so she didn't see her siblings much. The language of the school was French, which the Jensen children did not speak. The children spoke Cree and English. She did learn to speak French during her five years at this school and forgot a lot

of her Cree language. The nuns were the caregivers and supervisors of the children. The teachers, at the school, were from the local area. Gloria remembers the teachers being very nasty and cruel. She remembers being subject to slaps across the face and ear twisting and pulling if she scored less than 100 per cent on any test. After this treatment she was an honour roll student.

At mealtimes, the children were made to eat everything on their plate, no matter what the food was or how fresh it was. Porridge was the breakfast food that was served on weekdays and Saturdays. The porridge was not well-stored and contained dry worms, maggots and small insects. Sunday was rubber eggs and toast. According to Catholic tradition they were fed fish on Friday. She remembers one boy was allergic to milk and she remembers that the nuns forcing him to drink the milk in front of all the children.

When he regurgitated the milk, they made him eat it. Gloria's daily chores consisted of making 52 beds, cleaning the toilets with old toothbrushes, always washing dishes and the children drying them, and doing the laundry. Ironing was done by each of the children and had to be done to perfection; pleats and creases. Gloria remembers doing a jumper nine times until it met with approval by nuns.

Saturday was cleaning day, the floors were stripped by the children, working on their hands and knees using a knife and a brush, and then re-waxed with paste wax. Then the older children would pull smaller children around on grey wool blankets to shine the floors. The following year and every year thereafter, Gloria remembers hating being sent away to school. She would fight and scratch her older sister, Ruth, as she was hauling her to the bus.

In 1962 Gloria was accompanied by her sister Alice then 6 years old, and her brother David. Her brother William refused to go back to school and ran away from home and hid. William never returned to the convent school.

In 1963, Gloria, along with two of her sisters Alice now 7 and Rita six rode the bus to the convent and were dropped off at the convent at one o'clock in the morning. Gloria knew what was expected and where to go, so she took her sisters up to the convent gate and rang the bell. Gloria was hugging one of her sisters to calm their crying, when the door was opened. The girls were both slapped around before being sent to their beds. Chapel was every morning at 6, and church every Sunday morning including confession, each child was made to go into the confessional. Her sister Rita says she couldn't think of anything to confess so Rita lied and said she stole a banana to eat. They never got bananas at school.

Gloria remembers being woken by the ringing cow bell, and one morning it did not wake her. One of the nuns came to shake her awake and she couldn't wake up. The nun shamed her by pointing out the condition of her clothes, her pajama bottoms were half way off, she remembers wondering why she couldn't wake up.

From time to time, Gloria and her two sisters and a student named Danny W. from New Westminster, BC were taken out in a vehicle by one of the convent priests. This priest made them wear old eye glasses when they were with him. She remembers everything being blurry and not being able to see when wearing the glasses; Gloria believes the glasses had belonged to elderly deceased folks that had died in the hospital that was across the street from the convent.

On these drives the priest took them to Peace River, Falher and Sturgeon Lake churches pretending they were his helpers. He used to hold Gloria in an extended hard hug and Gloria remember him getting all sweaty and breathing hard and then he would leave the girls at whatever church they were at and

disappear with Danny W. for about an hour. When they returned he would drive them back to the convent. After attending that school for five years, her mother re-enrolled her in the public school system in Fort Nelson. Gloria was happy to stay home.

She says she never let her anger over how they were treated at this school, take over her life. She believes telling her story will help people come to terms with their experiences and may protect others from similar happenings.

FENTANYL TOWN HALLS AIM TO INFORM EDUCATORS ON ‘GAME-CHANGING’ DRUG

Issue 11 News & Events

November 24, 2016



Just days before the school year was set to begin, officials in Delta were reeling from reports of nine drug overdoses in a 20-minute period involving fentanyl, the powerful street-drug.

It was just the latest scare in more than 300 illicit drug overdoses in British Columbia between January and August 2016, with the Fraser Health Authority dealing with 100 of those overdoses alone.

“These overdoses took place in a very tight period of time and within a very tight community,” said Brad Bauman, Assistant Superintendent for SD37 (Delta). “Our police service, mayor, health authority and Superintendent and Board Chair were all saying: ‘Wow, this is a game changer and we need to act.’ The message we were getting from police was this was unlike anything they’d seen.”

Delta responded quickly by organizing two town halls on fentanyl in mid-September, where Bauman estimates 1,000 students, parents and others attended in order to seek answers.

What makes fentanyl so dangerous is that it can be deadly in very small doses – as little as a few granules can kill a new user. As of September, fentanyl related overdoses had already doubled in number from all of 2015, according to the BC Coroners Service.

“I think people are aware of fentanyl, but I also think parents in general never think it will happen to their child, that their children aren’t doing these things,” said Christie Sacré, Chair of SD44 (North Vancouver) Board of Education. “But sometimes, you just don’t know.”

To help educate parents, teachers and students, Sacré is part of a team organizing a fentanyl town hall in North Vancouver on Nov. 23. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Vancouver Coastal Health’s Medical Health Officer for the North Shore. Representatives from North Vancouver RCMP, West Vancouver Police, and other health representatives will also speak.

“Basically, we want to be proactive. We thankfully haven’t had any issues with fentanyl overdoses in schools on the North Shore, but it’s important to inform people, to let them know this could potentially be their kids without proper education,” Sacré said.

Bauman expanded on the notion, adding that the second facet of town hall events is to inform everyone about the resources that are available in the community for those affected by drug use. In Delta, this includes ongoing secondary school presentations with the Odd Squad, a group of serving and retired police officers who educate the public on avoiding drugs and gang life.

“We’re learning, and we’re trying to educate our counsellors, who are going for overdose awareness training as a bit of a preventative measure so we know what that looks like in frontline training,” Bauman said.

Bauman added that Delta had an early impetus to get ahead of the fentanyl crisis with a cascade of overdoses in a short period of time, but he hopes all school districts will work collaboratively to increase education and awareness around illicit drug use.

Sacré, who has children in Grades 10, 12 and third year university, noted that the goal of fentanyl town halls is not to increase anxiety. Rather, it is about educators’ top priority of student safety, emphasising that this is “the crucial age range for drug education.”

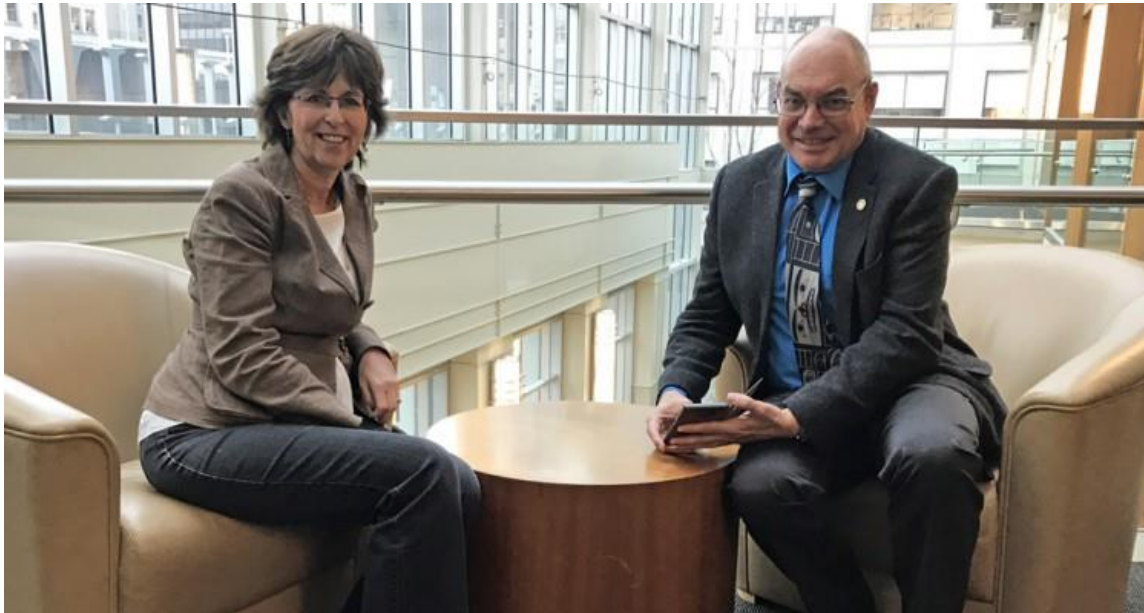
“This is a very real danger and not something most families anticipate. I hope people take the issue seriously, and I hope they come out and learn from our experts,” she said.

By Daniel Palmer, Writer, BCSTA

ELECTIONS ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE: PUTTING A SPOTLIGHT ON WHY PUBLIC EDUCATION IS THE KEY

Issue 11 Profiles Public Education is the Key

November 24, 2016



The BC School Trustees Association’s Elections Engagement Committee is composed of eight branch presidents; Tim Bennett, Lora-Lee Brekke, Shelley Carter, Laura Dixon, Art Erasmus, Eve Flynn, Ginny Manning and Lori Pratt, along with Director Donna Sargent and Vice President Gordon Swan. The committee exists representation from school districts throughout the province and is currently working on ways to make education the most talked about issue during the election. In order to realize this purpose, the committee will require the active participation of all school boards.

“Our goal is to make education, if not the key issue, one of the key issues in the upcoming provincial election,” said BCSTA vice-president and committee co-chair Gordon Swan. “We will be doing this in a non-partisan way and every branch president will be working with local Boards of Education to make this happen.”

For this election, the BCSTA is taking a grassroots approach by encouraging local school boards to participate by highlighting their specific needs and challenges in their communities. Such concerns include investments in trades and technology, recommendations from the Standing Committee on Finance as it relates to specific districts, rural issues of accessibility in the north and interior of the province, challenges faced by island and coastal communities due to unique geography and settings, a lack of classroom space in growing districts such as Surrey and much needed seismic upgrades for older schools in earthquake prone areas such as Richmond.

During the previous provincial election, the BCSTA itself was the main voice for public education advocacy, but strategies are changing for the upcoming election. “This time we are trying something a little bit different,” said BCSTA board director and committee co-chair Donna Sargent. “We want to empower our members and the community, to tell their story, to make it their own because we are locally elected and locally accountable to our voters. We want to give real examples at a local level on why public education is important.”

And to do that, the committee analyzed the upcoming AGM’s theme, “Education is the Key”, and asked the question, “Why is public education the key?” School boards will be encouraged to seek answers to this question, which will be widely publicized by trustees themselves, those running to be an MLA, chamber of commerce members, local government, students, seniors and various members of the public including businesses. This will also show and remind the 72 per cent of voters who do not have children of the importance of investing in public education.

“Public education is key to everyone,” Swan said. “It is key to a democratic society to have an educated workforce, it is key to social justice, key to a civil society, infrastructure, and community. It’s a key to having qualified nurses and doctors in a community, and this all starts in our local community schools.”

For many communities, schools also serve as a hub of activity. Seniors exercise by going for walks around the school, community groups such as Brownies and Scouts hold meetings after school hours, and gymnasiums and auditoriums are used for various community events.

“We want local school boards to show how impactful schools are to a community. Even if people don’t have kids, it’s a gathering spot,” Swan said. “Our school buildings are used five days a week by community groups. It’s not just a place kids go to until 3 p.m. It’s a bigger piece for the community.”

Currently, a new kit is being developed for this year’s public education advocacy campaign along with the last election’s “Me too!” articles being updated and repurposed. The “Me too” campaign encouraged people to take a picture of community members holding a circular sign that read, “We value public education,” in order to bring public education to the forefront of discussions in the last provincial election.

Social media will play a large role in the campaign, such as posting “public education is the key” answers on various platforms. At February’s provincial council meeting, the elections engagement committee will have a PechaKucha-style presentation Friday Night, with 20 slides shown for 20 seconds from 6 – 12 presenters. Those in attendance will then be able to engage each other in Saturday’s Issues Forum, to take what they learned to their local school boards to help them engage their local communities. The annual general meeting, set for April 2017, will have an all-candidates moderated education-forum, with representatives from the provincial Liberal, NDP, Conservative and Green parties having been invited to attend.

While the provincial election is still six months away, the committee is already feeling positive and energized from recent announcements from two of BC’s major political parties.

“We’ve seen in the past few month’s additional funds for a variety of District needs with both parties promising to invest more in Public Education,” Swan said. “We hope to see this expressed in their party’s’ education platforms.”

“It is one of the most important things they can invest in,” Sargent said about the provincial government. “And the public needs to know that public education is being properly funded.”

Both Sargent and Swan acknowledge there is a fine line between advocating for public education and being seen as an advocate for one political party over the other. As a non-partisan organization, the BCSTA is primarily focused on improving the public education experience for all students.

“There will likely be trustees who may be running for provincial office and we know trustees come from a broad, political spectrum,” Swan said. “We don’t want to look supportive of one party or the other because trustees have to work with whichever party is elected for the next four-year mandate. It is a balancing act.”

By Christopher Sun, Writer, BCSTA

THE GIFT OF A DRUM

Aboriginal Education Issue 11

November 24, 2016



In a heartfelt presentation at the October meeting, BCSTA Aboriginal Education Committee Elders Fannie Vance and Frank Johnson were gifted a drum. Fannie and Frank are valued members of the committee; their sharing and their wisdom does not go unnoticed.

Frank is a new member of the committee. It was during the Aboriginal Education Committee's summer planning meeting that he displayed his talent for drumming and singing by using a pen and the table, playing a moving Lehal song that he performed with his grandson.

Gloria Jackson, BCSTA director and liaison to the committee, told the story to a friend who works for the First Nation Health Authority. Her friend shared the story with her supervisor, Interior Region director Lisa Montgomery-Reid, who gifted the buffalo-hide drum made by Norman Terbasket.

Frank will be the Keeper of the Drum for the BCSTA, and he will share his drumming and singing with BCSTA members at future meetings and events.

"Thank you for the beautiful drum, it will make great heart beats," stated Fannie upon accepting the drum. Frank echoed the sentiment, adding that "it is an honour to be bestowed the Keeper of the Drum."