

A Short History of BC Education

- 1849 A school is opened at Fort Victoria for children of Hudson's Bay Company officers (i.e. senior managers). The school was known as the "Company School," to distinguish it from the "Colonial School" established three years later for children of the servants (i.e. ordinary employees) of the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 1851 Governor [James Douglas](#) recommends that schools be established for "the children of the labouring and poorer classes" on the colony of Vancouver Island.
- 1852 In March, a "common school" is opened in temporary quarters in Fort Victoria. This is the first government-funded public school in what becomes British Columbia. Charles Bailey is the first teacher.
- [1870 Rules and Regulations for the Management and Government of Common Schools](#) are published in the *Government Gazette* for the benefit of parents, teachers and school trustees. Appendices to the Rules and Regulations list prescribed textbooks and provide prayers to be used in religious services.
- 1872 In March the provincial legislature adopts the [Public School Act \(1872\)](#). This statute creates a Public School Fund and a [Provincial Board of Education](#).
- 1876 The *Public School Act, 1872* is subsequently amended to exclude all clergy from holding any position -- voluntary or otherwise -- in a provincial public school. The amendment also restricts religious exercises in schools to the public recitation of *The Lord's Prayer* and the *Ten Commandments*.
- 1879 *Public School Act, 1879*. The position of Superintendent of Education is retained, but the [Board of Education](#) is abolished under the new act. Control of the public school system is placed with the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council (i.e. the Cabinet).
- 1896 In the interests of health and hygiene, Recess - a ten or fifteen minute break from lessons in the morning and afternoon - becomes mandatory in all public schools. Children were supposed to spend the time outdoors to permit the "atmospheric washing" [i.e. ventilation] of the classroom.
- 1901 The [Provincial Normal School](#) for teacher training is established in Vancouver.
- 1905 British Columbia School Trustees Association is instituted
- 1915 The first [Parent-Teacher Association](#) is launched at Craigflower School near Victoria on 8 September 1915. In November, PTAs are formed at Bayview Elementary School and at King Edward High School in Vancouver.
- 1919 [British Columbia Teachers' Federation](#) is incorporated under the Benevolent Societies Act.
- 1922 Local PTAs form a provincial association known as the [British Columbia Parent-Teacher Federation \[BCPTF\]](#).
- 1938 New standardized [report cards](#) are introduced during the 1938-39 school year for provincial elementary schools, along with explanatory letters for parents. The report cards and accompanying letters are couched in the language of [progressivism](#). Revised report cards for junior and senior high schools are introduced the following year.
- 1943 Bible readings are authorized by the Council of Public Instruction. In 1944, the *Public School Act* is duly amended to read: "All public schools ... shall be opened by the reading, without explanation or comment, of a passage of scripture....to be followed by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer."

- 1944 September: The first provincially-funded [Kindergarten](#) classes are opened, on an experimental basis, in Vancouver and Victoria, when the Department of Education agrees to provide a grant towards the salary of kindergarten teachers. In Vancouver, the first kindergarten classes are opened at Henry Hudson and Dawson Schools; Victoria's first kindergarten is opened at [Spring Ridge School](#).
- 1946 *Public School Amendment Act*. This statute implements the recommendations of the Cameron Report and establishes large, regionally-defined administrative units. The new units are styled [School Districts](#), but are also assigned numbers. Hence S. D. [School District] No. 1 (Fernie), S.D. No. 39 (Vancouver), S.D. No. 61 (Greater Victoria), etc.
- Membership in the [British Columbia Teachers' Federation](#) is compulsory for all public school teachers, effective 1 April 1947.
- 1949 First steps, since the nineteenth century, towards integrating and accommodating First Nations students in the provincial public school system. An amendment to the *Public School Act* enables local Boards of School Trustees and the federal Department of Indian Affairs to enter into agreements for sharing the costs of schooling for aboriginal children
- 1951 The first chills of the [Cold War](#) are evident in the provincial education system. In September 1951, a course of lectures on *Civil Defence Affairs* is organized at the Provincial Normal School in Victoria. The next year, the Department of Education issues a poster on what to do "If An Air Raid Comes Without Warning." "Get Under Your Desk - Move Fast!."
- 1954 September: British Columbia experiences a critical *shortage of teachers*. To meet the need for more teachers, the Department of Education initiates a recruiting campaign in Britain (which nets 65 teachers for the start of the 1955 school year). Campaigns to recruit British teachers will continue over the next decade.
- 1960 October: The report of the *Royal Commission on Education* [known as the Chant Commission<] is presented to the government. In all, 158 recommendations were made. The report is released to the public in December and generates a great deal of discussion.
- 1961 The *ball point pen* is officially recognized and authorized for use in provincial schools. It replaces old fashioned penholders, steel nibs, ink bottles and blotters.
- 1967 Open-area schools become fashionable: MacCorkindale Elementary School in Vancouver is one of the first new "open-area" schools in the province.
- 1971 The Department of Education is reorganized, effective 1 January 1971, with significant structural changes. The position of Superintendent of Education is eliminated, and the superintendent's statutory duties are transferred to the Deputy Minister of Education.
French immersion programmes are established in select elementary schools.
- 1973 15 February: corporal punishment ("the strap") is abolished by an amendment to the *Public School Act*.
June: departmental exams [i.e. province-wide Grade 12 graduation exams] are discontinued. The exams will be reinstated in 1984.
- September: All school districts are required to make provisions for [Kindergartens](#).
- 1976 The *Department* of Education is restyled *Ministry* of Education
- 1977 A "core curriculum" is established for provincial schools, from K - 12. The curriculum consists of three categories - "that which must be taught, that which should be taught, and that which may be taught." [*106th Annual Report of the Public Schools*, p. 10].

- 1982 February: Premier William R. Bennett (leader of the provincial Social Credit Party) announces a new programme to curtail government spending. The programme, known as *Restraint*, provokes opposition and great hostility among organized labour groups, including provincial employee unions and the [British Columbia Teachers' Federation](#).

August: William ("Bill") van der Zalm is appointed Minister of Education and is responsible for implementing *Restraint* measures in the education sector.

- 1983 *School Wars!*, a term coined by journalists to describe unprecedented hostility between the provincial government and public school workers. Teachers and school support staff take part in a 3 day strike to protest reductions in education funding. The protest is part of a wide organized labour opposition movement known as *Solidarity*.
- 1987 April 1 of that year, the government announced two major pieces of legislation—Bills 19 and 20. Bill 19 was a piece of legislation that restricted existing rights for trade unions while at the same time including teachers as employees entitled to those rights. Principals and vice-principals were removed from the teacher bargaining unit with a clear “management role” defined for them

The [British Columbia College of Teachers](#) is created under the [Teaching Profession Act](#) to establish and promote [Standards for the education, competence and professional conduct](#) of its members. The College is a statutory body whose major function is to regulate the education profession in the public interest.

- 1988 The Sullivan Royal Commission Report is published. The provincial government accepts nearly all of its 83 recommendations, including a blueprint for an innovative curriculum program known as Year 2000. The [British Columbia Principals' and Vice Principals' Association](#) [BCPVPA] is formed.
- 1989 Parent Advisory Councils are recognized at every school, following recommendations from the Sullivan Royal Commission and changes to the *Public School Act*. PACs take up some of the school-advocacy campaigns formerly conducted by PTAs. In 1990, local PACs form the [British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils](#).
- 1991 The *School Meals program* is introduced, to provide children in urban schools with nutritious lunch-time meals.
- 1996 Bible Readings are no longer permitted in BC Schools
- 2001 During the April 2001 provincial election campaign, the BC Liberals indicated that they would bring in legislation designating education as an essential service. In August 2001, the BC Liberal government passed essential services legislation which substantially reduces teachers' full and free collective [bargaining rights](#), including the right to strike.
- In October, 2001, the BCTF held the first-ever province-wide strike vote and a total of 91.4% of British Columbia teachers voted "yes".
- On January 25, 2002, " the minister of labour introduced Bills 27 and 28, designed to impose terms and conditions of employment on teachers and strip all class-size, staffing, and workload provisions from the provincial and local agreements. Most of the provisions guaranteeing support for students with special needs were also eliminated.
- October 3, 2005, the BC Liberals introduced Bill 12, the [Teachers' Collective Agreement Act](#), which imposed a contract on BC's teachers and ordered an end to job action. It mandated zero-zero-zero, and extended the existing contract to June 2006.

- On October 5th, teachers throughout the province voted 90.5% to take a stand in protest against Bill 12, and were on strike from October 7th to 21st. The BCTF was found to be in contempt of court for defying the Labour Relations Board order to return to work, and the Federation's strike fund was frozen. Teachers did not receive strike pay.
- During the second week of the strike, the government asked mediator Vince Ready to facilitate an end to the teachers' strike and he developed recommendations which were presented to the BCTF and government. The BCTF reluctantly recommended the Ready report to its members. Teachers voted 77% to accept the recommendations and they returned to work on October 24, 2005.
- An agreement-in-committee was concluded with BCPSEA at 9:30 p.m. on June 30, 2006, and details are highlighted in the [settlement summary](#). Members ratified the five-year agreement on September 8, 2006. The settlement included a 16% salary increase over five years, and a \$4,000 signing bonus for each individual teacher.
- Spring 2011 Court rules against BC Government on Bill 27, the Education Services Collective Agreement Act, and Bill 28, the Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act.
- June 2011 Current contract expires without new agreement.
- October 2011 The British Columbia teachers' union pulled out of settlement talks with the provincial government
- 2012: Three-day strike after several months of low-scale job action. Government legislates a cooling off period, then BCTF and BCPSEA negotiate a retroactive deal covering 2011 to June 2013. No salary increase, but other increased leave provisions. Teachers say they fought back a government attempt to eliminate seniority rights.
- Spring 2014: rotating strikes begin May 2014 and escalate to full scale strike in June. The strike lasts until mid-September 2014. A 6 year contract is negotiated.
- April 2015: In a 4-1 decision, the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled that the province did not violate teachers' constitutional rights when it introduced Bill 22 in 2012 — legislation that temporarily limited teacher bargaining on class size and composition
- Summer 2015 – new draft curriculum introduced