

BC Teachers' Federation

Sept/Oct 2023

Teacher

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BCTF
Kids Matter
Teachers Care

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THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE



COVER PHOTO

After completing an adult education program, Cindy Unwin graduated along side her granddaughter. Read more adult education success stories on pages 20–23.

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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! Write teachermag@bctf.ca with your story idea to get started.

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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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

“Teachers provide safety, consistency, and support for families and colleagues every day, and this work does not go unnoticed.”

AS YOU SETTLE into a new school year, I want to thank you for all the work you do in your classrooms, schools, communities, and union. Teachers provide safety, consistency, and support for families and colleagues every day, and this work does not go unnoticed.

The teacher shortage is putting a strain on our public education system right now, and much of this pressure falls on teachers to manage. Thank you for holding our public education system together, even in difficult circumstances. The BCTF will continue to advocate for the improved working and learning conditions we all deserve. We know a comprehensive and funded strategy is needed to improve recruitment and retention, and we will continue to push for this in the school year ahead.

With the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) just around the corner, the BCTF will soon be launching our campaign to remove the FSA from public schools in BC. Standardized tests like the FSA do not provide holistic and authentic feedback on student learning, and these tests

rarely result in more funding or resources for the students who need it.

In fact, the Fraser Institute's school rankings based on FSA results are inappropriate, damaging, and unfair to communities around the province. As such, if you are a parent to a child in Grade 4 or 7, I encourage you to withdraw your child from the FSA. To members working in elementary schools, I hope you support your colleagues as they grapple with fitting the FSA into an already packed term. Visit bctf.ca/fsa to learn more about the negative impacts of the FSA, and for resources to participate in the campaign against inappropriate standardized testing.

Over the summer break, the Ministry of Education and Child Care finalized their resources to help support the implementation of the new K–12 reporting policy. The resources available to teachers to support the transition to this new reporting order include a webinar series, video presentation, reporting policy guidelines, and educator information sheets. The Federation will continue to relay concerns that arise from members and locals regarding the implementation of the new reporting order.

Lastly, I encourage each of you to familiarize yourselves with your local collective agreement and explore different ways to get involved in your provincial and local union. A union is strong because of its members. Your voice, your opinions, and your engagement matter.

I look forward to working with, and on behalf of, you all this year. I wish you all a great start to the new school year.

In solidarity,



Clint Johnston
BCTF President

MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT

«Les enseignant.e.s assurent chaque jour la sécurité, la cohérence et le soutien aux familles et aux collègues, et ce travail est loin de passer inaperçu.»

Alors que vous entamez une nouvelle année scolaire, je tiens à vous remercier pour tout le travail que vous accomplissez dans vos classes, vos écoles, vos communautés et votre syndicat. Les enseignant.e.s assurent chaque jour la sécurité, la cohérence et le soutien aux familles et aux collègues, et ce travail est loin de passer inaperçu.

La pénurie de personnel enseignant met

actuellement à rude épreuve notre système d'éducation publique, et une grande partie de cette pression retombe sur les enseignant.e.s. Merci de maintenir la cohésion de notre système d'éducation publique, même dans des circonstances difficiles. La FECB va continuer de plaider en faveur de meilleures conditions de travail et d'apprentissage, de celles que nous méritons toutes et tous. Nous savons qu'une stratégie globale et financée est nécessaire pour améliorer le recrutement et la rétention, et nous allons continuer de faire pression en ce sens au cours de l'année scolaire à venir.

À l'approche de l'évaluation des habiletés de base (EHB), la FECB lancera bientôt sa campagne visant à supprimer les EHB des écoles publiques de la Colombie-Britannique. Les tests standardisés comme les EHB ne fournissent pas de retour d'information holistique et authentique sur l'apprentissage des élèves, et ces tests aboutissent rarement à davantage de financement ou de ressources pour les élèves qui en ont besoin. De fait, le classement des écoles effectué par l'Institut Fraser et fondé sur les résultats des EHB est inapproprié, préjudiciable et injuste pour les communautés de la province. Alors, si vous êtes parent d'un enfant de 4^{ème} ou 7^{ème} année, je vous encourage à retirer votre enfant des EHB. Quant

aux membres travaillant dans les écoles primaires, j'espère que vous soutiendrez vos collègues qui se débattent pour intégrer les EHB dans un programme déjà chargé. Visitez bctf.ca/fsa pour en savoir plus sur l'impact négatif des EHB et pour obtenir des ressources permettant de participer à la campagne contre ces tests standardisés inappropriés.

Pendant les vacances d'été, le Ministère de l'Éducation et des Services à la petite enfance a finalisé ses ressources pour aider à soutenir la mise en œuvre de la nouvelle politique de la communication des résultats de l'élève de la maternelle à la 12^e année. Les ressources disponibles pour les enseignant.e.s pour soutenir la transition vers cette nouvelle façon de communiquer les résultats comprennent une série de webinaires, une présentation vidéo, des lignes directrices en matière de politique de communication des résultats et des fiches d'information pour les enseignant.e.s. La Fédération va continuer de relayer les préoccupations exprimées par ses membres et ses sections locales concernant la mise en œuvre de cette nouvelle manière de communiquer les résultats.

Pour finir, j'encourage chacun d'entre vous à vous familiariser avec votre convention collective locale et à explorer différentes façons de vous impliquer dans votre syndicat provincial et local. Un syndicat est fort grâce à ses membres. Votre voix, vos opinions et votre engagement comptent.

J'ai hâte de travailler cette année avec vous et pour vous. Je vous souhaite à toutes et tous une excellente rentrée scolaire.

Solidairement,



Clint Johnston
Président de la FECB



“...while almost 9 in 10 youth agree it’s important to speak up about racist or sexist comments, more than half don’t know how to do so.” ¹

Empowering educators and students to combat online prejudice and hate

By Danielle deBelle (she/her),
Media Education Specialist, MediaSmarts

In the age of digital media, hate has found a new home

Our lives are now entwined with digital media and social platforms—they mediate every aspect of our daily routines. We use them to share our moments, connect with loved ones, and even perform our jobs. Yet, it’s impossible to ignore the alarming negativity and vitriol that flood comment sections, social media posts, and gaming chats. This worrisome trend has given rise to online spaces that normalize prejudice and hate, in some cases leading to radicalization. At the same time, schools are witnessing an increase in online harassment and a growing backlash against efforts to recognize and respect diverse communities and identities. Empowering our youth to recognize and combat hate online is crucial to counteract this disturbing reality, making virtual spaces safer and more inclusive for all.

THE VULNERABLE ROAD TO RADICALIZATION

When we talk about hate, it’s not just an emotion but a mindset where individuals define themselves in opposition to another group. Hate and fear become part of their identity, triggering extreme emotions in response to the other group’s actions. During adolescence, seeking identity is a natural developmental process; we all remember how important it was to fit in, wear the right clothes, or listen to the coolest bands. But this stage of development can also lead to feelings of disaffection, in which family or cultural values appear worthless, and this in turn can make teens susceptible to hate messages. Youth in this situation will often seek a group or cause that give them values, an identity, and a surrogate family, a search that may be exploited by hate groups and movements to radicalize them.

HOW ONLINE HATE IS SPREAD

Because of the networked nature of digital media, hate groups can bypass traditional gatekeepers like publishers or TV networks and disseminate extreme content on platforms with algorithms that often target those already sympathetic to their message. They also share “dog whistles,” seemingly reasonable content aimed at attracting new sympathizers and normalizing hate speech.

ONLINE PREJUDICE’S FAR-REACHING IMPACT

Exposure to online prejudice and hate has severe consequences beyond making people feel unwelcome or uncomfortable: studies have revealed that experiencing discrimination online can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. While overt racism and hatred are alarming, the more casual and nuanced forms of prejudice can be just as damaging in shaping cultures of hate and spreading disinformation. Even if young people do not actively participate in prejudiced speech, they often find their own views influenced by the values of their communities. With digital media’s connected nature, these smaller communities can significantly affect larger ones, leading to more rapid radicalization.

“...the ‘majority illusion,’ a cognitive bias that makes the loudest voices seem to be the shared values of a community, is especially powerful online.”

BECOMING THE NOISY 10%

While it is important to take online hate seriously, it's also essential not to treat it as more common or mainstream than it actually is. That's because the “majority

illusion,” a cognitive bias that makes the loudest voices seem to be the shared values of a community, is especially powerful online.

Researchers have found that in any community, online or offline, the social norms are shaped by the most committed 10% of its members. If those 10% express views of prejudice and hate, they can have an outsized influence on the community and contribute to the majority illusion discussed above. The online realm exacerbates this effect and makes it challenging to gauge how representative these voices are, because it's difficult to estimate a virtual community's size. As a result, a dangerous cycle perpetuates itself: young people witnessing casual prejudice may believe it reflects the community's values, influencing their opinions or leading them to shy away from pushing back. However, this cycle can be broken, and young people can be empowered to become the “noisy 10%” who reshape their community's values.

Empowering educators to empower youth

Recognizing the urgency to equip students with essential tools and skills to navigate the online landscape responsibly, MediaSmarts, Canada's Centre for Digital Media Literacy, has developed *My Voice Is Louder than Hate*.¹ Based on research conducted with more than a thousand Canadian youth, this dynamic multimedia program aims to empower students in Grades 9–12 to confront and push back against hate and prejudice in their online communities. Focused on digital citizenship and media literacy, this resource equips students with the knowledge and skills to recognize hate material online and take effective action against it.

My Voice Is Louder than Hate has four essential components designed to provide an engaging learning experience for both students and teachers:

Teacher training workshop: To ensure effective implementation of the program, MediaSmarts offers a self-directed workshop for teachers. This workshop equips educators with the background knowledge

and tools to deliver the lessons confidently and effectively and deal with any difficult conversations that may take place.

Teacher's guide: Serving as a valuable companion resource, the teacher's guide provides background information, resources, and guidance on presenting the program's lessons. Topics covered include online hate, casual prejudice, dehumanization, and digital citizenship. The guide offers detailed instructions on how to approach and deliver the lessons with a focus on promoting emotional safety for students.

Two lessons: The heart of the program consists of two impactful lessons that leverage a multimedia platform to educate and empower students. The online interactive tool engages students with videos on countering online prejudice, multimedia learning opportunities, role-playing scenarios to address casual prejudice, and a tool for students to create their own content against hate.

Lesson 1: The Impact of Hate

In this lesson students explore how interacting through digital media can make it easier to hurt someone's feelings and can make hurtful or prejudiced behaviour seem normal in online spaces. They learn how Canadian youth feel about and respond to casual prejudice online, and then use the online multimedia tool to create a digital story that will help people understand that online hate hurts everyone who witnesses it.

Lesson 2: Pushing Back against Hate

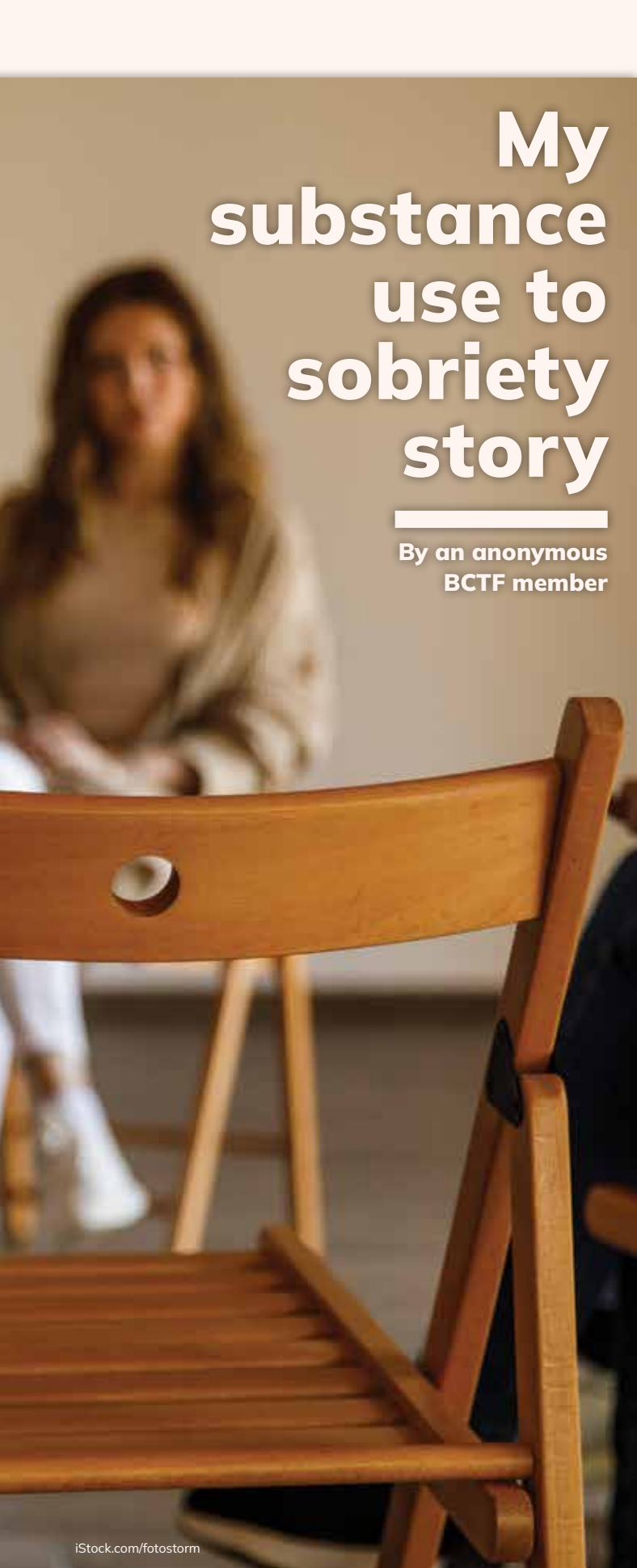
In this lesson students explore the benefits and drawbacks of being “full citizens” online. They learn reasons why Canadian youth sometimes do not push back when they witness casual prejudice online and then use the online multimedia tool to practise different ways of responding. Finally, students analyze memes as a medium and a way of responding to hate or other hurtful behaviour online, and then use the online multimedia tool to create a meme that they can use to push back against casual prejudice.

Creating a kinder digital world

MediaSmarts research study *Young Canadians in a Wireless World, Phase IV*² found that while almost 9 in 10 youth agree it's important to speak up about racist or sexist comments, more than half don't know how to do so. Our evaluation of the *My Voice Is Louder than Hate* program found that after participating in the lessons, students felt more confident in their ability to recognize and respond to prejudice online. By equipping educators and students alike, we can build a generation that stands against hate and promotes a more inclusive and compassionate digital world. •

1 mediasmarts.ca/my-voice-louder-hate-0

2 mediasmarts.ca/research-policy/young-canadians-wireless-world/young-canadians-wireless-world-phase-iv



My substance use to sobriety story

By an anonymous
BCTF member

“Substance use...may not happen when you expect it. My most significant struggle with substance use didn't happen when my personal life was most challenging...”

IF I WAS ASKED four years ago to describe someone with substance issues, I would have proceeded to describe the couple of people I knew who had struggled immensely with alcohol when I was growing up. People who drank every day, whose lives were falling apart, who

lost jobs and had a hard time finding new ones. People who couldn't stay sober, no matter what the consequences. I have family members who have had significant difficulties, to varying degrees, with alcohol. They worked through 12-step programs, with different levels of success. They also imprinted onto me that I would never want anything to do with a 12-step program to work on substance issues. In fact, I never imagined I would have a substance issue. I believed I had it under control.

Throughout my life I have faced many struggles; probably more than the average person my age, but things had settled in recent years, and I was working in a school. Dizziness and chest pains became a sudden and frequent occurrence in my life. I attempted to solve this problem by indulging in a glass of wine or refreshing Caesar after work, which turned into every day, and then multiple times per day. Alcohol hadn't even been part of my existence and routine during stressful periods of my life, but it was routine now even though my personal life was better.

After visiting my doctor for the fourth time because of dizziness and chest pains, she asked me to head immediately to the hospital the next time it happened. What I didn't realize was that it was happening only during work hours. This was the first clue that eventually led to me being evaluated for panic attacks and questioning my drinking habits. I was adamant that my alcohol consumption was under control until I decided to substitute my alcohol with a new substance, pot, which had just become legal and had a good reputation for “chilling people out.” I thought this could be my answer to all my panic problems.

Wrong! Pot can make things much worse. I had seen my students turn to pot as a coping strategy many times, and I of course knew this could have serious and negative effects, but again, my denial convinced me that would never happen to me.

Ultimately, it did happen to me, and I found myself admitted to the hospital for a pot-induced incident.

As much as the experience felt like a dream to me, it very much scared my friends and family. I was now on full medical leave from work, primarily based on stress and my inability to avoid panic attacks.

I was fortunate to have the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Health and Wellness Program helping me navigate my various needs. After my hospital stay I asked BCTF staff if there was any help available for substance use. I was encouraged to attend an independent medical exam by an addictions doctor. I had some immediate regrets after agreeing to this. I felt I was opening a huge can of worms and admitting that I might have an issue with alcohol. Almost like admitting defeat.

At the end of my appointment, the doctor asked me what I wanted out of this process. I basically told her that I wanted the deep pain in my chest to go away. This was the beginning of a long journey to where I am today.

Initially, the doctor's recommendations put me in the same panic mode as I'd been in to begin with. I felt the recommendations were rather harsh, especially considering that I asked for help and was not forced to seek it. I was told I would be monitored for up to two years by a medical monitoring program and have random urine tests, as one of the stipulations was that I was not to have any substances during that time or I wouldn't qualify for long-term disability (LTD). At this point my sick days had run out and LTD was my only income. I was also sent to a two-month treatment program where I started attending a 12-step program three times per week—the one I swore I would never be a part of—and eventually met my sponsor.

"I am concerned that... educators, especially those in small communities, refuse to attend any kind of 12-step program because of worries around anonymity and confidentiality."

I remember the day my partner dropped me off at the treatment centre; I was more nervous than ever before. Who would I be meeting there, and what would they make me do? I went in with a mindset focused on just getting it over

with. It ended up being the most eye-opening experience of my life, in good and bad ways, but certainly in a fulfilling way.

The treatment centre had people from across Canada, and from every walk of life. They were all people who were introspective, creative, funny, and had big hearts.

One of my biggest concerns with starting treatment was anonymity. After teaching for more than 20 years in a small community, anonymity is almost impossible to maintain. How many of my former students or students' parents would I run into? How many times can you go to any place in a small town and be anonymous? This is what inspired



AUTHOR'S BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Push Off from Here: Nine Essential Truths to Get You through Sobriety (And Everything Else)
by Laura McKowen

me to write this article. I am concerned that, like me, many educators, especially those in small communities, refuse to attend any kind of 12-step program because of worries around anonymity and confidentiality. Fortunately, anonymity has not been an issue for me—thank goodness for virtual supports. I have been extremely well supported by the BCTF throughout my journey and feel my anonymity has been protected throughout the process.

Since joining a 12-step program, other teachers in treatment have reached out to me. Some are at the beginning of their careers without continuing contracts, concerned about being found out and not getting "that job," and some are at the end of their careers. Of course, we are all in different situations, but we must find a way to support each other, and we must lean on supports provided by our union when needed.

Substance use is real and can sneak up on any of us. And as my story shows, it may not happen when you expect it. My most significant struggle with substance use didn't happen when my personal life was most challenging; instead, it snuck up on me when things in my life felt calmer. People from all around the world and from every demographic have the same issues with substances. In fact, a saying rings true for us: it's a thinking problem, not a drinking problem.

I am forever grateful for the life I've been able to rebuild today. The BCTF has given me something I never thought I wanted and, in fact, wanted to run the other way from—fast. I'm very lucky that online meetings exist in the world of substance use.

If you find yourself even questioning if you have a problem with substances, there are online meetings that are welcoming and where you are able to stay anonymous. I encourage you to take that first step and reach out to the BCTF Health and Wellness Program. It can change your life. It changed mine. •

Visit bctf.ca or call 1-800-663-9163 for more information on the BCTF Health and Wellness Program.

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE BCTF'S

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY THINK TANK: TEACHERS RESPONDING TO CLIMATE EMERGENCIES

FROM HEAT WARNINGS, to floods, fires, and landslides, BC has experienced several climate emergencies in the last few years.

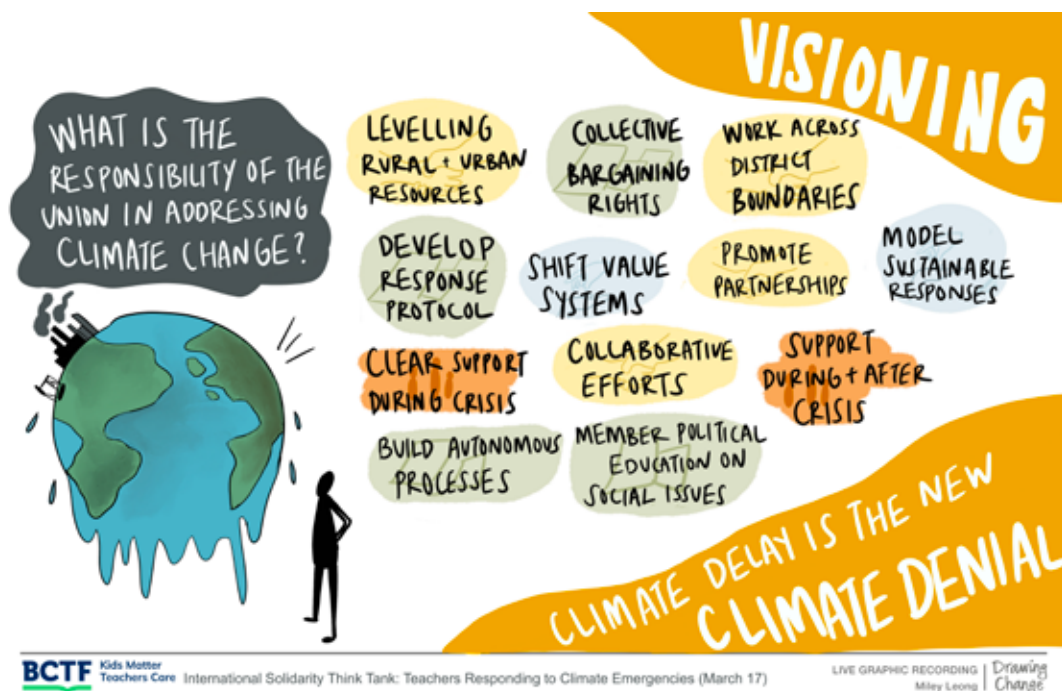
How does climate change affect students, teachers, and the role schools have in communities? What are unions' responsibilities in responding to climate emergencies? Earlier this year, the BCTF hosted a climate change think tank to open dialogue about these big questions.

The think tank brought together teachers from locals that have been recently affected by climate emergencies, members from the Environmental Justice Action Group on the Committee for Action on Social Justice, and colleagues from the Teachers' Federation of Puerto Rico, who have experienced their own share of climate emergencies in recent years. Here's what we learned.

The role of a teacher shifts during and after a climate emergency

Schools have always had a broader role in communities than their primary function of being a place of learning. Whether it's providing food, a safe place, or information and access to other community services, schools have an integral role in building up a community. This role is even more important after a climate emergency.

Teachers build relationships and connections with many families in the community. This community knowledge is essential in co-ordinating an emergency response. From different corners of the province, there are stories of teachers working with emergency response teams to make sure community members were safe and healthy. Teachers in Merritt were going door-to-door to check on students and families during school closures due to floods, while Princeton teachers volunteered to deliver clean water to families who did not have access.



Even when schools reopened and students were welcomed back, many students and teachers were grappling with losing their homes, being cut off from other communities, and trying to build new routines around uncertain futures.

"At that time, I was not an educator. I was a nurturer. Students needed a little bit of normalcy. They needed to know that the school building, and the adults in it, were a safe place," said Leanne Atkinson from Princeton.

After a climate emergency, teachers, in a way, become responsible for helping students navigate their experiences while simultaneously adapting to a new normal that may look and feel much less stable than what they're accustomed to. Teaching becomes less focused on curricular content, and more focused on connection, social-emotional support, and finding stability.

Teaching the curriculum isn't possible when students have emotional trauma to process. Both students and staff come to school carrying this trauma after a climate emergency. However, the training and professional development needed to teach through trauma, while also trying to process one's own trauma, is lacking.

School buildings and facilities are underprepared for dealing with climate emergencies

As we see more and more climate emergencies across the province, we also see the ways in which our school buildings are falling short in protecting students and staff.

In Princeton schools were fully operational long before potable water was available in the buildings. A year and a half later, students learned first-hand the impact of plastic waste as the school racked up water bottles because of a lack of safe drinking water from the taps.

In places like Kamloops, wildfire smoke can create hazardous levels of air pollution that pose a significant health risk, especially to vulnerable people. And though some schools were outfitted with air filters during the COVID-19 pandemic, we're learning that what constitutes the gold standard for filtration of viruses from air falls short when it comes to smoke filtration. If we are to create safe and healthy learning spaces, air quality needs to be a priority.

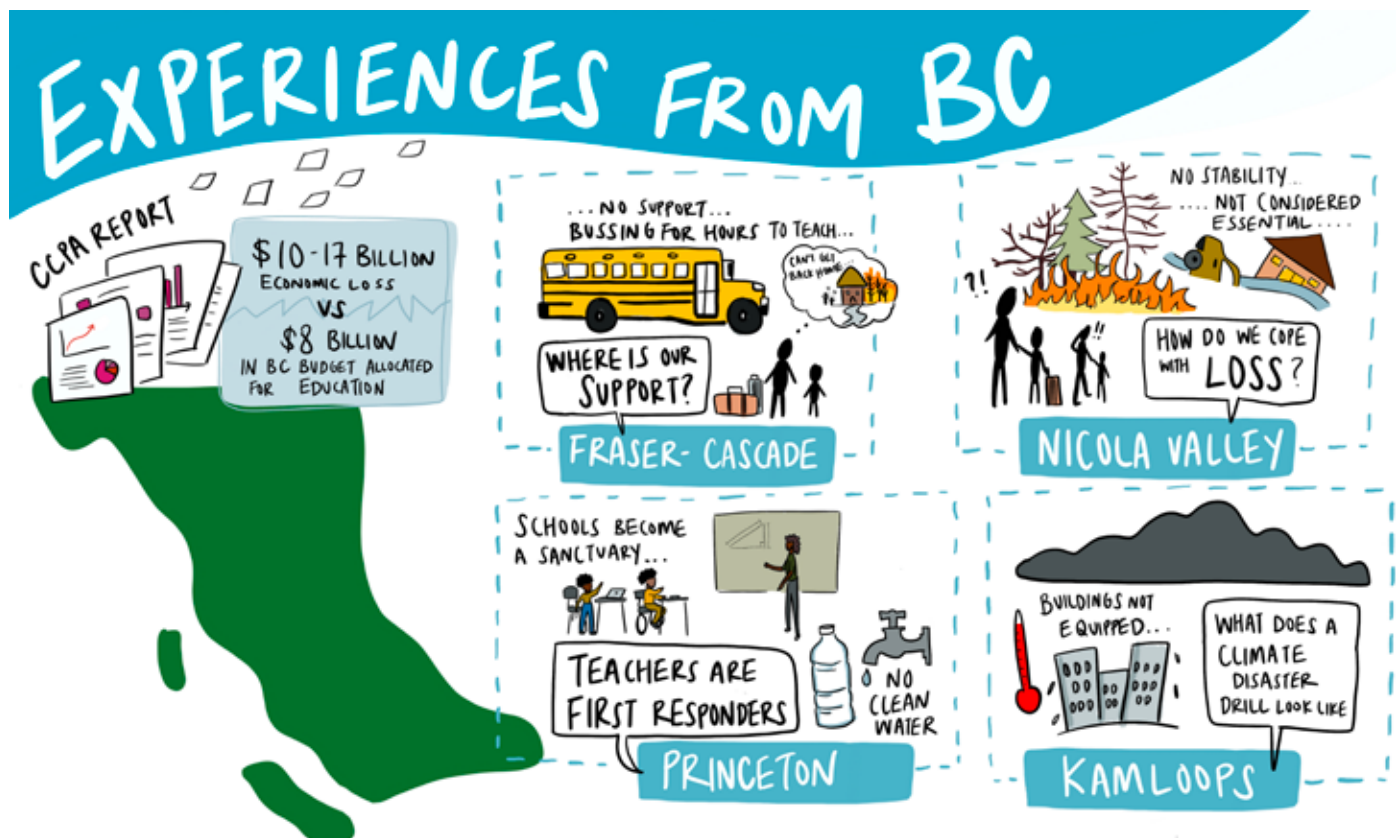
Heat waves have also posed a new challenge that school buildings are underprepared to handle. As the frequency, duration, and intensity of heat waves increases, the risk of disruption to education will only grow.

Much of the response so far has been reactive, rather than proactive, when it comes to climate emergencies. So how do we prepare schools, students, and staff to deal with future climate emergencies?

INFOGRAPHICS

These infographics were created as live graphic recordings to capture and summarize the discussions that occurred at the think tank.

"Maybe it's time we start thinking about what a climate emergency drill looks like. We've all done fire drills, and we know that's effective for keeping students and staff safe. How can we integrate learning about climate emergency responses?" said Greg Wagner from Kamloops.



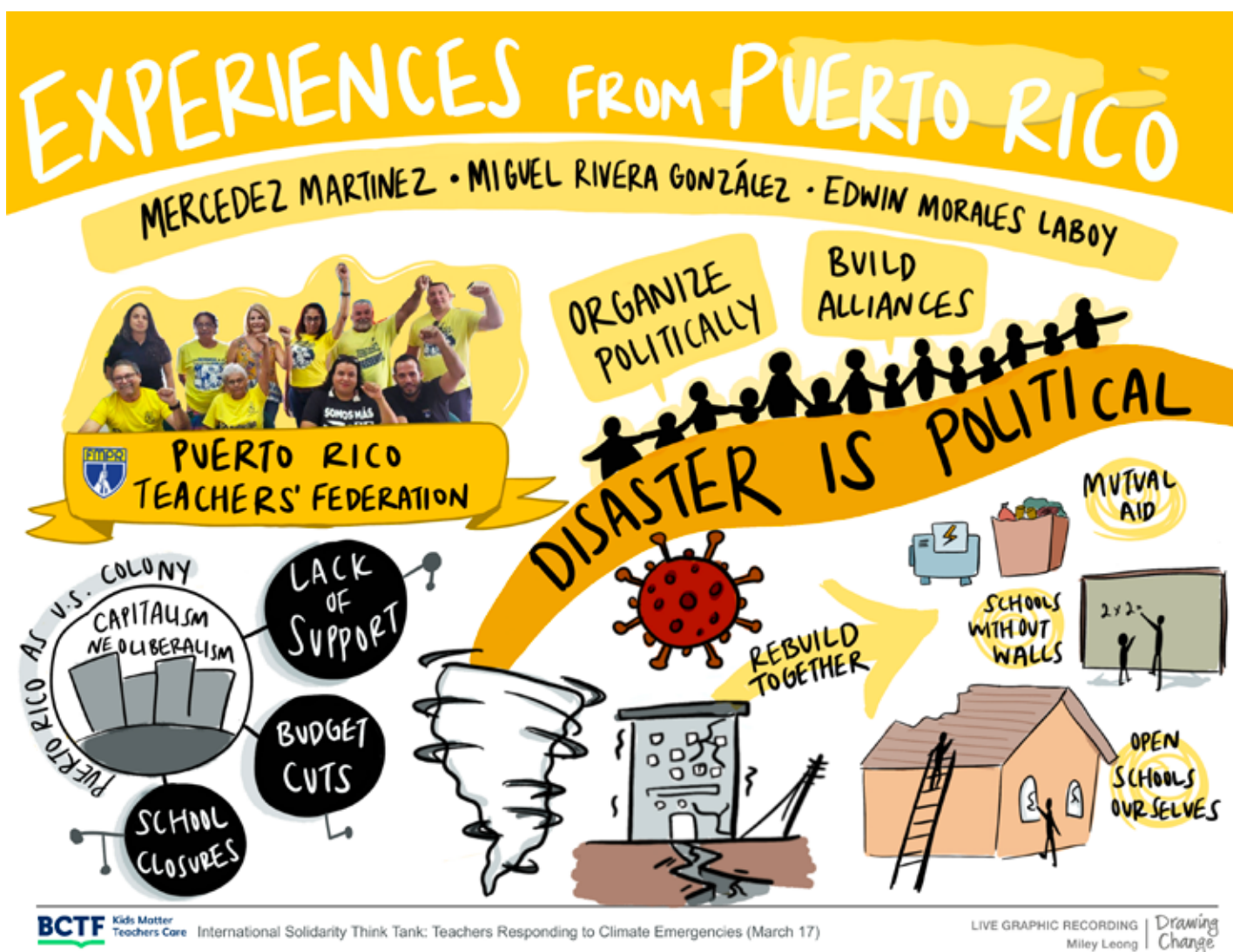
Climate emergencies can create opportunities for neoliberal agendas to jeopardize and privatize quality public education, as seen in Puerto Rico

school facilities, such as basketball courts, remain unusable even years after the climate emergency occurred. However, reopening schools, even without adequate facilities, is important in the fight against “disaster capitalism” in Puerto Rico.

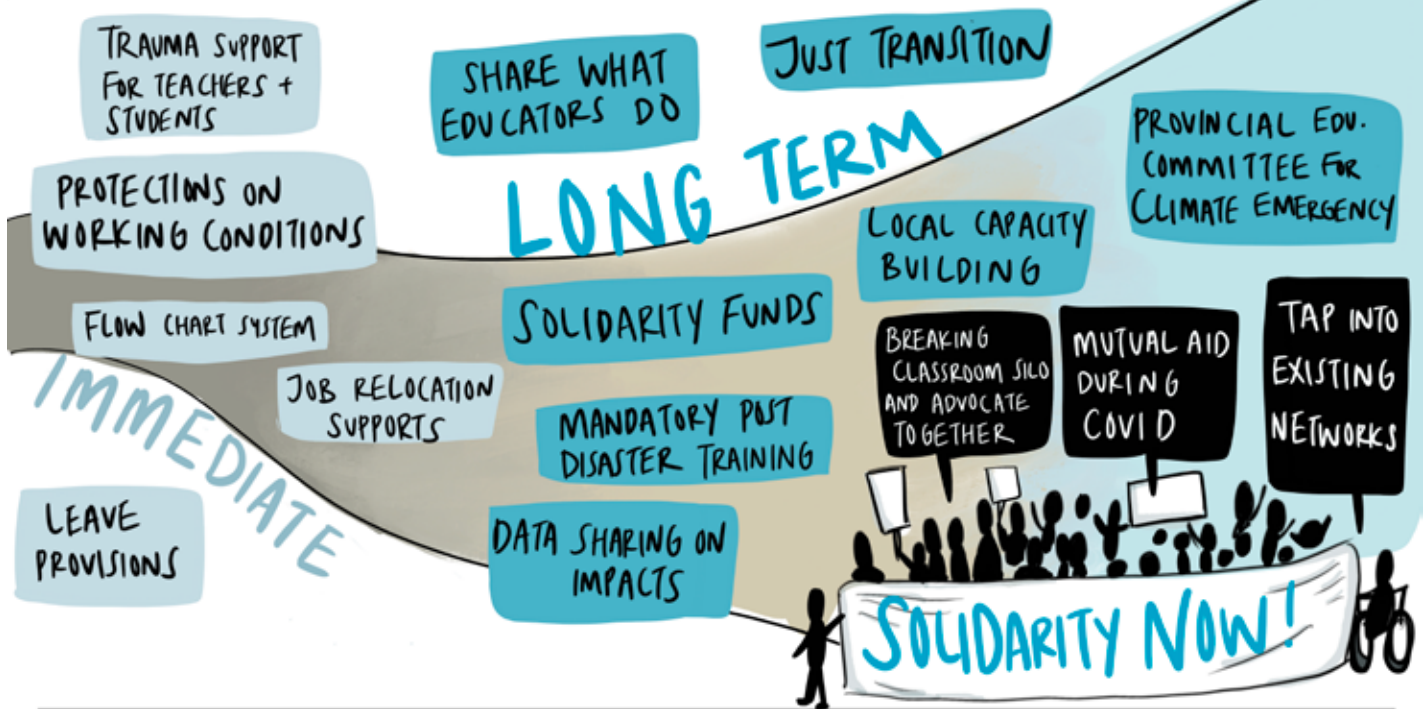
In recent years, when schools were closed after hurricanes and earthquakes in Puerto Rico, teachers fought to reopen schools as quickly as was safe to do so. In some cases, teachers were working without a physical building and running classes in outdoor community spaces. Often,

There, teachers have watched several schools be permanently shut down after a climate emergency. These schools are labelled as being beyond repair; however, the building is often sold and reopened as a private school in the months and years that follow the climate emergency.

The unfortunate reality is that climate emergencies facilitate the privatization of education systems while also taking resources away from the public system. In Puerto Rico, each climate emergency results in migration off the island. This drop in enrolment, however small, combined with the damage to school buildings gives decision-makers a perfect excuse to justify the privatization of a school in a particular community. The teachers’ federation in Puerto Rico is fighting to limit the number of schools their ministry of education can privatize in any given year.



A RESPONSE GROUNDED IN SOLIDARITY & CONNECTION



BCTF

Kids Matter
Teachers Care

International Solidarity Think Tank: Teachers Responding to Climate Emergencies (March 17)

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING | Drawing
Miley Leong | Change

Collective agreements can proactively protect members in future climate emergencies

When severe flooding in Merritt and the Fraser Valley closed major roadways, many teachers found themselves stuck with unreasonable commutes to get to their

schools. In some cases, teachers spent up to four hours each day getting to and from work.

Collective agreements are powerful tools to protect workers; unfortunately, most collective agreements do not currently have adequate language to protect teachers after a climate emergency or compel employers to make accommodations for those affected by climate emergencies. Keeping climate change at the forefront during bargaining can help secure workers' rights and safety during and after future climate emergencies.

Colleagues from the Teachers' Federation of Puerto Rico shared an example of how collective agreements can be an invaluable tool in creating proactive climate emergency response systems. Members of the Teachers' Federation of Puerto Rico have access to leaves of absence if they have lost their home or experienced trauma because of a climate emergency.

Our collective agreements could also help safeguard workers rights by establishing standards for clean air and safe temperatures in schools and providing trauma supports in the aftermath of a climate emergency.

The labour movement at large has the potential to play a key role in shaping proactive climate emergency response systems throughout our province. With upstream thinking that emphasizes collaborative supports for workers and students, we can create better support systems and be more prepared for the next climate emergency. And as we've seen over the past few years, schools and teachers are integral in community emergency responses.

"People need a place to heal after an emergency. That place is our schools. Schools are the centre of our community," said Mercedes Martinez, President of the Teachers' Federation of Puerto Rico.

As the centre of the community, schools need to be equipped to deal with emergencies so the community can heal and rebuild around them. •



METRO/FRASER VALLEY
METRO WEST
VANCOUVER ISLAND

BCTF ZONE MEETINGS

WHERE MEMBERS MEET ON LOCAL ISSUES

BCTF ZONES AND THEIR LOCALS

KOOTENAY

01 Fernie
02 Cranbrook
03 Kimberley
04 Windermere
07 Nelson
10 Arrow Lakes
18 Golden
20 Kootenay Columbia
51 Boundary
861 Creston Valley
862 Kootenay Lake

METRO/ FRASER VALLEY

33 Chilliwack
34 Abbotsford
35 Langley
36 Surrey
37 Delta
42 Maple Ridge
75 Mission
78 Fraser Cascade

METRO WEST

38 Richmond
391 Vancouver Elementary and
Adult Educators' Society
392 Vancouver Secondary
40 New Westminster
41 Burnaby
43 Coquitlam
44 North Vancouver
45 West Vancouver
48 Sea to Sky
49 Central Coast

NORTH COAST

50 Haida Gwaii
52 Prince Rupert
54 Bulkley Valley
80 Kitimat
87 Stikine
881 Terrace
882 Upper Skeena
92 Nisga'a

NORTH CENTRAL/ PEACE RIVER

27 Cariboo-Chilcotin
28 Quesnel
55 Burns Lake
56 Nechako
571 Prince George
572 Mackenzie
573 McBride-Valemount
591 Peace River South
592 Chetwyn
593 Tumbler Ridge
60 Peace River North
81 Fort Nelson

OKANAGAN

17 Princeton
19 Revelstoke
22 Vernon
23 Central Okanagan
31 Nicola Valley
53 Southern Okanagan/
Similkameen
67 Okanagan Skaha
73 Kamloops Thompson
74 Gold Trail
83 North Okanagan/
Shuswap

VANCOUVER ISLAND

46 Sunshine Coast
47 Powell River
61 Greater Victoria
62 Sooke
63 Saanich
64 Gulf Islands
65 Cowichan
66 Lake Cowichan
68 Nanaimo
69 Mount Arrowsmith
701 Alberni
702 Ucluelet Tofino
71 Comox
72 Campbell River
84 Vancouver Island West
85 Vancouver Island North
93 Syndicat enseignant.e.s.
programme francophone

WHAT ARE ZONE MEETINGS?

ALL 76 LOCALS AND SUBLOCALS across the province are divided into seven regional zones. Every year, in the fall and spring, the BCTF organizes what is known as "zone meetings." The zone meetings are an opportunity for members to gather and discuss regional issues.

WHO ATTENDS ZONE MEETINGS?

Within every local there are released union officials, meaning they are on leave from their teaching position to work on behalf of the union, and there are also volunteers, members who are doing union work in addition to their teaching duties.

Which union positions are released and which are volunteer positions depends on the size of the local and the workload of the role. At zone meetings there can be a combination of released and volunteer members in attendance.

Generally, local presidents attend zone meetings, as it is a chance for them to connect with other local presidents and work together on regional issues that are important to their members but may not get as much attention at provincial meetings.

Also in attendance are committee chairs or representatives from different local committees. Every local has several committees focused on different areas of union work: for example, bargaining committees, professional development committees, social justice committees, health and safety committees, and Aboriginal education committees.

WHAT HAPPENS AT ZONE MEETINGS?

At the zone meetings members have a chance to meet other members who do the same type of union work as them in a different local. This creates opportunities for discussion, strategizing, and collaboration to tackle issues.

Zone meetings also open pathways for dialogue between members on local committees and members on provincial committees. Each committee gathering at zone meetings is facilitated by a member who sits on the provincial advisory committee for the same topic. The facilitator can bring notes from the meeting back to the provincial advisory committee to inform that committee's recommendations to the BCTF Executive Committee.

The following pages are snapshots from four different committee meetings in four different zones.



Anna Chudnovsky photo

Professional development at the Okanagan Zone Meeting: Improving the profession, increasing our expertise, and exploring our curiosities

Okanagan PD chairs (L to R):

Robert French, Tamara Nunes, Shauna Mitchell, Teri Allen Innis, Barb Huva, Kyla Hadden, Holly Jezovit, Dave Mackenzie, Jessica Okayama.

DAVE MACKENZIE, professional development (PD) chair from Vernon and new local president, welcomes members to the professional development meeting at Okanagan zones by playing some catchy tunes from his iPhone. This group is fired up: they've come with a clear intention—to strengthen locals' abilities to support the professional development of their membership.

"How we build our profession, how we increase our expertise, this allows us to improve ourselves, follow our passions, and explore our curiosities," says Dave.

These folks are on a mission to make access to professional development opportunities more consistent and fair across the province. In rural locals, areas more removed from urban centres, professional development opportunities are few and far between. The "big deal" conferences all take place in the Lower Mainland, they say, and so travel and accommodation costs are prohibitive. What's more, local language on professional development differs across the province. In some locals, funds are allocated directly to each member to bank over time and use at their leisure. In other locals, members send an application to the PD chair of the local each time they have costs associated with professional development.

In some ways, the pandemic made it easier for members from remote locals to access conferences and workshops, but now most professional development has returned to in-person programming, and many locals are, yet again, feeling isolated from opportunities to increase their professional expertise.

"Sometimes it feels like union work is defensive only... But professional development is inspiring stuff: it's how we improve our profession..."

The PD chairs used zones as an opportunity to learn from one another and brainstorm together. How do folks in Kelowna disperse funds? What's the uptake from new members in professional development? How are we communicating these opportunities to new members so that they too can participate?

"Professional development is a celebration of our work and our value. It's the making of professionals. It should be treated as such," says Teri Allen Innis, PD chair from Kamloops. "Sometimes it feels like union work is defensive only. We support members being disciplined; we take grievances to the employer; we defend the collective agreement. But professional development is inspiring stuff: it's how we improve our profession; it's how we build our professional expertise."

As the meeting wraps up, the group makes plans to meet again to discuss strategies to strengthen local collective agreement language on professional development. The group is excited about the opportunity to share ideas, and they're motivated to do the work together.

Dave puts on some more tunes as the group heads out for lunch. One thing is certain: there will be more to come from this group of local activists.

Central Coast Aboriginal education contacts (L to R): Catherine Quanstrom, Charmaine Peal, Marla Gamble, Stephanie Muldoe, Teresa Seymour.



Aboriginal education at the North Coast Zone Meeting: Empowering teachers and students to engage with reconciliation

THE QUESTIONS that come up at a meeting of the North Coast Aboriginal education contacts are complex and personal.

How do you teach elementary students about the tragedies of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in a way that is age-appropriate but honest? How do you handle the weight of such topics when they happen in your own community? How do you empower kids to be advocates?

Stephanie Muldoe, who is facilitating the session, has books on hand and a list of resources that she passes around the group of five women. The chance to share across communities like this and to elevate Aboriginal education is part of what attracted her to volunteer with the union. It's a common story from the Aboriginal education contacts.

"I wanted a platform to share different perspectives to a larger audience," Stephanie said. "Not in a forceful way, but to say, 'Here's some material. If you're doing that, check this out.'"

"If someone reads the materials that the committee thinks is important, that's a win," she said.

Charmaine Peal, of the Nisga'a Teachers' Union, said she joined the union committee because she wanted to help other teachers find the information they need to help bring more Indigenous knowledge into all classrooms.

She remembers feeling excited when she heard on the radio that updated curriculum meant teachers would be able to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into all classroom subjects.

"I'm able to teach my students not only math and the English language. Now I can teach them about the history of the Nisga'a and how we see that world," she said, adding that about 99% of her students are Indigenous.

Charmaine, who teaches Grades 3 and 4, said she made the decision to teach in her community after experiencing significant teacher turnover as a student herself. When she was growing up, teachers would arrive for one- or two-year assignments and move on.

"It was a struggle," she said. "I saw a need for my community and the nation that we have teachers who are from there, because they will know what

the students need. That's why I was persistent in staying here: to provide that stability for the students."

Marla Gamble, who is Haida and teaches in Tsimshian territory, said she has volunteered with the union on and off through her 23-year career.

Marla said she incorporates Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in every subject that she teaches and doesn't shy away from the tough subjects.

The Grades 4 and 5 students in her class are at an age where they have a real sense of empathy and resiliency, and a drive to do what's right. They understand what happened at residential schools and what inter-generational trauma means. Marla said she tries to create a caring environment and encourages them to think about how they can make positive contributions.

"As an Indigenous person who feels fortunate to have graduated and gone to university, I feel I am obligated to use that position to help lift up Indigenous people and also create allies. That's what it is about for me."

Marla said she's been pleased to see a broader understanding of Indigenous experiences and perspectives in the general public, especially over the past seven or eight years. "Whether someone is Indigenous or not, there are now ample learning resources available," she said.

Beyond a space to advocate for Aboriginal education, Marla said her union work has given her social opportunities, as well as tools to support her colleagues.

"I really feel the union has made me stronger in the sense that it gives me courage to know that I can stand up for myself, stand up for members, and also stand up for the kids. It's helped me really understand the collective agreement and what my rights are. It has allowed that professional autonomy and that sense that what I'm doing is right."

Bargaining chairs Denise Anderson (left) and Laurie Andrews (right).

Rich Overgaard photo

Local bargaining at the Vancouver Island Zone Meeting: The reward is helping fellow teachers do their jobs even better

AS LOCAL BARGAINING CHAIRS from across Vancouver Island settle in for another session of learning and sharing strategies at the spring zone meetings, two teachers from different locals strike up a conversation about why they both looked so familiar to each other. What came next filled the room with smiles, as two high school friends from the 1980s were able to reconnect and share memories from their time as high school students in Nanaimo.

As it turned out, Laurie Andrews, now living in Powell River, and Denise Anderson, from the Comox Valley, were both members of the Nanaimo District Senior Secondary (NDSS) grad class of 1987. Thirty-six years later, they ended up sitting across the table from each other as teachers sharing strategies about how to engage members in the bargaining process.

At the next break, we interviewed Denise and Laurie as they caught up with each other and talked about how and they got engaged with their union and local bargaining.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED IN THERE? HOW DID YOU RECONNECT?

Denise: *I recognized Laurie from my high school days at NDSS. It's been what? Two or three years now? (Laughter)*

Laurie: *It was great to see each other and such a surprise—even more of a surprise that our paths haven't crossed sooner, considering our involvement with our locals and the BCTF.*

WHY DID YOU TAKE ON THE ROLE OF BARGAINING CHAIR?

Denise: *It's important for to me to know what is happening at the local and provincial level. What happens at bargaining totally impacts my livelihood, my work, and my work-life balance.*

Laurie: *I've been involved in the union from the early days of my career in different ways. I've been on different committees, and I was the PD chair for the local, which put me into the local bargaining process. I grew up in a house where my dad was a union activist. It was always part of who I am and my journey as a teacher.*

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO MEMBERS WHO HAVEN'T ENGAGED WITH THEIR LOCAL?

Denise: *I come at it like it's your professional responsibility to be informed. This is your livelihood; this is your job. We're important members of our community, of our society, and there's a lot to learn, but it only takes one little step to get engaged and move forward. It's incredibly important for members to engage, even if it's just dipping their toes in at first by filling out a survey or attending a general meeting. We need staff reps, we need people attending workshops, because we can't make improvements together without being together.*

Laurie: *I definitely encourage members to get involved. It can be hard, but it is so rewarding to help members—your fellow teachers—in their work and lives. We do such important work and it's amazing to be one of the people helping them do that.*

When it comes to bargaining, this is how we make improvements and help teachers do their jobs even better. But it's a team. It takes a group of us and feedback and engagement from the members. We can't do it without them.

When Laurie and Denise returned to the meeting, the group of local bargainers shared experiences and successes about member engagement.

Discussions focused on how member engagement drives awareness and change. The group agreed that when members engage with their union, locals can find better ways to support them, make improvements for them, and organize together to drive political change and workplace improvements.

So the next time you hear about a local townhall, school visit, general meeting, focus group, listening session, or survey—participate. This is how your local bargaining team finds out about your priorities, the improvements you need, and how teachers can work together to make gains.

“...without doing the union work, I would’ve burnt out a long time ago. This work feeds the soul.”

Sunjum Jhaj photo

Left: Health and safety rep Larry Dureski.

Health and safety at the North Central Zone Meeting: Collaboration and connection are at the centre of union work

WHAT DO YOU DO if you experience a violent incident at school? What are the first steps for reporting unsafe work? Who can you contact if you frequently see unshovelled snow in front of your school? Or what if your mobility and accessibility needs are not met? The health and safety committee in each local can help guide members through all these issues and many more.

The work of health and safety committees is wide and varied. They deal with emerging issues in their locals and at school sites, but they also plan so they can proactively get ahead of issues.

At the zone meeting, the health and safety contacts came prepared with questions and scenarios to get feedback from others who have first-hand experience with similar issues.

One issue stood out in particular: violence in schools.

Each local from this zone had numerous violent incidents occur in the last school year alone. The team shared stories of triumph and struggle where members and union representatives worked to get employers to act when repeated violent incidents occurred in the same school or classroom. Some members who came from locals with limited or no formal procedures in place took notes to bring back and discuss with their district administration.

There can often be a stigma associated with reporting violent incidents. Sometimes, teachers feel their teaching capabilities will be judged or they will be blamed in some way for having a violent student in their class. Getting members to report violent incidents and break this stigma is an important part of creating safety plans to deal with violence.

The work of the health and safety committee has proven to be challenging time and time again. When asked why they do this work, they all shared very similar answers: to support their colleagues and make schools safer for everyone in the building.

“When we make work environments safe for teachers, we also make it safer for students,” said Larry Dureski.

“I am able to do something important for staff members. I can make a difference and help my colleagues,” said Grant Gray.

Grant has been involved with the health and safety committee for over 10 years. Each year at zones, while working collaboratively to address issues, Grant gets to connect with some of the health and safety volunteers from other locals. Lyle Warbinek, Andy Closkey, and Grant Gray have been meeting up at the North Central Health and Safety Zone Meeting every year for over 10 years. The “three stooges,” as they are jokingly referred to, don’t get many opportunities to catch up with one another throughout the school year. But each year at zones they support each other in their work to advocate for their colleagues.

Larry Dureski also has a long-standing history of volunteering with the union. As a member of the provincial Health and Safety Advisory Committee, Larry was the facilitator for the North Central Health and Safety Zone Meeting. Larry has also volunteered in other roles with the union, including staff rep and on the Judicial Council.

In his facilitator role Larry has travelled to many parts of our province, always bringing along his trusted running shoes, ready to explore some new trails in the region.

Larry describes his work with the union as an opportunity for professional development. Through union work, he has had a chance to connect with colleagues across the province. The conversations with colleagues, sharing of ideas, and collaborative learning all enrich his teaching practice.

“I’ve been teaching for 36 years. If I just taught music without doing the union work, I would’ve burnt out a long time ago. This work feeds the soul,” said Larry. •



HOPE, PERSEVERANCE, AND SUCCESS STORIES OF ADULT EDUCATION

CINDY UNWIN

*I feel like I really
accomplished
something.*

GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL is something I've always wanted to do. It wasn't an easy decision to leave school when I was 14 years old and just starting Grade 10. My mom and I had several conversations and ultimately concluded it would be best for me to leave school so I could work and help at home. As one of seven siblings in a family raised by a single mom, helping out was part of our lifestyle.


I thought about going back to school many times, but eventually I moved out of my mom's home and had children of my own. At that stage of my life, I didn't have the time or resources to go back.

The idea of graduating from high school stayed in my mind, but for a long time, I never knew I could go back to school.

I'm 65 now, and for the last 10–15 years I started seriously thinking about my options to graduate from high school. I tried a few different options for completing courses needed to graduate, but none of them worked well for me. Then I met the teachers at SJ Burnside Education Centre.

SJ Burnside was completely different to any school experience I'd ever had. They didn't care who you were or what level you were at. Every student was welcomed and supported. It was okay to do things that were a little outside of the box. The teachers worked with me.

At first, nobody thought I was actually going to finish school because I tried to do it a few times before but was never able to. When I eventually did it,



**“I got to graduate
alongside my
granddaughter, and
now I get to figure out
what’s next for me.”**

Cindy Unwin (left)
graduated with her
granddaughter.
Photo provided by
Cindy Unwin.

I was so proud of myself. My children, grandchildren, and my siblings were all so happy for me.

I had no intention of going to the graduation ceremony, but my teachers convinced me to and I'm so glad I did. When I walked across that stage, everybody stood up and clapped for me. It was a feeling I'd never had before. Everybody was happy and celebrating because of something I did.

I feel like I really accomplished something. I've been struggling with this all my life, and I finally did it. It's hard to find words to explain what this means to me. The teachers, Susan Salvati in particular, made this possible for me.

I got to graduate alongside my granddaughter, and now I get to figure out what's next for me. Even though I'm as old as I am, I want to find something that feels like me for my next chapter.

AN ADULT EDUCATOR'S STORY

JAMES HANSON

*I still hold on to the
promise of possibility.*

I LIVE and work in a small rural community in coastal British Columbia. It is a beautiful place surrounded by the ocean, lakes, and the unending coastal rain forests.

As a community, we are hemmed in by ferries and experience limited opportunities for work, continuing education, and connection to the rest of the province. I didn't really have a clue as to what was available beyond the ferry terminal when I was a student. Upon graduation, I left to “get an education” and explore the options the world had to offer.

My work life included cooking and serving in restaurants, commercial fishing, small business entrepreneurship, and finally becoming a teacher 15 years after formally entering the work force. The idea of teaching lit up my world and renewed the hope I had been missing.

Hope is not wishful thinking, but the joyful expectation of something good. This hope rekindled a fire that had been missing from my life. The fire was the possibility of making a difference in others' lives. This hope is still alive today and is what drives me to do the work I do as an adult education teacher.

As an educator, I have had the incredible privilege of sharing in and participating with my students' stories and journeys. Their stories are often marked with struggle, disappointment, and situations that were beyond their control. Although the individual journeys are different, there are threads of similarity that resound: the perseverance, hope, and commitment that have paved the way for success for themselves, as well as their families.

Today, 20 years into my journey of being a teacher and educator, I still hold onto the promise of possibility. Who will be the next overcomers? What stories will I have the privilege of sharing in? Who are the students who will continue to inspire me?

None of the stories of students' successes would be possible without a school system that sees a need and steps up to fill the need, despite a student funding model that discriminates against adult learners.

I am thankful and grateful for the opportunity to share in my students' stories and journeys. I sincerely hope each student has learned as much as they have taught me.



ERI NAKABAYASHI

It really is never too late.

I DECIDED to go to the education center as an adult because instead of attending high school in Grade 12, I went to Vancouver Community College to pursue pastry arts. I aspired to be a pastry chef since I was a child; however, after working as one for five years and meeting others who have been pastry chefs for much longer, I realized this wasn't what I wanted to do long term.

The only other subject I'm passionate about, other than pastry arts, is marine conservation and restoration, so I decided to upgrade my schooling to change careers and follow my passion. In order to pursue post-secondary education, I needed credits for two high school courses that I didn't complete when I was in school.

I felt like I was behind compared to my friends and peers, but I believed it was worth trying to go back to school. It really is never too late.

CHANNI GONZALES

*Adult education changed
the direction of my life
forever, and that of my kids.*

I CAME BACK to school after 23 years of being out of school. It was an intimidating process, but one I'm so glad I followed through with because it changed my life.

My decision to leave school was made from necessity. I spent most of my childhood in and out of foster care because my parents struggled with addiction. I was legally emancipated from my parents when I was 14 years old.

For youth who end up completely on their own like me, there is some support from the government where we receive a subsidy to help with rent. However, the subsidy is not enough to cover all our expenses, so I found myself working three jobs just to make ends meet when I was 14 years old. That didn't leave much time for school. Teachers and the school principal at my high school tried to find ways to keep me in school, including finding paid internship programs for me. But ultimately, it wasn't enough money and I ended up leaving school in Grade 9.

Eri
Nakabayashi

CHARLOTTE HORSPOOL

The first step is always the hardest.

THE DECISION to go back to school as a mother with two young children was not an easy one. It took me years to finally build up enough courage to go back to school. Working within the school district already as a custodian, I knew that I wanted to further my career within the school system as an education assistant. When I finally took the leap, I was introduced to Louise Dominick who runs Ahms Tah Ow School in Tla'amin. Louise was extremely helpful in getting me set up and started with my English 12 upgrading course, as I had taken Communications 12 in high school.

I received endless amounts of support and encouragement from my teacher, James Hanson. He helped build my confidence and was always there to help in any way I needed. Upon completion of my English 12 course, I had the confidence and tools I needed to jump right into my university level English course through Vancouver Island University, which I completed in April with an A grade. I cannot thank Louise and James enough for the continued support and encouragement as I take the next steps in continuing my education.

The first step is always the hardest.



Life wasn't easy after that, and I found myself incarcerated at age 20 for cashing stolen cheques to feed myself. Fast forward a few more years and I was a single mom with two kids and abysmal job opportunities. Not many employers are willing to hire someone who has been incarcerated, and it's even more challenging when you need to balance a job with taking care of two kids by yourself.

When my oldest son was in Grade 9, he started to have problems at school. He was the same age I was when I left school, and I could see he was starting to give up on himself the way I did. I didn't want him to leave school. I wanted him to be able to access the opportunities that come with having completed high school. So, I struck a deal with him: we agreed that if I enrolled in school again and give it 100% effort, he would do the same.

I took my end of the deal seriously. I searched online for adult education programs and found out there was a publicly funded option available to me. It was scary going back to school after 23 years of being away from it, but the people were amazing. My English

teacher, Kim Henneberry Glover, was a counsellor and mentor to me throughout my time in adult education. I almost gave up multiple times because of the things happening in my personal life. I faced homelessness at one point, and my dad died of an overdose at another point.

It's not easy to focus on school when all these things are happening in your personal life. But Kim didn't let me quit. She pushed me and guided me. I've never had people in my life push me like this. I don't think I could have achieved what I did without the mentorship and friendship I found in school.

I kept my end of the bargain with my son. I ended up graduating with straight A's and was valedictorian of my class.

Adult education has changed the direction of my life forever, and that of my kids. Already things are looking up when I go into the workforce. I'm going to pursue post-secondary training for practical nursing.

Through adult education, I gained confidence in myself and my

capabilities. It has boosted someone that was broken down. Aside from my parenting, this is my biggest accomplishment. It's no small feat, and I'm incredibly proud and grateful for this education. •





Antarctica

Bringing the world to your classroom



Karina New taking the “polar plunge” south of the Antarctic Circle. Photo by Jasper Doest, National Geographic.

By Karina New (she/her), teacher, Vancouver

I STOOD on the bow of a ship, sailing across the Antarctic circle with tears of happiness slipping from my eyes. Just a mere five days before I had been standing in front of my Grades 5–6 students in a classroom in Vancouver. How did I get to the middle of an endless expanse of ocean looking at a horizon punctuated only by ice? How is a regular elementary school teacher on an expedition with National Geographic and Lindblad Expeditions?

“...this has been my dream since I was a child.”

In 2021, National Geographic and Lindblad Expeditions announced their 14th annual cohort of Grosvenor Teacher Fellows (GTFs). Only 50 fellows are selected annually from across Canada and the USA for this life-changing professional development opportunity. Selected educators are taken on an incredible voyage to

explore some of the most remote and beautiful locations on earth. Learning from top experts in the field, world-class photographers, and fascinating explorers, fellows are tasked with bringing all they learn back to their communities to inspire students. In a small office on a gloomy winter’s day, I received the phone call that I would be packing my bags for the journey of a lifetime.

Fast forward two years, past a global pandemic that put dreams on pause, I find myself stuffing Gore-Tex into a suitcase already bulging with base layers and woolly socks. I will soon begin the long journey to the southernmost city in the world: Ushuaia, Argentina, where our ship will depart for the Antarctic Peninsula. I will be joined by two other GTFs chosen for the expedition to the Antarctic. I feel numb with disbelief—this has been my dream since I was a child.

The expedition was a total of 24 days taking us from Antarctica to the remote island of South Georgia, and finally to the Falkland Islands, east of Argentina. The journey left me in awe of towering glaciers and a surprising abundance of wildlife that make the cold their home. Humpback whales waved their fins and showed off massive flukes as they dove. Gentoo penguins waddled along the shoreline, stealing our hearts with their antics. Seals basked lazily on ice floes, seemingly undisturbed by our presence. And above us, the skies were teeming with soaring albatrosses, their wingspans a testament to the wonders of evolution. I survived sailing over waves reaching six meters high, visiting a thriving king penguin colony of half-a-million strong, and jumping (by choice) into the frigid Southern Ocean wearing nothing but a Speedo.

“...we model how we want students to behave—why not also model how we want them to explore?”

Eager to share my experiences with my students before departing, we dove into numerous projects centred around Antarctica's ecology. Students explored the characteristics and behaviours of their chosen Antarctic species and created digital infographics that I could take along with me on my journey. Similarly, they took me along on their learning, and I discovered new species I hadn't even heard of—gelatinous

salps that have a precursor spinal cord? Leucistic penguins that lack melanin in their feathers? Students not only expanded their knowledge of Antarctic wildlife but were also completely engaged and captivated. Art, too, became a powerful tool for connecting them to this fragile corner of the world. Students painted life-sized versions of their animals, turning the hallways of our school into an Ant-art-tic experience that served as a playful reminder of the wonders that exist beyond our four walls.

As my journey neared, my students each added a unique task to my Antarctica bucket list. Have a snowball fight. Check. Eat instant noodles on the ship. Check. Breathe the Antarctic air. Check! What better way to feel the presence of my students than their words narrating my adventures like Sir David Attenborough on *Frozen Planet*. They were eager to see my photo and video updates from the ship, and they sent a list of their questions for the naturalists on board to answer. When I returned, I set up the artifacts and maps I had collected for the whole school to enjoy. Kids tried on my parka and tested my binoculars. We tasted diddle-dee berry jam straight from the Falklands. As adults, we model how we want students to behave—why not also model how we want them to explore?

While my journey allowed me the rare chance of seeing the breathtaking beauty of our planet's frozen south, it also opened my eyes to the sobering reality of human impacts. South Georgia Island features the historic relics of the whaling industry that hunted and killed over 175,000 whales between 1904 and 1965. Seeing the rusting silos of Grytviken that once processed literal tonnes of blue whale blubber into lamp oil was a stark contrast to the beautiful green tussock grass and playful fur seal pups that call the island home. Each day, we human visitors were careful to scrub the bottoms of our boots and inspect for any invasive debris we may otherwise introduce to the island. The experience was a reminder of our collective responsibility to protect and preserve our earth's fragile ecosystems.

Another impactful experience during the many days at sea was to sit down by a porthole and make watercolour paintings. I used water straight from the ocean that had been desalinated on board. Thus, I was able to use a small piece of the Antarctic environment to capture my memories on paper. Seeking a way to help students experience a similar connection, I initiated a mosaic mural project with the theme “Rooted in Our Place.” Each student was asked to choose a meaningful space—be it a park, a forest, or their own backyard—and capture its memory through art. They each collected objects, whether natural or human-made, from their chosen space to embed into their mosaic. By doing so, they discovered their own personal connection to our local spaces.

Left: Preening king penguin at Salisbury Plain, South Georgia Island. Photos provided by Karina New unless noted otherwise.

To further spread the excitement, I presented my expedition to the staff at my school. Through a combination of photography, videos, and storytelling, I transported my colleagues into the heart of Antarctica. Laughter and questions filled the room as I shared humorous anecdotes of gentoos stealing pebbles from their neighbour's nests and molting baby albatrosses squawking for food. Amidst the laughter, there was also a deeper message—a call to action. I highlighted the impacts of human behaviour, of climate change, and the importance of authentic, real-world learning experiences for students.

So why is it so important to bring the world to our classrooms? The answer lies in the power of authenticity. When students are immersed in real-world experiences, their learning becomes meaningful and relevant. By bringing Antarctica just a bit closer to home (I literally brought back a jar of Antarctic air), I was able to capture my student's thirst to learn more and to care more.

“No matter how small, bring your adventures back to share with students...” In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is crucial for students to develop a global perspective. When we bring the world into our classrooms, we

tell the stories of diverse ecosystems, career paths, and challenges faced by different communities. This exposure nurtures empathy, tolerance, and an understanding of the shared responsibility we have as global citizens. No matter how small, bring your adventures back to share with students—it might just inspire them to become the next explorers. •

Right, top down: Details of student mosaics inspired by Karina's adventure; explorers kayaking in Gullet (photograph by Dave Katz, National Geographic photo instructor); Karina explores a gentoo penguin colony on D'Hainaut Island.





Dawn recommends
Into the Wild
Conversation Cards
for exercises to help
create connected
classrooms.
Above: Dawn
Armstrong. Photos
and illustrations
provided by author.



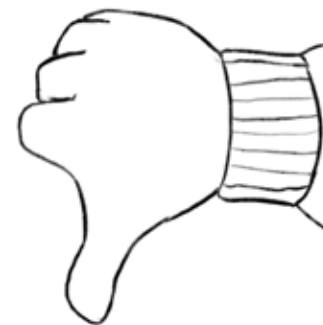
The power of connection

By Dawn Armstrong (she/her),
teacher, West Vancouver

FROM KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 students thrive in the classroom when they feel connected to the teacher and fellow students. When they feel safe to ask a question and advocate for what they need, their confidence, curiosity, and creativity grow. Building a connected classroom also promotes engagement, learning, and adds ease to your classroom management.

School start-up is filled with excitement and energy and can be a good time to implement new strategies and routines. On the opposite page are eight strategies for creating a connected classroom community. Building a connected classroom is a career-long process. To make this undertaking more manageable for yourself, offer yourself the ease of picking one new strategy to add to your classroom. Refine that strategy over the months ahead and make that one ritual awesome for this year! And remember, the most important part of building community is consistency.

8 tips for creating a connected classroom community



HELLO AND GOODBYE

Greet students at the door and wish them well on their way out. Make eye contact with each and every one of them. You could even add the “How would you like to be greeted?” options seen on viral videos: high five, hug, fist bump, dance-dance!

THUMBS UP, MIDDLE, DOWN

Check in with students throughout the day. Ask students a question that can be answered with a thumbs up, middle, or thumbs down. Questions could be about progress of an activity, level of understanding, or how they’re feeling.

GATHER UP

Bring your entire class together, ask them a question, and give everyone an opportunity to share. Ensure they can look each other in the eye: gather in a circle, standing or sitting. Use a timer/bell/stick/rock and give each student 20 seconds to share without interruption. Check out the link to Into the Wild Conversation Cards below for question ideas.

CLASSROOM AGREEMENTS

Gather up and build a set of five or six agreements/rules with your class. Create specific examples for each agreement. This is an opportune time to use your school’s current code of conduct as a guide.

INTO THE WILD CONVERSATION CARDS

Into the Wild Conversation Cards and workshop opportunities can be found at www.intothewildwego.ca.

MOVE YOUR BODY

Create movement breaks every 20–30 minutes. Movement breaks can be as simple as hopscotch down the hallway, flapping like you’re going to fly as you go to solve a math problem at the white boards, or stretching at your chair.

CLASSROOM JOBS

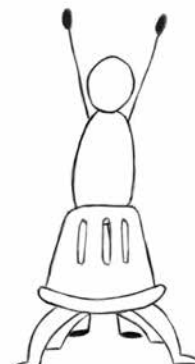
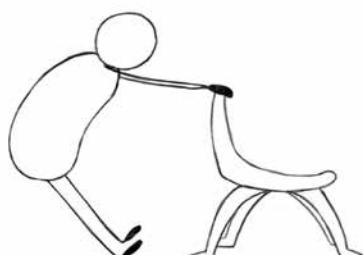
Give students an opportunity to take responsibility for their learning space by having a role in classroom set-up and clean-up. Assign roles and create rituals for this in your room. Create a board to indicate who is responsible for each task.


THERE I AM

Establish the classroom as a shared community space by representing students in the space and on the walls of the classroom. Display students’ artwork and projects, and have their names on their cubbies and at their desks.

SOUND “AFFECTS”

Play sounds in your classroom that match the focus you desire from your students. Calm music during work time and welcome time, chimes at transitions, dance tunes for move your body breaks! •





Jessica Selzer (left) and
Paula Waatainen (right).
Sunjum Jhaj photos.

Creating change-makers through the authentic assessment of deliberative dialogue

By Jessica Selzer (she/her), M.Ed, teacher, West Vancouver and
Dr. Paula Waatainen (she/her), Ed.D, Vancouver Island University

They have taken over my class. My unit on climate change and its effects on displaced persons has been hijacked by 24 Political Studies 12 students who have decided that as a class we are going to collaborate, deliberate, and create an actionable emergency plan for a catastrophic flood scenario in Richmond, BC, and send it to Bowinn Ma, Minister of Emergency Management and Crisis Management, for her consideration. They had discovered the province didn't have one yet.

They genuinely believed that I, their teacher, would convince her to not only read it, but come and visit them with her feedback.

In the end, they submitted a 62-page formal document, including a full budget, and a 10-page bibliography. Minister Ma did in fact come to visit them, and she stayed for 45 minutes answering questions.

What on earth just happened? What happened to make them think that this was even a possibility, and then successfully pull it off?

In the fall of 2022, I taught Political Studies 12 for the first time as part of a collaborative, design-based research project with Dr. Paula Waatainen.

My goal for this course was to borrow the format of Model United Nations' (MUN) committee simulations using real-world scenarios to help students become creative, critical thinkers; thinkers who could negotiate actionable solutions

and be passionate about making a difference for the common good, while interacting with conflicting worldviews and priorities. In MUN students are presented with a global issue and must act in the best interests and within the worldview of their assigned nation. Together, students must create a resolution that realistically addresses the problem.

The course was thematically structured and culminated in major simulations that gave students experience deliberating on real-world problems. I had experience with this, as I have been involved in the MUN club at my school since 2013. But the assessment piece associated with structuring a class around MUN simulations was a challenge I needed support with. I wanted to develop an assessment strategy for the course that would not be about "winning" the argument or "getting" the top score through memorization of testable facts. Instead, it would be about collaboratively creating actionable solutions based on research and data. I contacted Paula, a former department colleague at Rockridge Secondary, whose doctoral dissertation research focused on designing authentic assessments of citizenship competencies, and we embarked on a collaborative inquiry centred on the following question:

How might we operationalize competencies associated with deliberative dialogue, so that they can be taught effectively and assessed authentically?

“‘Authentic assessment’... means assessments that involve complex intellectual problems that have a realistic, real-world value and performance tasks that are as close as possible to what someone would have to do in the real world.”

Our inquiry and design process

Design-based research is powerful but messy—designing and redesigning while observing and reflecting. To begin we worked through a model Paula designed in her doctorate to help teachers develop more authentic assessments of competencies. “Authentic assessment” in research terms means assessments that involve complex intellectual problems that have a realistic, real-world value and performance tasks that are as close as possible to what someone would have to do in the real world. Criteria are explicit, and students engage in self-assessment throughout.

Paula’s model connects criteria for competency to a real context and connects student needs to teachers’ professional requirements.

AUTHENTIC TO CONTEXT

What competencies are required to respond to a real-world context? As teachers, we tend to make best guesses, but digging a little for context expertise can yield better ideas. In her dissertation study with Grade 6 teachers, Paula interviewed a Nanaimo city councillor and a city planner about the nature of competency required by citizens to make effective contributions to a public consultation process. Both suggested downplaying public speaking skills in favour of deliberation. Deliberation, in contrast to debate, has small groups decide “What should we do?” by weighing multiple perspectives and options. Both experts also highlighted the value of being able to prioritize, as it’s too easy to ask for the sun and the moon, but real-world processes require deciding what to do first and what to spend more money on. Did these criteria apply to Jessica’s context? She reached out to Jaime Webbe, the President of the UN Association of Canada, and came away satisfied that they did.

AUTHENTIC TO STUDENTS

To make the assessment more authentic to students from day one, we ran a lower-stakes “zombie outbreak” deliberation in the first week of class, and students self-reflect on how they did. Looking ahead at the major MUN simulation several weeks later, we purposefully used student-friendly language, to ask them what they thought they needed to know more about (knowledge), be better at doing (skills), and be more like (dispositions) to be and feel ready for that simulation. Both Jessica’s draft rubric and instructional plan were well-aligned with their ideas, but we adjusted the rubric to capture some of their additional, insightful criteria wording. This process was the start of an ongoing assessment conversation between Jessica and her students as they assessed competency growth together.

AUTHENTIC TO TEACHER PROFESSIONAL NEEDS

We tackled aligning authentically generated competencies to the learning standards in the BC Political Studies 12 curriculum and discussed how Jessica could accurately generate a percentage to report. As we intended to assess for the development of competencies over the term, we used language from the provincial proficiency scale in this graduation program course. The students were used to having rubrics capture growth of learning, having been through the International Baccalaureate Middle Years program in Grades 8–10.

Reflecting on our inquiry and design process

Ultimately, we appear to have created an assessment plan that supported assessment for, as, and of the development of competencies, but it was by no means perfect. Like any teachers who are trying to generate a percentage to report while assessing for competency over time, we struggled somewhat in reconciling using proficiency scale language when the Ministry of Education and Child Care has not provided adequate supports to do so in grad program courses. Ultimately Jessica chose to assign percentages holistically by having percentage ranges associated with proficiency levels. Like many districts that are generating their own conversion scales in the absence of a provincial one, we recognized that our system was trying to force two systems together. Still—the students Paula interviewed universally supported Jessica’s approach as clear and fair.



Jessica
Selzer

Design outputs

1. **The rubric:** After working through Paula's model, we created a list of assessment criteria that seemed essential, then operationalized the descriptors for "proficient," then other performance levels. Our criteria were as follows: knowledge, perspective taking, reasoned ethical judgment, prioritization, and communicating in a deliberative dialogue. Having unearthed "prioritization" as authentic, we aligned it with the Political Studies 12 curricular competencies of significance, and cause and consequence.
2. **Deliberations:** From there we planned a series of deliberations designed to practise different aspects of deliberative dialogue competency. We built competency through an urban planning deliberation game, a challenge to provide advice to their new mayor and council, and UN simulations, including a UN Human Rights Council simulation on the topic, "How can nations feasibly deal with a mass migration due to a climate crisis?"
3. **A recording process:** Our process would have fallen apart if Jessica couldn't realistically record what she saw and heard. Jessica had trained her students to keep deliberating while she "lurked" so she could observe students she felt she needed more data on. However, grading live authentic competency in a class of 30 is a daunting task. In consultation with a colleague, she developed a sophisticated spreadsheet that she continually updated with codes aligned to proficiency levels.

Best learning

Jessica: Some of my favourite times this semester were my bi-weekly walk and talks with Paula where we reflected on everything that happened during that block. We talked about what worked, what didn't, and most importantly about frustrations we had when students weren't getting what we were trying to have them do. It reminded me of being a brand-new student teacher reflecting on my teaching practice; something I rarely get to do now, let alone with a teaching partner. One thing I was grateful for was our co-developed method of continually grading for competency. This allowed students to try and try again until they progressed without being penalized for their prior attempts. We could informally assess via group and individual reflections and discuss what was working or holding them back. The students and I had a joint goal for their learning: for them to develop the competencies of deliberative dialogue. This was the first time in my career where I felt like a partner in learning rather than having a traditional student-teacher relationship.

Paula: The best thing about this design collaboration for me is that Jessica carved out the time and space in her course for us to work on deliberation with her students over several Tuesdays. This helped her to offer formative feedback and the multiple attempts the students needed to nudge the development of competency along.

Jessica was great at giving ongoing feedback to the whole class when she noticed trends. I remember watching them nodding thoughtfully as she pointed out that many of them were still "developing" in deliberation because they were just developing the confidence "to raise issues and considerations that are important but may complicate discussion." It was also pretty exciting watching her figure out how to manage the logistics of triangulating her collection of assessment evidence and adjusting her record of where students were in their competency development as they learned and grew.

Scan the QR code (right) or visit <https://qrco.de/beJeel> to find Jessica and Paula's Model UN resource.

So, what could have inspired students to design their own, very authentic, collaborative final project about emergency plans in our province?

After spending a semester working on simulations and being in communication with experts and decision-makers, it wasn't surprising that the students wanted to tackle a local real-world problem applicable to their futures. From Paula's interviews and our observations, we suggest

four factors that may have helped students build interest, confidence, and motivation to tackle a local problem.

1. **Relationships!** Paula interviewed a student who had participated in MUN simulations before, who noted that through this series of deliberations "we've developed a relationship where we can talk more freely, and as such we can more accurately express our perspectives but also work collaboratively."
2. **Deliberation:** It was fascinating watching students who were accustomed to arguing until blue in the face, now needing to consider multiple policy options and perspectives in groups. A student commented, "I usually just go aggressively with my tactics from the perspective of my country, but on day two of the simulation I realized I needed to be more collaborative." The policy proposal that they created for Minister Ma required a broad consideration of policy and collaborative decision-making.
3. **Disposition:** The secret sauce in competency! While research indicates that to have competency students don't have to just *be* capable of doing something, they have to *feel* capable too, we rarely operationalize competency by considering student disposition. An English language learning student spoke to Paula about getting out of her comfort zone: "It always feels great afterwards. I feel good about myself."
4. **Self-efficacy as citizens:** We think that by having them grow in their competencies for deliberative dialogue they were able to see the value of themselves as citizens, and in their proven ability to create logical, actionable solutions that were supported by research. The curtain had been drawn back on positions and systems of power and they seemed to feel worthy of a seat at the table. It also deeply resonated with them that they were treated as full citizens with valuable opinions and queries by speakers, such as Jaime Webbe, President of the UN Association in Canada, and MP Patrick Weiler who they held in high regard.

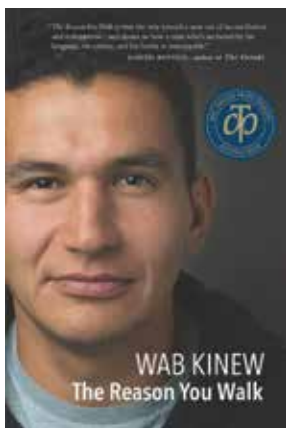
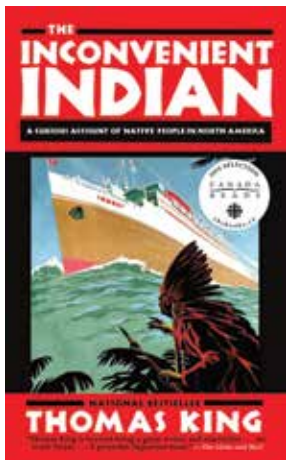


**Paula
Waatainen**



Schools play a key role in civic education. Who were they to give advice and opinions to the Provincial Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness? They are educated citizens of British Columbia and understood that the power and potential of a participatory democracy is only possible when citizens act. •

IDEAS FOR COMMEMORATING THE NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION



For Orange Shirt Day, my class will read *With Our Orange Hearts* by Phyllis Webstad and create orange hearts to display in our classroom window.

– Georgina Johnston



Focus on seeing the value in different ways of knowing (sometimes referred to as two-eyed seeing). I've put a lot of thought into how to incorporate Indigenous lessons into senior science courses. For example, one lesson parallels how both Western science ways of knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing (and ways of passing on knowledge) are valid. – Sarah Tarnowsky

I seek out opportunities to learn as I strive to become educated enough to be an ally. I recommend the free Indigenous Canada online course through the University of Alberta. It provided a good overview of background information I needed to begin bettering my understanding of history and current issues through Indigenous worldviews. I also recommend two great books by Indigenous authors: *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph and *Indigenous Relations: Insights, Tips, and Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality* by Bob Joseph and Cynthia F. Joseph. Both are easy reads with very practical concepts and enlightening facts and perspectives to consider. – Jennie Boulanger

One activity I did with my class for National Indigenous Peoples Day in June could be easily adapted to work for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. My class worked with artist Charlene Johnny from the Quw'utsun tribes of Duncan to design templates for an art project. Charlene also gave an artist talk, gifted the templates to us, and spent a class getting started on painting the templates with us. The templates highlight art local to our area. Students completed their paintings on the templates and created a large hallway display, with credit to Charlene for her expertise, guidance, and support throughout the project. – Teodora Zamfirescu

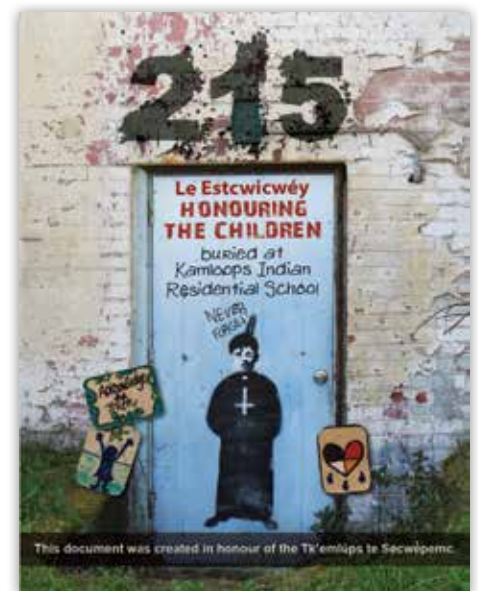
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FOR THE CLASSROOM

Resources by the BCTF Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee are the **Orange Shirt Day Activities** booklet, which includes a collection of books and classroom activities for elementary schools, and **215 Le Estcwiwéy: Honouring the Children Buried at Kamloops Indian Residential School**, a resource focused on the history and legacy of residential schools. Both resources are available under "Classroom Resources" on bctf.ca.

FOR PERSONAL LEARNING

Five Little Indians by Michelle Good
The Reason You Walk by Wab Kinew
The Inconvenient Indian by Thomas King
All My Relations podcast



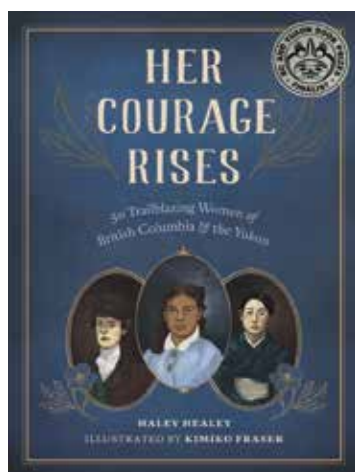
Books showcase diverse, trailblazing women of BC and Yukon

By Haley Healey, school counsellor and author, Nanaimo

Teacher guides
are available
for the
author's books
on Kimiko
Murakami and
Lilian Bland.

www.heritagehouse.ca
www.haleyhealey.com

WOMEN OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON have always been trailblazers, but they haven't always been included in the history books and stories. I'm a BCTF member, high school counsellor, and author of three recent books shining light on diverse and trailblazing women from BC and Yukon's past. I was first inspired to write about trailblazing women while touring Cougar Annie's garden near Tofino. I was inspired by Cougar Annie's resilience and resourcefulness and wondered if there were other amazing women like her whose stories I hadn't heard. As it turns out, there were. Researching and writing about these trailblazing women has been deeply inspiring. Suffragette and author Nellie McClung said, "People must know the past to understand the present and to face the future." I see books as an engaging way for students to learn about history and to be encouraged to pursue their own goals and dreams. Below are brief descriptions of my three books. Two of the books, Lilian Bland and Kimiko Murakami, have teacher guides that include discussion questions, activities, and tips for presenting sensitive historical topics to children. Teacher guides can be found at www.heritagehouse.ca or www.haleyhealey.com.



Her Courage Rises: 50 Trailblazing Women of British Columbia and the Yukon

Women in this book were diverse, daring, and blazed their own trails in life, sometimes literally. Much like women today, they kept going when things got tough and adapted when things changed. They were aviators, gold rushers, doctors, authors, and artists. They lived life in their own way. Some fell under the spell of Yukon, venturing to northern Canada for gold (Black miner Lucille Hunter), to work as a journalist (Faith Fenton), or to seek fortune and adventure (Nellie Cashman). Others were brave pioneers who farmed, hunted, fished, and supported their families during BC and Yukon's early days. Each story comes with a beautiful colour illustration by Kimiko Fraser, Victoria illustrator. *Her Courage Rises* is aimed for ages 12 and up and touches upon social studies topics such as residential schools and internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II.

Kimiko Murakami: A Japanese Canadian Pioneer

"Ganbaru" is a Japanese word that means to keep going during hard times and never give up. This picture book introduces young readers to Kimiko Murakami (1904–1997), a brave and determined woman whose life embodied the ganbaru spirit. Born in the village of Steveston, BC, and raised on Salt Spring Island, Kimiko was part of a long tradition of Japanese Canadian families who made their livings fishing and farming. During the Second World War, she was among the 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were sent to live in internment camps because they were seen as "enemy aliens." The camps were dirty and crowded, but worst of all, they robbed Japanese Canadians of their basic rights and freedoms. Following the war, Kimiko and her family were allowed to return to Salt Spring Island and had to rebuild their farm and their life from scratch. Through it all, Kimiko—a pioneer and survivor—never lost hope. Illustrated by Kimiko Fraser, this book is aimed at elementary school aged children.



Lilian Bland: An Amazing Aviatix

Ever since she was a little girl, Lilian Bland (1878–1971) wanted to fly. She loved to watch black gulls soaring through the sky near her England home, and she was fascinated by the mechanics of flight. However, airplanes were still very new when she was growing up, and those who did fly were usually men. Lilian would not give up. When she could not find anyone to teach her to fly, she took matters into her own hands. She designed and built her own plane, and after many tries, she finally got it to fly. This delightful picture book celebrates the life of Lilian Bland, remembered both in England and in her adopted home of Quatsino Sound, on Vancouver Island, for her many achievements—especially her ground-breaking achievements in aviation. This book is also illustrated by Kimiko Fraser and is aimed at elementary school aged children. •





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BY ASHLEY COOK

GRADES
K-7

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

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Social Awareness and Responsibility

THEMES: Indigenous Culture, Tradition, and Identity

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STILL FALLING
BY RACHEL ABERLE

GRADES
8+

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Communicating | Creative Thinking
Positive Personal Identity

THEMES: Mental Health, Creative Expression,
Asking for Help

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FOR NOW
By Scott Button

GRADES
8+

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Awareness and Responsibility | Personal Awareness
and Responsibility | Positive Personal and
Cultural Identity | Communicating

THEMES: LGBTQ+, Healthy Relationships, Discrimination

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Green Thumb's offices are located on the traditional, ancestral and
unceded territory of the x'mwexw'ayam (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh
(Squamish), and səl̓wə'təl (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As a touring
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Illustrations by Grace Salisbury

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BRING YOUR ADVENTURES TO THE CLASSROOM

Read about teacher Karina New's Antarctic adventure and how she shared it with students and the school community on pages 24-27. Photo and art by Karina New.