

The B.C. School Counsellors' Association

YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION – DO YOU BELONG?

By Vic Gladish, Counsellor, Sardis Secondary (SD #33)

You are a school counselor and a teacher – a professional. Do you belong to an appropriate professional association? If not, why not? You might reply – “yeah – I’m a member of the College of Teachers and the BCTF – what more do I need?” Hopefully, by the time you finish this you’ll have the answer!

I have been a member of the BCSCA (nominally I admit, and preferring to watch others do all the work) and my Local Specialist Association (a little more involved) for the past 10 years. There are many reasons why I belong to these two associations, but the main reason has been professional development – through organized activities and the informal networking that occurs when professionals gather together. Before the days of relentless and nasty cutbacks our LSA in Chilliwack was the vehicle for delivering counsellor professional development and we had a reasonable budget and a lot of autonomy in selecting the activities for our members. Our function is evolving into a more political one as we work together to advocate for school counsellors in our district. And, for at least six of the past ten years, I have attended the annual PSA Conference, put on by the BCSCA, and have benefitted professionally from the many workshop sessions that I attended and inspirational speakers that I heard. The conference has provided me with an opportunity to meet up with old friends and colleagues from all over British Columbia, to have some fun in Vancouver, and to re-energize for the demands of secondary school counselling work.

Last October, at our conference, I witnessed once again how hard the executive of the PSA works on behalf of the members and other conference attendees. Several of these individuals have contributed countless hours of their own time for many years to ensure that the BCSCA exists. I decided I could no longer sit on the sidelines and applaud their efforts so I allowed my name to stand during the election of officers and now find myself in the role of Membership Chair with a front row seat to all the action (and wondering how am I going to keep up with these powerhouses who seem to have limitless energy). I

can honestly say now, “Your executive works hard for you – what can you do to contribute to your LSA or PSA?”

I see this appeal for members to also be a call to action! Our work is threatened by a government bent on cutting funding for public education and services to the vulnerable. A strong PSA with strong LSAs will provide strength in numbers and solidarity in advocating for professional school counselling and manageable ratios. We will have a much stronger voice when a higher proportion of us belong to our professional association. Are you going to quietly allow your school district to lose yet another counsellor this spring as the belt tightens yet again?

So - what does your PSA do for you? Why should we be members? In summary: professional development, professional association, political activism, an incredible annual conference, an evolving website, and, don't forget that great little magazine written by school counsellors for school counsellors three time each year.

We need to be learning, refreshing our training, and connecting with our colleagues in order to stay a step or two ahead of our clients/students, and becoming a member in the BCSCA helps to make that possible. When will you join us?

Feeling motivated? Go to <http://bcschoolcounsellor.com/>, click on Membership and thanks to PayPal, you can instantly become a member. Your membership is renewed annually as part of your Conference fee, so be sure to attend next October.