

Teacher

BC Teachers' Federation

Nov/Dec 2023



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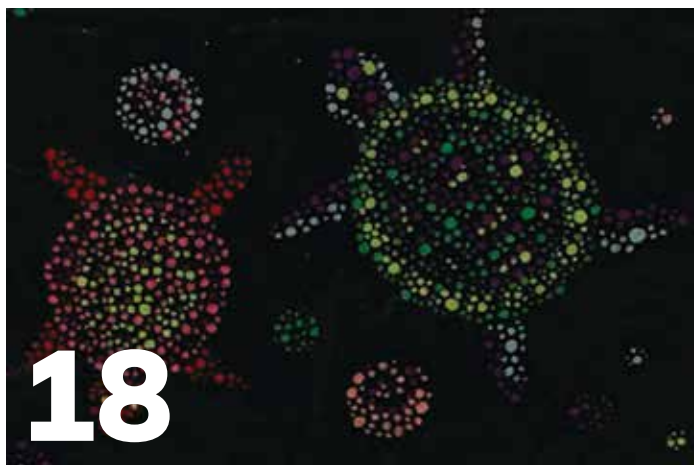
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Sunjum Jhaj photo

BCTF

Kids Matter
Teachers Care

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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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Cover photo

Gulf Islands members Sara Bowles (left) and Jessica Willows (right) enjoy being immersed in nature and a tight-knit community on Mayne Island. Read more in the local profile on pages 20–25.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sunjum Jhaj photo

THE FIRST FEW MONTHS of this school year have not been easy for many of our members given events taking place in our communities and our world. Recently, we've seen anti-SOGI protests outside local offices and community gathering sites around the province. The misinformation used to spew anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric is worrying and alarming. I want to recognize and applaud the work BCTF members are doing every day to protect their colleagues and students from discrimination and harassment related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

SOGI resources are intended to ensure schools are spaces where everyone is welcome, bullying is not tolerated, and students can express themselves in a genuine way that is true to who they are. The work teachers do with these resources, and the relationships you build with students and staff, are essential to creating safe and inclusive schools. Thank you for defending policies and resources that show students they don't need to hide who they are, and that all families and individuals deserve respect and recognition.

“Thank you for defending policies and resources that show students they don't need to hide who they are, and that all families and individuals deserve respect and recognition.”

In the midst of a school year with both global and community stresses causing increased concern among students, teachers, and families, Grades 4 and 7 teachers are again expected to

administer the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). This standardized test disrupts learning and is an unnecessary and inequitable stress—particularly for vulnerable students. The Fraser Institute's use of the FSA data to devalue the incredible work being done in communities across BC is both demoralizing and unjust. To learn more about the BCTF's campaign against the FSA, visit bctf.ca/fsa.

I'd also like to acknowledge the work that occurs in all public schools around the province—all of which are providing a supportive and engaging learning environment for kids. The BCTF strongly believes that student success doesn't have a postal code. Teachers are differentiating learning; supporting students to meet them where they're at; and teaching kindness, empathy, and citizenship—all important learning the FSA doesn't measure.

Finally, to the staff at Hazel Trembath Elementary School in Coquitlam, I see the incredible amount of work and dedication it has taken to start new routines and bring some normalcy to students' lives after the devastating fire that destroyed your school site. The whole school community has been deeply affected by this fire, and our hearts go out to all the staff, students, and families.

In solidarity,

Clint Johnston
BCTF President

«Je vous remercie de défendre des politiques et des ressources qui montrent aux élèves qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de cacher ce qu'ils sont et que toutes les familles et tous les individus méritent le respect et la reconnaissance.»

MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT

LES PREMIERS MOIS DE L'ANNÉE scolaire n'ont pas été faciles pour beaucoup de nos membres, en raison des événements qui se déroulent dans nos communautés et dans le monde. Récemment, nous avons assisté à des manifestations anti-SOGI devant les bureaux des sections locales et des lieux de rassemblement communautaire dans toute la province. La désinformation utilisée pour répandre une rhétorique anti-2SLGBTQIA+ est inquiétante et alarmante. Je tiens à reconnaître et à saluer le travail que les membres de la FECB accomplissent chaque jour pour protéger leurs collègues et leurs élèves contre la discrimination et le harcèlement liés à l'orientation sexuelle et à l'identité de genre.

Les ressources SOGI visent à s'assurer que les écoles sont des espaces où tout le monde est le bienvenu, où l'intimidation n'est pas tolérée et où les élèves peuvent s'exprimer d'une manière authentique qui correspond à ce qu'ils sont. Le travail du personnel enseignant avec ces ressources et les relations établies avec les élèves et le personnel sont essentiels pour créer des écoles sûres et inclusives. Je vous remercie de défendre des politiques et des ressources qui montrent aux élèves qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de cacher ce qu'ils sont et que toutes les familles et tous les individus méritent le respect et la reconnaissance.

Au milieu d'une année scolaire marquée par des tensions mondiales et communautaires qui suscitent une inquiétude croissante chez les élèves, le personnel enseignant et les familles, les enseignants de 4e et 7e années devront à nouveau faire passer les Évaluations des compétences de base (EHB). Ce test standardisé perturbe l'apprentissage et constitue un stress inutile et inéquitable, en particulier pour les élèves vulnérables. L'utilisation par l'Institut Fraser des données des EHB pour dévaloriser l'incroyable travail réalisé dans les communautés à travers la Colombie-Britannique est à la fois démoralisante et injuste. Pour en savoir plus sur la campagne de la FECB contre les EHB, visitez le site bctf.ca/fsa.

J'aimerais également souligner le travail accompli dans toutes les écoles publiques de la province, qui offrent aux enfants un environnement d'apprentissage positif et stimulant. La FECB croit fermement que la réussite des élèves n'a pas de code postal. Le personnel enseignant différencie l'apprentissage, soutient les élèves pour les accompagner à leur niveau, et enseigne la gentillesse, l'empathie et la citoyenneté—autant d'apprentissages importants que les EHB ne mesurent pas.

Enfin, au personnel de l'école primaire Hazel Trembath de Coquitlam, je constate l'incroyable ampleur de travail et de dévouement qu'il a fallu pour mettre en place de nouvelles routines et rétablir une certaine normalité dans la vie des élèves après l'incendie dévastateur qui a détruit le site de votre école. Toute la communauté scolaire a été profondément touchée par cet incendie et nous sommes de tout cœur avec le personnel, les élèves et les familles.

En toute solidarité,



Clint Johnston
Président de la FECB

Supporting trans students

Q&A WITH A PARENT, ALLY, AND TRANS-RIGHTS ADVOCATE

This article has been published anonymously to protect the identity of the child.



istock.com/DanirKhobrov

Tell us a bit about you.

I am always keen to share my lived experience as the father of a 10-year-old daughter who is transgender. I was thrilled when I was invited to contribute to *Teacher* about the role schools play in assisting parents who are socially transitioning their transgender, gender-fluid, and non-binary children. Talking, sharing, and listening fosters greater awareness, understanding, and advocacy for gender-creative kids.

How was your experience navigating the school system as a parent of a trans child? What are some things schools have done to make you feel supported and safe?

In September of Grade 3, my daughter asked for her pronouns to be changed from he/him to she/her. Her request was respectfully agreed to by teachers, administrators, and, ultimately, my daughter's classmates. The issue remained: how do we facilitate the request? I saw a "worst-case scenario" in my mind's eye, much like a Roald Dahl novel: the teacher asking my daughter to stand up in front of the class and announcing that my daughter, who was formerly referred to as he, would now be referred to as she. I pictured the class laughing at her and the bullying beginning.

Fortunately, my fears never materialized. In conjunction with a school counsellor, our school's amazing principal, and my daughter's teachers, we came up with a plan to share books about sexual orientation and gender identity with the class. Students would be given the opportunity to gain information and insights and ask questions. At the end of the day, students would be invited to express their preferred pronouns to one another.

The day of the book-reading plan and the official pronoun change happened; I spent the entire day completely pre-occupied with wondering how it might all turn out. When I picked up my daughter from school, I asked her how her day went. She replied, "You're never going to believe what happened today." Holding my breath, I asked, "Really, what happened?" She said, "I got to the top of the rope in gym class." Exhaling, I asked if anything else had happened. She replied, "Yes, at lunch, I swapped my cookie for a chocolate bar." "Anything else happen today?" I prodded one more time. "No," she replied.

What are some things schools could focus on improving?

I want the teachers at my daughter's school to know how important acceptance and advocacy has been to my daughter and to our family. I cannot imagine the desperation a child and parent must feel to be told by their school that their child cannot use the bathroom that matches their gender identity. I cannot imagine the toll it must take on a trans child's sense of self to have to show up to a place, day, after day, after day, that fundamentally does not accept who they are. I know that if this was my daughter's experience, she would not be the incredible kid she is today, full of confidence and pride.

Parents are asking school staff to be partners in the social transitioning of their child, and I think it's important for school staff to realize that no matter how "under control" parents may seem about this partnership, parents (at least in my case) are scared and feel incredibly vulnerable about what the outcomes will be of socially transitioning their child in the school environment. The more support, understanding, and advocacy schools can show, the lower the fear and anxiety will be for the parents and ultimately the child.

There's also been a lot in the media lately about trying to mandate that schools share with parents the pronouns students are using at school. For students who don't have safe spaces within their homes and families to express their gender identities, schools may be the only welcoming spaces where they can be their true selves. Outing students when they are not ready to have this conversation with their families can be damaging and dangerous. I encourage all schools to stand up for students' rights to identify however they want to in each space they move through.

How can parents advocate for their children at school? What is a parent's role in the school-based team to ensure their child is supported at school?

The most direct way a parent can advocate for their child is to get involved with your school. Join the parent advisory council (PAC) and volunteer for PAC-related activities. Getting involved at your child's school helps you to get to know the school's staff and administration. It helps you to get to know other parents. It helps you to form relationships and have organic conversations about the issues that are important to you and the larger school community.

I have volunteered for the past several years for the spring fling and the pumpkin patch fundraiser at my daughter's school, and now I am on the PAC. I am now much more comfortable with bringing up my own initiatives at PAC meetings. This year I am going to organize our school's first-ever pride parade. I have much more confidence doing so given the number of volunteer hours I have contributed to a variety of school events.

What challenges or successes do you anticipate as your child moves into the upper grades? What's different about how elementary schools and secondary schools can support students?

The challenges I anticipate moving into upper grades are with the onset of puberty. Right now, my daughter is a girl. If you did not know she was trans, you would never suspect that she was assigned male at birth. Of course, with the onset of puberty her voice will deepen, her shoulders will widen, and she will develop an Adam's apple and facial hair; all of which are not only anathema to my daughter, but they also "out" her as assigned male at birth. As these changes occur, we, as a family, must decide what, if any, gender-affirming health care we want to pursue. This will be a period of great uncertainty for myself and my daughter, and I hope this time does not cause any excess or undue pressure beyond the already tumultuous time of puberty. I am concerned how these changes will affect my daughter's academics, her social life, her confidence, and her overall sense of self.

High school is an important time for social and peer-group interaction. I hope that my daughter's high school has peer-oriented supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ students.

What is your advice to other parents who are learning to navigate their child's gender identity? What resources are available? Where can they learn more about supporting their child?

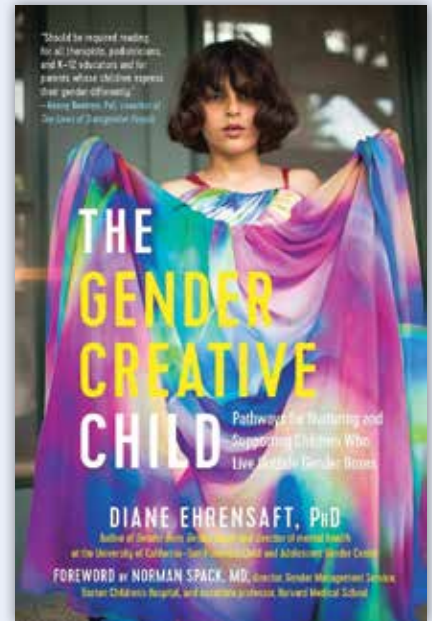
My advice for parents who are learning to navigate their child's gender identity is to support and respect requests for gender-affirming expression. If you have a child who is a trans male, and they want a short haircut, let them cut their hair. If, as is the case in my family, your daughter is trans, and they want to wear a dress to school, let them wear a dress to school. I know it's scary. I know it may feel impossible. But the more my wife and I "leaned into" and supported my daughter's gender expression, the more she sparkled.

Realize that non-conforming gender identify is a gift. Your child's expression of non-conforming identity, in the face of a dominant binary culture, shows just how strong, confident, and beautiful your child is. ●

A PARENT-ALLY'S RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

***The Man Enough Podcast* featuring Alok Vaid-Menon**

"The Urgent Need for Compassion" episode of this podcast, featuring poet and activist Alok Vaid-Menon, blew my mind. It has single-handedly been the most important and influential resource in my understanding of gender.



***The Gender Creative Child* by Diane Ehrensaft**



***Transgender Child* by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper**

***Transgender Teen* by Stephanie Brill and Lise Kenney**

Qmunity.ca has a twice-monthly online support group for parents of trans kids.

Trans Care BC phsa.ca/transcarebc

Canadian Parents of Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diverse Kids
facebook.com/canadianparentsoftranskids





THE MAKING OF MELANIN MAGIC A CASE FOR BIPOC GROUPS IN SCHOOLS

By Tasha Henry (she/her) and Jennifer Gage (she/her),
teachers and visitors on Lekwungen speaking peoples traditional lands

“DISCOVER YOURSELF AND BE PROUD OF YOUR CULTURE AND WHO YOU ARE. NEVER DESIGN YOUR DAY TO BE IN FRONT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE GOING TO PULL YOU DOWN.”

– ABEL GEREZGHER, MELANIN MAGIC MENTOR

IN THE FALL OF 2017, Carmel Bennett, youth and family counsellor at Cedar Hill Middle School in Victoria, BC, noticed that many of her counselling students were girls of colour. She quickly realized that a different support model was needed. As a biracial woman, Bennett saw a need for an exclusive space for Black/mixed/brown girls to explore their identities in a safe space. She asked her friend Ejemen Iyayi, a counsellor from Quadra Village, to co-facilitate a weekly lunchtime group nestled in the corner of the resource room. As a group, the girls chose the name “Melanin Magic” and shared their experiences with racism and discrimination. When Bennett left the following school year, Tasha Henry, an inclusive learning teacher, and Iyayi continued the weekly group, pulling in community mentors and role models to inspire the girls. As a white-settler teacher, Henry knew that the group could run only with BIPOC facilitators and mentors.

Inspired by a photography/storytelling exhibition by Nathan Smith, called “Profiling Black Excellence,” the group decided that art as intervention was a modality that could raise their voices in a predominantly white community. The double meaning of Smith’s exhibition “Profiling Black Excellence” resonated with the middle schoolers. They understood the painful experience of being racially profiled and were hopeful and eager to step into their futures as social-change agents. By 2019, the group was open to students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, including those who identify as boys and those of Asian descent. These new members brought with them a strong mission to insert their own experience and perspectives into public spaces through art, media, installation, and fieldwork.

This year Jennifer Gage, a teacher in the Sooke district, and Henry co-facilitate the group with youth mentor Abel Gerezgher. Gage and Henry, both middle school teachers and mothers of biracial children, have witnessed their own children suffer from racism in the school system. They met at one of Melanin Magic’s community art interventions in 2022. Gage, a Black educator originally from Toronto, was struck by the confidence of the Melanin Magic students and the degree of empowerment revealed through the art installation. The exhibition represented silenced voices through the installation of painted jean jackets, with words and images such as “8:48,” the minutes that George Floyd was held down, or the red dress, symbolizing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The jackets were hung and strewn provocatively by Indigenous contemporary artist Tyrone Elliot to tell a bigger story of the voices that have been silenced and the ones still waiting to be heard.

Gage remembers: *When I took my daughters to the installation, I was immediately impressed with the passion and pride in their work. I also realized that it was the first time my girls were in the presence of several kids who looked like them and they commented that it was “cool.” When I brought my daughter to the group meeting, I noticed the students were able to talk openly about the things they had in common, including the microaggressions they experienced in elementary school that they still carry with them. In just one meeting, it showed my daughter that she was not alone and gave her a community that she’s been longing for.* ➔



Recently the group's size swelled to 25 students, so the kids voted to split the meetings by gender. This would allow them to discuss topics and themes specific to their experiences. To make this happen, Henry and Gage connected with male-identifying BIPOC community mentors to meet with the boys' group. The boys wanted to focus on the stereotyping of Black men in sports, specifically basketball, so Henry asked Abel Gerezgher, youth wellness co-ordinator and a basketball player with a passion for uplifting youth, to co-facilitate the weekly group. Gerezgher reminds teachers that when forming groups for BIPOC youth there can be historical internalized racism that affects the level of engagement or perceived stigmatization of these exclusive groups. Sensitive to these complexities, Melanin Magic students have chosen to personally invite students to the meetings with a face-to-face invitation. The weekly share-outs often include their observations of other BIPOC students in the school who seem isolated or lonely. Finding ways to connect with other BIPOC students who have a commitment to social justice projects has always been part of their unofficial recruitment plan.

Elyon, a Grade 8 student, encourages teacher-facilitators to consider how and why they would invite students to the group: "Make sure kids don't join just for fun. Our work is important. You should personally invite people to the group; don't just ask every person of colour to join." As Elyon points out, the group isn't necessarily for all people of colour; it is for BIPOC students who are passionate about social and historical thinking, social justice, and community building.

A COMPLICATED INVITATION

With the intention to decolonize schooling practices in purposeful ways, Melanin Magic starts each school year with an invitation to "dream together" around shared interests and passions. Out of these dreams comes a critical examination of what kinds of barriers may currently be in place to achieving that collective dream, whether they're institutional, systemic, or otherwise. The group usually forms a "burning question" that articulates these social or cultural barriers. Their facilitators then find community artists, professionals, and activists to mentor the students through the complexity of that question, with a goal to impose this question into public awareness and community spaces. The year's work always culminates with an art show, celebration, or exhibition that engages the community in unexpected ways. Past projects have included a podcast with artist Kemi Craig, a mural mentored by Dre Searle for the Greater Victoria Art Gallery, and a photography exhibition curated by the students with photographer Nathan Smith for the Legacy Art Gallery.

As Henry says, decolonizing field trips and using instructional time to do this work in the community is one way the group intentionally occupies private and public spaces that have historically remained closed to them. Liz, a Grade 8 student, advises, "If you are starting a BIPOC group, you have to have an open mind. You have to know how to support kids of colour. You can't dismiss their experience. Don't have an agenda of what you think the group should be or do. You don't want them to feel more restricted in a place that's meant to make them feel safe."



**“...lesson plans
alone don’t ensure
institutional
change, nor do
good intentions...
there has to be
larger community
engagement...”**





Often when the students meet, they grapple with the complexity of what it means to identify as BIPOC. As Tabi, a Grade 8 student who has been in the group since Grade 6, reaffirms, “Make sure you have BIPOC leaders in the group: teachers or older students. Students have to be able to relate to you when it comes to racism.”

Teachers who want to form BIPOC groups in schools may have good intentions to run an anti-racist curriculum, but lesson plans alone don’t ensure institutional change, nor do good intentions. Racism and discrimination are permitted to operate in spite of education’s attempts to “erase bullying” or engage in “culturally responsive” professional goals, and that is precisely why student voice and agency must be at the forefront of any discussion of inclusion when it comes to schools. This isn’t to say that anti-racist programs don’t have impact, but there has to be larger community engagement leading the learning. Having student-led groups that work with and for the communities they hope to empower is a necessary presence in any school, but especially in schools where the white culture remains dominant.

SUSTAINING THE MAGIC

When students can frame their own vision of community outside of their school’s walls, they get to imagine the world they want to live in. Several Melanin Magic mentors have described what it was like for them to attend public schools in Victoria. Some of them tried to form Black student unions or BIPOC student associations and had been told by the school staff that the groups had to be inclusive (available to all, including white students). It may seem like a response grounded in equity, but this kind of response points to the misunderstanding of the difference between equity and equality; a misunderstanding that further oppresses and perpetuates the need for the group in the first place. As Sophia, a former Melanin Magic student, attests, “A teacher once said to me ‘I don’t see colour; I just see a great person.’ Why doesn’t she see me as Black *and* a great person? The two are related!” This kind of microaggression closes down any discussion of race and identity under a pretense of equality that forecloses on any opportunity for a meaningful relationship, let alone a learning one.

While white teachers are working to understand their own fragility and embedded belief systems and misunderstandings, the students are already opening the conversations that need to happen. Parker Johnson, Melanin Magic mentor, encourages teachers to understand their role, as well as the limitations of that role. He recommends, “Always do the work in collaboration with students of colour. Take the time to craft a diversity, equity, and inclusion role as a collective, with student input where they can describe what this role looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Listen to who students want as their facilitator and then ask who the best people are to be in that role.” This type of student input could drive any school goal or district goal around inclusion.

Melanin Magic, now in its seventh year running, and the longest running BIPOC group in the Greater Victoria School District, hopes that every school can sustain a BIPOC-student-led group. “It’s a fine balance between grant writing, community relationships, facilitation skills, including understanding white fragility, and enough structure so that the kids see their ideas impacting the communities they live in,” says Henry.

Chloe, a Grade 6 student, sees the necessity of such groups in schools. “There should definitely be a group in every school because where else would you feel safe enough to share these experiences? Make sure you do something fun, and make sure you let the kids invite new kids to the group. It should not be a group that just talks; it should be a group where people get to share experiences from different schools.” Gage and Henry recommend hosting the group during instructional time and to stay flexible but purposeful in the content and facilitation style. Most of all, as Henry says, “Students should leave your room lighter and more emboldened each week.” When asked what is the “magic” in Melanin Magic, Tabi says, “Even if we are talking about systemic racism, we have fun. We like to sing a lot and laugh. Yeah, we like to laugh a lot.” •

MELANIN MAGIC’S ADVICE for teachers starting a BIPOC group

DO

meet in a cozy, closed space that feels like a living room.

circle up and start with a check-in. We always acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples whose land we are on.

have food or tea to share—become a family, clean up after yourselves, and say thank you.

meaningful fieldwork: get out on the land, visit art galleries or museums, start conversations about art and representation.

take the bus together.

establish some “rules to gather” around respect, kindness, and listening. No cross talking! Sit in a circle.

invite “cool” guests and mentors, including parents, professionals, aunties/uncles, and local BIPOC business owners. How will we know what we can do if we don’t see it first!

work with your hands while talking (beading, painting, eating, or making music are our favourites).

name someone who champions you in your life when in the gratefulness circle. Hold them in your heart.

leave your meeting making sure everyone feels lifted up.

DON’T

have the group always meet at lunch—that’s when we want to see our friends. Have it during class time.

always talk about heavy stuff or talk too much—make sure it feels safe to share.

put an announcement on the PA—that’s embarrassing.

think all Black/brown kids will have stuff in common. Let us pick who we invite to the group.

decide what you think we should do. We have ideas.

have us on display in assemblies or presentations. We are not a performance group.

be too open-ended. Have a focus or a project. (We always work on something together; otherwise it gets gossipy.)



**All photography by
Nathan Smith of N8 Images**



We will remember them

Travelling to Netherlands war cemeteries upon the invitation of Veterans Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion, Dutch Branch 005

“We would like to recognize every single one of them by a photo and a story of his life, so they will never be forgotten.”

– Faces to Graves Challenge,
Royal Canadian Legion,
Dutch Branch 005



By Carol Arnold, teacher, Salt Spring Island

MY BROTHER AND I got the call from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) in August: would we be willing to join a delegation that would go to the Netherlands in September to visit the gravesite of our uncle? A week-long trip was being organized by VAC to bring some of the closest living relatives to the gravesites of 13 Indigenous soldiers who died in the last stage of WWII. This came about after a group of Canadian, Indigenous, and Dutch individuals created the Indigenous Legacy Project earlier in the year. The Indigenous Legacy Project is a “research and remembrance initiative to identify and mark the graves of Indigenous soldiers buried” across the Netherlands.¹

Growing up, our mother kept her older brother’s memory alive, telling stories about his suffering at a residential school near St. Albert, and how he ran away to get back to his home at Lac Ste. Anne. She told how he fled the school in winter and ran 26 miles to get home only to find “them” waiting for him when he arrived. The residential school he attended was run by Catholic nuns who assured my grandmother that her son would be getting an excellent education.

In 1940, barely 19 years old, my uncle Joseph Norman Letendre enlisted in the army, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. The records described him as a Cree speaker, “labourer,” and musician. He was known for his athletic ability, especially as a runner. On April 12, 1945, he was killed in action in a fierce battle near Holten where he is now buried alongside hundreds of Canadians who died liberating the Netherlands.

The journey to the city of Deventer, located near two of the great Canadian war cemeteries in the Netherlands, Holten and Groesbeek, brought solace to my brother Richard and me; solace for the gaping hole left by Norman's untimely death so close to V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, May 5, 1945. We were comforted by the company of the other 27 Indigenous family representatives, moved by the ceremonies, and enriched by hearing the stories of their loved ones, which were so similar to our own. We were touched as well by the outpouring of gratitude by the Dutch mayor, school children, and teachers. They continue to honour the sacrifice of so many young men who came from afar and liberated them from the Nazi tyranny. They told us of how they had lived in fear, and were starving and sick when the Canadians arrived. To this day the cemeteries are kept immaculately groomed, often by classes of school children. In fact, school children participated in two of the ceremonies held for us: first at Holten, and then at Groesbeek.

Canadian dignitaries accompanied us and spoke at the three ceremonies held in as many days. The speeches from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Canadian Ambassador to The Hague fully acknowledged the differential treatment the Indigenous soldiers experienced, and they expressed regret on behalf of the Canadian state and people for the long delay in fully making gestures of restitution to the soldiers' families and communities. It is essential we remember this suffering and sacrifice on November 8, Aboriginal Veterans Day.

November 8 is now set aside for special recognition of the contributions made by soldiers like my uncle. It is well known that one motivation for joining the war was for young recruits to escape the experience and memory of residential schools. Residential schooling, in fact, resulted in recruits being limited to enlisting in the army, deemed as too poorly educated to join the navy or air force. Keep in mind that WWII ended in 1945, yet Aboriginal people did not get the right to vote in Federal elections until 1960! Benefits of land and loans that were given to non-Indigenous veterans upon their return to civilian life did not flow to their Indigenous counterparts. Furthermore, enfranchisement for enlisted Indigenous men meant they lost their identity, and this often meant they did not or could not return to their reserves.

1 "13 soldiers represented by family or community members with Indigenous Legacy Project delegation," Veterans Affairs Canada, September 2023: www.canada.ca/en/veterans-affairs-canada/news/2023/09/13-soldiers-represented-by-family-or-community-members-with-indigenous-legacy-project-delegation.htm

2 R. Scott Sheffield and David Joseph Gallant, "Indigenous Peoples and the World Wars," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, April 2016: www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indigenous-peoples-and-the-world-wars

3 *ibid.*

We must also acknowledge that it was Indigenous activism that ultimately brought about change: the major amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951, citizenship and voting rights in 1960, and, "recognition of their sacrifices and restitution for grievances over veterans benefits from the 1970s to the 2000s. Perseverance [by the activists] paid off, with a consensus report accepted by both First Nations veterans groups and the government in 2001, followed by an offer of a public apology and offer of compensation in 2003."²

My uncle was Métis, and Métis and Inuit veterans' "grievances ha[d] not received the same hearing [as First Nations]. In recent years, however, Indigenous veterans have gained much greater recognition in local and national acts of remembrance, including Aboriginal Veterans Day on 8 November (inaugurated by Winnipeg's city council in 1994) and a National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in Ottawa (unveiled in 2001)."³ They are forgotten warriors no longer.

Thirteen soldiers' family members were found and invited to make this journey in September. My brother Richard and I were given the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to our uncle's final resting place. This meant a great deal to us, as we always felt that Uncle Norman's life was deemed insignificant, my mother and grandmother's grief and loss, insignificant. This feeling was echoed by many of the other participants. Close to where I now live is another family whose home is Saanich; they too were able to honour their uncle Edward Underwood. His great nephew Kelly is the partner of BCTF member Ginny Underwood. We are all connected in so many unseen ways.

Mark the day and remember the contributions and losses of Aboriginal Peoples. We owe them so much and we need to tell their stories. •

PHOTOS

Below: Dutch school children honour Indigenous soldiers who died liberating the Netherlands. **Opposite top:** A ceremony at a war cemetery. **Opposite bottom:** Indigenous Legacy Project participants. Photos provided by Carol Arnold.





SHIFTING SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICE DELIVERY IN SCHOOLS

By Pam Waterhouse (she/her),
speech language pathologist, Abbotsford

THE ROLE of a speech language pathologist (SLP) is to support students in accessing the curriculum by supporting their development of communication, thinking, and social skills. As a school SLP my method of service delivery has evolved along with our provincial curriculum. When I was first employed in BC schools in the 1980s, the medical service delivery model was the standard. SLPs were trained to pull students from class one at a time, often two or three times per week.

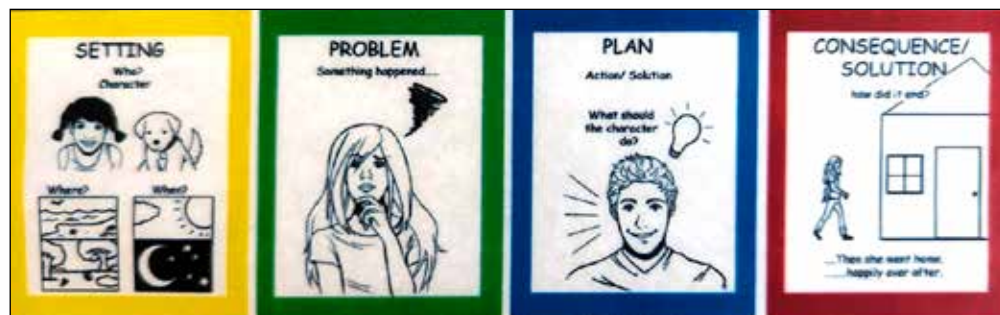
Now, as we move toward more inclusive and accepting models of education that value belonging, celebrate differences, and integrate First Peoples Principles of Learning, we are all obligated to make changes to the way we deliver services and supports to students. For SLPs, this means shifting our practice to be more collaborative with our colleagues and focused on student empowerment. While there are still a percentage of students that need one-on-one support from an SLP, there are many benefits to shifting our service delivery to be less isolated and more integrated in the school community.

Thus, you may have noticed your school SLP offering service to schools, families, and students in a different way. Using a consultative model, service delivery may look like meeting with families to learn more about students' communication difficulties and offering home-based strategies, coming into classrooms to collaborate with teachers, and listening to teachers' concerns and working together to address them. SLPs can also model strategies and co-plan lessons with teachers, attend school-based team meetings, or offer professional development in groups or one-on-one to teachers.

In my experience, SLP and teacher expertise typically complement each other well, with SLPs

iStock.com/FatCamera

RIGHT: An example of how SLP collaboration can benefit the whole school community: Pam's narrative bookmark, developed for writers, has also been used on the playground to help students communicate problems and comprehend consequences.



“A benefit of teacher-SLP collaboration is that it ultimately has positive effects on more children than if the SLP is working in isolation with just one or a few children.”

“fixable.” An example of this is developmental language disorder (DLD). This is a lifelong disorder of unknown origins that affects approximately seven percent of the population. Thus, any teacher may have several students in their classroom that have difficulty with comprehension and/or verbal communication.

Pulling a student from their classroom for therapy sends a non-verbal message that this child will be “fixed” and catch up, a precept that can discourage the teacher, the family, and, most of all, the student. Rather than being pulled out of the classroom to work with the SLP (and missing classroom lessons), a preferred method may be for the SLP to work alongside the teacher to recognize students' moments of communication breakdown and to explore strategies the students find helpful. Ultimately, we want to support students to have intact self-esteem, feel empowered to self-advocate, and be able to achieve success in the classroom and throughout their lives. Adequate supports for students reduce their chances of dropping out of school.

A benefit of teacher-SLP collaboration is that it ultimately has positive effects on more children than if the SLP is working in isolation with just one or a few children. For example, my teacher colleague Laura Carroll has a Kindergarten class each year that is composed of predominantly English language learners. She recognized the importance of teaching her students how to pronounce the sounds of the English language in conjunction with teaching the alphabet. This is especially important for the English sounds that don't occur in

trained in a medical model of learning and teachers trained in an educational model. I realize I have as much to learn from teachers as they have from me.

Research is telling us that many communication difficulties are rooted in neurology, and as such, are not always

the language of the home, as the inability to hear sounds can affect the acquisition of literacy skills. Laura and I developed exercises for the class, and one November I asked her if I could come to video her practising the “th” sound with her students for a presentation I was making. Laura replied “No, we're finished practising. They all pronounce it now.” This astonished me just two months into the school year; without this classroom practice, students often take years to acquire English sound pronunciation.

Another example of how SLP collaboration can lead to positive outcomes for all students is when I did an hour-long, school-wide presentation on the development of narrative language. Narrative language is the ability to tell a story in a logical, sequential order with four parts: a setting, a problem or event, a solution, and a consequence. This skill is associated with social skills and is a perfect way to introduce complex sentence structures and new vocabulary and grammar in context, while practising oral language skills. A week later the principal emailed me to inform me that the visual support I shared in a bookmark format for writers (pictured above), was laminated and added to the lanyards worn on playground duty. The school was having great success using the visual to help dysregulated students communicate problems or conflicts experienced on the playground and comprehend consequences.

When teachers and SLPs collaborate to integrate supports into regular classroom and school activities, and make these supports available for all students, the results can exceed our expectations and hopes. While I acknowledge that there are instances where one-on-one support is essential, I encourage my SLP colleagues to focus on shifting their service delivery to experience the many school-wide benefits of working in a collaborative model. This shift can also help us decolonize our practice, as we focus on supporting all students and families and creating classroom communities that foster belonging and value differences. •

For more information about developmental language disorder see www.dldandme.org and chat with your school SLP.



Teaching climate justice through arts-based education

“MOTHER EARTH IS A SOURCE OF LIFE, NOT A RESOURCE.”

**– CHIEF ARVOL
LOOKING HORSE**

BIG IDEA—ARTS

Dance, drama, music, and visual arts are each unique languages for creating and communicating.

CORE COMPETENCY— COMMUNICATION

The communication competency is fundamental to finding satisfaction, purpose, and joy.

FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLE OF LEARNING

Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.

By Chris Schaufert (she/her), music teacher, Mission

LAST YEAR, when the BCTF sent out a call for classes to submit student-designed posters for a climate justice poster contest, our school, Ecole Christine Morrison Elementary (CME), was excited to participate. We had been building up to our school-wide Earth Day events for some time, integrating climate justice into many aspects of our learning, but especially into the arts.

Each of the 16 divisions in our school collaborated with Judy Cathers, the Indigenous liaison worker, to create Shxweli banners: Shxweli means “Life Spirit” in Halq’eméylem and is a concept that guided our arts project. The banners represent teachings from the Medicine Wheel. Cathers spoke to students about the reciprocal relationship between us and the four life-giving elements that require our stewardship. The banners, like the Medicine Wheel, represent us with the green centre and represent the four elements, wind, fire, water, and earth, with the four quadrants.

Another message intentionally woven into this arts project ties to the First Peoples principle of learning about recognizing the role of Indigenous knowledge. We wanted to represent climate justice through the lens of Etuaptmumk, a concept from Elder Albert Marshall. Etuaptmumk is a Mi’kmaq word meaning “Two-Eyed Seeing.”

The Mission School District’s Equity Scan and Enhancement Agreement notes, “Etuaptmumk refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the

strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.”¹ The textiles and materials, specifically, were chosen through this lens to bring all the elements and principles together into a cohesive whole.

The banners were on display at our school-wide Earth Day events. All 16 music classes in the school also worked together to learn two songs for the Earth Day assembly. The lyrics of these two songs inspired the elements and principles of design for the banners. The songs were “Shxweli-Life Spirit,” part of the Good Medicine Songs project,² and “Kids for Saving Earth Promise Song.”³

“Shxweli-Life Spirit” taught students that Shxweli is also in the river, salmon, mountains, ocean, sacred roots of trees and plants, and in everyone and everything. In music class, students also shared what they believed they already knew about the four elements of the Medicine Wheel and how that knowledge connects to climate issues. This song was performed as the closing number at the Earth Day assembly and was accompanied by students doing a hand dance to help tell the story through action.

The Indigenous lens of Shxweli allowed students to make connections to self, others, and place. It truly seemed to transform a general malaise of “What can we do about it all?” to action through music and art-making. Singing this song allowed students to feel like they were part of an important message about how to move forward together as caretakers of Mother Earth.

The “Kids for Saving Earth Promise Song” was also performed school wide, and the lyrics were read aloud in six different languages at the assembly: French, German, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, and Ukrainian. The student thumbprints in each quadrant of the Medicine Wheel represent the power of their collective promise to care for Mother Earth so that she is here for future generations.

*The Earth is my home.
I promise to keep it healthy and beautiful.
I will love the land, the air, the water, and all living creatures.
I will be a defender of my planet.
United with friends, I will save the Earth.*

After our Earth Day events, our Shxweli banners were hung in the foyer of our school for the month of June to honour National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21. The banners ended up winning the BCTF climate justice poster contest, a proud moment for many students at CME.

When we started this project, we created the banners with the intention of giving them away in fall 2023 to say thank you to various individuals and organizations who play a vital role in providing opportunities for students to experience satisfaction, purpose, and joy in their learning. So, at the end of September, we gifted half of our banners to acknowledge the amazing work people in our immediate and greater community are doing with and for us all. •



ABOVE: A class banner inspired by the concept of Shxweli (Life Spirit). **OPPOSITE:** CME students pose with their banners. Photos provided by Chris Schaufert.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At this time we would like to say “Kw’ás hó:y, Thank You, Merci!” to the following people for their time, wisdom, and energy that inspired the making of our banners:

Malila, the Halq’eméylem teacher at CME and Judy Cathers, the Indigenous liaison worker at CME.

All of the CME staff who chose to try something new for Earth Day this year—you are excellent role models for how growth mindset is a lifelong learning process for our students.

The Good Medicine Songs team who provide music, ecology, entertainment, education, and action opportunities for students at CME.

And also, thank you, BCTF, for creating engaging opportunities for students to go public with their learning, reminding them that their learning can reach further than the room they go to school in each day.

Check out some of the other submissions to the poster contest here: https://youtu.be/_yN6KqvEz-8

¹ “Q’pethet Ye Tel:exw, Gathering to Understand: A Framework for Creating a Culture of Equity, Year Three,” Mission Public Schools, Mission, 2021–22: [www.mpsd.ca/Programs/IndigenousEducation/Pages/Equity-Scan-and-Enhancement-Agreement.aspx#/=](http://www.mpsd.ca/Programs/IndigenousEducation/Pages/Equity-Scan-and-Enhancement-Agreement.aspx#/)

² www.artistresponseteam.com/goodmedicinesongs

³ www.kidsforsavingearth.org/kse-promise-song



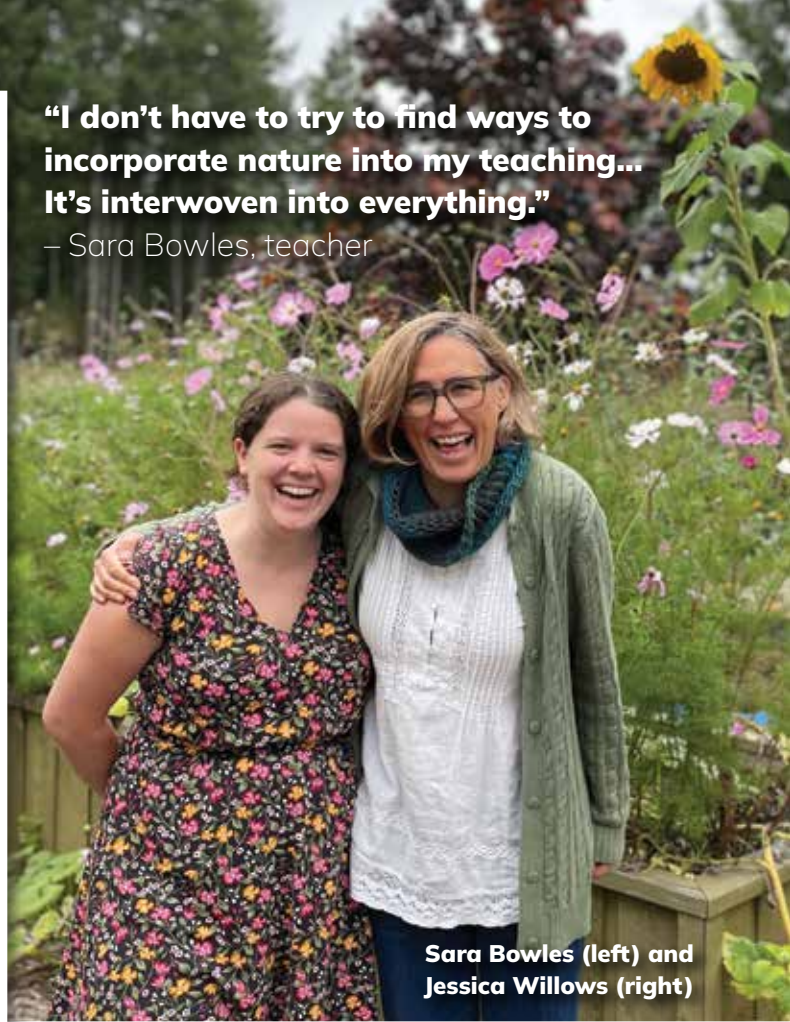


GULF ISLANDS LOCAL PROFILE

NATURE, COMMUNITY, AND THE ARTS

“I don’t have to try to find ways to incorporate nature into my teaching... It’s interwoven into everything.”

– Sara Bowles, teacher



Sara Bowles (left) and Jessica Willows (right)

THE GULF ISLANDS make up a small corner of British Columbia’s undeniably beautiful coastline. With approximately 175 teachers working across five islands, this little local is filled with heart, camaraderie, and innovation.

Like any rural local, there are challenges with community access to services and resources. However, teachers in this local are focused on all the good that comes from living on a small island: easy access to nature, a tight-knit community, and a thriving arts scene.

“I wake up and see the ocean, orcas, seals, herons, and eagles every day. I don’t have to try to find ways to incorporate nature into my teaching because it’s already such a big part of everything we do on the island. It’s interwoven into everything,” said Sara Bowles, one of only two teachers at a K–7 school on Mayne Island.

Bowles teaches K–2, and her colleague Jessica Willows teaches Grades 3–7 at Mayne Island Elementary School.



“...you really get to know students... some connections last long after graduation. It’s lovely to walk a lifetime with someone and know their journey,”

– Nia Williams,
counsellor



Nia Williams



**A Gulf Islands water taxi on the move.
Nia Williams photo.**

Mayne Island currently has no teacher teaching on call (TTOC) on the island itself. So, if Bowles or Willows are away, a TTOC would need to take a water taxi to get to the island to report for work. Water taxis are a common experience for students across the Gulf Islands. Many of the smaller islands don't have secondary schools, so students are shuttled to a larger island by water taxi for Grades 8 to 12—a truly unique Gulf Islands experience.

The water taxi was one key factor in switching to a four-day school week in the Gulf Islands. Four longer days allows the district to save on high costs associated with operating the water taxi. It also reduces the carbon footprint. “We’re switching over to electric school buses, which the local is very happy about, but the carbon footprint of a diesel water taxi is undeniable,” said Ian Mitchell, Local President.

For TTOCs, the water taxi commute to Mayne Island can make for a long day. They need to arrive at the water taxi dock by 6:30 a.m. to catch the boat and don't return until 6:30 p.m. As for TTOCs on outer islands, they have to take a combination of ferries and water taxis. Since water taxis are only for foot passengers, TTOCs also need to find a way to get to the school from the dock. Sometimes they will walk. “I remember knocking on car doors of people waiting to offload to ask if they were headed past the school. Or people driving by would offer me a ride. It’s part of the community feel,” said Bowles.

The close-knit community is one of the biggest reasons teachers say they love working in this local. Schools are the heart of any community, so in a rural area like the Gulf Islands, the community often rallies together to support the school however they can.

The larger community frequently participates within the school in different ways. One example is a program called Gen Pals, where students and seniors within the community write letters to each other as pen pals. Students also have

“The people who were leaders in our local before me are still supporting the local and supporting me.” – Ian Mitchell, Local President

an opportunity to work with the local conservancy group to learn about and help conserve the ecology of the island. Local artists living on the island also come into the school for various arts projects; the most recent artist-guided project at Mayne Island Elementary was a quilting project where students first learned how to make pillows and then full quilts.

At Fulford Elementary School on Salt Spring Island, Sarah Kerrigan brings parents and community members into her class for a weekly nature walk. Every Wednesday afternoon, Kerrigan takes students out into nature for environmental learning, mindfulness, and opportunities for connection.

Much of the outdoor education Kerrigan weaves into her practice requires a lot of scaffolding with students to learn skills and responsibilities to be out in nature. One of the activities her students frequently participate in is nature journaling. Students find a sit-spot of their choice and pay attention to their senses. They then draw or write about their experience. Through this activity, they practise mindfulness and apply a science lens to label their illustrations and use descriptive language. “We had to start by learning expected behaviours to be safe and respectful outside, to be able to listen, and be able to gather at a meeting spot,” said Kerrigan.

Kerrigan started out as a Grades 1 and 2 teacher, but this year moved to Grade 3 with her students. “I wanted more depth. Keeping the students for three years means it feels like a family in here,” said Kerrigan.

Knowing students throughout their entire school experience is common across the Gulf Islands. For Nia Williams, a school counsellor at Gulf Islands Secondary on Salt Spring Island, some of the students who passed through her doors have stayed in touch years later. “One of the joys of counselling here is that you really get to know students and walk with them. Some connections start before they enter high school because I know them from the community, and some connections last long after graduation. It’s lovely to walk a lifetime with someone and know their journey,” said Williams.

The sense of community also exists among staff. “I have a great appreciation for finding camaraderie in my professional circle, not just within the counselling department, but the whole school,” said Williams.

Teaching can be an isolating profession without feeling connected to colleagues. In such a small local, professional development (PD) opportunities and union engagement are important pieces in fostering professional relationships. “The connection you find with colleagues through PD or your union is important to combat isolation,” said Willows, who is also the local PD chair. “I always encourage new teachers to get involved in the union. It can feel like you’re too busy in your classroom to volunteer for the union, but ultimately, you find connection and you learn about the structures you’re working in. This helps you grow as a professional.”

For Ian Mitchell, his role as local president has been supported by the strong community that surrounds him. “The people who were leaders in our local before me are still supporting the local and supporting me. They’re all incredible people. Even now, I can reach out to them anytime I have a question,” said Mitchell.

You feel looked after in this community and the kids feel it too,” said Willows. ➔



“...it feels like a family...”
– Sarah Kerrigan, teacher



Sarah Kerrigan



A culinary arts student in Gulf Islands Secondary's greenhouse. Opposite page: Three culinary arts students with collected herbs. Opposite right: Mark Kilner in the kitchen. All Gulf Islands photos (pages 20–25) by Sunjum Jhaj unless noted.

SPOTLIGHT ON GULF ISLANDS SECONDARY'S CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM

The cafeteria at Gulf Islands Secondary School has a \$6 lunch on offer every day for students and staff. What does \$6 get you for lunch? On an ordinary Thursday, lunch-goers could choose one of three options: a roasted root vegetable shawarma in a homemade pita with a side of couscous salad, lamb loin with pumpkin gnocchi and roasted brussels sprouts, or wild pacific salmon with cauliflower couscous and mango chutney. There's also a very popular daily salad bar. Each menu item is a nutritious meal made with locally sourced ingredients.

The food is prepared fresh by the culinary arts students under the guidance of Mark Kilner, the head chef and teacher. The kitchen is a fully functioning professional kitchen, with students rotating through various jobs to learn all aspects of cooking, serving, and clean-up.

"The first thing I did when I started here was get rid of the deep fryer," said Kilner. "I wanted to focus on teaching about nutrition through cooking, and making sure students can access nutritious lunches at school."

The program is intended for students planning to study in post-secondary culinary arts programs. As such, classes before lunch



Mark Kilner

prepare, cook, and serve lunch to other students and staff. The block after lunch is responsible for clean-up, and the final block of the day is a demonstration block. During this block, Kilner offers students an opportunity to learn a new skill. On the day of our visit, the demo was ice-cream making.

Over time, as interest and participation in the program grew, more and more students were enrolling who had no intention of pursuing culinary arts professionally. Instead, the class is well-attended because of the hands-on learning, inclusive atmosphere, and team approach to growing, cooking, and learning about food.

"I don't want to go into the culinary arts after I graduate, but Chef is a lot of fun to cook with and I've learned life skills like being able to cook for myself," said Lexi, a Grade 11 student in the culinary arts program.

Kilner has adapted the program through the years to focus on healthy meals that can be cooked at home and don't require any special equipment, so all students can find value in the learning.

"They're going to eat for the rest of their lives; I want to teach the skills they need for that, and I want to make it safe and fun," said Kilner.

Through fundraising and catering, the students raised over \$200,000 for a greenhouse at the school to expand their already existing garden. In the greenhouse and garden, they grow as many fresh veggies as they can to be used in the cafeteria lunches. The ingredients they can't grow are sourced locally when possible.

The program is also a no-waste kitchen, meaning they find a way to incorporate all edible pieces of the ingredients they use. When Kilner showed students how to butcher a lamb for the school lunch menu, they made a point to use as much as they could with as little waste as possible.

"They're going to eat for the rest of their lives; I want to teach the skills they need for that, and I want to make it safe and fun."

– Mark Kilner, teacher


Fiona McCamley, the certified education assistant in the culinary arts program, was a former student who graduated in 2019. "I loved the program as a student and now as part of the educational team. It gives kids a chance to learn in a different way. They learn fractions,

ratios, reactions, measuring, and all these skills that are academic, but they do it in a setting focused on community, friendship, and food," said McCamley.

"There's no right answer in this class," said Tia, a Grade 10 student. "You use the skills you learn every day. I learn a new recipe and then I get to try it out at home."

It's easy to see that students feel comfortable in the kitchen and want to be there. "Chef has created a cafeteria where students go to feel seen and be encouraged," said Nia Williams, school counsellor at Gulf Islands Secondary.

"The program nourishes kids in so many ways," said McCamley. •



A pacific chorus frog
from iStock.com/Shayne King

URBAN ECOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

RESOURCES AND WORKSHOPS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

By Naomi Higo (she/her), co-ordinator, Institute of Urban Ecology

SOMETIMES, when we live in an urban area with lots of cars and roads and buildings, it can be easy to forget or overlook all the nature that shares space with us.

The Institute of Urban Ecology has free programs and resources for teachers focused on real problems faced by urban residents, such as microplastics and invasive species. But it's not all doom and gloom. Our workshops and resources shine a light on the problems but focus on the solutions. Our goal is to leave students feeling empowered and inspired to continue finding ways to help protect our urban ecosystems.

Urban ecology is a relatively new science but is growing in importance. Metro Vancouver is one of Canada's fastest growing populations. As one of the country's most biologically diverse ecosystems, it is crucial that people living in Metro Vancouver recognize the important ecosystem services needed to battle climate change and keep our communities healthy and happy. Community engagement is an explicit component of the Institute of Urban Ecology and a vital part of urban ecological sustainability.

DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE 230 SPECIES AT RISK IN METRO VANCOUVER TODAY?

Amphibians are the most threatened group of vertebrates in the world! BC is home to 22 different species of amphibians, and 8 of them are known to be in decline (many species' statuses are still unknown). Across the country, 44% (23/52) of amphibian species have been listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Urban development is one of the largest contributors of amphibian declines in Canada. Habitat loss and fragmentation, road mortality, pollution, chemical contamination, invasive species, climate change, and the illegal pet trade are just a handful of problems threatening our urban amphibians today.

Your class can discover more about BC's amazing amphibians in our Amazing Amphibian workshop, which is available for classes of all ages in-person or online (available on YouTube).

Bats are also suffering a similar fate. More than 200 bat species in 60 countries around the world are considered threatened (critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. BC is home to 16 different bat species, and 8 of them are listed as species at risk.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Aren't bats just dirty, disease-carrying vermin? This kind of belief is one of the reasons why so many bats are struggling to survive in our urban ecosystems. Through the eyes of a scientist, students can learn to sort bat myths from bat facts with our interactive puppet show (K-3) or with a game of bat trivia (Grade 4 and up). If in-person workshops are not an option for you, check out our How to Save Endangered Bats video on YouTube.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

Every one of our workshops ends with a group discussion addressing one big question: "What else can you do?" As students start to brainstorm, our workshop facilitator will guide them toward actionable solutions within their control.

Some examples of actionable solutions from other classes:

- Removing invasive plants from your school or local park.
- Building your own bee house and discovering the secret world of solitary bees.
- Building a mini greenhouse in the school garden and discovering the beauty and benefits of native plants.
- Joining our citizen science Beetle Watch project and helping to collect real data for the Institute of Urban Ecology's ongoing research project.

With a solution-focused approach to urban ecology, each student is left feeling empowered and inspired to continue finding ways to help protect our urban ecosystems. •

To learn more about the Institute of Urban Ecology, scan the QR code, visit <https://qrco.de/beThAv>, or email ieu@douglascollege.ca.



STUDENT SUCCESS DOESN'T HAVE A POSTAL CODE

WHY THE FSA IS INEQUITABLE AND INEFFECTIVE

By **Joanna Cornthwaite**, Local President, Nanaimo District Teachers' Association
and **Robyn Ladner**, teacher, Vernon

WHAT IS THE FSA?

Robyn: The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) was introduced in 2000, as a province-wide standardized assessment of what the Ministry of Education and Child Care calls “basic skills”—those being literacy and numeracy. It is given to every Grade 4 and 7 student in the province unless stringent criteria are met for exemption. The results of the tests are then reported at the provincial, district, school, and individual level.

HOW DOES THE FSA AFFECT TEACHERS AND STUDENTS?

Joanna: The process of implementing the FSA is very stressful for students, and also teachers. It is outside the regular classroom routine and does not follow the design or process of regular classroom teaching. Teachers need to pause their regularly scheduled activities during FSA times; then, after the FSA is completed, teachers need time to re-establish routines and help students regulate. Overall, it takes time away from learning.

Robyn: Over the 23 years that I've had to administer the FSA, I've observed that it has a negative effect on students' motivation and learning. The tests create stress—especially among vulnerable or struggling students. The content is not differentiated or modified the way teachers do for students, so the reading level may be well above what they can understand, or the math may be much more difficult than the level where they are currently working.

As teachers, we strive to meet individual needs, adjust learning and assessment, and support students so they can be successful wherever they are on a spectrum of learning. Then the FSA comes along and shows them that they are not at the level of their peers or are not where they “should be,” and it's demoralizing. It used to be that many more students could be exempt from the FSA. Now the criteria are much more strict and only students with multiple challenges can be excused from writing the tests. This means a student on an individual education plan (IEP), who may be learning several grades below their placement, is made to write the FSA and is expected to try and answer complicated math problems when their IEP has them doing basic computation. They may have help, or a scribe, but for many students with learning challenges, this is a cruel practice. The onus falls on the teacher to advocate for these students to be excused.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT THE BCTF CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FSA?

Joanna: The FSA is extremely stressful for students with additional needs—any students with a learning disability or a diagnosis where self-regulation is a challenge find the regimented nature of FSAs incredibly difficult. Students need to be shown that success does not always mean high scores in tests of literacy and numeracy—success includes kindness, compassion, and perseverance—all things that are not measured by the FSA.

The data is collected by the Fraser Institute, which develops the tests. This data then appears in other venues, including the use of data by mortgage companies to identify “good schools,” which affects the morale of staff. The communities who perform poorly on the FSAs are identified as “bad schools” in “bad neighbourhoods,” and teachers from those neighbourhoods are often told by families, “My child is only here until we get into a good school.”

This could not be further from the truth: all schools are good schools; I would argue great schools. And I wholeheartedly believe that a postal code or school location does not determine student success. The success of students is determined by excellent teaching and protective adults who surround students in rich learning opportunities. Every public school in BC offers rich learning opportunities, protective adults, and, most notably, dedicated teachers who do their utmost to ensure student success every day.

Robyn: While I understand that the Ministry would like a “snapshot” of how students are doing across the province, this could be done with a rotating random sample each year. Testing every student, every year is unnecessary for how they say the data is used. I've been teaching since before the inception of the FSA. Since the FSA began, I have not seen any changes to curriculum or school funding as a result of test scores.

The work that goes on in some of our most vulnerable neighbourhoods for some of our most vulnerable kids is incredible and cannot be quantified by these tests. The inclusion, support, and heartfelt effort that goes into making sure these students in these schools and communities are cared for and given the best start in education is undermined by the Fraser Institute's rankings. •



School psychologists seek consistent opportunities and full scope of practice

By Kathleen Cherry, school psychologist, Sooke

BC'S SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS, many of whom are BCTF members, are coping with the stressors that have become an inherent part of BC's education landscape: staff shortages and underfunding being two of the most impactful.

In addition, BC's school psychologists are also experiencing regulatory changes. These may bring long-term benefits but are also causing short-term stress and increased workload for school psychologists.

The new regulatory framework involves shifting the licensing and registration of school psychologists in BC. Currently, BC's school psychologists are certified through the BC Association of School Psychologists (BCASP). However, the province's Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, has announced that BC's school psychologists must be registrants of the Canadian Psychologists of BC (CPBC) by May 1, 2024, to continue their current role.

The CPBC explains on its website that the change is not meant to alter psychology services within the school system but to align existing services provided by school psychologists with the requirements and expectations of other professionals regulated under the *Health Professions Act*.

The shift has long been considered by government and is part of an ongoing effort to streamline the number of bodies regulating health care professions. The BC Association of School Psychologists (BCASP) is supportive of the change, recognizing that it will heighten the visibility of the profession, clarify professional identity, and promote a greater understanding of the role among all education stakeholders.

An expedited process to apply for CPBC membership has been developed for BCASP-certified members, but this is not as simple or time effective as might have been hoped. BCASP-certified applicants must pass the written jurisprudence exam, attend a workshop, and submit three references and two criminal record checks.

Additional costs involved in this process may also be borne by individual school psychologists. While the annual CPBC fees (\$1,200) will be covered by the employer, the reimbursement of the approximately \$800 for the application process

“The confusion created by the lack of consistency for employment situations... negatively affects the recruitment and retention of school psychologists.”

(application fee, written jurisprudence exams, and criminal record checks) remain uncertain.

Some districts have indicated a willingness to cover these costs. However, in a February 15, 2023, statement, the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) made it clear that districts have no legal obligation to do so.

On behalf of school psychologist members, Clint Johnston, BCTF President, responded to BCPSEA and urged the province to fund an employer payment for these fees, adding that the severe shortage of school psychologists within the province makes this step particularly important.

Indeed, the scarcity of school psychologists has been recognized by the BCTF for several years. In January 2021, the BCTF Representative Assembly passed a motion that the BCTF investigate the working conditions and recruitment and retention issues for school psychologists.

One of the issues affecting the recruitment and retention of school psychologists, and consequently the school psychologist shortage, is the veritable hodgepodge of employment situations and remuneration packages that exist across the province. Some are BCTF members, some are exempt staff, while others belong to the Canadian Allied Professionals Union. Some districts offer stipends or have identified the school psychology role as a position of special responsibility, while others do not. The confusion created by the lack of consistency for employment situations makes movement between districts difficult and negatively affects the recruitment and retention of school psychologists.

The limited number of training programs is another identified concern related to the shortage of school psychologists. At present, the UBC School and Applied Child Psychology (SACP) program is the only school psychology program in BC. However, its faculty state that the lack of school psychology programs within BC is not the sole issue, as the province is also failing to recruit or retain a number of SACP graduates.

“...the current system is failing to capitalize on school psychologists’ broad skill set, which would allow for greater individual, class-wide, school-wide, and systems-level supports.”

In a letter dated March 8, 2023, Dr. Laurie Ford wrote to the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the Ministry of Health, and the College of Psychologists of BC, on behalf of the UBC faculty of the SACP program. In this, she noted that the primary concern was the continued limitations in the scope of practice placed on school psychologists.

Dr. Ford explained that the current, continued emphasis on the assessment and diagnosis of specific learning disorder and intellectual disability is not an accurate reflection of the depth and breadth of training received by school psychologists in 2023 and is inconsistent with the practice recommended by the profession and professional organizations in school psychology.¹

Dr. Ford noted that students within the UBC cohort are looking outside of BC to find their internship positions and eventual full-time employment, in part, so they can engage in more diverse practice reflective of their training. This limitation in scope also serves to decrease access to much-needed mental health services for children and youth in BC.

A grassroots advocacy group of BC school psychologists² seconds this concern and states that the current system is failing to capitalize on school psychologists’ broad skill set, which would allow for greater individual, class-wide, school-wide, and systems-level supports.

A part of the challenge for school psychologists is that they are a small group poised between several large provincial systems: CPBC, schools/districts, BCTF, and the Ministries of health and education. Many are both certified teachers and licensed school psychologists, educators, and mental health professionals. This brings with it both inherent risks and benefits.

The downside is that these large groups may fail to recognize, respect, and hear this cross section of knowledge. While belonging to many factions, the voices of school psychologists may never be large enough to be properly heard in any one group.

On the flip side, there is the ongoing hope that new changes within the regulatory framework will be the beginning of thoughtful, respectful, systemic improvements.

When schools are supported with the full breadth of services a school psychologist can provide, students can experience greater success and access to health services, while teachers are supported as they work with students who have learning challenges or need mental health services.

School psychologists who are BCTF members are hoping that, although small in number, their collective voice will reach the bargaining table when it comes time to again bargain for our collective working and learning conditions. More equity in working conditions and remuneration across the province can support the recruitment and retention of school psychologists, lessen individual burnout, and improve BC’s public education system for all staff and students. •

TUNE IN TO THE BCASP PODCAST FOR INQUIRY AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Staying up to date with current research and best practice across two disciplines is no easy task. School psychologists must log at least 30 hours of continuing education per year. A portion of these hours must be in approved formal programs (e.g., conferences) and members must ensure that they get hours in specific areas, including ethics, Indigenous cultural safety, self-care, self-study, and structured interactive activities.

The BC Association of School Psychologists (BCASP) has a long-standing tradition of hosting a fantastic conference, providing members with a great way to earn a portion of these continuing education hours. This November will mark the organization’s 35th conference and BCASP is eager to welcome participants as well as national and international experts.

More recently, Vancouver School District school psychologist James Tanliao and I have embarked on an informal project: co-hosting the BCASP Podcast. Episodes last the length of a typical commute and provide the listener with a sampling of topics, including links to allow for a deeper dive.

In its inaugural year, episodes addressed literacy, with researchers Jan Hasbrouck, Nancy Young, and UNBC faculty member and school psychologist Melanie Baerg. Other topics addressed included the migration experiences of newcomer youth, the underdiagnosis of autism spectrum disorder in certain populations, and ways to support wellness among Indigenous youth.

This year we promise to keep the conversation going. The first episode of the school year was released October 10 and featured Dr. Liz Angoff discussing her approach to support children in better understanding their brains.

Future releases plan to highlight math instruction, report writing, executive functioning, and ethics. We are excited by the project and always welcome feedback or suggestions.

**Search for “BCASP Podcast” on Spotify,
Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcasts.**

1 www.cpa.ca/mental-health-carefor-canadian-children-and-youth-the-role-of-school-psychologists/
2 sites.google.com/bcschoolpsychadvocacy.com/bc-school-psychology-advocacy/home?authuser=0





CARRYING OUR LEARNING FORWARD

10 YEARS OF THE PROJECT OF HEART CANOE

By Cheryl Carlson, teacher, Hope

FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS, the Project of Heart Canoe has been travelling around the province, visiting different schools, and bringing opportunities for learning and reflection to thousands of students in BC. This fall, Silver Creek Elementary in Hope had the privilege of hosting the canoe for its tenth anniversary celebration.

The canoe, which is covered by 6,000 tiles designed by students from across BC as witness pieces, was greeted at our school by members of the Spuzzum Nation and Una-Ann Moyer, the artist behind the Project of Heart Canoe.

All Grades 6 and 7 students were invited to witness a cleansing ceremony for the canoe led by Shane John, member of the Chawathil Nation. Chief James Hobart from the Spuzzum Nation noted that, typically, certain people are called to witness a ceremony; however, in this case, all the youth were called to witness because the Project of Heart Canoe is about collective learning and creating an opportunity for everyone to participate in healing.

The canoe is the first step of a year-long, school-wide learning experience centred on truth-telling as a path toward reconciliation. It's important to focus on truth before reconciliation in order to meaningfully engage in reconciliation, whether with your class or on your own personal learning journey. What can reconciliation look like in an elementary school?

One step I am taking toward reconciliation with my class is to expand our use of the Halq'eméylem language in our day-to-day activities.

LEFT: Maria, along with fellow students, carries the Project of Heart Canoe into her school after the cleansing ceremony. Chief James Hobart explained that this canoe is special because usually a canoe carries us to where we need to be, but this canoe gets honoured by being carried. "It gets to rest. It carries messages from across BC instead," said Hobart. In recent years, the canoe has visited Alert Bay, Langley, Comox, Port Alberni, Chilliwack, and Mission. ➔



At our canoe welcoming ceremony, Elder Marion Dixon from the Spuzzum Nation shared some words in Nlaka'pamux. Marion is one of the last speakers of this specific dialect of Nlaka'pamux.

After listening to Marion speak, Grade 6 student Jaycee shared that, "It's everybody's job to make sure languages survive after residential schools tried to take them away."

I want to ensure students have an opportunity to learn the language and understand the value of Indigenous languages. To do so, throughout the school year, my students and I will:

- learn Halq'eméylem words for objects we encounter regularly.
- learn Halq'eméylem place names for the areas surrounding our school and homes.
- learn Halq'eméylem names for plants and animals in our local ecosystem.

Students will also be creating their own witness pieces throughout the school year as we learn about residential schools and Canada's colonial legacy. The witness pieces will be used for school commemoration projects that encourage all members of our communities to take pause and reflect on what truth-telling means to them.

Even though our orange shirts may be folded and put away until next September, teachers' work to bring Indigenous languages, stories, and histories to the forefront of their teaching must continue all year. For the next seven months, the Project of Heart Canoe will serve to remind our school community of the ongoing work we must all engage in for truth and reconciliation. •



TOP LEFT: Una-Ann Moyer, the artist who brought together tiles from students for the canoe, joined school staff to welcome the canoe through ceremony. She explained to students that the canoe is a metaphor for the Project of Heart. "In a canoe, we all pull together. We need to do the same with reconciliation. The message the canoe shares is that we are all learning, teaching, and sharing together," said Una-Ann.

CENTRE LEFT: After the cleansing of the canoe and paddles, student Koi works to insert paddles into the canoe to complete the art installation. Shane John from the Chawathil Nation explained that cleansing this installation is important because it carries the story of a dark and heartbreaking time in Canada's history. The cleansing ensures we continue this learning in a good way.

BOTTOM LEFT: After listening to Elder Marion Dixon speak in Nlaka'pamux, Grade 6 student Jaycee (left) shared, "It's everybody's job to make sure languages survive after residential schools tried to take them away." Lemiah, a fellow student, is pictured on the right.



TOP RIGHT: Teachers, BCTF staff, Spuzzum Nation members, and educators with the Indigenous education department stand together with the canoe. This project exists thanks to many people contributing in different ways.



“Even though our orange shirts may be folded and put away until next September, teachers’ work to bring Indigenous languages, stories, and histories to the forefront of their teaching must continue all year.”

RESOURCES

The Project of Heart Canoe is an extension of the booklet by the same name. The Project of Heart booklet is available online and in print and is meant to serve as a visual journey to support teachers in understanding and learning about the hidden history of residential schools. You can find the booklet in the “Classroom Resources” section of bctf.ca. More information and resources are available on www.projectofheart.ca.

The BCTF also offers a Project of Heart workshop. The workshop takes a deeper dive into the Project of Heart resources. Attendees have an opportunity to take an inquiry-based approach to examining the history and legacy of residential schools. To book this workshop, and others, including Infusing Aboriginal Content and Perspectives and Indigenous Perspectives, visit the “Services and Information” section of bctf.ca.

If you’re interested in signing up to host the Project of Heart Canoe at your school, complete the expression of interest form at bctf.ca/ProjectOfHeartCanoe.com.

RIGHT: Artist Una-Ann Moyer, Chief James Hobart, and Elder Marion Dixon. Chief Hobart spoke to the Silver Creek assembly about how we all have a role in reconciliation.



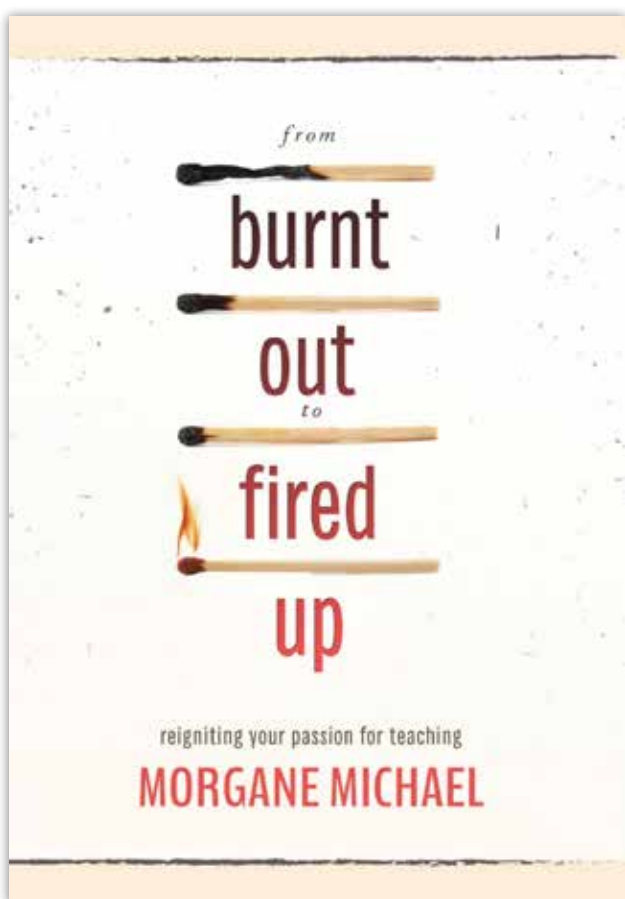
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FROM BURNT-OUT TO FIRED-UP!

Strategies to reignite your passion for the classroom and life



By Morgane Michael (she/her), teacher, Victoria

TEACHING can be one of the most fulfilling and rewarding professions out there, but it can also be incredibly challenging and stressful. As a full-time Kindergarten teacher with two young children at home, I know first-hand how challenging achieving “balance” can feel.

Many teachers experience burnout at some point in their careers. According to research, burnout is a common problem among teachers, with studies showing that up to 50% of teachers experience it at some point in their careers. Symptoms of burnout include:

- feeling emotionally exhausted
- lacking motivation and enthusiasm
- feeling cynical or detached from one’s work.

Sometimes, educators even question their efficacy in the classroom, but it is possible to prevent and overcome the symptoms of burnout. As a practising educator and parent with children of my own in the school system, I recognize the significance of systemic issues like underfunding and lack of resources that currently exist; however, in my book *From Burnt Out to Fired Up: Reigniting Your Passion for Teaching*, I explore some research-based strategies centred around five themes, or the “5 R’s”: reflect, reframe, refocus, reconnect, and reveal. These themes enable educators to regain a sense of control, efficacy, and meaning within their professional and personal lives.

Here are some strategies for moving from burnt-out to fired-up using the 5 R's:

Reflect

To prevent burnout it's important for teachers to prioritize self-care and make time for activities that recharge and energize them. This might include exercise, meditation, spending time with loved ones, or pursuing hobbies and interests outside of work. By taking care of themselves, teachers can build resilience and better manage the demands of their jobs.

- Set aside time each day for quiet reflection or meditation.
- Keep a journal to track your thoughts and feelings.
- Ask yourself what you really want and what makes you happy.
- Identify your personal values and make sure your actions align with them.

Reframe

Another key theme in the book is the importance of mindset in shaping our experiences and attitudes. Adopting a positive mindset can help teachers overcome obstacles and stay motivated in the face of challenges. This might involve reframing negative self-talk, focusing on progress rather than perfection, and setting realistic goals. By cultivating a growth mindset, teachers can approach their work with a sense of possibility and excitement, rather than fear or frustration.

- Challenge negative self-talk and replace it with positive affirmations.
- Look for opportunities to learn and grow from challenges or setbacks.
- Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can't.
- Practise gratitude by focusing on what you do have, rather than what you don't.

Refocus

We have deep-seated dreams that reside within us, and there comes a time when we must take a good look at our lives to determine what we want our story to be. Refocusing allows us to take stock of these dreams and to recalibrate our compass so that we can step into the life we've always wanted to live.

- Set clear goals and prioritize tasks accordingly.
- Identify areas where you can delegate or ask for help.
- Break big projects into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Use tools like time blocking to stay focused and productive.

Reconnect

Another important strategy for preventing burnout is to build positive relationships with friends, family, students, and colleagues. Creating a sense of community and connection in the classroom can help teachers feel more engaged and fulfilled in their work. This might involve getting to know students as individuals, actively listening to their needs and concerns, and providing them with meaningful feedback and support. Likewise, building positive relationships with colleagues can help teachers feel more supported and less isolated in their work. This might involve collaborating on projects or lesson plans, sharing resources and ideas, and providing each other with emotional support and encouragement.

- Connect with supportive friends or family members.
- Try new activities or hobbies to bring excitement into your life.
- Volunteer or get involved in a cause that is important to you.
- Prioritize friendships by engaging in novel experiences.

Reveal

We are all born creative. It is only in adulthood that we lose our child-like capacity for divergent thinking. Cultivating a sense of play and creativity is an important way to bolster our well-being as educators. This might involve incorporating creativity and playfulness into the classroom, exploring new teaching techniques and methodologies, and seeking out ongoing professional development opportunities. By staying engaged and curious in one's work, teachers can maintain a sense of purpose and excitement that can help prevent burnout.

- Identify your strengths and look for opportunities to use them in new ways.
- Consider doing some of the activities and hobbies you did when you were a child.
- Sign up for a new class or learn about a new interest through podcasts, YouTube videos, or courses.
- Think about what success really means to you and redefine it in your own terms.

There are a wealth of practical strategies and insights for preventing and overcoming burnout in the classroom; however, prioritizing yourself and your overall well-being begins with a decision to live life differently. By prioritizing self-care, adopting a positive mindset, building upon positive relationships, staying inspired and motivated to achieve big audacious goals, and by pursuing our creativity through curiosity and novel experiences, educators can cultivate resilience and fulfillment in our work and personal lives. By doing so, we can not only prevent burnout but also create a more positive and engaging learning environment for our students and colleagues. •

About the author

Since 2008, Morgane Michael has been an elementary school educator with the Greater Victoria School District in BC. She is a passionate advocate for social-emotional learning, kindness education, and educator well-being. In her free time, she loves playing with her two children, Makena (9) and Tyson (7), hosting her podcast KindSight 101, working out, offering professional development for educators, and writing. Learn more about Morgane at www.morganemichael.com.



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For more information and to access IMS, contact Sherry Payne, Nadia Bove, or your local president.

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THE BCTF CODE OF ETHICS states general rules for all members of the professional service and conduct toward students, colleagues, and the professional union. Members are advised to contact local union officers or appropriate BCTF staff for advice on how to proceed with issues related to the BCTF Code of Ethics.

1. The member speaks and acts toward students with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities.
2. The member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give it only to authorized persons or agencies directly concerned with their welfare. The member follows legal requirements in reporting child protection issues.
3. A privileged relationship exists between members and students. The member refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological, or other advantage.
4. The member is willing to review with colleagues, students, and their parents/ guardians the practices employed in discharging the member's professional duties.
5. The member directs any criticism of the teaching performance and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. If the member believes that the issue(s) has not been addressed, they may, after privately informing the colleague in writing of their intent to do so, direct the criticism in confidence to appropriate individuals who can offer advice and assistance.*
*It shall not be considered a breach of the Code of Ethics for a member to follow the legal requirements for reporting child protection issues. (*See 31.B.12 of the Members' Guide to the BCTF.)*
6. The member acknowledges the authority and responsibilities of the BCTF and its locals and fulfills obligations arising from membership in their professional union.
7. The member adheres to the provisions of the collective agreement.
8. The member acts in a manner not prejudicial to job actions or other collective strategies of their professional union.
9. The member, as an individual or as a member of a group of members, does not make unauthorized representations to outside bodies in the name of the Federation or its locals.
10. In the course of union business and meetings, the member must not discriminate against any other member because of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age of that person or member, or because that person or member has been convicted of a criminal or summary conviction offence that is unrelated to the membership or intended membership, or any other protected grounds under the *BC Human Rights Code*.

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The Judicial Council implements the Code of Ethics, supports professional and ethical practice, and considers alleged breaches of the code. For information and advice on the Code of Ethics and the complaint process, contact Sherry Payne, Ethics Administrator, at 604-871-1803 or spayne@bctf.ca, or Nadia Bove, Internal Relations Administrative Assistant, at 604 871-1823 or nbove@bctf.ca.

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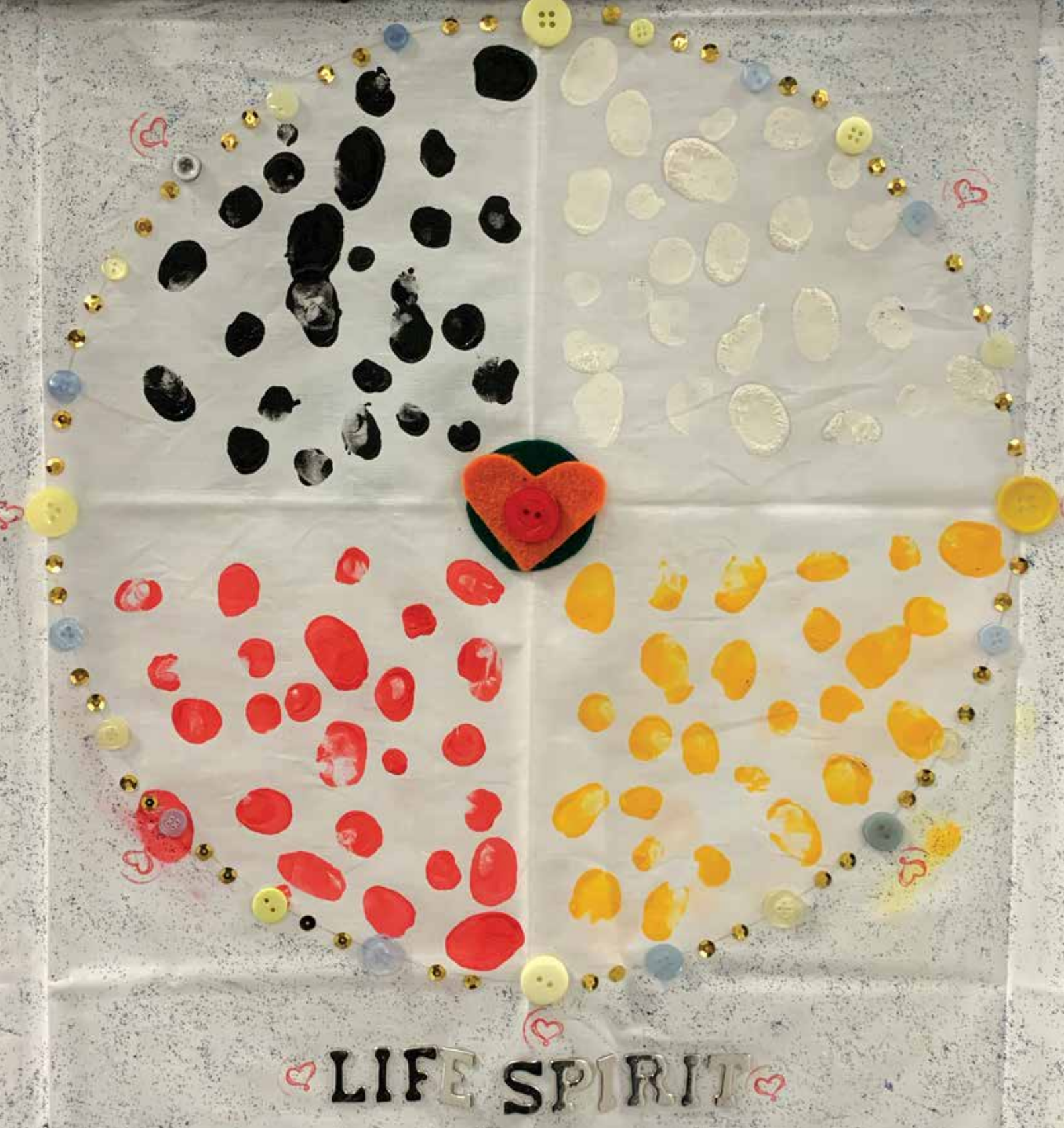
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ABOVE: A banner created by an elementary class in Mission inspired by the concept of Shxweli (Life Spirit) and the Medicine Wheel. Read more in “Teaching climate justice through arts-based education” on pages 18–19.