BC Teachers' Federation

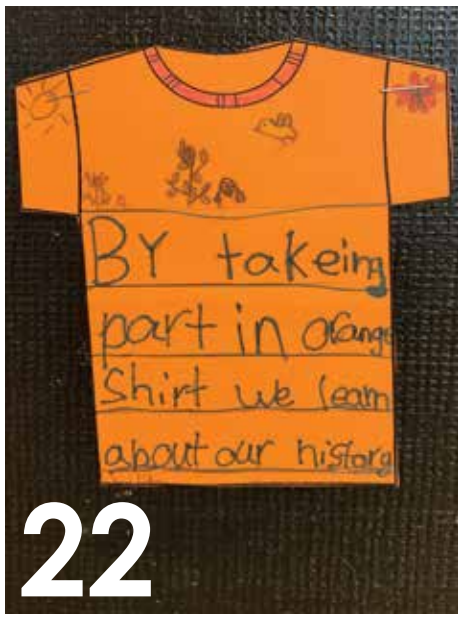
Teacher

Nov/Dec 2021

A decolonization journey through quilting

pages 20–21

IN THIS ISSUE



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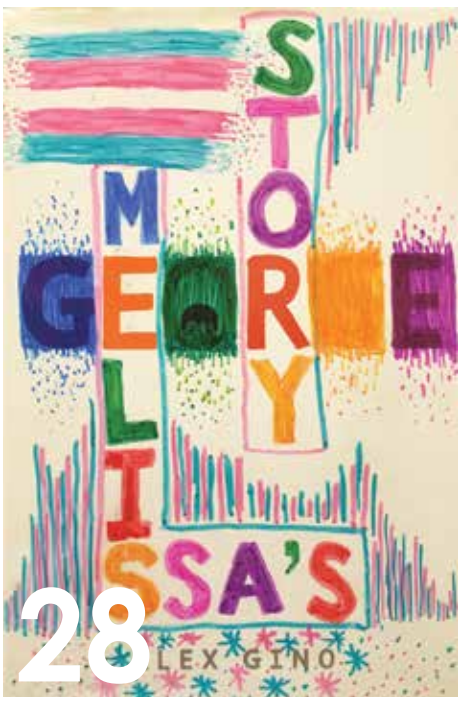
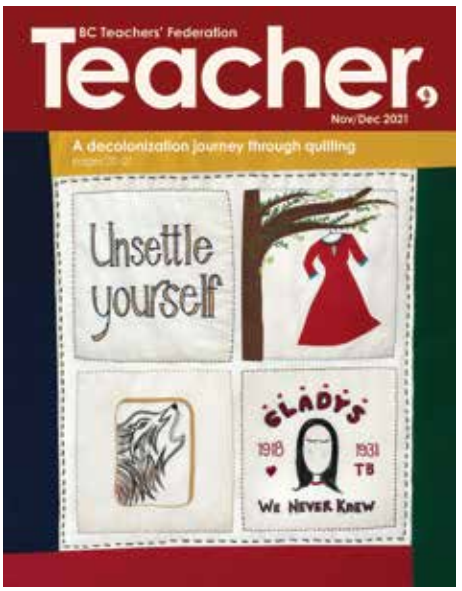


THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE



Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? Know of a project at your school or in your local you want to share with colleagues? Then consider writing for *Teacher*, the flagship publication of the BCTF! Submission guidelines are available at *bctf.ca*.

We also welcome letters to the editor. Send your letter to *teachermag@bctf.ca*.

Teacher reserves the right to edit or condense any contribution considered for publication. We are unable to publish all submissions we receive.

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CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media

CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association

TFEU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Teri Mooring, BCTF President

Hope on the horizon for healthier, safer schools

With yet another incredibly busy start to another pandemic school year, I first want to acknowledge every single classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, teacher teaching on call, adult educator, resource teacher, specialist teacher, and associated professional throughout BC for your commitment and dedication to your students and colleagues. Together, we have kept our schools open and operational—something we know makes a world of difference in maintaining a sense of normality for our students and their families through these very uncertain times. *Thank you!*

And, thanks to our collective outspoken advocacy, we now have the full K–12 mask mandate in place across BC. We are grateful to also now know that our younger students will soon have access to vaccines—one more very important tool in the battle against COVID-19. It is expected that Health Canada will approve COVID-19 vaccines for the 5–11 age group before the end of 2021.

Though the Provincial Health Officer has indicated that vaccines will not be mandated for students, it has become clear to us that a vaccine mandate is likely to come to employees in the public education system. Fortunately, as expected, 94% of respondents in our recent survey of randomly sampled members indicated they are already fully vaccinated (with another 1% awaiting their second dose), well above the provincial average, and 82% indicated support for a vaccine mandate for school staffs.

Though the decision to implement a mandate falls to the employer and/or government, the Federation has formalized our position in support of provincial mandatory COVID-19 vaccines in the K–12 system for school staff and volunteers. Getting vaccinated is about more than just keeping yourself safe—it's also about protecting those around you. If you haven't already done so, please get vaccinated.

Let's stay strong and healthy, together.

In solidarity,

Teri Mooring
BCTF President

MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

Teri Mooring, Présidente de la FECB

Une lueur d'espoir pour des écoles plus saines et plus sûres

Avec un autre début d'année scolaire incroyablement chargé en ce temps de pandémie, je tiens d'abord à remercier chaque enseignant(e), enseignant(e)-bibliothécaire, enseignant(e) suppléant(e), éducateur(-trice) des adultes, enseignant(e)-ressource, enseignant(e) spécialisé(e) et professionnel(le) associé(e) dans l'ensemble de la Colombie-Britannique pour votre engagement et votre dévouement envers vos élèves et collègues. Ensemble, nous avons maintenu nos écoles ouvertes et opérationnelles, ce qui, nous le savons, fait toute la différence dans le maintien d'un sentiment de normalité pour nos élèves et leurs familles en cette période d'incertitude. Merci!

De plus, grâce à notre fervent plaidoyer collectif, nous avons maintenant un mandat de port du masque en place pour tous/toutes les élèves de la maternelle à la 12e année partout en C.-B. Nous sommes également reconnaissant(e)

s de savoir que nos jeunes élèves auront bientôt accès à des vaccins, un outil supplémentaire important dans la lutte contre la COVID-19. On s'attend à ce que Santé Canada approuve les vaccins contre la COVID-19 pour le groupe d'âge des 5 à 11 ans avant la fin de 2021.

Bien que l'agent provincial de la santé (PHO) ait indiqué que les vaccins ne seront pas obligatoires pour les élèves, il est devenu clair pour nous qu'un mandat de vaccination sera probablement prescrit pour les employé(e)s du système d'éducation publique. Heureusement, comme nous nous y attendions, 94% des répondant(e)s à notre récent sondage effectué auprès d'un échantillon de membres sélectionné(e)s au hasard ont indiqué qu'ils/qu'elles étaient déjà entièrement vacciné(e)s (avec une portion de 1% en attente de leur deuxième dose), ce qui est bien au-delà de la moyenne provinciale et 82% ont indiqué appuyer un mandat de vaccination pour le personnel scolaire.

Bien que la décision d'émettre un mandat incombe à l'employeur ou au gouvernement, la Fédération a officialisé sa position à l'appui des vaccins provinciaux obligatoires contre la COVID-19 dans le système de la maternelle à la 12e année pour le personnel scolaire et les bénévoles. Se faire vacciner, ce n'est pas seulement assurer sa propre sécurité, c'est aussi protéger son entourage. Si vous ne l'avez pas déjà fait, veuillez s'il vous plaît vous faire vacciner.

Restons fort(e)s et en santé tous ensemble.

Solidairement,

Teri Mooring
Présidente de la FECB

Luis Isidoro photo

Celebrating 53 years of service to the BCTF

FOR 53 YEARS, Lise West's calm and patient demeanour has been a welcome respite from the busy, and sometimes hectic, pace of work at the BCTF office. Members and staff have benefited greatly from Lise's steady hand in everything from planning governance meetings to organizing communications.

Congratulations on ytour retirement, Lise, and thank you for your contributions to the BCTF.

When did you start working at the BCTF?
July 2, 1968. I was one of seven support staff hired right after high school. The vice-principal at my high school was on the resolutions committee at the BCTF and gave me the phone number for the BCTF office a few weeks before I finished high school.

What was your fist job at the BCTF?
I worked in what was called the Publications Department. I was typing journals and newsletters for the provincial specialist associations. Sometimes, there were illustrations in the journals and newsletters. I couldn't draw, so after a year and a half I requested a change and was placed in the General Office. That was the name for the Communications and Campaigns Division at the time.

What has changed at the BCTF office since you first started?
The biggest change is that everybody has their own computer now. We used to share computers and used electric typewriters for most of our work. If you made a mistake on the electric typewriter, you had to rekey the whole page. There was a lot of paper around all the time.

What has changed at the BCTF as a whole?
I think the Federation has grown to be more inclusive and more open to all members.

What did you love most about working here?
The ongoing learning makes the work here interesting. The work is always challenging, and there's a lot of variety. But the best part about working here is the people. We work as a team. We back each other up, we share knowledge and information, we help each other. It's a great place to work.

It has been a privilege to work at the BCTF.

Thank you, Lise!

How the BCTF

I want my union to take action on climate change!

The BCTF's governing bodies follow democratic processes to make decisions. To present an idea to a governing body, you need to present a **motion.**

*A **motion** brings business before a meeting. Motions contain specific action items. For advice on who to talk to about writing a motion, contact your local.*

I have two motions:

That my local participate in the climate march in my community on November 14.*

That the BCTF show support for the organization Teachers for Action against Climate Change.*

*This event and organization are fictional.

Local motion

Every local hosts general meetings open to all members in the local. Connect with your local office to learn about their process for presenting a motion. At the **local general meeting**, you will have an opportunity to speak to your motion and share why you think it's important.

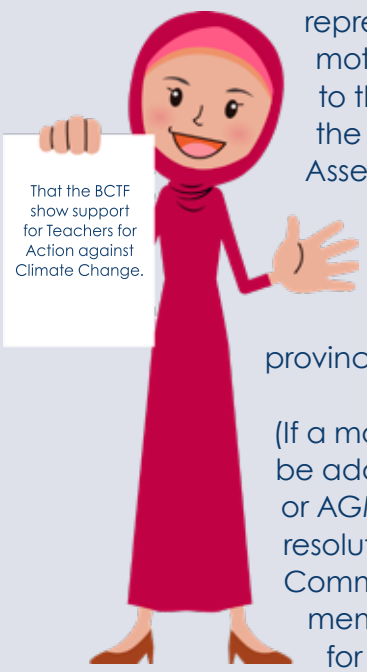
*A **local general meeting** is where local decisions are made.*

Provincial motion

Present it to your **local executive committee.**

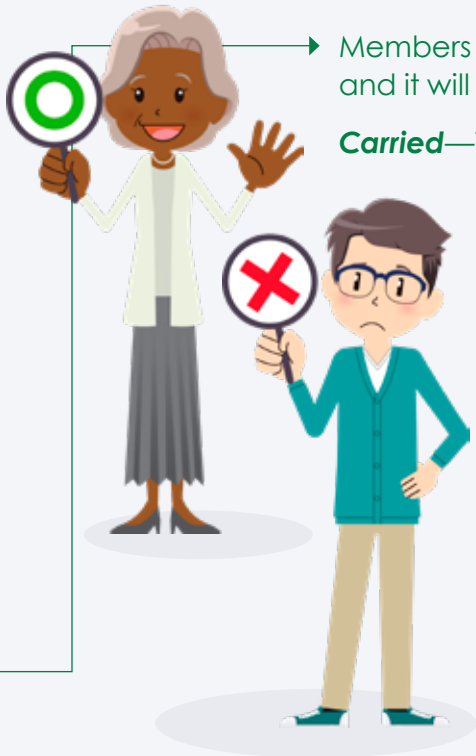
*The **local executive committee** is made up of elected members who oversee the business of the local and provide political leadership.*

The local executive or representatives will submit motions on behalf of the local to the governing bodies of the BCTF: the Representative Assembly (RA) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Motions from locals are termed resolutions, and are debated at these provincial meetings.



(If a motion is urgent and must be addressed before the next RA or AGM, a local can send the resolution to the BCTF Executive Committee (EC). A BCTF EC member must move the motion for debate at the EC meeting.)

makes decisions



Members at the local general meeting will vote on the motion, and it will be **carried** or **defeated**.

Carried—*The local will take action as specified by the motion.*

Defeated—*As a union, we respect our democratic processes and understand that once our decisions are made, the collective position prevails.*

However, you can still present your motion, or something similar in spirit, at a future local general meeting. Connect with like-minded members in your local and do some grassroots organizing to garner support—local committees can be a great place to start. When you have more members engaged in your issue, bring it back to a local general meeting for consideration.

BCTF Representative Assembly

At the Representative Assembly, 131 local representatives vote to give mandate to the BCTF Executive Committee. The BCTF EC and local presidents attend the RA with voice but no vote.

BCTF Annual General Meeting

Approximately 750 elected teacher delegates meet at the AGM to elect new BCTF EC members, debate EC recommendations, local resolutions, and set BCTF priorities for the year.

Just like at the local level, motions brought to the RA or AGM are typically carried or defeated, and the collective position prevails. Members can continue to work locally and provincially to have their issues heard.

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What does the provincial bargaining team do?

THE PROVINCIAL BARGAINING TEAM is appointed by the BCTF Executive Committee (EC) to represent members during negotiations with the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA). The bargaining team is tasked with writing proposals that outline improvements we are seeking to our collective agreements. These proposals are presented at the bargaining table and are negotiated with representatives from BCPSEA, who bargain on behalf of school districts.

Who decides what we bargain?

The bargaining team takes direction from BCTF members in setting bargaining priorities.

Each local submits bargaining priorities to be considered at the BCTF Bargaining Conference, based on feedback from their members. The local then sends delegates to this conference who vote to ratify which of the local priorities and BCTF EC recommendations will be bargained.

BCTF advisory committees also submit reports to the conference that outline their bargaining priorities for the delegates to consider before they begin voting.

What can we bargain?

Bargaining takes place both provincially and locally. The provincial bargaining team bargains with BCPSEA for all significant monetary items, for example, salary and working conditions. Local bargaining teams generally bargain non-monetary items with their employer (school districts) such as post-and-fill language. The split of issues (see right)determines which provisions in the collective agreement must be bargained provincially and which can be bargained locally.

Split of issues

Locally bargained language

- posting and filling of positions
- layoff and recall
- non-discrimination
- staff committee
- access to information
- most non-cost items
- other items currently listed in Appendix 2* of the collective agreement.

Provincially bargained language

Pre-1994 language locals might have pertaining to items currently listed in Appendix 1* of the collective agreement, for example:

- allowances
- workload
- time worked
- paid leaves unique to your local

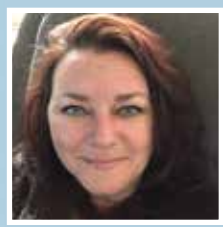
LOCAL LANGUAGE

- salary
- benefits
- workload
- time worked
- paid leaves
- other items currently listed in Appendix 1 of the collective agreement.

PROVINCIAL LANGUAGE

*Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 are found in LOU#1 of the collective agreement and define the local/provincial split of issues. The split of issues is negotiated at the provincial table, within the parameters of the Public Education Labour Relations Act.

Get to know your provincial bargaining team



Sherry Dittrick (she/her)

Currently I am the local president in Comox. I have previously served as vice-president/bargaining chair, health and safety chair, and member-at-large on our local executive. For six years, I facilitated BCTF health and safety workshops and was a member of the Health and Safety Advisory Committee. My teaching experience spans K–9 as a music and classroom generalist. In 2017 I taught in NSW, Australia on an exchange. I love travelling. In my free time I am usually hiking or backpacking or renovating a cottage. I am thrilled to be a member of this team!

Clint Johnston (he/him)

I'm Clint Johnston, living on stolen Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh land, First Vice-President of the BCTF. I taught elementary students in Chilliwack prior to becoming local president, then BCTF member-at-large, then second VP. Currently I'm also serving my fifth year as a Canadian Teachers' Federation vice-president, a role I enjoy. I've bargained locally, on provincial LOUs, and as employer with staff at both the BCTF and CTF. Interestingly, my teaching started with five years in England, where two of my five children were born; three attend K–12 currently, one lives in London, and one attends University in Montréal.

Tammy McKinley (she/her)

I have been a teacher since 1997 and have taught in Alexis Creek, Kitimat, Fort Nelson, and Chilliwack. My training includes a Bachelor of Elementary Education as well as a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. I have been very active in my local for the past 18 years and have held several roles: treasurer, vice-president, PD chair, LR, and bargaining chair. Provincially I have been a member of Women in Negotiations for two years and the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee for three years. I am looking forward to the opportunity to represent members at the provincial bargaining table.

Robin Tosczak (she/her)

Since I started teaching 11 years ago, I've been actively involved in the union. Locally, I've served in many roles in the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association, including grievance officer, health and safety officer, bargaining team, and pretty much all the committees. Currently I'm the full-time first vice-president, on leave from an elementary literacy and ELL position in Victoria (hello, Strawberry Vale colleagues!). Provincially, I've been a member-at-large on the Executive Committee since 2016, and I'm looking forward to working with members to secure the best deal possible in this round.

Carla Wilson (she/her)

I am a teacher and union activist in Nelson, BC. I have a BA from UVic, a B.Ed. from Laval, and a graduate diploma and Master's degree from VIU. I have taught everything from primary grades through Grade 12 and beyond (including DL). Most of my career has been spent in French immersion classes or teaching senior English courses. I have been the president of Local 07 for the past three years and prior to that held various union positions and sat on several provincial committees. I love writing, dancing, music, photography, travel, the outdoors, and my puppy.

Sarah York (she/her)

I acknowledge that the lands on which I work, play, and learn are on the shared unceded traditional territory of the Hupačasath and Tseshaht Nations. I am currently a food studies teacher in Port Alberni. I have taught students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 in mostly small and smaller towns. I've also taught science and math, PE, inclusive education, foods, textiles, and career life education. I've been a school staff rep since 2015. In my local, I have held various roles, including secretary-treasurer and health and safety chair, and am currently the social justice co-chair. I have been a local rep and am currently a member of the Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Advisory Committee and the Women in Negotiations cadre.

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The FSA: A measure of inequity

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By Doug Sherrett, teacher, Vancouver

I TEND NOT TO BE A LETTER WRITER. I enjoy the water-cooler talk and professional conversations about issues in education. I pride myself in being well-read and reflective about learning in today's fluid environments. Uncharacteristically, today I am motivated to sit down and put some thoughts together to share about the Foundation Skills Assessments (FSA), the annual Grade 4 and 7 standardized test from the BC Ministry of Education.

This is my 17th year working as an intermediate teacher in Vancouver's Downtown East Side. I love working with my students and families; there are no dull days at Strathcona. Every hour, issues of culture, poverty, and mental wellness affect the needs of students, families, and, at times, staff. Teachers, administration, and support staff work diligently to meet these needs. I relish these challenges, and believe that over my time here, I have developed strategies, relationships, and work ethos to be effective every day.

So, amid the stress of managing regular learning in my class I am met with the anachronism of the FSA. The Ministry of Education's website says:

> *The Foundation Skills Assessment is an annual province-wide assessment of all B.C. students' academic skills in grades 4 and 7, and provides parents, teachers, schools, school districts and the Ministry of Education with important information on how well students are progressing in the foundation skills of Literacy and Numeracy.*

Standardized testing, a summative assessment tool that was born in the last century, does little to support meaningful learning in schools. How can the feedback support learning when the "important information" comes back weeks or months later?

Sure, I get the government wants to have empirical valuation on their investment into K–12 education. I pay my share of taxes and want those dollars spent effectively too. However, the use of the FSA provides only a thin perspective of learning. And at what cost to students and teachers?

From a student perspective it represents significant time away from contextual classroom learning. Not just the time to write the test, but the time to learn how to write such a test. Anecdotally, it does not provide meaningful information to my students. It becomes a stressful environment for them.

For teachers it is a logistical drain on an already logistical challenge. How, when, and where tests will be administered, and communications to parents are all time burns for teachers. And the results do little to inform our teaching practice. We do not get specifics back on test results, simply where the students are relative to the rest of their provincial grade cohort. I already know this information thanks to the valuable formative assessment tools provided by the Ministry of Education and my school board.

"...these results are used in media, social and mainstream, to marginalize the learning students are doing."

Some parents like this ranked perspective. They want to see how their child measures up to others in their grade. However, the FSA only provides this relative measure on an important, but narrow, aspect of their child's progress at school. And many parents who do not support comparative results are concerned about the negative effects this has on their child's learning.

Is the FSA just a quick and limited measure for the Ministry and school boards to compare themselves? Is it worth the stress and time it takes to move through this process? To me it is not. Especially when these results are used in media, social and mainstream, to marginalize the learning students are doing.

School rankings that come from FSA results can have an enormous impact on a school's sense of pride. Low-ranking schools, which often come from low-income neighbourhoods, are especially affected. Rankings do nothing more than pit schools and neighbourhoods against each other.

While there is never a good time for a standardized test, the fourth wave of the worst global pandemic in recent memory is a particularly bad time for one. The students and families in my class are dealing with so many daily stresses right now, let alone the health and well-being impacts of COVID-19.

When we compare the small value of this archaic measurement to the cost of students' social-emotional well-being, the hours of lost learning time, and the related stress on teachers, we see the cons significantly outweigh the pros. Please, let us rethink the FSA to save future generations from a time-consuming, stressful practice that does little to improve learning outcomes.

In defence of not being a superhero!

By Jennie Slack (she/her), President, Provincial Intermediate and Middle Years Teachers' Association, and teacher, Burnaby

TEACHING IS A PROFESSION that is an endless time sink. There is always something more we could do: our lessons could be more engaging; our worksheets could be more appealing; we could create more manipulatives for our math lesson; we could give more detailed feedback on those essays we're marking. If teachers were given three extra hours a day, we could fill them with nothing but planning and still wish we had more time.

Teaching is also a profession that draws on your emotional energy. We teach because we care, and caring for so many young people means that instead of having one, or two, or three children, we have thirty, or forty, or a hundred. Did Johnny have a lunch today? Was Mohamed able to find a friend to play with at recess? How is Xi Wen doing since their mother went back to China for another three months? Did Tina get enough sleep last night? How can I support Ryder's mum, who has to work night shifts, in helping Ryder complete their homework?

It is a daily truth for us that our students bring their home lives with them when they come to school. It is equally true that when we teachers go home, we take our school-day worries with us. This can be overwhelming, especially when our homes have their own stresses, and as we are navigating the world amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We may have spouses, children, or aging parents. We may have health concerns, home maintenance issues, or budgetary constraints. We may have hobbies we never get enough time for and passions we feel we're neglecting. And we often have the guilt that no matter what we do, it is never enough.

Teachers are superheroes. We try to do it all, and often we succeed, but sometimes that comes at a very high cost. Compassion fatigue is endemic among teachers and can lead to serious physical and mental health concerns. We have to acknowledge that we are human and respect our limitations. Sometimes it is vital to take off that superhero cape, look at what we're doing, acknowledge a need to conserve our energy, and say, "You know what, that's good enough." Could I spend another 15 minutes on this handout to make it perfect? Yes, but it's good enough. Is this lesson exactly as I'd like it and covering all the aspects of the new curriculum I want it to? No, but it's good enough. Did I respond to Rhett's emotional issue in the way most likely to help them? Maybe not, but I tried my best and that has to be good enough.

We cannot be everything to everyone all the time. The good news is, we don't have to be. We are one adult in the lives of the children coming through our rooms. We are one of many teachers they will interact with, learn from, and connect with. We don't have to do it all, because there are others to share the load. So, if we are in a place where we can't be our best teacher-self, if we only have the energy and emotional capacity to be "good enough," that is, indeed, good enough.

This article was originally published on the PITA blog: *www.pita.ca/blog/in-defence-of-not-being-a-super-hero*

Addressing Ableism: A new BCTF workshop

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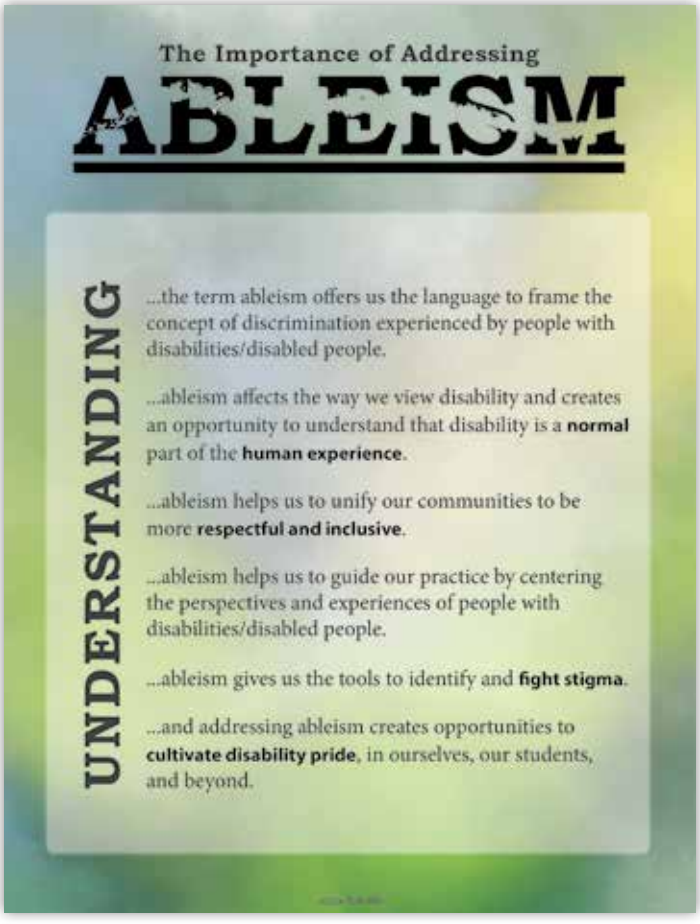


By Leah Kelley, education consultant and retired teacher, Chilliwack; and **Debra Swain**, teacher, Victoria

AS TEACHERS, we work hard to support our students and create equitable learning environments. To do so, it's important we continually engage in learning and reflection to help us address our own biases and work toward creating a just society. We are excited to share information about Addressing Ableism, a new workshop that is available online through the BCTF. This workshop explores ableism and its impact, and guides participants in examining their potential biases that may contribute to ableism.

What is ableism?

Ableism can be defined as the practices, attitudes, systems, and structures in a society that stigmatize or limit the participation, inclusion, and potential of disabled people/people with disabilities. Such practices discriminate against and devalue people with physical, developmental, neurological, or psychiatric disabilities, often resting on the assumption that disabled people need to be "fixed" in order to be included and/or to be considered successful.

Ableism is prevalent in our society and systems; it can be subtle or obvious, unintended or intentional. As educators, we have a responsibility to interrogate this within our practice.

A new workshop to explore ableism and its impact in schools and classrooms

In this workshop, participants consider the way disability is viewed and explore how to identify and push back against the stigma faced every day by people with disabilities/disabled people. Teachers will discuss and reflect on how understanding ableism can guide their practice, and cultivate disability pride in ourselves, in students, and beyond. Strategies to address and counter ableism and build understanding (for ourselves, for colleagues, and for students) are discussed and explored.

Topics introduced in the workshop include the following:

- The use of person-first language and identity-first language.
- The #SayTheWord Disability campaign, which highlights the importance of language and advocates for using the word "disability" rather than euphemisms such as "special needs."
- Things that might not seem ableist but are, based on an article by Wendy Lu (scan QR code to the right).
- Reflecting on the timeline of inclusion in BC schools.
- Models of disability: learning about alternative models of disability, beyond the medical model, supports us as educators in examining our views and biases about disability. These models provide a lens through which we can evaluate our practice (see below).
- The inherent intersectionality of disability justice. Disability is not a singular identity. People live at the intersection of other identities, so addressing ableism must address the complexity and layers of discrimination and oppression experienced by people (for example, those who are LGBTQ2S+, BIPOC, people living in poverty, etc).
- The importance of centring the lived experience of disabled people/people with disabilities to inform our practice.

As educators, we have an opportunity to apply our understanding of ableism to our pedagogical strategies. Understanding ableism can guide our work with families and students, as well as increase our capacity as professionals to influence and change systems and to align ourselves with disability justice.

MORE INFORMATION

This workshop can be booked for your school staff or local. To book a workshop, click on the Services and Guidance page on *bctf.ca*.

Scan the QR code for more information and additional reading about ableism and disability justice.

SCAN ME

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Debra Swain is an experienced inclusive educator and past-president of the Teachers of Inclusive Education (TIE-BC) provincial specialist association. Debra was excited to work with the team writing this workshop for the BCTF. Debra has been a BCTF facilitator for a number of years and continues to learn and grow as a professional each time she facilitates a workshop, and she values the dedication that teachers show to their own professional learning.

Dr. Leah Kelley is a neurodivergent and otherwise disabled educator, writer, activist, and poet. She has 30+ years of experience as a public school teacher, including as a primary teacher, an inclusion resource teacher (K–12), and an SEL (social-emotional learning) helping teacher. She has presented nationally and internationally on topics such as autism and neurodiversity, advocacy, and inclusion, and is the co-producer of the award-winning documentary *Vectors of Autism*.

MODELS OF DISABILITY

Medical

Based on linking a disability diagnosis to an individual's physical body. This model assumes a disability may reduce an individual's quality of life. The aim is to diminish or correct the disability with medical or other interventions. The medical model focuses on curing or managing illness or disability to allow the person with a disability/disabled person a more "normal" life.

Identity or pride

Based on a conceptual framework that disabled people/people with disabilities should be proud of their disabled identity. Disability is part of identity and can be a source of strength and pride.

Social

Based on the understanding that systemic barriers, negative attitudes, and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) are social constructs. While physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not necessarily have to lead to disability unless society fails to consider and include people regardless of their individual differences.

Human rights

Disabled people/people with disabilities have inalienable rights under legislation. Recognizing disability is a component of upholding these rights in education, employment, and community involvement. Addressing ableism is ensuring voices aren't silenced, marginalized, or made invisible. Disabled people must be included in policy-making: "Nothing about us, without us."

The pink belt

By Russell Berg (he/him), teacher, Nanaimo

AMIRA[1] RAN TO ME across the floor of the bustling tent. Her squeal cut through the buzz of Pashto and Arabic and her three-year-old curls bounced on her cheek. She wanted to show me her jeans. They were clearly second hand, with pink and orange animal patches sewn all over them, and she was intent on showing me each one. We sat on the floor of the UNHCR tent on the island of Lesvos in Greece. She exclaimed something in Urdu at each animal and I made the sound of each animal as she did. We smiled and laughed together.

I had last seen Amira the night before, and she wasn't laughing then; she was crying, and shivering, and there had been a look of desperate fear filling her eyes. I was driving a rescue boat and our crew was working desperately to get Amira and her family off a cliff face in the dark hours of the morning, with the wind breaking the waves into frothy whiteness. It took two hours to get Amira and the rest of the people travelling with her off that rock. All of these people had run from the bombs and the bullets of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, and, in a storm, had washed up on the shore of Lesvos, Greece. Amira and her mother were the first ones on the boat, and when her mother sat down just opposite where I was driving, Amira clamped her arms around my leg and held on for the next two hours.

We got up off the floor of the tent and I noticed that Amira's pants were too big; she kept pulling them up. The volunteers distributing dry clothes at the transition camp do their best, but not everything fits. I asked Amira's father, who spoke some English, if it was okay for me to take her to get a belt. He nodded okay and I took her back to the distribution tent. We knelt on the floor to rummage through the tattered cardboard box of belts together. At the bottom of the box of donated belts was a pink and orange belt that matched the patches on her pants perfectly. Amira's mouth made a large "O" of delighted surprise. It was far too big for her, so I wrapped it around her waist twice and we went back to find her family.

We sat down to talk some more, and it turned out that Amira's father had learned to speak a little English from his brother who had been an interpreter for the German army in Afghanistan. The Taliban had decided that because her uncle had done this job, Amira and all of her family must die; and so her family had run for their lives and she found herself on Lesvos in need of a belt.

[1] Name has been changed to protect the family.

Left: The Mo Chara, "my friend" in Gaelic, our trusty rescue boat responds to a report of a refugee dinghy in distress. Mo Chara is an Atlantic 75 from England that has been crewed by volunteers 24 hours a day, except for the pandemic, since 2016.

Opposite: This heart of scarves was made by volunteers who worked at the refugee camp. They did everything they could to make the prison-like atmosphere of the camp as welcoming as possible.

Right: The wreckage of refugee voyages that ended in tragedy litter the coast of Lesvos. An average of 2,800 people drown in the Mediterranean every year searching for a safe place to live. Photos provided by author.

The first year that I came home from Greece I had a recurring nightmare. In the dream I was driving a dinghy full of refugees. It was not much more than a raft with a motor, and there were so many people on board that I couldn't see over them. I was straining and stretching to see so that I could find the safe water but there were rocks all around. I looked down and saw the waves, but the waves weren't made of water, they were made of people. I was driving the boat through a sea of refugees who didn't make it. There was no splash of water, just fingers and the soft cries of those we didn't save.

Re-entry is difficult. When I am not doing search and rescue work in the waters around Lesvos or Vancouver Island, I am a high school teacher in Nanaimo at John Barsby Community School. In many ways the re-entry was more difficult than the sometimes very difficult work we were doing in the waters between Turkey and Greece. The sense-making work that happened in my head was sometimes so fruitless in a place so privileged as Canada. I was searching for the reasons that I get to live my life versus the reasons that Amira lives the life she does, and I couldn't find even one that made sense. There was, however, one thing that made it somewhat easier to accept. I teach English to former refugees who have found a safe home in Canada. The tension that I felt in leaving the refugees behind in Greece was resolved in some ways by the fact that I was helping people here at home. I began to understand that I wasn't abandoning the work with refugees: I was continuing it on the other end of their journey.

Then the pandemic hit and the consistent, dynamic, daily contact that I had with my students was flattened into a two-inch window on my screen. In normal times teaching a student to learn another language is not limited to a seventy-five-minute class. It is conversations in the hallway, it is lunches in my classroom to work on homework, it is visits to their other classes to help them understand that subject. Teaching a student to learn English involves the full range of gesture, expression, movement, tone of voice, and the shape of my mouth, lips, and tongue. It did not translate successfully to that little screen, and both my students and I struggled. When they came back to the classroom in September of 2020, it felt like the chains that had been weighing down our communication had been lifted. This group of students had been in Canada for a while and many were ready to fly. They worked so hard and achieved great success in this incredible task of navigating a new language and culture.

There was, however, one very large blank spot in the middle of the white board of our re-entry plan. Because of border closures prompted by the pandemic, for the first time in five years we did not have any brand new refugee students coming to our school. The beginner class was empty. I know there is a desperate need, for I left thousands upon thousands of refugee children behind in Turkey, Jordan, and Greece. Children who do not have access to school, a decent meal, or a safe place to live. For all of those children there is no re-entry, no "return to normal." Their normal is a refugee camp where they line up for three hours for food, where they face criminally inadequate water and sanitation services, where the asylum claim process is byzantine at best and a soul-crushing destroyer of hope at worst.

I keep a picture of Amira on my desk at school. She is sitting in the dirt outside the tent that her parents made from scavenged tarps and blankets, and she is smiling at me. I can just see the pink and orange belt. I have lost touch with the family, but she should be starting school this year; given the circumstances on Lesvos, I doubt very much that is happening. Whatever issues I may be having with re-entry, this girl will face a much harder journey. Be well, Amira.

Supporting students from refugee backgrounds in Canadian schools

By Valerie Schutte (she/her), independent researcher

OVER 100 MILLION PEOPLE have been forcibly displaced worldwide in the past decade by persecution, human rights violations, and events seriously disturbing the public order. Children represented 42% of forcibly displaced persons in 2020. Canada has welcomed over 130,000 forcibly displaced children since 2015 and will continue to welcome more in the coming years. As such, teachers in Canada will play an essential role in supporting students from refugee backgrounds.

Students from refugee backgrounds include:

- children who have sought refugee protection from outside Canada and come to Canada after being granted refugee status (i.e., resettled refugees).
- children who seek refugee protection from within Canada and who may or may not be granted refugee status in Canada (i.e., asylum seekers and refugee claimants).

This article outlines five common needs of students from refugee backgrounds across Canada and summarizes research-informed considerations for teachers supporting students from refugee backgrounds with one or more of these needs.

Access to education

Students from refugee backgrounds often have fragmented educational histories. Globally, only 63% and 24% of students from refugee backgrounds have access to primary and secondary education, respectively, though global education access averages are 91% and 84%. On average, students from refugee backgrounds miss three to four years of education.

Schools that students from refugee backgrounds may have attended before arriving in Canada can include non-formal learning centres managed by organizations, child-friendly spaces supervised by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and schools managed by communities, religious organizations, NGOs, ministries of education, or private organizations. These different types of schools often vary in their languages of instruction, curricula, and certification of studies.

Teachers may provide welcome sessions and intake interviews for students from refugee backgrounds and, where applicable, their guardians to provide information and help the student transition to their new school. Where possible, interpreters may be used to facilitate communication. Interpreters could be professional interpreters, plurilingual teachers, or members of the student's family.

Bridging and accelerated education

Most students from refugee backgrounds in Canada need supports addressing interruptions in education, inadequate quality of education, and/or differences between curricula used in the schools that they have attended. For all students from refugee backgrounds, their education in Canadian schools should bridge the knowledge and skills that they have acquired from prior learning experiences with those that they are currently learning. For students who are older and may have more to catch up on to meet the curriculum requirements for their age-appropriate class placement, their education should support them to learn the foundational content and skills within an accelerated timeframe.

Teachers can recognize and build on the skills, capabilities, and knowledges the students have developed in both formal and informal ways. Informal learning practices that can foster learning in Canadian schools include practices in nature (learning about the natural environment), survival practices (learning about life skills, such as responsibilities or work experiences inside and outside the home), and social activist practices (learning about the importance of treating others with respect and care).[1]

Creating a student profile is a possible starting point. Teachers can record in the profile information about a student's prior formal and informal learning, preferred learning styles, interests, and experiences and reference this profile during planning to ensure that learning experiences activate and build on the student's strengths. Students from refugee backgrounds with accelerated education needs may also benefit from lessons that incorporate experiential learning, sessions further developing their study skills, and explanations of school routines, expectations, and norms.

Language education

Many students from refugee backgrounds spend a disproportionate amount of time learning languages because, oftentimes, the languages that they use at home, in the community, and at school are different in their country of origin, their country or countries of asylum, and—for those who are resettled—their country of resettlement. The majority of students from refugee backgrounds are plurilingual when they arrive in Canada. However, approximately two in three do not know English or French. Those who do not know the language of instruction should be taught the language, and those who are plurilingual should be supported in the maintenance and development of proficiency in all their languages.

1 Kaukko, M., & Wilkinson, J. (2018). 'Learning how to go on': refugee students and informal learning practices. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1514080

iStock.com/sources

"Globally, only 63% and 24% of students from refugee backgrounds have access to primary and secondary education, respectively..."

Teachers can use a variety of strategies to support the language learning of students from refugee backgrounds. All teachers of students from refugee backgrounds can promote the use of their languages at school and at home, respect silent periods and linguistic diversity, and encourage translanguaging. As oral language is the foundation of written language, students from refugee backgrounds who are learning the language of instruction should be provided with many opportunities to practise their listening and speaking skills. Explicit instruction promoting metalinguistic awareness can help them transfer their knowledge and skills from one language to another. Teachers may also wish to consider using content-based language instruction so that students from refugee backgrounds, especially those with accelerated education needs, learn the language through the curriculum.

Mental health and psycho-social support

There is a higher prevalence of mental health difficulties in children from refugee backgrounds than in their peers who have never sought refugee protection. This high prevalence is often associated with increases in the volume, duration, and frequency of exposure to stressful and/or traumatic events and reductions in protective factors that foster resilience before, during, and after forcible displacement. The most common mental health difficulties among children from refugee backgrounds are post-traumatic stress disorder (23%), anxiety (16%), and depression (14%).

Teachers may find it helpful to think about mental health and psycho-social support for students from refugee backgrounds using a multitiered model of school-based mental health care. This model incorporates universal supports for all students, intensive supports for specific groups of students that include some or all students from refugee backgrounds, and specialized supports for individual students from refugee backgrounds with specific needs.

Universal supports benefiting students from refugee backgrounds could include social and emotional learning, sensitization to refugeehood (i.e., the entire school community learning about experiences and issues relating to refugeehood with the aim of fostering psycho-social support toward students from refugee backgrounds), and antiracist and anti-oppressive pedagogies.

Intensive supports for groups of students including some or all students from refugee backgrounds may include acculturation supports (i.e., supports for the well-being of students as they engage in Canadian cultural contexts and negotiate their cultural identities and feelings of belonging) and trauma-informed pedagogical supports.

Specialized supports for individual students might involve identifying individual students from refugee backgrounds experiencing mental health difficulties and connecting them with mental health services.

Inclusive education

Some students from refugee backgrounds have behavioural, communicational, intellectual, and/or physical exceptionalities that require inclusive education supports. Many students from refugee backgrounds are gifted. More than 15% are estimated to have disabilities because the incidence of disability, which is approximately 15% for any given population, is higher among those that have been forcibly displaced. Some students from refugee backgrounds and their families are resettled to Canada specifically because of the severity of medical or special needs in their family. Nevertheless, it is can be difficult for qualified professionals to identify children from refugee backgrounds with exceptionalities, because assessments often use age-based developmental benchmarks, while the dates of birth of many children from refugee backgrounds are incorrectly documented or documentation is lost; assessment tools may be culturally or linguistically inappropriate; and indicators of inclusive education needs are similar to those of language learning and accelerated education needs.

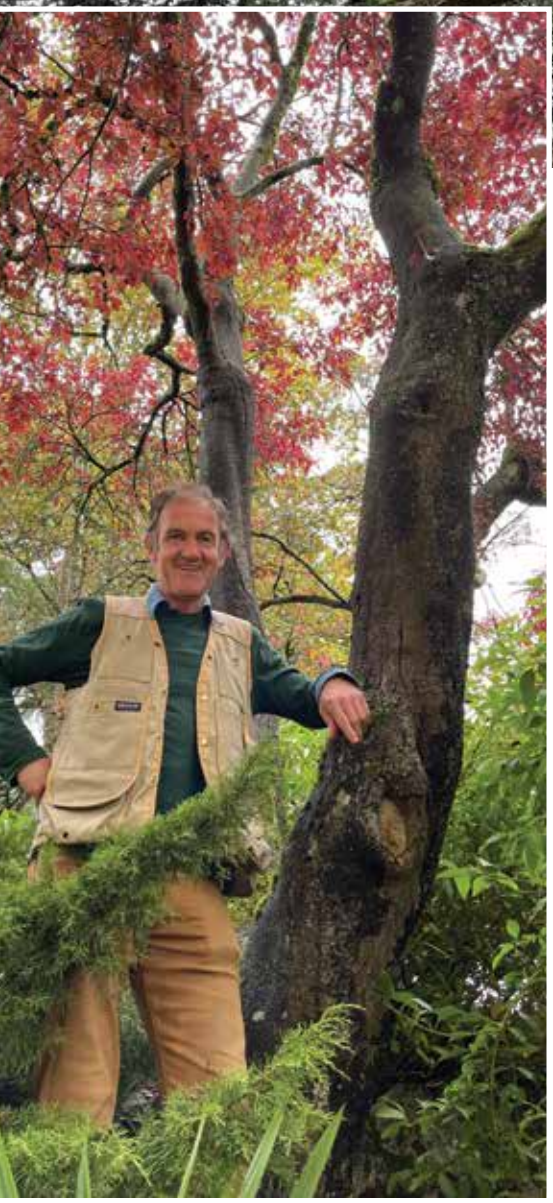
The school team may wish to learn about and reflect upon potential sensitivities around exceptionalities and then engage with the student and their family around understandings of, feelings about, and responses to exceptionalities. Teachers and educational professionals can then use accommodations and modifications for the student at school. They can also collaborate and co-ordinate with appropriate partners (e.g., family, friends, health professionals) to ensure consistent and continuous support to the student at school and beyond.

Conclusion

As teachers seek to support students from refugee backgrounds, they should foster collaborative partnerships that enable students from refugee backgrounds and, where applicable, their families to participate meaningfully in the planning and delivery of educational services that meet their needs. For the majority of students from refugee backgrounds currently in Canada, these needs include access to education, bridging and accelerated education, language education, mental health and psycho-social support, and/or inclusive education. Given the incredible diversity within contemporary groups of students from refugee backgrounds, and that which can be expected among future groups of students from refugee backgrounds, the supports provided for each child should be tailored to their unique needs, capabilities, and aspirations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Certified with the Ontario College of Teachers, Valerie Schutte has a Master of Arts in Education, a Bachelor of Education, a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, and an Honours Bachelor of Arts in French. Her graduate research (2018–2021) analyzed education policy addressing the needs of students from refugee backgrounds across Canada's 13 educational jurisdictions.



Connecting with trees and nature in school gardens

By Tom O'Sullivan, gardener and horticulturist, VSB

WORKING AS A HORTICULTURIST for several decades has allowed me to experience nature more than most. Small details will always amaze, such as the little white flowers from snowdrops appearing above the cold ground as early as January, or huge clusters of little red berries hanging from a mountain ash in the fall.

Nature is full of little secrets, and I enjoy sharing these experiences with others.

In my role as a gardener with the Vancouver School Board (VSB), I have many pleasant exchanges with community members. It's common for a student, parent, teacher, or passerby to stop and remark on some aspect of the garden as I work. The most common reaction from elementary students when I'm pruning a tree is, "Stop, stop, you're killing the tree," to which I assure them, "No, no, I'm just giving it a haircut." But this shows that they care.

Their curiosity is amazing, and there's so much for them to discover. Quite often, while working on a school garden, an audience of young faces will appear to watch me turn the soil, clean up shrub borders, and tend to the plants. They see a chaotic bed cluttered with dead leaves, broken branches, weeds, or gangly off-shoots look refreshed and beautiful. For them, seeing is believing.

Now that it's late fall, and while bracing for the onslaught of winter, it's tempting to believe there's not much of interest in the garden. But when that perfect fall day bursting with sunshine and freshness appears from nowhere, opportunities for outdoor activities for students should not be missed.

These types of fall days are perfect for getting out of the classroom and exploring the anatomy of trees, and there's no place better than your own school grounds to explore. The trees you walk past every day are fascinating to study.

In the simplest terms, trees consist of leaves, branches, trunks, and roots. The leaves conduct the magic of photosynthesis, sequestrating carbon from the atmosphere to form wood in the body of the tree. But wood is extremely heavy, just try standing a small log upright. Easy? No!

Above: A mature cedar's branch network.
Left: Tom O'Sullivan working with nature in school gardens. Sunjum Jhaj photos.

Here is some information about trees that teachers can use to help their students learn about and connect with the trees and nature that exists around their school.

Shape and form

Stand well back and see, from a distance, the size, shape, and form of a tree of interest. Look at its height, the network of branches, and where it's positioned in the school garden

Drip line

As you walk closer to the tree, make a note of where the outer edges of the canopy end; this is called the drip line. When deciduous trees are in leaf it's very defined, but evergreen trees can demonstrate this characteristic anytime.

Leaves

As it is fall season, most deciduous trees will have shed or are in the process of shedding their leaves. But different species of trees shed their leaves at different times. Usually ash is the first to drop its leaves, sometimes starting as early as the end of September. However, the leaves of beech or oak (now dry and brown) can remain attached to the tree well into the winter months. This ensures that leaves cascade onto the ground over a long period of time

Branch network

Looking up at the branches, note the various sizes and shapes of branches from large boughs down to very small twigs. Note the differences between branch networks from deciduous and coniferous trees.

Trunk

Trees generally have one central trunk or may have multiple stems. Tree trunks grow bigger and stronger every year. In their natural woodland settings, trees compete for light and, as they grow taller to catch the sunlight, the lower branches become less efficient, so they transfer their nutrients to the rest of the tree, die off, and eventually drop from the tree. In urban areas and parks, skilled horticulturists and arborists remove these branches in order to give the tree a more pleasant appearance. Look for calluses on the trunk where branch wounds have healed over (see photo below).

Root flare

This is the point where the main trunk meets the ground. In mature trees, huge anchor roots can be seen partially exposed above the ground at the very base of the tree.

Root systems

This is the tricky part as, of course, we can't see the roots below the ground. However, without knowledge of the root system how can we know about the life of a tree? It's the root network that can be the most fascinating part of a tree's structure. As a general rule, a tree's root network can extend up to 50% farther than its height. That means a 20-foot tree will have roots that spread 30 feet under the ground in all directions. For scale, just ask a student to lie down on the ground and mark out their height while adding 50%. The roots at the very base of the tree are responsible for anchoring the tree to the ground, while farther away, beyond the drip line, the smaller roots, which are called feeder roots, send back water and nutrients.

In the fall/winter months, deciduous trees stand tall and proud like sculptures. Their magnificent form can be admired from the very top right down to the base of their trunks. While they might be sleeping for the winter, they carry vast stores of food that will see them burst into leaf in the spring and start their new season of making our schools and neighbourhoods full of vitality.

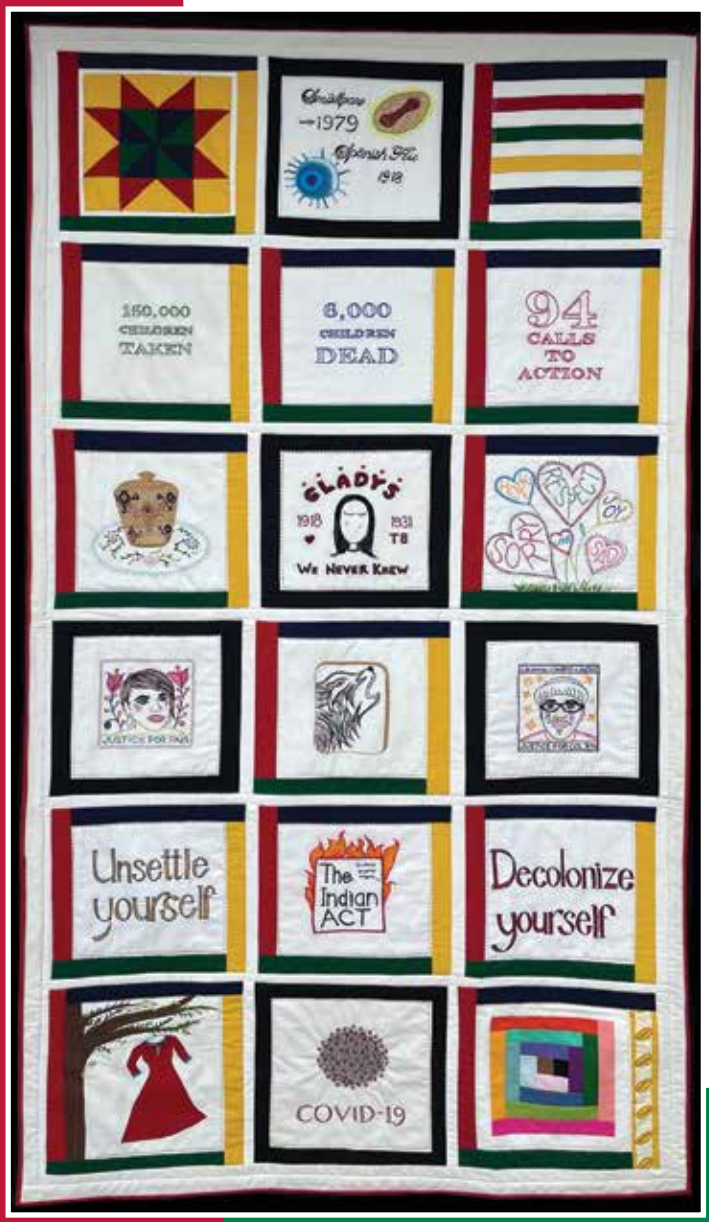
The next time you walk by that tree on your school ground, take a moment to appreciate its beauty and purpose. Trees may be quiet, but each one has a wonderful story to tell.

Pictured: Evidence of a previous branch on a tree trunk.

Weaving and quilting our stories entwine:

By Nancy Knickerbocker (she/her), freelance writer and retired BCTF staff

IN 2015, I began making a quilt to help me unsettle and decolonize myself. Reflecting on my growing understanding of the injustices of colonialism, sitting with my shame and discomfort, I needed an outlet for the difficult emotions that surfaced. I turned to needlecraft, which has seen me through challenging times in the past. During untold hours of embroidery and patchwork, as my hands played with colour and line, my mind slowed down, my heart opened up, and slowly I was changed.



Like most Canadians, I learned nothing about Indian Residential Schools in public school. It was not until I was an adult, a graduate of the University of BC, and working as a reporter at *The Vancouver Sun* that my editor assigned me to cover a panel discussion at UBC on the history of racism in our province. That afternoon, I learned for the very first time about the Komagata Maru incident (1914), the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act (1885–1947), the internment of Japanese Canadians (1942–1947), and the Indian Residential School system (1845–1994). That seminar blew my mind! I was supposedly an educated British Columbian, a trained journalist, and I didn't know one bloody thing about any of these massive rights violations.

Everything I learned that day completely contradicted the tolerant, welcoming, self-congratulatory narrative I was taught and had internalized about what it means to be a citizen of polite, bilingual, multicultural Canada. It's a very comfortable national self-identity we have defined for ourselves. Too bad it's not true! And unless we reckon with this false national myth, we're never going to become the kind of people we think we already are.

I'm so grateful that working at the BCTF for more than 20 years gave me many opportunities to unlearn the old lies. Aboriginal colleagues, residential school survivors, scholars, and activists helped me learn about the historic and contemporary impacts of colonialism and, in doing so, embark on a decolonization journey through journalism and handicraft.

That's why I'm a strong advocate of "craftivism," or craft with an activist purpose. It challenges the sexist notion of needlework as having a purpose only in the private sphere of homemaking. Rather, craftivism means taking our stitchery into the public realm in the hope it will provoke people to think and perhaps even to take action.

My quilt (pictured left) has turned out to be 6½ feet tall and 3½ feet wide, but when I started the first patch, I had no idea where it was going. I just knew I had to sew these messages to myself: "Unsettle yourself" and "Decolonize yourself." That was after reading *Unsettling the Settler Within,* by Dr. Paulette Regan, former director of research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. She says:

"An unsettling pedagogy asks us as settlers to explore our own collective identity, to plumb the depth of our repressed history,

A decolonization journey

so that we can risk interacting differently with Indigenous peoples—with vulnerability, humility, and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort."

Next, I stitched the horrendous facts that were censored from my education and likely from yours too: 150,000 children taken, 6,000 children dead. With the heart-wrenching evidence recently revealed by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc of the remains of 215 children at Kamloops Residential School, I was reminded with horror that I first learned of those unmarked graves from a Grade 4 student.

In 2015 I was privileged to join a field trip of Grade 3/4 students, parents, and teachers to Spuzzum. Through the BCTF resource Gladys We Never Knew, the children had learned about Gladys Chapman, her family, their language, the berries and salmon they harvested from the lands and waters of Nlaka'pamux territory. They also learned she had been taken from her home to Kamloops Residential School, where she died at age 12 of tuberculosis. The kids were solemn at her graveside and as they planted their heart garden.

Learning about Gladys's short life and tragic death made such an impression on one student that, when his family was travelling to the Interior that summer, he asked to stop at the Kamloops Residential School. They were deeply moved to meet Daniel, a survivor who gave them an extensive tour of the imposing brick institution. The student told me, "Daniel's friend saw a nun push one of the kids down the stairs, and the kid died. That nun was the meanest person ever…. The kids were buried in unmarked graves down by the river."

What a sad and beautiful thing that the younger generation is now teaching their elders!

My decolonization quilt illustrates elements of genocide: historic epidemics and the current pandemic, both of which disproportionately affected Indigenous people. Two patches are from images drawn by students whose classes participated in the Project of Heart: a howling wolf, emblematic of Indigenous parents weeping for their lost children, and hope for an end to the oppression of the Indian Act, which is depicted on fire. The Red Dress patch honours Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Portrait patches of Tina Fontaine and Colten Boushie decry the failure of the Canadian courts to deliver justice for murdered Indigenous youth.

Nancy Knickerbocker photos

The quilt also challenges what Dr. Regan calls the "cherished national myth" of Europeans as benevolent peacemakers. The iconic Hudson's Bay blanket references smallpox blankets, as well as the corporate greed at the root of the colonial enterprise. Traditional patchwork designs like Lone Star and Log Cabin reference the heroic pioneer narratives that I, and many settler Canadians, learned at our grandparents' knees. Seen through a decolonizing lens, these images highlight how my generation's privilege is rooted in land theft by our ancestors.

Writing and quilting have helped me move from ignorance and—I have to admit it— denial, to outrage, anger, and grief, to awareness and action. This decolonization journey is far from over. In fact, I don't think it will ever be over. This is work that needs to be done, and done again, and yet again if we have any hope of earning the right to speak of reconciliation.

I intend to give the quilt to the BCTF, with gratitude for the many learning opportunities it gave me. There are many more stories associated with each patch, and we hope to bring them together in an online learning resource similar to Project of Heart.

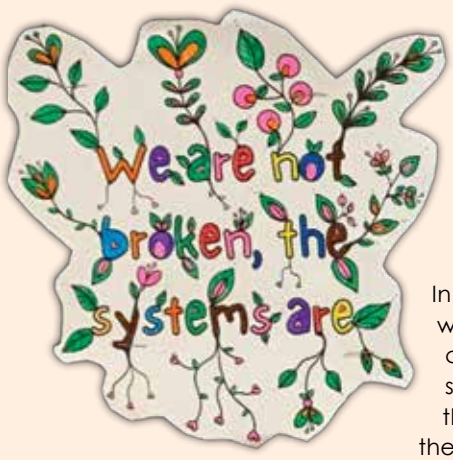
AUTHOR'S NOTE

The title for this article comes from the song "Weaving and Quilting," one of the inspirations for the quilt. The song is a duet between an Indigenous woman and a settler woman, each telling about how their grandmother taught them their respective crafts: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muv4uQLmSNs*

Noel Booth Elementary students' acts of reconciliation on September 30

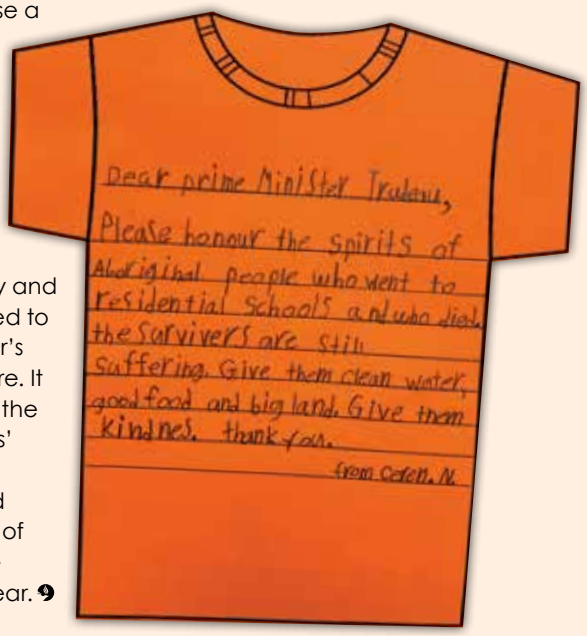
Photos and reflection by Jean Moir, teacher, Langley

Noel Booth Elementary in Langley, BC has taken an active part in Orange Shirt Day for several years. Most of the students have a good understanding of what took place in residential schools and the part these schools played in our collective history in Canada. For the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we asked students to think deeply and give voice to their personal responses. Student responses were used to create displays throughout the school.



In Division 9, a Grade 3/4 split, we brainstormed ideas as a class and challenged each student to come up with their own ideas. Classmates then helped their friends who were struggling to put their thoughts into words. The children's words and artwork were put onto small t-shirts for the display.

Division 9 wanted to channel their caring and compassion into actions that would make life fairer and more equitable for all Indigenous Peoples across Canada. They decided to write letters to leaders who are able to create real and lasting change. Again, we brainstormed as a class and students were asked to compose a personal letter to the Prime Minister, letting him know what needs to happen. These letters became part of our hall display and they will be mailed to the Prime Minister's Office in the future. It is inspiring to see the depth of students' understanding, compassion, and desire to be part of creating change increase each year.



THE ABORIGINAL LENS: EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

THE ABORIGINAL LENS is a guide for those who work in education and are committed to taking up the "Calls to Action on Education" as stipulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This framework is designed to help educators challenge the current, established systems of belief that support Eurocentric practices that have silenced other ways of knowing and being. The lens focuses our efforts and can be used to examine and assess policies and practices. The framework also works to address the needs of the collective and the community, as well as providing common reference for teachers.

Respect requires:

- Listening to and learning from the voices that have been silenced.
- Learning from the stories and experiences of Aboriginal Knowledge Keepers.
- Creating a safe space where everyone belongs in the circle.
- Valuing multiple knowledge systems, diverse cultures, and perspectives.

Relationship-building requires:

- Understanding protocols for acknowledgment of traditional territories.
- Supporting Aboriginal students so that they can be successful.
- Understanding privilege to create equity.
- Bringing together Aboriginal students, Elders, and community members.
- Creating space where Aboriginal students, Elders, and community members can come together in school.

Relevance requires:

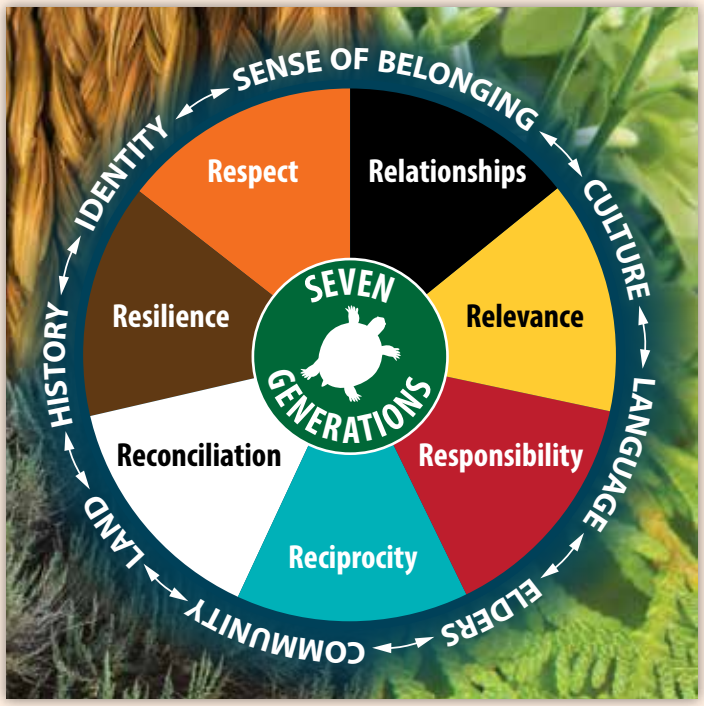
- Creating living links in the process of infusion that includes Elders and artists in the classroom, as well as examining current issues in the struggles of Aboriginal people in BC.
- Incorporating the Aboriginal world views and making them an essential component of the curriculum.
- Recognizing the legacy and continuing impacts of colonization.

Responsibility requires:

- Understanding that each of us has a role to play in supporting the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Working to break down barriers intended to keep people separated or marginalized.
- Seeking Ministry support for opposing systemic racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Employing the lens of Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and Being in all classrooms, schools, and school districts.

Reciprocity requires:

- Working to achieve nation-to-nation relations guided by the spirit and intent of the Royal Proclamation of 1763.
- Eliminating power differentials in decision-making; genuine co-operation can only take place where there is a meeting of equals.
- Teaching and learning must be as an interactive sharing of knowledge; students should not be viewed as passive recipients of knowledge.
- Support for teacher-led, teacher-created resources, workshops, and in-services by the Ministry of Education.
- Sharing successes of reconciliation with community.



▲ Visit *bctf.ca* to find the Aboriginal Lens poster.

Reconciliation requires:

- Recognizing Canada's attempted genocide of Aboriginal people by sharing the truth about Canada's history (policies of assimilation and attempted genocide).
- Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to Aboriginal history, including residential school and ongoing intergenerational impacts.
- Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- Developing an action plan, strategies and other concrete measures to achieve the goals of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- Establishing ways for Aboriginal students to see themselves reflected in school curriculum and communities.

Resilience:

- Acknowledging that despite 150 years of forced assimilation policies, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis continue to assert, defend, and develop their identities and cultures.
- Understanding resilience as building capacity for children and youth to overcome risks from the legacy of colonization.
- Working with allies to implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in our schools, districts, and curricula.
- Celebrating the diversity, strength, leadership, and beauty of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

15 things I learned in 15 years of teaching

By Suzanne Munroe (she/her), teacher, Vancouver

iStock.com/apichon_tee

1 Move it!

I take my class outside to walk or run laps every morning. Research shows that students who exercise before school retain more of what they learn during the school day. I find that movement in the morning helps sleepy kids wake up and energetic kids calm down. This routine also gives me time to connect with kids before the day gets started. We talk about whatever is upsetting them, share a laugh, or just get to know each other. Relationships are built and student behaviour improves because of this time together.

2 Every cohort is different

I've taught the same grade at the same school for several years now, and every group is different. For example, some cohorts need more academic support, while other groups may have more social-emotional challenges.

3 Hidden costs

Almost all teachers I know spend their own money on class materials, especially new teachers and those who teach in low-income neighbourhoods.

4 Equity in public schools is a myth

This was never more apparent to me than when I spoke to a gym teacher who taught at three different public schools in the same district. The school in the low-income neighbourhood had barely any sports equipment, the school in the wealthy postal code had the best equipment, and the school in the middle-class neighbourhood fell in the middle. The fact that parents can donate to their child's school means lower-income schools go without many things, while public schools in wealthier areas can access more resources.

5 Parents can be a bigger challenge than kids

Parents have a great influence on their child's mindset and how their child engages at school. Having a difficult relationship with a parent can make it more difficult to build a positive rapport with the student. This has certainly been a pattern I've noticed when I've had challenging relationships in my class. I've also noticed this pattern is true in reverse: when the adults in a child's life work together to set the right tone, the child is better able to thrive.

6 Teaching is not as "safe" as it seems

After working through a pandemic, this seems obvious. However, increasing violence in schools (including elementary schools) means safety in schools was an issue long before COVID-19.[1]

Being a teacher does not necessarily mean complete financial security either; school strikes could mean suspended pay. Housing prices in BC are spiraling out of control, and there is no guarantee that teacher paychecks will keep up with the cost of living.

7 Every school is a different world, and so is every school district

Before I became a teacher, I assumed that school districts differed merely by community demographics, but I've since learned that districts' views and approaches can be drastically different. When I graduated from UBC, Surrey school trustees had voted to ban any representation of same-sex families from school libraries. At the same time, the Vancouver school district had hired someone to advocate for LGBTQ+ interests.

Just watching how different districts in BC responded to the demands of the pandemic shows how working conditions can differ across districts as well. When I was a new teacher, I didn't realize that certain things are negotiated at the local level. The local collective agreement affects teachers' lives in many ways: from the number of staff meetings you need to attend, to the dental benefits you receive, to whether you can spend PD funds on your M.Ed.

8 Teaching is exhausting

Teachers make nearly 1,500 decisions every day. Elementary teachers have 200–300 exchanges with students per hour.[2] In fact, research shows that teachers make more decisions minute-to-minute than brain surgeons.[3] This explains the decision fatigue and brain fog that follows the teaching day for many of us.

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1 *www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/elementary-school-violence-1.5278838*
2 *www.edutopia.org/blog/battling-decision-fatigue-gravity-goldberg-renee-houser*
3 *www.americansocietytoday.blogspot.com/2011/04/teaching-isnt-as-simple-as-it-appears.html*

9 Teaching is as rewarding as it is difficult

The time a classroom teacher gets to spend with one group of students and families allows us to build deep and meaningful connections. I worked with kids for ten years before becoming a teacher. While those jobs were meaningful, the connections and relationships I've formed as a teacher have been the most rewarding and fulfilling experience of my professional life.

10 Childhood is formative, but it is not the end of the story

A few Christmases ago, I got a pre-paid VISA as a class gift. Having never used one before, I asked a salesperson at my local bookstore if she knew how to use it. While she patiently and confidently explained how the card worked, I got the feeling that I knew her from somewhere. As I walked away, someone called her name and I realized I taught her in Grade 2. I hadn't seen her since. Then, I had a flashback of a sweet, gentle child with a lisp and learning challenges. I have seen her in the store since, this time training other employees. It still makes me emotional to think of how far she has come.

11 Boundaries are your best friend

Being assertive and persuasive are critical to managing your workload, dealing with demanding parents, and advocating for students.

12 Make time for yourself

Set time aside to rest and renew yourself. With whatever energy you have left over after teaching, try to pursue another passion. If you do, you will be a happier, healthier person, and a better teacher as a result.

13 Community counts

Becoming a part of a school community has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my adult life. Thirteen years ago, I was placed at a school within walking distance of my apartment. I would never have applied to teach that close to home, as I thought physical distance was key to a healthy work/life balance. But it has made my neighbourhood feel like a community in a way that nothing else has.

14 Teaching trends come and go... and come back again

As schools in my district are being seismically upgraded, open classrooms have replaced traditional layouts. Some experienced teachers recall this model from the 1970s failing miserably, but memories are short and given enough time, what is old can feel new again.

Suzanne Munroe
Photo provided by author

15 You will never stop learning

Every school year means new students and families to support. Eventually, curriculum gets updated. Technology evolves. New research comes out on trauma or learning disorders or assessment. School staff turns over; we say goodbye to a cherished colleague and welcome a new one. Whether we like it or not, a teaching life often requires us to adapt and learn. And sometimes this can feel overwhelming.

It's easy to forget how humbling, challenging, and exciting it is to learn something new. When you find yourself not learning, seek out opportunities to become a student again. When I was in elementary school, one of the Grade 7 teachers chose to participate in the school band so he could learn how to play the clarinet. He didn't volunteer to teach band; he went to band practice every week to learn from his colleague and performed alongside 10- and 11-year-olds in the school assembly. I have forgotten many things in my 45 years of life, but this memory has endured.

Eating disorders:
Breaking down stereotypes

By Sarah Rodgers Rosellini, special education teacher, BC Children's Hospital; **Lily Yiu**, special education teacher, BC Children's Hospital; and **Jennifer S. Coelho,** psychologist, BC Children's Hospital and clinical associate professor, Department of Psychiatry, UBC

DURING THEIR CAREERS, teachers will inevitably come across students with eating disorders in their classrooms and school communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a perfect storm for an exacerbation in eating disorder symptoms among adolescents.[1] Reduction in social contact, school closures, stay-at-home orders, all compounded by increased internet and social media use, are among the factors thought to have contributed to a global surge in new eating disorder diagnoses.

One of the challenges with identifying and supporting children and youth with eating disorders is that many people with an eating disorder may seem to be healthy, but can be seriously ill. Stereotypes about who is affected by eating disorders may also contribute to difficulties in recognizing eating disorder symptoms. To understand more about the truths about eating disorders, and combatting stereotypes, the Academy for Eating Disorders has shared Nine Truths about Eating Disorders.[2] One of these truths is that eating disorders affect people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds.

Breaking down stereotypes about gender

Although eating disorders may be perceived as primarily affecting girls and women, in fact eating disorders affect people of all genders. There may be some gender differences in eating disorder symptoms and behaviours, e.g., females may be more likely to pursue weight loss and be concerned about leanness, while males may have more concerns about muscularity.

Some students will have a gender identity that doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender, non-binary, and gender questioning youth may be at particular risk for the development of disordered eating or symptoms of eating disorders. The onset of puberty can be a particularly distressing time, and some youth may restrict nutritional intake in an effort to delay or stall puberty and the physical changes that accompany it. Access to gender-affirming care has been critical in reducing eating disorder symptoms in trans youth with eating disorders.

Resources

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre provides information and resources for coping with eating disorders: *www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca*

Trans Care BC provides education and resources about gender, including information about gender-inclusive language and creating a welcoming gender-affirming environment: *www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/gender-basics-education/education-resources/support-tools*

Types of eating disorders

Anorexia nervosa (AN) is characterized by restricted intake, extreme weight loss (or, for children/adolescents, failure to gain weight as part of normal development), and typically a fear of gaining weight. There are two distinctive *AN subtypes*. The *restrictive subtype* is characterized by restrictive eating and may be accompanied by overexercise. You may also encounter students with the *binge-eating/purging subtype*. Youth with this subtype are underweight, but also engage in binge-eating (eating large quantities of food and feeling out of control) and/or purging to try to compensate for food intake. Purging can take the form of self-induced vomiting or use of laxatives or diuretics.

Bulimia nervosa (BN) is similar to the binge-eating/purging subtype of AN, where individuals engage in regular binge-eating and behaviours to compensate for their intake during binges (e.g., through purging, fasting, or excessive exercise). Unlike with AN, individuals with BN are not significantly underweight.

Binge-eating disorder (BED) comprises regular episodes of binge-eating (eating large quantities of food and feeling out of control) and is accompanied by embarrassment, guilt, eating until uncomfortably full, or other distressing symptoms.

Other specified eating disorders include eating disorders that are serious and life-threatening, but have different presentations than AN, BN, or BED. This includes *atypical AN*, where an individual is not underweight, and may be above their suggested body weight range. Individuals with atypical AN restrict intake and typically also have significant weight loss but may have started at a higher weight. Atypical AN is a serious eating disorder that can, for some youth, lead to hospitalization due to medical concerns.

Avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) is a newer eating disorder diagnosis. ARFID shares some similarities to AN in that people restrict their food intake and often have a very particular selection of foods they are willing or able to eat. However, people with ARFID do not have fears about weight gain, unlike those with AN. Children with ARFID may appear to be "picky eaters"; however, ARFID is more than just picky eating and is associated with medical problems and/or psychosocial interference due to lack of sufficient nutrition. Youth with ARFID may have textural or flavour sensitivities that limit the types of foods they are able to consume or a general low interest in eating. Other youth with ARFID may worry about the consequences of eating (e.g., choking, nausea, or pain). Youth with ARFID may have trouble at school academically, because of poor nutrition, but also socially as eating and interacting with friends is often affected.

Indicators of eating disorders

These indicators are general in nature, but they can be indicative of eating disorder symptoms. If teachers and support staff notice these indicators, it would be helpful to share this information with the school-based team and the students' parents/guardians:

- obvious weight loss
- changes in eating habits or not eating at break/lunch
- over-scheduling activities
- over-exercising, constant movement, standing, leg shaking
- perfectionist attitudes
- difficulty with focus
- withdrawal or non-engagement
- drops or jumps in grades or work habits
- intense preoccupation with body image
- evidence of shakiness, dizziness, or feeling faint
- frequent trips to the washroom
- absences from school.

What can educators do if they notice signs of eating disorders?

If you suspect a student is at risk of developing an eating disorder, inquire if your school or district has an intervention protocol in place. Sample protocols, and information about eating disorders in the school context, are available in *Understanding Eating Disorders in Schools: A Guide for School Professionals in BC Schools.*[3]

It is important that immediate steps be taken to support a student suspected of developing an eating disorder. Prior to approaching the student, be mindful that the student may react in anger, shut down, or deny that there is anything wrong. If the student is unwilling to engage, acknowledge and validate their discomfort before reassuring them that you are available to listen when they are ready to talk.

For students willing to engage, approach the student through a trauma-informed lens. Avoid using language that could be perceived as judgmental. Express your concerns for their overall well-being and reassure them they have done nothing wrong. Make sure the student is given an opportunity to process their thoughts and feelings. If they are uncomfortable connecting with their family doctor, encourage them to allow the public health clinician assigned to the school to visit them for an assessment. You will also need to inform the student that all health and safety concerns have to be shared with their parents.

The purpose of the initial conversation is not to convince the student that they have a problem or to make a diagnosis. It is simply to initiate support. The good news is that recovery from eating disorders is possible, and there are good outcomes for early intervention in children and adolescents with eating disorders.

1 Katzman, D. K. (2021). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Eating Disorders: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Eating Disorders Among Adolescents and Young Adults. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(4), 535-537

2 *www.aedweb.org/publications/nine-truths*

3 *www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Understanding-Eating-Disorders-in-Schools.pdf*

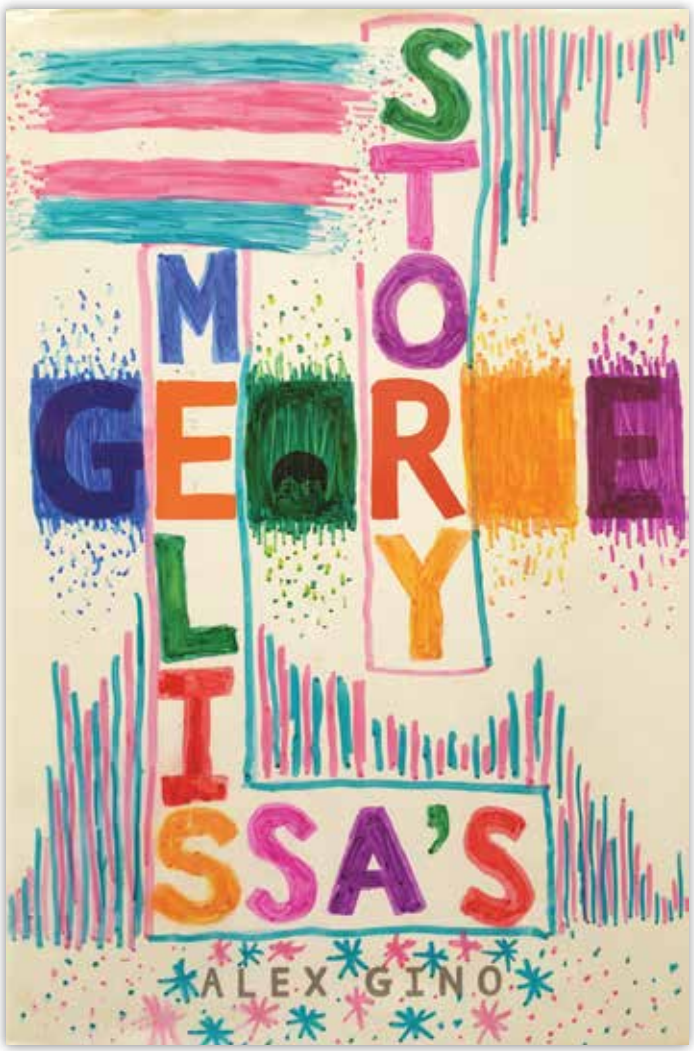
A revolution in trans and non-binary fiction

By Mary Ann Saunders (she/her), lecturer, UBC's School of Journalism, Writing, and Media

I AM SO EXCITED about a course I'll be teaching at UBC starting in January, and I hope that, after reading this article, you'll be excited too.

It's a course in children's and young adult (YA) fiction written by transgender and non-binary (trans/nb) writers. I have wanted to teach a course like this for a long time, but even two years ago it would have been hard to develop an adequate reading list.

In the past two years, however, an explosion of new (and excellent) work has appeared! As someone who has been teaching and researching young people's literatures for some time, it has been extraordinary to see this new body of children's and YA fiction appearing practically before my eyes. Suddenly I can't keep up with it all.



I *do* have personal stake in this emerging literature. I'm a trans woman and non-binary femme, and when I was young, there were no books like these. I was 50 before I saw the emotional landscape of my own childhood represented in fiction, encountering it in Alex Gino's 2015 middle-grade novel, *Melissa's Story* (published as *George*). That book opened me to long-forgotten feelings and embodied sensations from my own middle-grade years. I cried all the way through it—and it still makes me cry.

Gino is non-binary themself and seems to remember exactly what it felt like to be a child whose gender didn't fit social norms. In *Melissa's Story,* they convey such feelings, in all their complexity, in language appropriate for and accessible to early middle-grade readers. This, combined with my own experience of reading *Melissa's Story,* speaks powerfully to why it's vital that trans/nb youth have access to Own Voices fiction (i.e., fiction by writers who share their life experiences). No child should have to wait, as I did, until adulthood to find people like them in the books they read.

Since the publication of *Melissa's Story,* what an amazing body of work has emerged! It features authors and characters who represent not just diverse gender possibilities but significant racial diversity as well. The books take in many genres and story types, including science fiction and fantasy, utopias/dystopias, magical realism, and (of course!) romance. Among these titles, there is a superhero trilogy, a cyber-mystery, an animal rescue story, and a figure skating novel. And, because publishers are releasing new titles practically monthly (I am aware of 14 titles slated for release in 2022), there is so much more still to come!

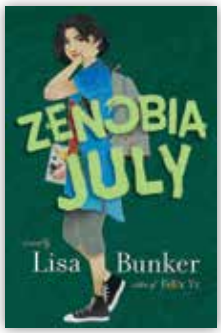
It's truly an exciting time for gender-diverse representation in young people's fiction, and it thrills me to think of these books finding their way into school classrooms and libraries throughout BC, reaching the gender-diverse young people who need them—as well as their peers, teachers, librarians, and families.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Alex Gino encourages readers to alter their copies of *George* (see left), changing the title to the gender-affirming *Melissa's Story,* so this is how I refer to the novel. Scan the QR code to read more about Gino's "sharpie activism."

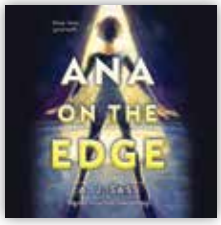
SCAN ME

SELECTED MIDDLE-GRADE BOOKS



***Zenobia July* by Lisa Bunker (trans girl protagonist, gender-queer and trans boy secondary characters)**
Taken in by her lesbian aunts, orphaned and traumatized Zenobia can finally live as a girl. Friendships with other "misfits" at her new school—especially gender-queer Arli—and with members of her aunts' extensive chosen family, help Zen slowly grow in confidence and self-acceptance. Wonderful intergenerational trans/queer representation and beautiful centring of queer/chosen family.

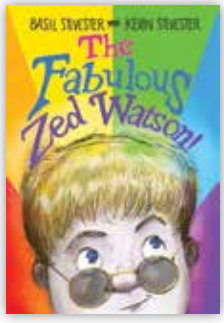
***George* a.k.a. *Melissa's Story* by Alex Gino (trans girl protagonist)**
Trans girl Melissa is trying to figure out how to come out to her best friend and then to her family. At times heartbreaking, this is ultimately a hopeful and affirming book about preadolescent trans girlhood. (Melissa reappears, two years older, as an important secondary character in Gino's *Rick*.)



***Ana on the Edge* by A. J. Sass (non-binary protagonist, trans boy secondary character)**
Champion junior figure skater Ana Jin is uncomfortable with figure skating's rigid gender norms. Becoming friends with Hayden, a trans boy, opens Ana to the possibility that she might be non-binary. (Again, great modelling of diverse gender possibilities.)

***Both Can Be True* by Jules Machias (gender-fluid protagonist)**
Ash's new friend Daniel has illicitly rescued a dog from being euthanized and, in their struggle to secretly care for the stolen dog, the new friends develop crushes on each other. But, Daniel doesn't know Ash is gender-fluid, and Ash doesn't know how to explain to Daniel that the girl he fell for fluxes between being girl and boy. (It's great to see middle-grade fiction presenting gender possibilities that challenge the male/female binary.)

***Girl Haven* by Lilah Sturges, story, and Meaghan Carter, art (trans girl protagonist)**
Ash and his friends are transported to a fantasy realm where magical defenses allow entry only to girls. At first, it's not clear why (or how) Ash is there, but Ash's heroic actions eventually help Ash and others understand her true identity. A sweet and gentle graphic novel.

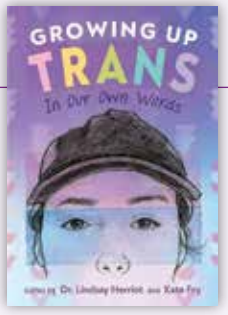


***The Fabulous Zed Watson!* by Basil Sylvester and Kevin Sylvester (non-binary protagonist)**
A hilarious romp with an ebullient and delightfully nerdy non-binary protagonist. I laughed all the way through this book.

Mary Ann's recommendations continue on page 30 (over).

Moving collection of writing and art by trans youth

By Diane Wiens (she/her), teacher, Sooke



I HAD THE PLEASURE of attending the book launch for *Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words* this summer in Victoria. The book, edited by Dr. Lindsay Herriot and Kate Fry, is a collection of stories, poetry, essays, and artwork written by transgender youth aged 10–18 organized into seven thematic chapters, including childhood, families, and acceptance, among others.

At the end of each chapter, there are suggestions for further readings on the chapter's topic and a section answering the question "What Can I Do Now?" This section includes tips for readers to encourage further reflection on the topic.

The poetry and stories included in this book are so powerful and poignant that it is easy to forget the writers are so young, and often heartbreaking when you remember that they are. The topics contained in this book are often heavy: the young writers discuss bullying, self-hatred, suicidal ideation, and mental health struggles.

I found the "What Can I Do Now?" section works to balance the pain that is often included in the stories. The actionable ideas in this section allow readers to help support trans youth they come into contact with in their own lives.

This book is written for adults, but is accessible for middle and secondary students. It would make a powerful professional development book for teachers, or a perfect addition to a Grade 7–12 classroom library.

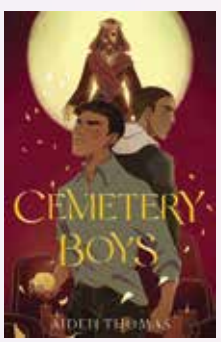
Continued from page 29...

SELECTED YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

***Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender (trans masculine protagonist)**
Felix arrives at school to find enlarged pre-transition photos of him, including his birth name, hanging in the school's main hall. While this violation provides much of the plot focus, as Felix and his friends try to identify the perpetrator, what is most powerful about this book is the diverse group of queer youth who populate it, negotiating intersections of race, sexuality, gender identity, and economic class. Also, there's plenty of relationship drama and a gorgeous queer/trans romance.

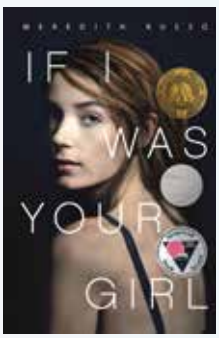
***Dreadnought* by April Daniels (trans girl protagonist)**
Closeted trans girl Danny unexpectedly receives superpowers and her ideal form—that of a girl—simultaneously. Girl and superhero life would be great but for trans-related friend and family conflicts, and a less-than-welcoming legion of superheroes. A skillful blend of real-life trans youth challenges and superhero novel, *Dreadnought* (the first volume in Daniels' *Nemesis* trilogy) is both emotionally sophisticated and a thrilling page-turner.

***I Wish You All the Best* by Mason Deaver (non-binary protagonist)**
Kicked out by their parents for being non-binary, Ben's adult sister takes them in. Honest about some of the bleaker aspects of trans/nb youth existence, this is ultimately a hopeful and uplifting book—and a lovely queer/non-binary love story.



***Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas (trans boy protagonist)**
Latinx trans boy Yadriel belongs to an ancient community of *brujx,* people who negotiate between the realms of the living and the dead. However, *brujx* roles are divided along gender lines, creating conflict for Yadriel. His efforts to prove himself lead to a romantic relationship that bridges across life and death. Determined to hold onto the boy he loves, Yadriel discovers an ancient magic that lives deep within him. Immensely romantic magical realism!

***When the Moon Was Ours* by Anna-Marie McLemore (trans masculine youth, trans feminine parent)**
Miel, a Latinx girl whose wrist grows roses, appeared from a water tower at the age of five. Her closest friend is Samir, a *bacha posh* (a Pakistani trans masculine identity with no Western equivalent). While classified as YA, this poetic and stunningly beautiful work of magical realism truly transcends categorization. It's a profound work of art and a lush, deeply moving love story.



***If I Was Your Girl* (trans girl protagonist) and *Birthday* (trans girl protagonist) by Meredith Russo**
Set in semi-rural and small-town Tennessee, Russo's novels recognize that some trans youth live in smaller, more conservative communities. In *If I Was Your Girl,* protagonist Amanda experiences dangerous hostility alongside life-saving solidarity from other girls. *Birthday* narrates the thirteenth through eighteenth birthdays of Eric and Morgan, best friends born on the same day. Through the years, Morgan gradually acknowledges to herself and others that she is a trans girl, and readers witness the changing dynamics of this lifelong friendship. Russo's books compellingly represent the emotional complexity of trans girls' inner lives.

***Lizard Radio* by Pat Schmatz (gender-queer/non-binary protagonist)**
In this dystopian narrative, benders, people neither strongly male nor strongly female, must choose one or the other by late adolescence. Sent to a camp that forces this choice, Kivali instead discovers her capacity to resist—and the power (and danger) that lies in resistance.

***Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi (trans girl protagonist)**
Jam accidentally summons Pet, a terrifying creature from one of her mother's paintings, and Pet reveals that an unidentified evil lurks in Jam's seemingly perfect community of Lucille. Lucille, however, rid itself of monsters long ago, so how can Jam trust the seemingly monstrous Pet? (In Emezi's imagined future, being trans is so ordinary that this is incidental information rather than central to the story. More like this please!)

Learning about pronouns

By Sunjum Jhaj (she/her), Editor, *Teacher* magazine

THE CONCEPT OF PRONOUNS never seemed very complex to me. You refer to people by the pronouns they choose. Period.

I now know that this is a superficial and incomplete understanding of pronouns. Over the past several months, I've been reading and learning about creating safe, gender-inclusive spaces. In reality, there is a lot more complexity surrounding pronouns than I previously recognized.

Reading articles and blog posts by teachers and trans and non-binary writers and activists helped me identify key mistakes I have been making in my approach to pronouns. Mistakes inevitably happen, but they shouldn't dissuade us from trying to engage in meaningful allyship. Continual learning helps us identify and address mistakes and prevent future mistakes.

Here's what I've learned so far:

Mistake 1: Asking for preferred pronouns

Pronouns are not a preference. They are correct or they are incorrect. By asking for preferred pronouns, I was implying that pronoun choice is based only on preference rather than deeply intertwined with identity.

Mistake 2: Asking people to share their pronouns without creating an opportunity to opt out

For the last edition of the magazine, I sent an email to all authors asking them to send me their pronouns to include in their byline. I didn't offer an alternative for people who may not be comfortable sharing their pronouns with me or publicly in the magazine. My email may also have erroneously implied that sharing pronouns was a requirement for publishing an article in the magazine. Pronouns are personal and complex; not everyone wants to share this with strangers.

I've also learned that pronoun requests can be traumatic for some. People who are questioning their gender identity may feel uncomfortable and forced to choose a pronoun when they are not ready to do so. People whose gender identity does not match their gender expression may be forced to lie or out themselves when asked for pronouns. Providing an opportunity to opt out of sharing pronouns without drawing attention is just as important as creating space to share pronouns.

Mistake 3: Believing you're in an inclusive space where people feel safe sharing their pronouns

Just because one person feels safe, does not mean others will. It takes a lot more than just sharing pronouns to create safe spaces. We need to be aware of potential reactions or pushback people may experience after sharing their pronouns. And most importantly, we need to be prepared to call out and stand against discrimination.

Mistake 4: Assuming you know someone's gender identity based on their pronouns

Pronouns alone don't encompass all gender identities. Further, gender identity is not static for many people, and their use of pronouns may vary over time.

Mistake 5: Acting before learning

We all want to take action to help create a safe, equitable, and inclusive environment; however, if we try to act before engaging in meaningful learning, our actions may do more harm than good. Asking for pronouns without learning about the complexity surrounding this practice is just one example of this.

True allyship requires us to educate ourselves. Read, listen, and learn. Then take informed actions accordingly.

Finally, allyship with trans and non-binary people should not start and end with sharing pronouns. While pronouns can certainly be a useful strategy to signal solidarity, our allyship must extend beyond this.

iStock.com/nadia_bormotova

Virtual field trips

Ready for a trip to Mars? Want to chat with an expert who can answer your class's science or history questions? Interested in visiting museums and galleries without field trip permission forms? Then it's time for a virtual field trip!

Several museums and non-profit organizations have developed engaging virtual field trips for K–12 students. Some are free, or have fee-assistance programs in place, while others charge per class or per student. There are thousands of virtual field trip options available for all grades; the examples listed below are just a small snapshot.

The Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre offers a variety of virtual programs for Grades K–10. Their virtual field trips give schools a chance to learn more about the plants and animals that live in BC's ecosystems.

You can tour the **Beaty Biodiversity Museum** virtually with a museum interpreter. The Museum Interpreter shares stories and specimens from the museum and answers students' questions. This can also be combined with a virtual visit to the Pacific Museum of Earth. The Beaty Biodiversity Museum also has several Beaty Boxes schools can borrow with touchable specimens and scientific objects for students to explore.

Access Mars lets you explore a 3D replica of the Martian surface created using digital photos taken from the Curiosity rover as it travelled across Mars. While exploring the Martian terrain, students can click on points of interest to learn more about the Curiosity mission.

The **HR MacMillan Space Centre** is currently sharing virtual presentations with schools, followed by a Q&A with staff to answer all your questions about space.

In addition to their in-person shows and exhibitions, **Science World** currently offers several online workshops for elementary students to learn more about science concepts and coding.

The **Museum of Anthropology** offers live virtual programs for elementary schools, as well as free downloadable programs for secondary schools. The Museum of Anthropology also has teaching kits for guided study in the classroom.

The **Royal BC Museum** has several 45-minute, 30-minute, and 20-minute digital program offerings. Digital programs are live, interactive learning experiences led by museum staff and cover a variety of topics including Indigenous history, natural history, and becoming BC.

Your class can now visit **Barkerville** virtually to learn more about BC's Gold Rush. Barkerville offers virtual tours, re-enactments, and stories from the gold rush.

Grades K–12 can virtually visit galleries from the **Canadian Museum for Human Rights**. The museum offers virtual field trips tailored to all grade levels, led by museum staff. Each virtual tour ends with a visit to the Israel Asper Tower of Hope for 360˚ views of Winnipeg.

linktr.ee/VirtualFieldTrips

The **Legislative Assembly of British Columbia** offers both a virtual tour and virtual classroom program. The virtual classroom program is facilitated by a Parliamentary Tour Guide and gives students an opportunity to learn about the building and the people who work in it. When possible, your local MLA may join the virtual classroom program.

Google Earth Timelapse uses over 15 million satellite images to show how the earth changed over the last 37 years. Students can watch the Columbia Glacier retreat, the expansion of mining in Alberta, deforestation in Bolivia, and urban growth in cities around the world.

Google Arts & Culture has partnered with over 2,000 museums, art galleries, and cultural institutions from around the world to create virtual experiences that enable people to view collections and galleries for free. Explore cities, art collections, galleries, and museums from around the world. You can explore by category, colour, time, theme, or collection.

The **San Diego Zoo** shares live footage from different animal enclosures on their website. Students and classes can watch elephants, pandas, owls, and more go about their day in a zoo enclosure.

For an interesting comparison of animal behaviour in man-made enclosures and animal behaviour in the wild, you can watch live footage from wildlife cameras in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries around the world on ***explore.org***. Look for polar bears in Wapusk National Park in Manitoba or keep an eye out for the Big 5 in Tembe Elephant Park in South Africa. This website also saves highlights caught on camera, so there's plenty to watch even if the wildlife is out of sight in the live footage.

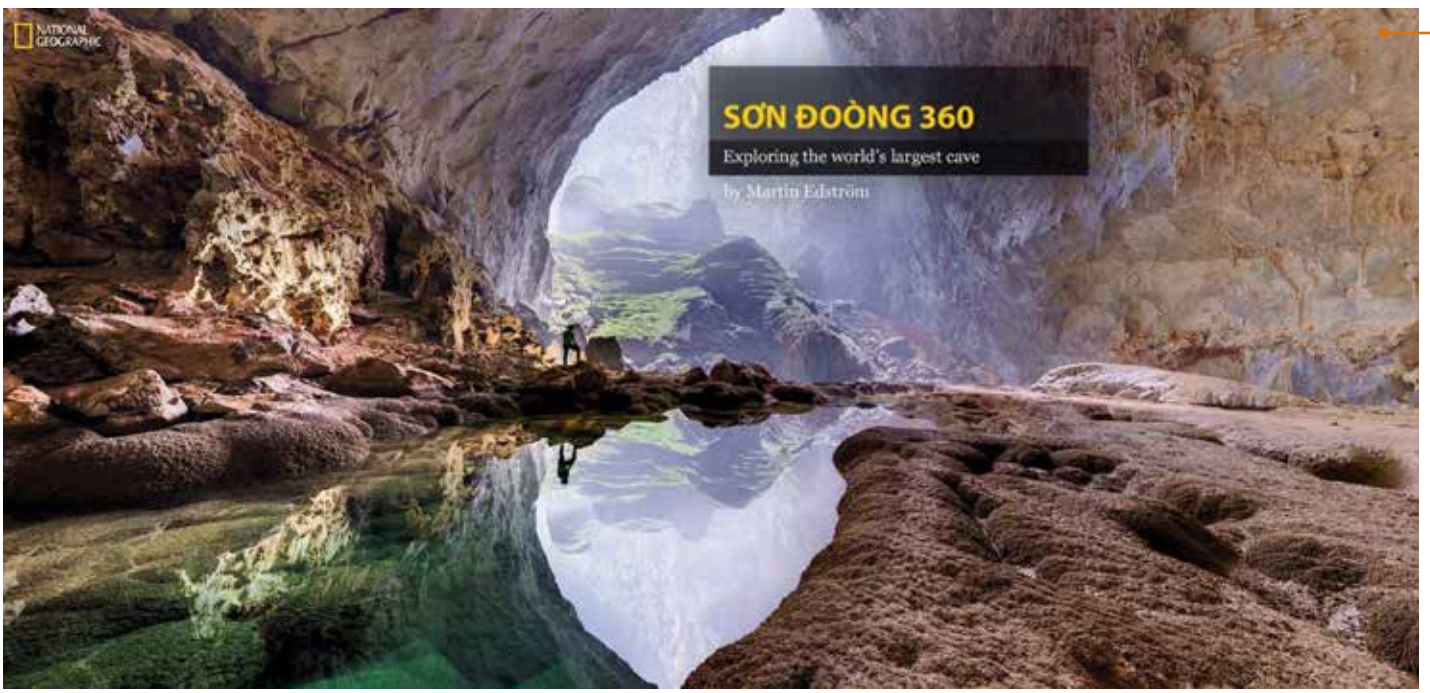
Hang Son Doong is the world's largest natural cave, located in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Vietnam. National Geographic has created a free virtual tour of this cave where you can experience the sights and sounds and read about the history and geography. Son Doong is more than 5 km long and reaches heights up to 200 metres in some of the largest caverns.

Parks Canada and the Royal Ontario Museum teamed up to create a virtual experience of the **Burgess Shale** in Yoho National Park. The virtual experience allows you to explore a fossil gallery and learn about evolutionary and geological science. You can also learn about the history of expeditions in the area.

The Canadian Museum of History has 95 online exhibits to explore virtually at your own pace. You can browse stories, artifacts, videos, and galleries.

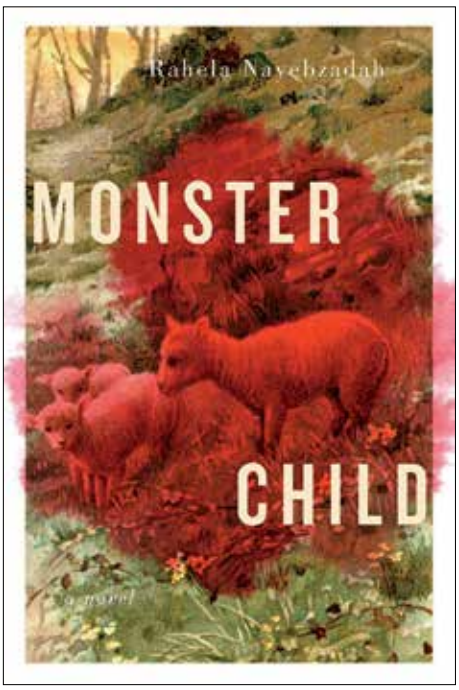
To find links to these resources, scan the QR code or visit *linktr.ee/VirtualFieldTrips*.

SCAN ME



Q&A with Rahela Nayebzadah:
Author of *Monster Child* and Surrey teacher

"... I wrote *Monster Child* because I wanted Afghan readers to be seen and heard. ... And now with the situation in Afghanistan, Afghan voices are more crucial than ever."



What is *Monster Child* about?

The book is based on the Afshar family and told from the perspective of the three self-proclaimed "monster" children: Beh, Shabnam, and Alif. It's appropriate for Grades 11 and 12, and deals with race, racism, sexual assault, and Islamophobia. After the loss of a family member, family secrets are revealed, and the children are left to deal with traumas that happen within the immigrant community.

Aside from monstrosity, blood is also a major theme in the novel. For Beh, blood flows out of her as a result of sexual abuse. For Shabnam, she has a magical gift of crying blood. And, for Alif, he is left questioning his own blood.

Why did you decide to write this book?

As an Afghan-Canadian, I wrote *Monster Child* because I wanted Afghan readers to be seen and heard. I was two when my family and I immigrated to Canada. Growing up, I don't recall studying any books written by Afghan authors (except for *The Kite Runner*). And now with the situation in Afghanistan, Afghan voices are more crucial than ever. Our voices and stories need to be heard.

Afghans are often misrepresented in the media. A lot of common narratives we see surrounding Afghanistan portray Afghan women as submissive and Afghan men as oppressive and violent. Such misrepresentations need to be addressed in classrooms.

As an author and educator, I truly believe the best way to combat stereotypes is through books. *Monster Child* gives readers a chance to learn about traumas that occur within the immigrant experience through the eyes of teenagers. The book offers an insight into Afghan culture by including stories, meals, prayers, and cultural and gender-based expectations. A glossary of Dari words is also included.

What aspects of your own life helped inspire the book?

Like many immigrants, I experienced racism from a young age. These stories and experiences were incorporated into the novel. For example, the Afshar family encountered discrimination and prejudice with the opening of their family restaurant, The Afghan Nomad. My family also struggled with similar experiences with the opening of our family business, The Silk Road Cafe. This sense of shame in one's culture and the need to belong was an important aspect of my childhood and early adulthood.

Finally, as a Muslim, I've had to deal with Islamophobia my entire life. Having a mother and sister who both wear the hijab, it was important that I address the role of women in Islam and the Afghan culture.

What do you hope your students will learn from this book?

Monster Child deals with themes that can be difficult for readers to process and can even be triggering for some readers. The passages on 13-year-old Beh's sexual assault are detailed and vivid. Although these topics are difficult, it is important that we discuss them. This can only be done if teachers create a safe environment for such discussions to take place and ensure supports are in place for students who need them.

As educators, we need to dispel myths (such as "boys will be boys") and victim-blaming when discussing such topics. I want students to understand that people of all gender identities can be victims of sexual abuse. This book also creates opportunities to discuss how terms such as "survivor" and "victim" are problematic.

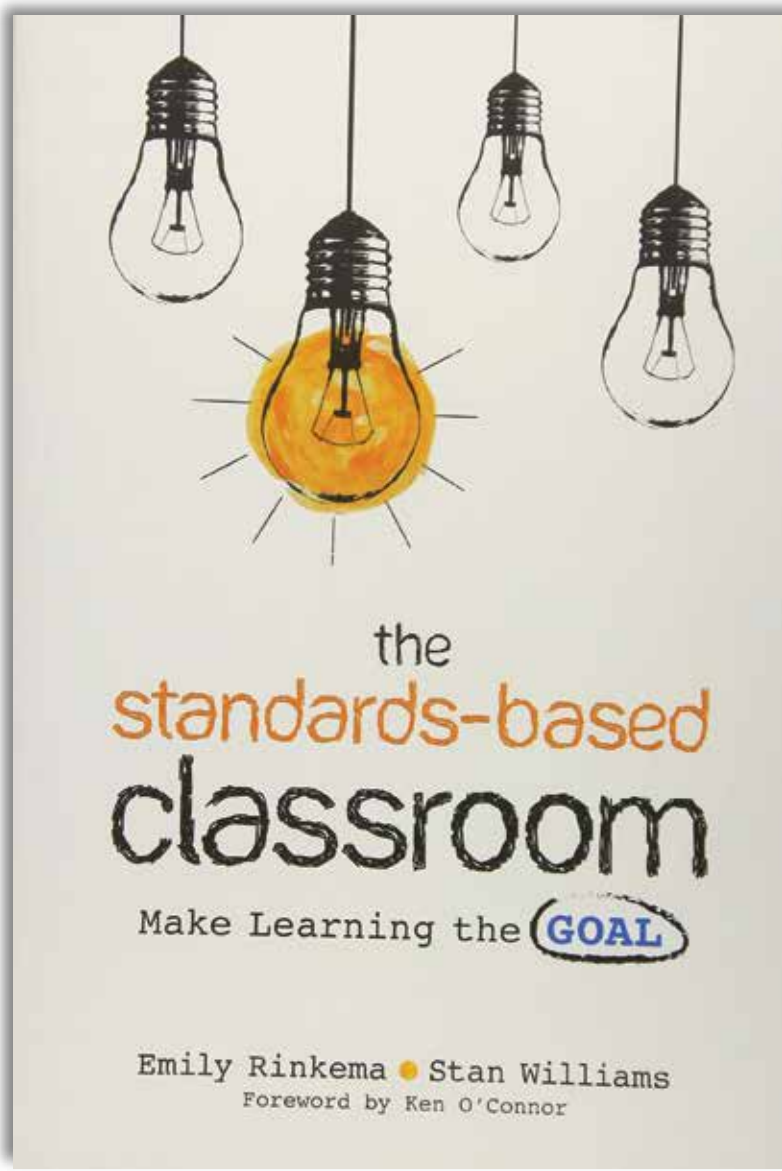
An inspiring and practical approach to standards-based assessment

By Marcus Blair (he/him), teacher, Summerland

THIS SUMMER I set out to further my understanding of standards-based assessment. While seeking out the experts, I stumbled upon Emily Rinkema and Stan Williams's book, *The Standards-Based Classroom: Make Learning the Goal*. Like many educators, I devour professional development books. By doing so, I'm often deluged by a tidal wave of talented teachers, inspiring pedagogy, and persistent despair. Despair instigated by one nagging question: how can I feasibly finesse or even force those talented teachers' inspiring pedagogies into my own practice? But this book isn't like that. Rather than triggering despair, this book can level-up your assessment practices through its practical strategies, thorough explanations, and helpful examples. So, if you're looking to dip your toes into standards-based assessment, start with this book!

Chapter One, titled "Developing K-U-Ds," illustrates how to create unit plans for any standards-based classroom, regardless of grade or discipline. Developing K-U-Ds involves breaking units into what you want your students to *know*, what you want your students to *understand*, and what you want your students to be able to *do* at the conclusion of any given learning period. You don't have to be a curriculum guru to spot the blatant parallels to BC's revised curriculum: know = content, understand = big ideas, do = curricular competencies. Furthermore, Rinkema and Williams provide several concrete examples of K-U-D-s being implemented in real classrooms. So, rather than wistfully imagining hypothetical classrooms where their ideas could succeed, I smoothly integrated them into my own. Honestly, I kept this book in arms reach as I organized my units for Social Justice 12—a new addition to my teaching schedule.

Another chapter, "Building Learning Scales," explains how to create learning scales for a variety of classroom contexts. Learning scales communicate a student's understanding of any given competency. These scales are all divided into four levels, which aligns nicely with BC's four-level proficiency scale language: emerging, developing, proficient, and extending. To help teachers adapt learning scales into their own context, the authors include examples from a variety of disciplines, everything from middle school mathematics to secondary home economics. To better communicate the utility of learning scales, Rinkema and Williams feature an example below the title of each chapter; these specific scales communicate four levels in which teachers can adopt each chapter's concepts. For instance, the chapter on K-U-Ds describes an emerging level of concept implementation as, "I have course curriculum documents," and the extending level as, "I use my unit K-U-Ds with students to clearly communicate goals and expectations for learning." I've been using proficiency language and learning scales in my own classroom for some time, but the examples provided in *The Standards-Based Classroom* compelled me to re-evaluate my existing assessment portfolio.



Implementing standards-based practices can be a daunting task. But it doesn't have to be a solitary one. Use Rinkema and Williams's *The Standards Based Classroom: Make Learning the Goal* as your standards-based guide. It provides additional insights on many other aspects of standards-based assessment, including formative and summative assessment, differentiation, and how to create a standards-based grade book. Whether you're pursuing a paradigm shift or less drastic tweaks to your assessment practice, this book has much to offer.

Peer Support Service available online

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For more information and to access PSS, contact Sherry Payne, Miranda Light, or your local president.

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604-871-1803
1-800-663-9163
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jbradley@inclusionbc.org

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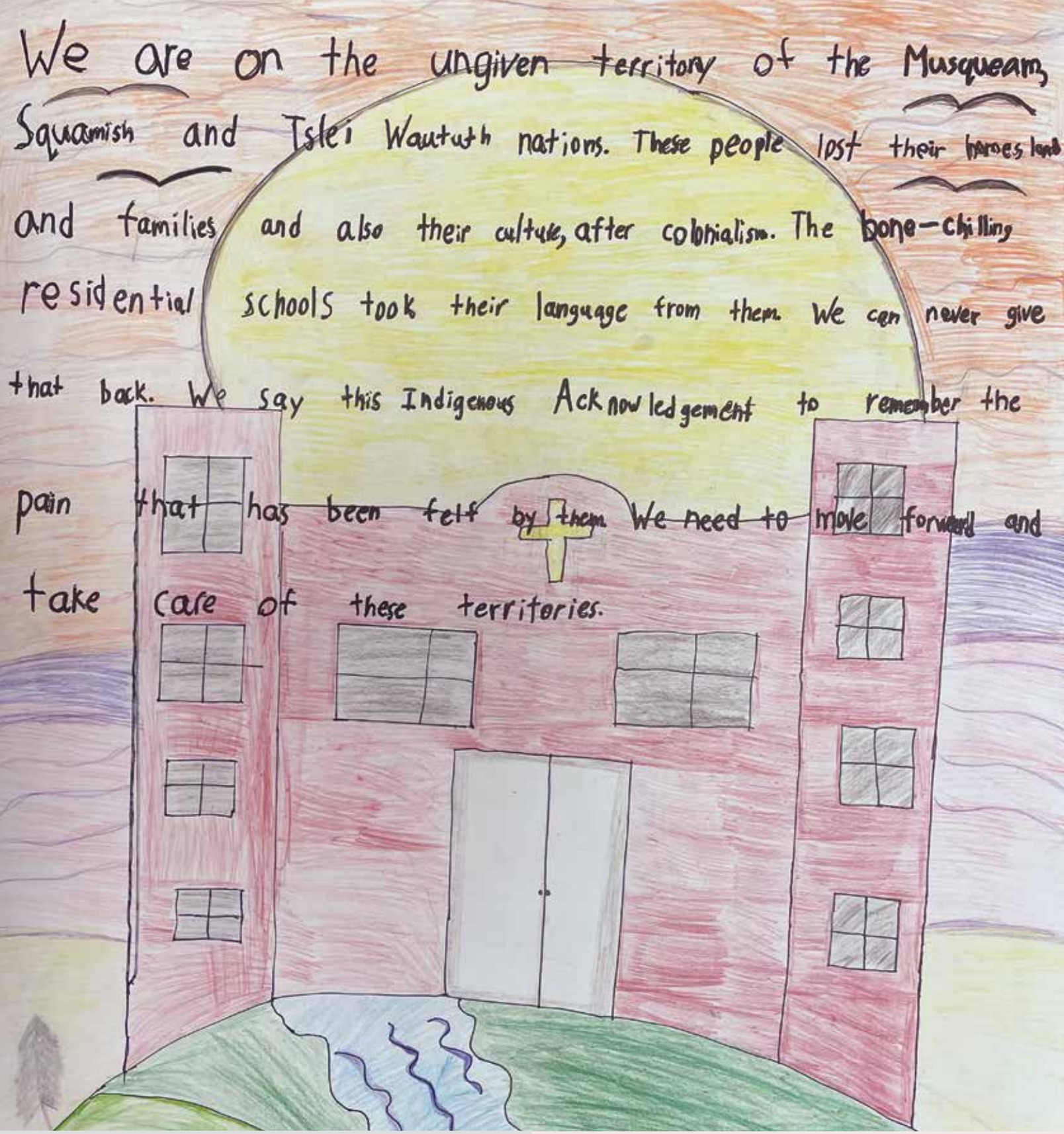

Above: This land acknowledgment was written by Grade 6/7 students, Tommy Chen, Samual Cuthand Zhao, and Kaydenze Zamora, from Lord Strathcona Elementary School in Vancouver.

Send photos of your students' work to *teachermag@bctf.ca* for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue.

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