BC Teachers' Federation

May/June 2021

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Joshua Berson Photography

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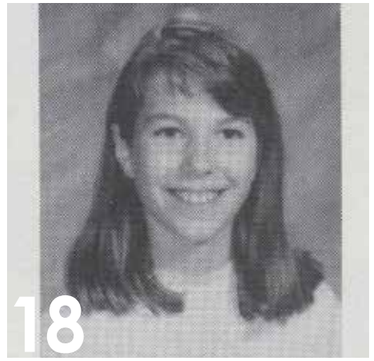

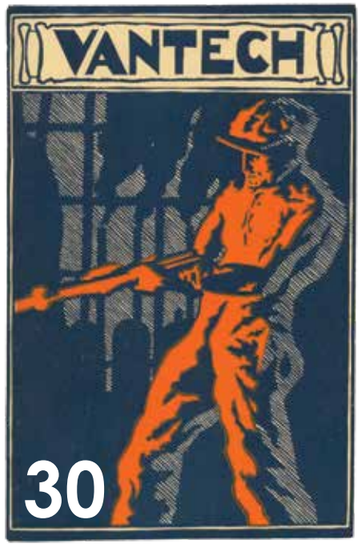

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CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association
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Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? Know of a project at your school or in your local you want to share with colleagues? Then consider writing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

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

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Contact us
BC Teachers' Federation
Toll free 1-800-663-9163
Email *teachermag@bctf.ca*
Web *bctf.ca/newsmag*
Editor Sunjum Jhaj, *sjhaj@bctf.ca*
Assistant Editor/Designer Sarah Young
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Teri Mooring, BCTF President

What a year…

The 2020–21 school year truly has been one for the books. Teachers throughout BC have faced unprecedented challenges and stress loads as we have navigated this pandemic together. You have carried more responsibility than ever before—and done so without many of the tools necessary to protect yourselves, your students, and your colleagues.

I am immensely proud of both the advocacy and resilience I have seen from colleagues throughout the province. Together, we have fought for stronger health and safety measures, and raised widespread public awareness of the conditions teachers and students face in our classrooms every day. I also want to acknowledge the locals for their tireless work advocating for members through public and political channels, as well as the Labour Relations Board troubleshooting process.

We continue this important advocacy work every day—at the individual, local, and Federation levels—fighting for safer classrooms, data transparency, portable ventilation systems, and more.

With teacher vaccination programs well underway and mere weeks left in this school year, we are shifting our focus to meaningful enhancements to safety measures for the next school year. Though we are encouraged that the vaccine roll-out for teachers is ongoing, we recognize that not all students entering our classrooms in September will be vaccinated. As such, the K–12 Steering Committee is now meeting twice each week, with the second meeting dedicated exclusively to planning for a safe return to schools in September.

I applaud each and every one of you for your strength and tenacity over the past year. You have adapted to the ever-changing conditions, while continuing to centre the needs of your students; and through this you have reaffirmed the integral role of public education in our society and our economy.

I hope you all find time for rest and rejuvenation with your loved ones over the summer. You deserve it!

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your commitment to BC students.

Stay safe and take care,

Teri Mooring
BCTF President

MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

Quelle année…

L'année scolaire 2020-2021 restera assurément dans les annales. Les enseignant(e)s à travers la C.-B. ont dû faire face à des défis et des charges de stress sans précédent alors que nous traversions ensemble cette pandémie. Vous avez assumé plus de responsabilités que jamais auparavant et ce, sans disposer des outils nécessaires pour protéger vos élèves, vos collègues et vous protéger vous-même.

Je suis immensément fière du plaidoyer et de la résilience dont mes collègues ont fait preuve dans l'ensemble de la province. Ensemble, nous nous sommes battus pour des mesures de santé et de sécurité plus rigoureuses et nous avons sensibilisé la population aux conditions auxquelles les enseignant(e)s et les élèves sont confronté(e)s chaque jour dans nos salles de classe. Je tiens également à souligner le travail inlassable des sections locales qui défendent les intérêts des membres par l'entremise de voies publics et politiques, ainsi que par le processus de résolution de problèmes de la Commission des relations de travail.

Nous poursuivons cet important travail de défense des droits au niveau individuel, local et au niveau de la Fédération tous les jours. Nous luttons pour des salles de classes plus sécuritaires, pour la transparence des données, pour des systèmes de ventilation portatifs et plus encore.

Étant donné que les programmes de vaccination des enseignant(e)s vont bon train et qu'il ne reste que quelques semaines à cette année scolaire, nous réorientons nos efforts vers des améliorations significatives des mesures de sécurité pour la prochaine année scolaire. Bien que nous soyons encouragé(e)s par le fait que le déploiement du vaccin pour les enseignant(e)s soit en cours, nous reconnaissons que les élèves qui entreront dans nos classes en septembre ne seront pas encore vacciné(e)s. Par conséquent, le Comité directeur de la maternelle à la 12e année se réunit maintenant deux fois par semaine et la deuxième réunion est consacrée exclusivement à la planification d'un retour en classe sécuritaire en septembre.

J'applaudis chacun(e) d'entre vous pour votre force et votre ténacité au cours de la dernière année. Vous vous êtes adapté(e)s aux conditions toujours changeantes tout en continuant de placer les besoins de vos élèves au centre de votre travail. De plus, à travers cela, vous avez réaffirmé le rôle intégral de l'éducation publique à l'intérieur de notre société et de notre économie.

J'espère que vous trouverez du temps pour vous reposer et vous ressourcer avec vos proches pendant l'été. Vous le méritez!

Du plus profond de mon cœur, je vous remercie pour votre engagement envers les élèves de la Colombie-Britannique.

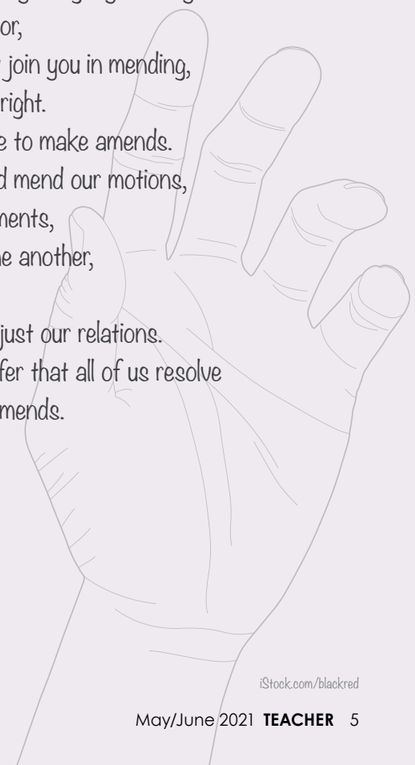
Soyez prudent(e) et prenez soin de vous,

Teri Mooring
Présidente de la FECB

On attending a union annual general meeting

by Jamie Hudson, teacher, Richmond

Thank you, chair.
I would like to make an amendment,
for what is it to amend if not
to mend?
to heal?
to join together in medicine?
to mend and make right?
I bring forth this amendment.
I offer it up to you as
evidence that I am trying to do the work
of healing myself,
to sit patiently in this chair,
to do the slow work of mending
my own consciousness,
so bruised and mangled by our collective history,
so that I may bring myself to you here
on this floor,
that I may join you in mending,
in making right.
I would like to make amends.
If we could mend our motions,
our movements,
toward one another,
to amend,
to render just our relations.
I would offer that all of us resolve
to make amends.



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New *BCTF.ca*

THE 2021–22 school year will be our first with the new *BCTF.ca* website. We are building a new website as a digital service that supports, engages, and informs members, parents, and the public. We are making many improvements, which means that the new *BCTF.ca* will look a lot different than it has in the past.

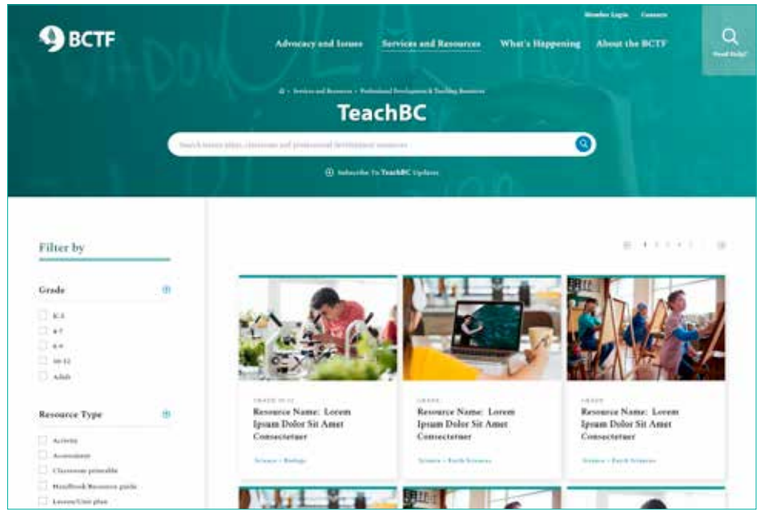
Here are some mock-ups of things we can look forward to. Photos and text in the mock-ups are just for illustration—the final website content, including navigation, may differ.

Simplified structure with more up-to-date content

We are making it easier to see what is happening at the BCTF since you last visited. The What's Happening section shows you everything that is new without having to check each section of the website for changes.

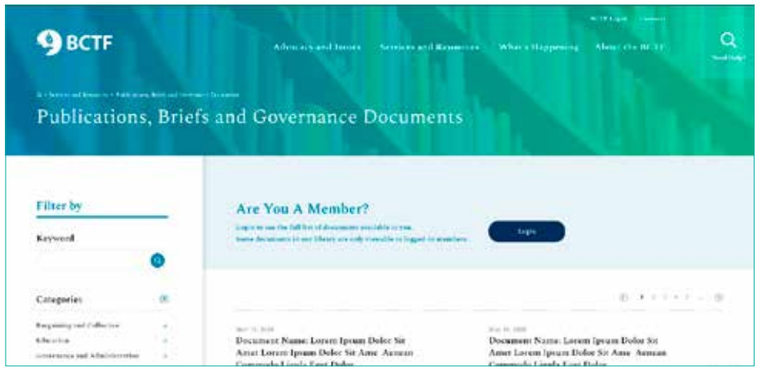
Easier login

We've overhauled the process to login to the website. In the future you will be able to login using your personal email address or Member ID, whichever is easier for you.



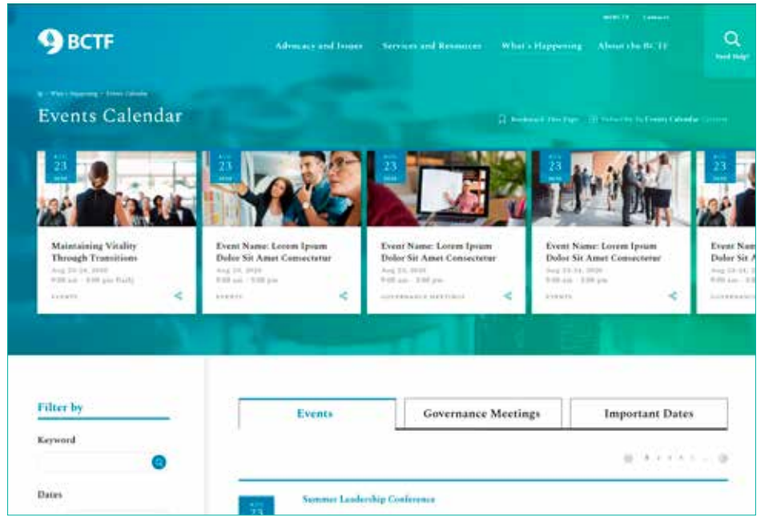
Teaching resources

We've built free teaching resources into the website and redesigned TeachBC, so it is easier to see everything that is available to you as a BCTF member.



Centralized directory of services and forms

We've created a centralized directory of everything you can do with the BCTF. In addition to putting forms in once place, every form has instructions on who it is for, how to use it, and who to send it to.



All event information, all in one place

We've built a custom event tool that allows you to see featured BCTF events as well as professional development events you might be interested in. All information about an event, including the agenda, registration, and event documents are in one place, so you don't have to jump around the website or your email to find event details.

Q&A: How did you connect with your MLA?

BCTF members share their lobbying experiences and knowledge

How did you arrange your meeting with your MLA, and what preparations did you make when it was confirmed?

Stephen Price, Political Action Contact, West Vancouver
MLAs: Karin Kirkpatrick, Jordan Sturdy (both BC Liberals)
We reached out to the MLA offices via the information on their website. We contacted both MLAs whose ridings overlap our school district to meet together, because they are both BC Liberals. We gave them parameters for the times we were available and asked them to suggest two dates that fit from which we would choose. Because of COVID, obviously everything was by video conference.

The two political action contacts in our district met for a walk and set priorities for the meeting. We knew that the Legislature was opening with a budget coming up soon, so we asked ourselves, "In what way can these MLAs apply pressure on our behalf? What are the useful areas where we will potentially be in agreement with BC Liberals about how government should proceed? What are the sorts of questions we'd want to see opposition MLAs asking to government?"

We also looked up the MLAs' biographies: what did they do before politics, and what are they passionate about? How can we link their interests to our priorities?

Glen Gough, Local President, Fort Nelson
MLA: Dan Davies (BC Liberal)
I used the BCTF email campaign soon after the election to reach out to our MLA to congratulate him. The letter highlighted the general BCTF concerns for education and I added some specific concerns relevant to our local.

It was actually our MLA's local office that contacted me to ask if I wanted an in-person meeting the next time he was in town. Of course, I said yes. To prepare I reviewed the letter I had sent and made a list of provincial and local priorities.

Sarah Wethered, Local President, New Westminster
MLAs: Jennifer Whiteside, Aman Singh (both BC NDP)
I sent a letter to both MLAs upon their election and followed up with two emails asking for a meeting. I eventually received an email from Jennifer Whiteside's ministerial assistant to set a date and time when we could meet with her and our other MLA, Aman Singh. When it was confirmed, I solicited questions from my executive committee as well as a couple of other local presidents. My two vice-presidents and I met for an afternoon to narrow down the questions to approximately six different topics.

What were the positive aspects of the meeting, and what follow-up actions were agreed upon?

Stephen Price: The MLAs were cordial and listened attentively, allowing us to take the lead on the agenda. We focused on COVID-related issues this time around.

1. Gaining support for mask mandates. They were not aware that public health had only mandated masks until April 19, not June 30. We explained how, as educators, we know that on-again, off-again rules are hard for kids to succeed at.

2. Data transparency. We asked for better, more effective data sharing. This is an area where the BC Liberals were already criticizing the NDP, so we just underlined the need for data.

3. Funding. The budget was coming up and we wanted to point out a few targeted requests. We focused on mental health, especially funding for school psychologists and counsellors. This was a priority because Karin Kirkpatrick is the Critic for Children, Family Development and Childcare, so this is squarely in her portfolio. We also focused on bridge funding for international student funding losses. Both MLAs asked for more detail so they could speak to this in budget committee meetings.

These are not big-ticket items, but they are areas where we could see movement in the next few months and where an opposition critic could help us make progress.

Glen Gough: The meeting was very positive. I felt well listened to and received honest answers that had actual details, not just vague political double-speak. He did say specifically he would speak out in support for some of our issues and would pass all we discussed on to the Education Critic in the Liberal party.

As for follow up, we exchanged contact info and plan to set up a face-to-face meeting each time he visits our community. I sent a follow-up letter to thank him and confirm his position on items and information he provided, giving him an opportunity to correct any "misunderstanding" I may have heard. To date he has not corrected anything.

Sarah Wethered: Minister Whiteside was able to hear from a Grade 7–8 teacher (our second VP) who could bring real-life examples of what masking was like in a classroom and how students really felt about writing the FSA tests. MLA Aman Singh shared the positive news that the long-waited bus route to Queensborough would start in September. No follow-up actions were agreed upon, but the possibility of a further meeting was not ruled out.

What advice can you offer to members who want to reach out to their MLAs, and is there anything you would have done differently?

Stephen Price: Despite our long-standing differences with the BC Liberals, it's worthwhile to share credible, informed information from the frontlines of education instead of the usual "everything's great" they get from district management or board chairs.

Even though changes sometimes take a lot of advocacy and patient pressure, it's helpful to consider a longer perspective. My recently retired mom's first classrooms in the 1970s had 44 students, no support for kids with additional needs, and few resources. Amidst all our ups and downs, our efforts matter, even if we can only see that when we look at the arc of decades.

Glen Gough: The advice I would offer to members is to just do it. MLAs are ordinary people doing a specific job for the people of BC. They hold no status above any other person. They work for us: our taxes pay their wages, our votes give them their job. We have the right to access them and discuss the workings of the province, especially on topics where we are experts (i.e., education).

One thing I'd suggest if communicating with your MLA is to actually mail a hard-copy letter. My MLA told me (as did his local assistant) that he doesn't always absorb all that is written in emails because he receives so many, though he does read them all. Since a hard-copy letter is, in today's world, a rarity, it was noticed and acted on more seriously.

Sarah Wethered: Be persistent, especially if your MLA is a cabinet minister. Know exactly what you want to discuss prior to the meeting, as the meeting time goes by so quickly. We only got to speak to three of our six topics. I thought 45 minutes would be lots of time, but next time, I would ask for an hour.

Interested in connecting with your MLA?

Direct personal contact is the best way to persuade decision-makers—including MLAs. You can make an appointment to meet with your MLA by contacting their constituency office.

Plan for the meeting

- ✓ Determine specific goals for the meeting: persuading an MLA to support your local's position(s), demonstrating your support for them, gathering information, confirming a yes or no vote on legislation, asking supportive MLAs to champion your issues, etc. (If you are meeting on behalf of your local, make sure that you prepare for the meeting with input from the local president or other officers, and stick to approved topics and strategies.)
- ✓ Figure out where the individual/party stands on the issue you wish to discuss. The more information you have going into the meeting, the better.
- ✓ Decide who should be at the meeting and assign roles depending on circumstances. If possible, there should at least be one spokesperson and one recorder, if the MLA's office is okay with that. The recorder takes notes on what happened and what both parties promised to do (follow-up actions.) You can meet individually and keep your own notes, but that's less ideal. If you have a larger delegation there can be additional roles, as desired:
  - Meeting leader: does introductions, runs meeting, keeps track of time and the agenda.
  - Storyteller: shares a compelling story about a relevant personal experience as a teacher.
  - Delivery person: in charge of leaving behind fact sheets, petitions, letters, etc.
  - Pitch person: makes the "ask."

During the meeting

- ✓ Know your facts and stick to them. A short, well-prepared presentation is more impressive and effective than a long, rambling one.
- ✓ Concentrate on solutions rather than problems. Offer information that may help the MLA make the desired decisions.
- ✓ Personal stories are the most powerful tools we have.
- ✓ Give the MLA a chance to speak.
- ✓ Don't prolong the meeting beyond the allotted time unless you are invited to continue the discussion.
- ✓ Ask about follow up—who should you talk to? Then be sure to follow up with this individual.
- ✓ Leave a brief, easily readable summary of your positions when you leave. It can be a previously prepared document, but one-page maximum with bullet points.

After the meeting

- ✓ Send a thank you letter or email after the meeting with an offer to meet again in the future. Offer to provide more information as needed.
- ✓ Try to establish regular contact with your MLA following the meeting. This could be informal meetings or phone conversations.

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Finding the child behind the mask

By Blaine Mandin, teacher, Surrey

IT IS THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST. You are excited about your new class and the start of another year. You begin to have the usual nightmares about being late on the first day or showing up in your underwear. You wake up on that first Tuesday after a night of fitful sleep, put on your "back to school clothes," and think about all the things you want to accomplish. After 10 minutes with your new students you witness kids rolling on the ground, hiding under tables, poking and punching each other, and talking non-stop after several requests to be quiet. You quickly realize it is going to be one of those years. You wonder if you can make it.

I had one of these challenging classes a few years ago and often went home exhausted. Even with almost 30 years of teaching experience, I wondered if I was up to the task, but quickly realized that the best thing I could do for many of my students was give them a safe, secure, and loving place to be for six hours a day.

There was one boy in particular. We will call him Luke. You know the one! Angry. Sullen. Pushing the limits to see what he can get away with. Mean with his words. Trying to push you away, lashing out before he gets hurt and is rejected like he has been so many times before. We also saw glimpses of the bright, funny, and sensitive boy behind the mask. At first, we rarely saw him, but we knew he was in there begging for someone to believe in him, to love him. Instead of getting into a power struggle or getting angry, we simply tried to love and accept him unconditionally. It was hard at times. We still set boundaries and let him know that there would be consequences when he stepped over the line, but that we still loved him.

Evan Leek, one of BC's amazing and indispensable educational assistants, was assigned to my class in late fall and connected instantly with Luke. The curriculum became secondary because we realized that what this boy needed most had nothing to do with whether he could convert fractions or knew the name of Canada's first Prime Minister. We started to notice a big difference in Luke's behaviour just after spring break. He was smiling and laughing more, getting work done, and sharing ideas during class discussions. The boy behind the mask even started to call out other kids for behaviour he had been exhibiting earlier in the year. The child we knew in September became a distant memory.

Evan then overheard something I hope everyone who works in education gets to hear at least once in their career.

Another boy in the class said, "This school hasn't taught me anything. I haven't learned one thing this year."

Luke responded, "Yeah, well, because of this school and this class, I learned how to be happy."

Luke's response still gives me goosebumps even as I write this.

No child wakes up in the morning wanting to get into trouble, frustrate their teachers, or not understand the latest math concept. I have learned that we need to look beyond the behaviour to see the child behind the mask. What is really going on? Who are they? What is the most important thing this child needs to learn? Years from now your students are not going to remember that amazing science experiment or the math lesson when you were firing on all cylinders. They are going to remember how you made them feel. They are going to remember how you inspired them to love reading, or fitness, or music, or learning in general. They are going to remember how you dressed up in the weird costume on Halloween, or sang that silly song at an assembly, or how you remembered their birthday and let them sit in your teacher chair. Or, maybe they will remember you for helping them realize that they can safely be themselves and that happiness is a possibility.

The Violence Is Preventable program for BC schools

By Nicky Bowman, Children and Youth Services Co-ordinator, BC Society of Transition Houses

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, it was estimated that three to five students in every Canadian classroom experienced violence at home.[1] While there is no definitive statistic on the number of students experiencing violence at home during the pandemic, the BC Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE) programs have reported more instances of children experiencing violence directly during COVID-19. We also know the pandemic has exacerbated domestic violence globally and in Canada.[2]

Increased instances of violence and the stresses of the pandemic have taken a toll on young people's mental health: the Kids Help Phone received over 4 million contacts in 2020, compared with 1.9 million in 2019.[3] Reaching children and youth is crucial at this time, yet restricted access to schools makes it harder to stay connected to vulnerable students.

PEACE counsellors understand the importance of reaching vulnerable children and youth. The BC PEACE programs offer free confidential support to children and youth aged 3–18 with experiences of violence. The program is funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and operates in 86 locations across BC.

One way PEACE counsellors can connect with students and schools is through the Violence Is Preventable (VIP) program. Through VIP, PEACE counsellors deliver free school-based presentations covering topics including healthy relationships, self-esteem, emotional expression, consent, online safety, and violence against women and safety planning. Contact information is provided so that students can self-refer or be referred by a teacher or school counsellor to the PEACE program for further support.

The VIP curriculum aligns with the Ministry of Education's curricular competencies and is tailored to different grades. Presentations can be adapted to meet schools' needs.

"This presentation is a must for my Grade 7 class."
– Educator

VIP has the capacity to reach a large number of students each year. In 2018–19, PEACE programs reached 8,095 students and 1,047 adults through VIP presentations, resulting in 172 referrals to PEACE program services. Last year, the abrupt school closures in March affected program delivery, yet 6,862 students and 935 adults still received this information, resulting in 140 referrals. This year PEACE counsellors have pivoted to offer VIP and PEACE program services both in-person and remotely.

Violence prevention initiatives are crucial to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of violence. Children who experience violence are more likely to have violent intimate relationships as adults, either as victims or perpetrators,[4] and feedback from students highlights the impact and the need for the VIP program.

"I learned that what I do may be abusive, and I am going to change that." – Student

Educators are not alone in helping children and youth experiencing violence. Schools are well positioned to access a generation of youth and, with VIP's help, break the cycle of violence. To find a VIP or PEACE program near you, visit *www.bcsth.ca/support*.

You can watch a two-minute video about the VIP program here: *tinyurl.com/aayumuhc*

1 Jaffe, P., Wolfe, D., & Wilson, S.K; *Children of battered women*; Sage; Thousand Oaks, CA; (1990).
2 Bradley, N.L. et al. (2020); "Health care practitioners' responsibility to address intimate partner violence related to the COVID-19 pandemic"; *CMAJ*, 192 (22); *www.cmaj.ca/content/192/22/E609.short*.
3 Yousif, N., "4 million cries for help: Calls to Kids Help Phone soar amid pandemic," Toronto Star, 2021, *www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/12/13/4-million-cries-for-help-calls-to-kids-help-phone-soar-amid-pandemic.html*.
4 Unicef, "Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children," *www.unicef.org/media/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf*.

Collaboration and project-based learning: A silver lining to a pandemic year

By Jason Lui, teacher, Langley

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TEACHING DURING THIS PANDEMIC has taken its toll. It's been difficult to find the silver lining, but one of the positives I've experienced is collaboration with my colleagues on project-based learning (PBL).

As an elementary English language learner (ELL) teacher, I work in a non-enrolling position. Before COVID-19, I was primarily providing tier two and tier three support under the Response to Intervention framework. This means I mostly worked with small groups and individual students in providing specific literacy support.

When COVID-19 struck, many of our educational systems had to pivot in accordance with new and necessary safety protocols. I can no longer invite students from different classrooms to work in small group settings. Nor can I cross cohorts and work with students individually. My familiarity with the pre-COVID approach of providing tier two and tier three ELL support was no longer feasible. Hence, the idea of co-planning and co-teaching in the classroom as tier one support (support for the entire class) came to the forefront.

This tier one approach allowed me to work with four different divisions of Grade 4 and 5 students. I was able to work with the specific ELL students on my caseload while respecting COVID-19 safety protocols. Even better, I got a chance to co-plan and co-teach with four fantastic homeroom (enrolling) teachers. At the start of the school year, I met with each teacher individually and proposed a PBL approach that would help all students develop their language and literacy skills.

My journey with PBL started in August 2017 when I reluctantly gave up one full week of summer break to participate in a PBL course. That week turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It invited me to more fully understand PBL and create a PBL unit that I could use immediately.

The course provided guiding questions to address while planning a PBL unit. By integrating these guiding questions into the planning stage, PBL can better enrich and empower student learning. Here are some examples of guiding questions:

- What "big ideas" do you want students to deeply understand?
- Which competencies (core and curricular) will students practise?
- How will students have choice and voice?
- What are the final products students will produce?
- Who will be the audience for the presentation?
- How will the PBL be launched in order to hook the students?
- How can it be authentic and contribute to the community?

With this new knowledge, I created a project called the Nicomekl News. The Nicomekl News is a year-long passion project that integrates ELL instruction with other subject areas. As a final product, students create online passion stories that include images and narrations.

Nicomekl News is far from being a perfect PBL unit, and I constantly look for ways to re-adjust and make it better. Each of the four teachers I am working with this year has helped grow and improve this unit. For example, in one class, we tied in the teachers' lessons on inference. These lessons were useful for students at the research and script-writing stages of the project. In another class, we co-taught lessons on paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism. Overall, teacher collaboration has been vital in improving and progressing this PBL unit.

Most students in all four divisions have been very motivated throughout this project. That being said, I am grateful for our flexible timeline on this project—it allows time to navigate with those learners who feel unmotivated or need additional supports. In other words, the span of the year gives time to formatively assess and intentionally celebrate the short-term student successes along the way. For example, when a vulnerable learner feels pessimistic about participating at all but, through PBL, becomes encouraged to complete their work.

Over the next several weeks, as we wrap up the school year, students' final projects will be uploaded to the Nicomekl News website (*bit.ly/nicomeklnews*). With a solid system and structure in place for Nicomekl News, my hope is that this PBL unit will continue to inspire and encourage students, staff, and parents in future years, even as we move into a new normal in a post-COVID world. The growth of this unit, and the collaboration that helped get it to where it is today, was a highlight in a year filled with challenges.

Excerpts from the pandemic diary of a health and safety officer

By Toni Grewal, BCTF Health and Safety Officer

February 5, 2020: Two cases of COVID-19 reported in BC

This was the last time I was at YVR. I recall seeing a few travellers and even staff at departure gates wearing disposable masks. Just a usual weekday morning, the airport was awake but not bustling. I got on the Skytrain and went straight to the office. At that moment, I had no idea how COVID-19 would transform our work, our lives, and the world.

March 11, 2020: WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic

The whole world had been anticipating the World Health Organization's (WHO) announcement for days, holding our collective breath. After the exhale, the uncertainty and fear started to set in. What now? What next? I felt this sudden need to learn as much as I could, to become a pseudo-expert, an armchair epidemiologist. But even the omniscient internet was limited; the coronavirus was too novel to be easily characterized. Like others employed in health and safety, my work would be swiftly engulfed by the pandemic.

September 10, 2020: Schools reopen with students and staff on site

September was a blur of activity and anxiety. All the planning and preparation could not prevent the multitude of health and safety challenges that erupted in schools around the province. There were issues with ventilation, access to barriers, composition of cohorts, availability of masks, physical distancing, health and safety committees, and cleaning and disinfecting. Alas, schools are not factories, students are not robots, and teachers are not automatons. Teaching centres on communication, collaboration, and connection; all of which were jeopardized because of COVID-19. Even with the barrage of health and safety concerns surfacing in schools, our members worked diligently to support students; they laboured tirelessly as union reps, leaders, and committee members; they advocated fiercely for health and safety prevention.

November 13, 2020: Surrey has the most COVID-19 cases

As a resident of the Fraser Health region, my reaction to this statistic was visceral. In the fall there had been school exposures, which led to school closures and members having to self-isolate. The daily case count was increasing, hospitalizations were not decreasing. Tragically, COVID-19 continued to claim lives in our province and across the country. For me there was no diversion or distraction to shake of the disconnectedness, to stave off the November doldrums. Speaking with members on the phone, I would get a glimpse of how they managed to stay safe, maintain physical distancing while still teaching the diverse learners in their classrooms, gyms, computer labs, music rooms, etc. These conversations were often filled with a range of emotions. Their day-to-day work was different, harder, exhausting, and riddled with ongoing health and safety issues that could not be resolved quickly.

> "I remain in constant awe of our members: their patience, flexibility, creativity, resiliency—and their compassion."

January 14, 2021: The first variant case in BC

Although the arrival of this South African variant was unsurprising, it was still alarming because it was more infectious. How would the symptoms differ? Who would be more susceptible? Could you still contract it if you had already had COVID-19? So many questions with no ready-made answers. Also, I was hearing more and more from local presidents about how teaching during a pandemic was affecting the mental well-being of their members. There is no PPE for our mental health.

March 11, 2021: The one-year milestone in the COVID-19 pandemic

People have talked of and shared their "pandemic lessons." For me, the most valuable lesson has been the importance of compassion. I learned how to be compassionate from the two greatest influences in my life: my parents and my teachers. Our members have had to adjust, adapt, and work incredibly hard during this tumultuous school year. I remain in constant awe of our members: their patience, flexibility, creativity, resiliency—and their compassion. In the post-COVID world, our lives may not revert to the same "normal" we once knew. Nevertheless, with the arrival of vaccines, I believe we are slowly heading toward better days. Hope is in the air.

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TTOC Richard Warrington outside of Queen Mary Community School in North Vancouver. Sunjum Jhaj photo.

TTOC chronicles in the time of COVID

By Richard Warrington, teacher teaching on call, West Vancouver

It's 7:30 a.m. *As recommended, I've arrived extra early at the school. So early in fact, that no one else is here yet. Normally, the main door would be unlocked. But this is COVID time, and being a TTOC just got a whole lot more complicated. I try the phone number pasted on the window. No answer. Office staff aren't likely to be here until around 8:00 a.m. I wait, hoping to be able to get into the classroom soon. Luckily, the vice-principal comes out of her office and lets me in. I can get started—and there's a lot to do. First order of business is to complete the daily health check. This one is online. Then I'll need to find the office, sign in, and get directions to the staff and photocopy rooms.*

I'm in my fourth year of TTOC-ing for both SD45 West Vancouver and SD44 North Vancouver. What I love about this job is the constant variety. Normally, I cover a range of subjects in both elementary and secondary schools. I was used to getting a new "job" every day, but even that is different in the time of COVID. Much more often, it's week-long dispatches, covering teachers who need to self-isolate because of infection or the risk of potential transmission. This change in working conditions has also affected other TTOCs.

I met Melanie, a first-year TTOC, in a school staffroom while she was preparing for her first day on the job. As a new teacher, Melanie was eager to get experience but also to get her own class and classroom and begin to build her career. I spoke with her again recently:

"Although I am happy to gain the experience as a new teacher, I find it to be quite an overwhelming time to be entering the field. Not only do I find myself navigating typical new-teacher challenges (learning classroom management strategies, curriculum content, building student-teacher relationships) but the added layer of COVID safety protocols is a lot to absorb. Bouncing from school to school, I find that I am constantly trying to keep up because every school and every teacher has their own way of implementing safety protocols. In addition, TTOCs are exposed to more individuals than anyone else in the profession. I just kind of put my head down and do my job, but it's hard not to be hyper-aware of this. I had the opportunity to take a full-time contract in January and jumped on it. I was interested in the role, but to be honest, the idea of staying in one place with the same group of students seemed like a much safer option."

Both Melanie and I are concerned about our personal safety when considering which dispatches to accept. We both feel a sense of responsibility to help out where and when needed, but there is the added risk of exposure to a disease that for some is fatal and for many others carries serious consequences. TTOC-ing is never easy and the addition of health and safety protocols, which are vital for safety, makes moving through the day feel more like progress through molasses.

Everyone knows what a TTOC does, and many of us have been TTOCs at some point during our careers. Often, you arrive at a school you don't know to teach a class you've never seen before and a subject you may not be familiar with. None of this is new. It's part and parcel of the nomadic working conditions of a TTOC. What is new is the added risk imposed as a result of contact with multiple classes in the course of a day. Sometimes, dispatch information isn't clear on how many different classes are involved in an assignment. This makes it difficult to assess the level of risk when deciding to accept a dispatch.

Many TTOCs are isolated from school communities and don't have established professional networks to lean on. The pandemic has made even normal day-to-day socializing with colleagues much more difficult. Ever-present is concern for the safety of students, one's own personal health, and the risk to family at home.

The uncertainty and stress of these unusual times has taken a toll on many teachers, and perhaps TTOCs especially. During a recent BCTF meeting, attendees were treated to a guided tour of Starling Minds, the free online wellness program available to all BCTF members and their families (see below). It was like a spa visit, just virtually. I found it very calming and reaffirming. It felt like curling up with a warm cup of tea while listening to relaxing music and getting a sense that the universe is unfolding as it should, despite everything going on. I'm going to go back and listen again.

It's also very welcome news that the vaccine is finally on its way to all staff working in schools. Because of my age, I've already been able to get my first shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine. I will of course continue to observe all protocols for others' safety, but now, two weeks after my shot, I find the protection provided by the vaccine gives a huge sense of relief.

Despite the challenges of the past year, TTOCs worked hard every day to support and encourage students and provide effective teaching. As we all slowly move toward whatever our "new normal" is going to be, it's good to know there will always be great teachers ready to support students. A lot of the great teachers I know are TTOCs.

When I finally get to the classroom, I spend some time reading and re-reading the TTOC notes so I have an idea of how to do what the classroom teacher has planned. I write my name on the whiteboard next to the date and plan for the day. I make a note of where things are in the classroom and preread the class list, so I don't stumble on too many names, as well as any medical notes on individual students. I check the emergency procedures in place for COVID as well as those for fire, earthquake, and lockdown. I'm ready. And just in time too. The first bell has gone and I can hear students coming down the hall. The first few students come into the classroom, hang their coats and look over at the stranger sitting at their teacher's desk. Tentatively, a couple of students come closer.

"Are you going to be our teacher today?" asks one.

"Yes, yes I am," I say, smiling and looking forward to the day.

Starling Minds

This past year has been exceptionally challenging for many teachers across the province. The BCTF is committed to supporting members' mental well-being through our partnership with Starling Minds. This free online mental health and wellness toolkit is designed to help manage stress and prevent anxiety and depression.

To register for Starling Minds you will need the access code BCTFMEMBER and your BCTF Member ID. Visit *members.bctf.ca* and follow the prompts to access the BCTF Member Portal and find your Member ID. Then visit the link below to register for Starling Minds:

app.starlingminds.com/registration/bctf

Look up (and up and up)

By Brianna Romeo, teacher, Maple Ridge

I REMEMBER gathering with future teachers in September 2019, all of us vibrating with nervous energy as we started the first semester of our teaching certification program at Simon Fraser University. Did we have what it took to be good teachers? Did we know enough? Did we study enough? Would we be well liked in classrooms?

Of course, the winter of 2019 bled into what would become a fateful March 2020. All of a sudden, we were not only on the road to becoming teachers, but we were the only group to become teachers in the midst of a global pandemic. We had to pivot, and pivot fast, if we wanted to succeed in this chosen field. We took notes upon notes on how we were not to expect a normal year; we heard time and time again that we must be gentle with the kids and gentle with ourselves; we were eager students of a system that was spinning in a completely different direction than a year previous, with no one quite sure when or how the spinning would stop. For us new teachers, the ones who have been your TTOCs and filling your temporary leaves, this is the only normal we have ever known.

I started teaching in a temporary contract in January, masked up and all. Most days it feels surreal that someone would put me in charge of a classroom, the classic impostor syndrome of a new teacher, and one who is barely in their mid-twenties. Some days I feel like I'm exactly where I'm meant to be. I am trying to maintain an aura of confidence while simultaneously accepting that I need extra support as a new teacher. Seasoned teachers and support staff at my school have been so welcoming and kind to me, answering even the simplest questions and dropping in to see if there is anything I need to feel more confident. They are helpers, and I am grateful.

One thing I knew with certainty going into this job was that the kids had a pretty tough year. If there was anything I could do to make their learning fun and engaging, I was going to do my best to make it happen. I needed a reason to look up, and so did they. So, we did, quite literally.

I started a space unit with my Grade 3–4s in January, and we turned our attention to the stars. We learned of planets, stars, and the moon and its phases. We learned about the sun in all of its blazing glory. We learned about black holes (the most fascinating concept, not only for a nine-year-old, but for me too). Black History Month saw us diving into the story of NASA's computers and the Black women who contributed to making space flight possible. We turned on the live feed of the International Space Station, looking at impossibly cool footage of astronauts and Earth from outer space.

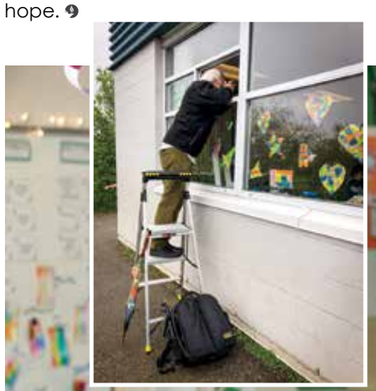
On the day the Mars rover Perseverance landed, we watched as NASA employees erupted in triumph, marvelling at the wonder that humans had successfully sent yet another rover to Mars. Even sweeter for me as a new teacher was hearing my students perfectly understand what a rover was, as well as its function and purpose. We built rovers out of cardboard that week, little contraptions that moved by a rubber-band pulley.

Studying the stars and planets was as much fun for me as it was for them. It changes my perspective, however minuscule, to be faced with the understanding of just how small our planet and its inhabitants are, and how resilient we are. Tracing constellations in the sky reminded me of the vast history our Earth has seen; humanity has time and time again undergone immense tragedy, and yet, we're still here, victorious and orbiting the sun.

We challenged ourselves to look up, and I found myself looking up, not just literally, but metaphorically as well.

The questions I have as a new teacher still follow me: do I know enough? Am I good enough? On the days where I am unsure, my goal is simply to create a community of helpers and hopefuls. To look up is to see others in need and to reach out a helping hand, just as my colleagues have done for me.

To look up is to remember that good things are coming. To look up is to hope.



PHOTOS
Josh Berson of Joshua Berson Photography (inset this page) went to new heights to capture images of Brianna and her class in Maple Ridge, while observing the district's COVID safety protocols.


Lilian


Kristina

"I didn't see it at the time, but that day was a gift. I got a little better at accepting criticism, a little better at questioning my assumptions... Lilian and I remained friends into adulthood."
– Kristina

The greatest gift was being held accountable for my racism

By Kristina L. Cockle, former student, Vancouver

MY VERY FIRST MEMORY of school is looking around the Kindergarten classroom, worrying that my skin was too dark, and considering the whitest girls to be the prettiest and most desirable as friends. As a five-year-old white child, I had already incorporated the idea of a racial hierarchy.

Carl Dennis, who is First Nations and joined our class in Grade 4, also remembers his first day of Kindergarten: "I tried to say, 'Hi' to a little red-headed girl, and she started screaming 'He's trying to touch me!'" The teacher scolded Carl and sent him to sit in the corner.

It was 1983 and we lived on the west side of Vancouver. Nobody talked to me about race or racism; I learned by observing. I observed that white students were assigned to the advanced reading groups and First Nations students from the Musqueam Reserve were placed in the beginner groups. I already believed the old lie that our value as human beings depends on our performance, and took the reading groups as evidence that Indigenous people performed poorly.

I observed that Musqueam students were frequently on "The Bench" in the principal's office and could be suspended or even expelled. In our annual school musicals, white students took the lead roles, singing, dancing, and acting out European stories on the stage. Musqueam students were mostly kept behind the scenes as stagehands. Whenever the grade above us was over-enrolled, a small handful of First Nations students was moved down to my class. Robin Garcia, who was moved down in Grade 5 and again in Grade 7, reflects, "It wasn't easy to voice what we went through being First Nations in elementary school. Nobody asked [what was going on in my life], they just thought I was a bad girl."

I looked around my school and did not see the racism. Instead, I saw evidence that white people were "normal" and that Indigenous people were "a problem," or at the least, dispensable.

One teacher challenged the narrative. Drawing from her own experience with racial injustice, our Grade 5 and 6 teacher called out racism and bullying whenever and wherever she caught a glimpse of it. When someone joked about a "Chinese home run" our teacher stopped the baseball game and started a discussion about racism. When I and other white girls teased Carl about his hygiene, she kept us after school for a life lesson that still haunts me.

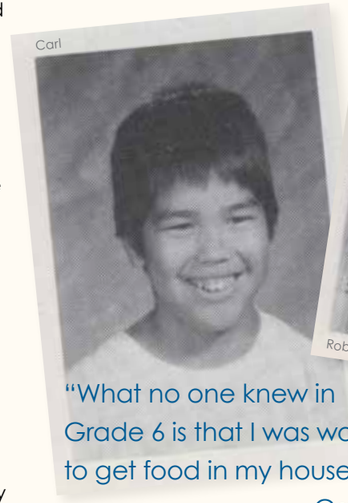
I liked Carl, and yet I had ignored and sacrificed his feelings because I was weak, conceited, and lacked empathy. My own insecurity was so strong that I chose not to see the vulnerable boy who only smiled. Carl reflects now, "What no one knew in Grade 6 is that I was working to get food in my house. Even before I moved to the res, I was cutting lawns to make food money at eight years old."

Our teacher may only have guessed at the details of Carl's situation, but it was clear that our cruelty cut her to the bone. Any adult could see the glaring inequalities between Carl and the middle-class white girls who were bullying him, but most pretended those inequalities didn't exist. The difference with this teacher was the depth of her empathy for Carl and her determination to name our racism, hold us accountable, and continue to love us. My awareness of my racism couldn't erase what I'd said to Carl—he still lives with that. But it did open a small crack in my worldview, so I could begin to climb out.

Another time we were writing poems about our classmates. I proudly wrote about Lilian Fan, the first student to join our class from an ESL program: "She's not the best in English, because she's Chinese, but her As in math will never cease." When we came back from music class, my heart sank. Our teacher had written a new version on the blackboard: "She's improving her English every day. When talking in 'News' she has plenty to say." The teacher asked the class if we saw anything problematic in my version. I didn't. As my classmates discussed stereotypes, my first reaction was to feel defensive. But I couldn't deny they made good points. I swallowed my pride. I didn't see it at the time, but that day was a gift. I got a little better at accepting criticism, a little better at questioning my assumptions. Maybe it was thanks to that intervention, in rhyme no less, that Lilian and I remained friends into adulthood.

When I reminded her about the poem a few weeks ago, Lilian said she remembered it, although at the time she had not understood what was wrong. Only as adults, looking back, were we able to see the full extent of what our teacher had done. For me, she exposed my racism and privilege, so I could start growing. She showed me that my actions and words can be racist and hurtful, regardless of my intentions. She made our classroom safer: not just for Lilian and other BIPOC students, or new students who would come from ESL programs, but for all of us. Her lines of poetry and her words every day embodied a growth mindset, before the term existed, and told us that we each had something wonderful to give the world.

We still live in a white supremacist Canada. In Alberta last year, a 15-year-old Black girl died by suicide after years of unaddressed racism at school. In Mississauga, in 2016, a six-year-old Black child was handcuffed at school by police. Across Canada, racist attacks on Asians have risen dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. And here in the Lower Mainland, when Carl is at work landscaping in 2021, people accuse him of coming to their neighbourhood to dump garbage or break into a house.


Carl


Robin

Photos provided by author

"What no one knew in Grade 6 is that I was working to get food in my house."
– Carl

"It wasn't easy to voice what we went through being First Nations in elementary school."
– Robin

As Lilian pointed out in discussing this article, well-meaning adults often aren't sure or don't know how to handle racism when it happens. Some may tolerate racism quietly, "and in effect teach kids to do the same by example, even while loving them to bits." What do white children learn when they watch or perpetrate racism and white adults say nothing? I'm still trying to unpick the racist threads in my own brain, decades later.

I believe one of the greatest gifts we can give children is the ability to challenge racism, every single day, starting well before Kindergarten. We don't expect anyone to learn to do math by having one class on Math Day or learn to read because they had a reading lesson on Literacy Day. We also cannot expect them to be able to undo centuries of racism, colonialism, and Indian Residential School trauma from a handful of lessons on an annual antibullying day, on Orange Shirt Day, and during Black History Month. It is not one or two conversations, but the accumulation of hundreds of small conversations and examples that form our values and change the course of our lives.

Robin says of our teacher, "She saved me, that's all I can say. Everyone would just see me as troubled, but she helped me with her kindness and I really took that and kept going. If it wasn't for her I don't think I'd be here at all—meaning I would have killed myself. I'm ever blessed that the Creator sent such a beautiful soul."

I, too, believe that our teacher saved me. She saved me by disrupting the stories I was telling myself and by holding me accountable for my racism. I am ever-blessed by her example of how to be an accomplice in dismantling white supremacy, an example that serves me on a personal level, in educating my own child, and in my career. The most important lessons were not from the curriculum, but from our beloved teacher interrupting the curriculum to insist that kindness and empathy are more important than academics. Imagine if we did that in every classroom, every camp, every team sport. As Robin told me, we can't go back, but, "Once our people are on the same boat, we'll have a safe sailing."

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This article was inspired by our teacher, Valerie Jerome, who continues to work against racism in BC schools. You can read Valerie's article "Is change in our future?" in the January/February 2021 issue of *Teacher* (pages 20–21).

The art and heart of land acknowledgments

By Carol Arnold, teacher, living and teaching on the shared and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the SENĆOŦEN- and Hul'qumi'num-speaking Peoples

SHORTLY AFTER MOVING from Edmonton to BC in 2002, and joining the BCTF, I attended my first zone meeting in Victoria. Jim Iker, then Executive Member-at-Large, took the podium and opened the session by acknowledging that we were meeting on the traditional, shared territories of the Songhees and the Esquimault Peoples. I don't remember all that he said, but he spoke with respect and sincerity, provoking in me an emotional response that was powerful and immediate—tears poured down my face and I could barely control the emotion that welled up in my throat. In my entire adult life, I had never heard a public acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands in a manner that made it clear the land still rightfully belonged to the Songhees and Esquimault First Nations. I am neither Songhees nor Esquimault, but I identify as Indigenous. Such public recognition extended beyond the territory in Victoria; it acknowledged me as well.

I have recounted this story to my friends and colleagues many times. One time, at a plenary session of Summer Leadership Conference, I stood and told the assembly about my first experience at that zone meeting and what impact that public acknowledgment had on me. To this day, I relive that emotional experience when recalling that day from 2002.

I shared this story in response to a discussion about who should have the role of providing a territorial acknowledgment and addressing why they are important.

In the early days of land acknowledgments, the practice in many school districts was to assign the acknowledgment role to the Indigenous person on staff. Often, it was the "visible" Indigenous person who was asked to provide the opening words. In addition, Indigenous staff members were also often asked to create a script that could be used by district personnel. The script would provide authentic and "correct" information about the local Indigenous Peoples. The script writer would not only help identify the Indigenous Peoples who should be acknowledged but also provide the correct combination of words: "shared," "unceded," "traditional," etc.

Over the past 20 years, the practice of acknowledgments has evolved through reflection, discussion, and the emergence of the Truth and Reconciliation movement. Thankfully, many voices and experiences have helped us come to some important realizations. First and foremost, the act of acknowledging colonization, theft of land, and the displacement of Indigenous Peoples is for white people, settlers, Europeans, and non-Indigenous members of any assembly.

People who hold authority within the group, the president, vice-president, member-at-large, principal, superintendent, trustee, MP, or MLA, are the most appropriate choice for land acknowledgments. They have the ability to create change, make gestures of Truth and Reconciliation, offer space, and make commitments that help raise up the Indigenous Peoples of the territory. Anishinaabe writer and educator Hayden King describes this as being "privileged."

In a 2019 CBC interview by Rosanna Deerchild, on the program *Unreserved*, Hayden King expressed how he regretted writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgment. King soon came to realize his good intentions had given way to a rote, tick-the-box set of practices that became meaningless. This pattern is present in BC too.

A script is something that is canned and thus lacks a personal, thoughtful, or meaningful connection to the purpose of the gathering it opens. Beyond that, scripts may even be incorrect, lacking research into who the actual Indigenous Peoples are that need to be recognized.

iStock.com/bpperry

King pointed out how institutions could use their position of privilege to create real change by taking actions that prove the sincerity of the gesture. In the case of Ryerson, they can go beyond the acknowledgment to offer to hire more Indigenous professors, create more spaces for Indigenous students, share some of their land, etc. In the CBC TV spoof by Baroness Von Sketch, the emptiness of an acknowledgment shared at the beginning of a theatre performance brilliantly shows how acknowledgments can become feel-good but sterile gestures.

As a teacher of the course BC First Peoples, I realized it was important to include students in discussions about meaningful acknowledgments. It created the opportunity to research the history of Indigenous Peoples where we live and learn as much of that history as possible. In so doing, students became knowledgeable practitioners of territorial acknowledgments. We came to understand the importance of introducing ourselves and who we are by recognizing our ancestors and where they came from. We also learned the difference between an acknowledgment and a welcome. The welcome is reserved for a recognized spokesperson of the local Indigenous Peoples. The acknowledgment, by comparison, is a public expression of our indebtedness to the original people of the land where we live. Now how do we repay that debt?

School assemblies (start of the school year, Remembrance Day, graduation, etc.) are opportunities for students to speak to other students, show leadership, and role-model reconciliation. Recognizing and admitting we are uninvited settlers on appropriated land is a necessary first step.

King suggests there are three component requirements for making the acknowledgment meaningful:

1. Research the local Indigenous Peoples, know their proper names and learn their history. Look into current events affecting local Indigenous Peoples: for example, is there an issue or struggle they are currently engaged in?

2. Use meaningful and personal words to acknowledge your relationship to the territory: for example, European settler, Indigenous visitor, immigrant settler.

3. Understand the obligation that comes with acknowledging a territory: what commitment can you make?

Twenty years ago, the BCTF was a leader in establishing the practice of land acknowledgments, paving a revolutionary path to thinking about the unceded territories of BC. With that came an understanding about the degree of change necessary to forge new relations between colonial-settler society and Indigenous Peoples.

As a union we have continued to educate and support multifaceted efforts to decolonize schools, the education system, and our own union. We have now firmly asserted support for Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Education, but we need to push forward to ensure acknowledgments are meaningful expressions that work toward action. This discussion rightfully belongs to us as teacher-allies. We need to revitalize our own practices starting now. We have many members who have been leaders throughout this process, sharing inspiring land acknowledgments, but too often we witness lackluster, scripted opening statements that take less than 30 seconds. We shouldn't accept lapsing into a habit empty of any real purpose. The value of these acknowledgments cannot be underestimated in opening and creating safe spaces for Indigenous students and teachers: you are seen.

As a union, we must continue to ask, how can the BCTF lead in eradicating barriers for Indigenous teachers and students? What can we do internally, and in terms of policy, to decolonize our own practices? What can we do to facilitate this reflective process? As individuals, we can take immediate action by asking ourselves, "How can we make our land acknowledgments meaningful statements that address our obligations to Indigenous Peoples across BC?"

REFERENCES

Baroness Von Sketch spoofing empty land acknowledgments: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlG17C19nYo*

Hayden King on CBC's *Unreserved*: *https://bit.ly/3tdpr2H*

IMAGE

Ch'ich'iyúy Elxwíkn' (the Twin Sisters), later named The Lions by colonial settlers, overlook the North Shore and City of Vancouver on the Traditional Territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish First Nations. Unpacking the erased Indigenous history of a local landmark is one way to deepen a land acknowledgment.

Growth not grades: Student-centred assessment

By Morgen MacDonald, teacher and Literacy Intervention Co-ordinator, Salmon Arm

COMMUNICATING student learning and assessing student progress is an ongoing inquiry for many teachers around the province. A group of teachers at Shuswap Middle School in Salmon Arm, BC, have spent the last two years participating in an inquiry project where we questioned, "How do we make reporting and assessment more meaningful to students and parents?" Our inquiry was guided by the Provincial Assessment Pilot goals, including flexible communication with parents, descriptive feedback, an emphasis on student reflection, and a shift away from letter grades to a strength-based proficiency scale.

In the first year of our inquiry, with support from school and district administration, we worked together to establish a framework for reporting. Since we were embarking on a journey to explore new ways of assessing and reporting, our group needed to select and create all the documents we would use throughout the year.

Strength-based proficiency scale

The first building block of our new assessment framework was the proficiency scale from the Provincial Assessment Pilot. Rather than the finality of letter grades, which say little about a student's ability or understanding of subject matter and focus more on achievement, the move to a proficiency scale (see below) allowed for a shift in mindset toward growth and improvement.

Each teacher was given a copy of the proficiency scale, which included kid-friendly language, to post in their classroom. From these anchor charts, students learned the meaning of each stage of the proficiency scale. This language was used throughout class time to ensure students and teachers were gaining confidence in this new way of thinking about assessment.

Students were encouraged to see themselves as ever-growing learners. Students gained confidence and comfort knowing that the focus was to see progress and growth. As the inquiry project progressed, we noticed students were better able to identify themselves on the scale and use proficiency language as a way of self-assessing. Overtime, we noticed a change in personal teaching practice, an increase in student engagement in assessment and learning, and a shift in how we, as teachers, viewed assessment.

Points of progress reports

Many of the teachers in the group felt pressured writing traditional report cards. These traditional report cards covered subjects in isolation from one another and were due by specific deadlines that did not always align with natural breaks in the learning cycle. To allow for more flexible reporting, we created points of progress reports. Points of progress reports give the opportunity to report on units of learning as they finish rather than two or three months later, as is sometimes the case with traditional report cards.

Strength-based proficiency scale

Emerging
The student demonstrates an initial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

Developing
The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

Extending
The student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

Proficient
The student demonstrates a complete understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.

Megan Weir, vice-principal and Grade 8 teacher, noted that descriptive feedback is a powerful way to affect student learning. Each point of progress report that is sent home includes:

- the big ideas that were covered in the unit.
- the core competencies the student practiced and developed throughout the unit.
- the curricular competencies the student has gained.
- specific feedback for the student related to engagement, behaviour, and progress.
- next steps and goals for future learning.

By setting out the reporting document in this way, we were able to give specific feedback about each student as it applied to the unit or project. We were also able to integrate units and report on cross-curricular progress in a single document. This allowed students and parents to more easily see how subjects are connected.

The group noted that this shift in reporting also resulted in a shift in planning style. Shannon Thio, Grade 6–7 teacher, stated, "I started using the point of progress report as a planning tool. By setting out what curricular competencies a unit would cover I was able to think purposefully about how to include these in my teaching." This backward design planning led to more purposeful use of language as teachers made sure to state the competencies and big ideas while the class worked through a unit.

Sue Whitehead, Grade 6–7 teacher, noted, "This project pulls together my favorite best practices: backward design, establishing common language for clarity, intrinsic goal-setting practices, and student ownership of learning." We noticed that students were increasingly aware of what they were learning and why. As a result, when students were asked to self-assess they could do so using language from the curricular competencies and the proficiency scale. Teachers in this project took different approaches to self-assessment: some used rubrics that mimicked the points of progress and used the proficiency scale, while others gave students their own copy of the points of progress to write on. It was great for the group to hear about the various and diverse ways teachers were using self-assessment to connect students to their learning and growth.

Quinn Olson, Grade 8 teacher, observed that, "This style of assessment and reporting resulted in students and teachers sharing the responsibility to monitor progress. The teacher is no longer the sole keeper of grades; we work together to move forward."

Personal tracking sheets for teachers

As teachers, we were still required to meet Ministry of Education reporting requirements throughout this inquiry project. We created personal tracking sheets to share with school administration to show that we met provincial reporting guidelines throughout the year.

The emotions of change

As with any change, this exploration of assessment and reporting has been a challenging one. Grade 8 teacher Ryan Kenny noted, "The project forced me to feel frustrated, overwhelmed, and, at times, fed up. It also allowed for tremendous camaraderie and shared learning with my colleagues." Ryan's feeling of frustration and overwhelm were shared by all of us as we worked to transform our reporting and teaching. Having access to the BCTF Teacher Inquiry Program (*bctf.ca/TeacherInquiry*) time allowed the group to work together, support each other, flesh out ideas, push and challenge one another, and come to a consensus about how and why reporting is important.

The group dug deep into what assessment means to teachers, parents, and students and gained a greater sense of confidence in both their assessment and teaching practices. Throughout the process, classes were aware of the learning taking place and changes in engagement were noted in all grade levels. Teachers watched as students became active participants in their learning and through self-assessment were able to identify areas of strength and stretch. The work done in this project has helped to inform and support some of the new reporting practices being implemented in School District 83, North Okanagan Shuswap, notably the use of personalized, meaningful feedback. As this worthwhile inquiry ends in May, the participating teachers at Shuswap Middle School hope that our new learning will continue to influence reporting practices in our classrooms, and that we can act as mentors for others as they embark on journeys to challenge traditional ways of assessing and reporting.

Protection not patchwork: A proactive approach to privacy

By Jason Woywada, Executive Director, BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

STUDENTS HAVE LONG BEEN on the frontlines of digital privacy intrusion. A growing number of questions and expressions of concern from parents and teachers prompted the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA), through BC Law Foundation funding and consultation with the BC Teachers' Federation, to research and publish *Troubling clouds: Gaps affecting privacy protection in British Columbia's K–12 education system* in the fall of 2020. As highlighted by author Matthew A.J. Levine:

Software applications and internet platforms are almost certainly going to be part of British Columbia's classrooms for the foreseeable future. Alongside the advantages associated with introducing students to the internet, increasing the use of software applications in the classroom also opens the door to privacy risks. Now is the time for all concerned stakeholders to think seriously about systematic solutions for managing these risks.

The report reveals that, whether online or in the classroom, student privacy is being sacrificed by a patchwork approach. Individual districts and, in some cases, schools are faced with the challenge of making informed decisions about privacy on an application-by-application basis, in a constantly changing environment. It, unfortunately, sets the system and people in it up for failure. The report makes clear recommendations and points to the creation of systematic solutions for managing the risks going forward.

Ideally, a forward-looking approach takes privacy seriously. It is proactive, creating informed decisions about new applications prior to implementation rather than responding to challenges arising from their use. Privacy by Design is one example of a made-in-Canada approach to information management recognized here and around the world. It is built around proactive vs. reactive measures and a variety of principles that include full functionality, so privacy is a positive sum and not a zero-sum game.

Truly progressive, innovative solutions consider privacy from the start and focus on the interests of the user. They safeguard the personal information of the teacher, the student, or the parent. They pre-identify and consider the collection, retention, and use of information with the risk of harm to the individual if their information is subject to a data breach. In an education context, there are legitimate concerns when the constant collection of personal information is a routine cost of learning. Normalizing ubiquitous surveillance affects personal privacy, and both affect human behaviour.

The stakes are high and the consequences affect everyone. Education should not come at the expense of teacher and student privacy. Recognizing the importance of privacy in the present and future, it is our hope that teachers, trustees, and administrators reach mutually agreed upon decisions that reflect guidance from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and lead to lasting protections and improvements. As discussed at the last BCTF Summer Leadership Conference, privacy issues should be on the agenda for guidance from the Ministry of Education, developed as policy at all levels, and considered in prospective collective bargaining.

An active and informed dialogue about privacy-affecting digital technologies is essential. The BCTF's Professional Issues Advisory Committee developed key questions and reviewed them with FIPA. They provide a great starting point for teachers when faced with new initiatives:

Purpose
- Is the use of the technological device/platform pedagogically necessary?
- What kinds of attitudes and behaviours related to privacy does the system normalize?
- For reporting: does the technological device/platform enhance communication with parents about student learning?
- For curriculum: does the technological device/platform enhance student learning in terms of curricular outcomes?

Professional autonomy
- Has the technological device/platform been mandated by your school/district?

Equity
- Is the use of the technological device/platform equitable?
- Is there a potential impact on your colleagues from your decision to use this technological device/platform?
- Are you aware of potential social and emotional impacts of the use of this technological device/platform on students?

Workload
- Is the workload associated with the use of this technological device/platform reasonable?

Access
- Is your school/district providing you with the necessary technological device?
- Is your school/district providing you with appropriate support to use the device (e.g., data, technical support, etc.)?

Privacy
- Has your school/district provided you with privacy training on this technological device/platform?
- Have you reviewed the privacy impact assessment of the technological device/platform?
- Are there potential long-term impacts on the student's digital privacy rights in using this technological device/platform?

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Concept mapping as a tool for meaningful learning

By Eugene Melnik, teacher, Coquitlam

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I came across a teaching methodology called concept mapping. What attracted me right away was how easily it allowed students to visualize whole lessons on a single piece of paper and analyze and evaluate concepts, ideas, and viewpoints. Concept mapping also proved to be a great tool for helping students build new knowledge upon the foundation of prior knowledge, create new meaningful learning experiences, and facilitate development of self-paced, individualized learning. With further research I learned that concept maps are widely applicable and can be used in many subject areas from K to 12 and beyond. As a result, I incorporated concept maps in all my secondary social studies courses.

To create a concept map, begin with a central topic or a question you want to investigate. Ask students to brainstorm ideas that are connected to the central theme, while keeping the hierarchical structure in mind. For example, if a topic is World War II, the next concept related hierarchically to it could be "participating nations," or "major battles of the war." After concepts are arranged hierarchically, students connect them with arrows and short, one- or two-word linking phrases. Together, concepts linked with a phrase should form a sentence that expresses a flow of ideas and propositions forming a narrative of the lesson. Ideally, students should be able to read these propositions as ready-to-use sentences that demonstrate their understanding of the material.

First, I introduce concept mapping as a note-taking strategy. I model the process on the board and ask students to follow my lead. Gradually, I allow students to modify the process to match their own style and supplement new concepts with their own examples. Once students feel comfortable constructing maps during note-taking, we expand the use of concept maps to analyze texts and video materials, form investigative questions, brainstorm ideas, and create alternative historical scenarios. We also use concept maps for pair-sharing activities, group projects and presentations, and for daily and end-of-unit learning assessment.

After students create an initial concept map of a topic, they review the map several times to go over the material and draw additional connections. Students verbally explain parts of their concept maps to a partner and, for homework, explain and teach a member of their household everything that was learned in the lesson, using their concept map as a guide. With verbal repetition, students can reinforce new knowledge and use their own words to explain information, activating multiple brain pathways to deepen comprehension of ideas and help move knowledge from short- to long-term memory. Through verbal pair-sharing, teaching, and guiding, students understand the "overall picture" of the lesson.

Concept mapping is an effective tool for promoting individualized learning. It provides flexibility around content, allows the use of supportive online technology, and offers an opportunity for self-paced learning. For example, when students read and analyze articles with the use of concept maps, they can interpret the content through personal experiences and meanings. Just like storytellers, they can choose to emphasize certain ideas and omit others, thus constructing their personal learning narrative. Furthermore, students can use online concept mapping software to enhance their maps through creative use of colour and style. Finally, concept mapping allows students to work on tasks at their own pace, which alleviates pressure and anxiety while improving confidence and motivation.

Additionally, concept mapping requires students to think critically and logically in searching for connections and relations between new ideas and existing knowledge. It places emphasis on fostering "higher-order thinking": the active, intelligent evaluation of ideas and information instead of passive memorization of disconnected facts. When students continuously brainstorm new concepts, decide on their proper position on the map, and search for all possible relationships with the neighbouring ideas, they create strong and meaningful links between new and prior knowledge.

The results of concept mapping with my students have been quite encouraging. Not only has their learning reflected a much deeper and more meaningful understanding of key ideas, but their writing and speaking have improved as well. Using concept mapping helped bridge gaps in students' understanding of important concepts, improve critical-thinking skills, and deepen analysis of new material. So, instead of clinging to disconnected facts, my students can now retain information longer, make strong logical inferences, and connect ideas to form a holistic narrative of what they learned.

I hope you can try this methodology with your students as well!

Connection, complexity, and care: Teaching history in our (post)pandemic world

Dr. Samantha Cutrara, history education strategist and author of *Transforming the Canadian History Classroom: Imagining a New "We"*

"We must teach history in ways that counter and challenge traditional understandings of the past and present."

THE PANDEMIC has shaped, and will continue to shape, education far beyond this moment. From embracing new teaching and learning methods, to figuring out what engagement looks like behind a computer screen or mask, we all had to adapt to a new educational landscape. This also includes bringing more of ourselves to the classrooms: our fears, our (inequitable) lives, our understanding of the world needing greater (or different) justice. This vulnerability can be scary, but it can also open up space to engage in teaching and learning differently.

In particular, in history education, I see the opportunity to centre the learner in a community-based exploration of the effects of history on our lives and the ways we interact in the world. This is not only about assessing historical evidence, but about exploring the messy experiences that don't always fit within the boundaries of traditional history. Our students know they are living through a historical moment that people will write about for decades. They're also aware of the parts of our past we need to face in order to work for greater justice. The time is ripe to build on this historical moment to teach and learn history meaningfully.

I define meaningful learning in history education as students engaging with history that has significance to their lives now and in the future, both inside and outside the classroom, and with interpretations of the past that align with students' sense of familial or community history, in and for the wider world. With this definition, I see meaningful learning in history education developed through a triad of connection, complexity, and care.

More information

To learn more about connection, complexity, and care in history education, check out Samantha's new book. A book club reading guide is available on her website. Learn more at ***www.SamanthaCutrara.com*.**

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Connection

I have yet to meet a teacher who doesn't see the value in connecting students to history. However, sometimes these connections are based in our expectations rather than students' realities. I remember wanting to teach a concept and thought I'd bring in "cool" music to start the class. But when I put on a Destiny's Child song, students looked confused—they had never heard of the song! I felt so old. Just because it was cool when I was a teen, doesn't mean it's cool now (in fact, it was the opposite!).

If I really wanted to prioritize connection in this class, I should have introduced the concept and asked students to come up with songs that they thought illustrated it. But I thought I knew what would connect to them, so I didn't think I had to ask them. I have come to define connection as historical content that links to students' prior knowledge and provides depth to their interests, identities, backgrounds, worldviews, and/or futures in ways that meet students where they are. Rather than say, "Here's the connection, trust me," connection in history education means that teachers set up conditions for students to engage with material in ways that can reveal students' prior knowledge.

I remember asking a disengaged student to tell me about her experiences at a heavy metal concert the night before, and then asking her if she saw any connections between her experience at the concert with the French Revolution, which we were studying at the time. She came up with such an interesting analytical take on revolutionary riots that I no longer can think of one without the other. The same happened when teaching about 1950s rock'n'roll in a Canadian history class. Students were able to draw on contemporary artists to talk about ongoing appropriation of Black cultures and music. In these classes, I hardly talked at all! I let students weave the connections between the past and the present. Connection, in this sense, is about making you, as the teacher, as much of a learner as your students; you are creating the conditions to learn about your students as they learn about history.

Complexity

Connection is closely tied with complexity. When we facilitate connections between students lived experiences and course materials, we have an opportunity to reflect on the complexities featured in these connections. For example, do these connections encompass complexities related to students' identities and experiences of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality?

Complexity in history education involves complex stories that highlight more critical understandings of the past. I like to think of this as what critical race theorists call "counterstories": stories that are counter to the mainstream; stories that inspire and uncover narratives of action, resilience, resistance, and hope. It is not just teaching stories of connection and then moving on, but letting those connections demonstrate the complexities of the stories and experiences from the past and present, and inviting students to learn these in active and meaningful ways.

For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made clear that although the inclusion of Indian Residential School histories in our curricula was an important Call to Action, these histories need to be included in ways that align with Indigenous worldviews and help develop ongoing relationships of reconciliation. In other words, teaching about residential schools without challenging a political system and individual attitudes that started the schools and allowed them to continue, doesn't actually answer the Call to Action. We must teach history in ways that counter and challenge traditional understandings of the past and present. We must teach history in complex ways. In avoiding the complexity of the past (or avoiding the material I think might be "difficult"), I would also avoid exploring with my students the ways the past shows up in the present—and this is a key element of history education.

Care

The third element of meaningful learning in history education is care. Care is foundational to the work we do. This year has forced us to care about more things, different things, and show our care in different ways, while also (I hope!) caring for ourselves.

But sometimes we can care in ways that are not beneficial for our students. Sometimes our care can look like connecting to students in one-dimensional ways or simplifying history to protect students from knowledge we determine is "difficult." These ways of caring work against what we often want to do in our classes. My definition of care involves the willingness and affective demeanour to invite connection and complexity of the past and present into your classroom in ways that develop a learning community. In a learning community, teachers and students actively work together to make sense of the difficult, messy, complex, and sometimes painful world around us. This engages in the study of the past, but also invites discussions about the present from the multiple perspectives of the people in your classroom.

Approaching history education with the values of connection, complexity, and care can help students develop an understanding of themselves as readers and writers (and artists and architects and influencers) of the world they live in. The space to grow and explore the world is especially important in the (post)pandemic landscape where many of our fears and inequities have been laid bare. So many teachers want to teach history meaningfully; this triad can be a guide to help make that so.

Culture through history: Getting to know *Nikkei* in Canada

By Carolyn Nakagawa, Education Program Developer, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

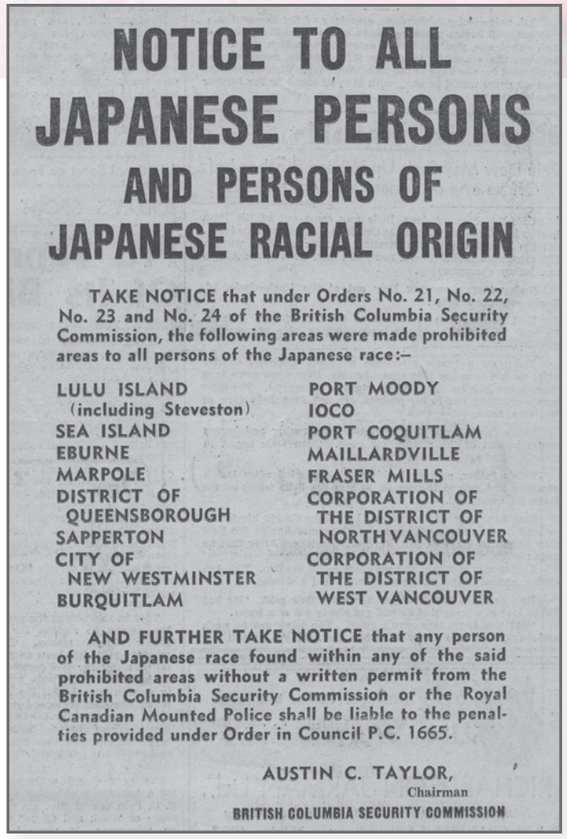
WHAT IS *NIKKEI*? This is usually the first thing I ask students who visit the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre on a field trip. While the students were often excited to be at the centre, and familiar with various aspects of Japanese culture, such as anime and martial arts, very few of them knew about the Japanese word that we use as our name.

Nikkei means "Japanese ancestry." It is a word that encompasses people all around the world who have Japanese heritage, but do not live in Japan. Many *Nikkei*, including myself, were born in other countries and have never been citizens of Japan, so to call us "Japanese" feels inaccurate. As the great-granddaughter of Japanese immigrants to Canada, I notice many cultural differences between myself and my Japanese-born friends and relatives. I carry a Canadian passport, and Canada is where I feel most at home. So, I identify as Japanese Canadian (where "Japanese" is an adjective adding detail to the national identity of "Canadian"), and as *Nikkei*—a cultural description that connects me with my Japanese ancestry.

Before we closed our facility for the safety of our community in March 2020, our museum exhibit on display was called *Nikkei*. It was a very tall order to represent the diversity of our community in a single gallery space. *Nikkei* in Canada, or Japanese Canadians, have a history dating back to the late 19th century, when the first immigrants from Japan arrived in Canada and began to build lives and raise families here. Relationships to Japanese culture and heritage evolve with every subsequent generation to be born in Canada: many in our community will identify themselves with terms like *Nisei* (second-generation), *Sansei* (third-generation), or *Yonsei* (fourth-generation) to indicate their distance from the most recent ancestor to emigrate from Japan (the *Issei*, or first generation).

In the *Nikkei* exhibit, it was very important to us to cover the long history of anti-Asian racism in Canada, including various types of legal discrimination that shaped our community's experiences before World War II. This discrimination culminated in the forced internment of 22,000 Japanese Canadians, most of them Canadian-born or naturalized Canadians, from 1942–1949.

We also wanted to highlight and celebrate the many ways connections to our Japanese culture have flourished in Canada. This includes the dedicated work of Japanese language teachers beginning in 1906 in Vancouver with the establishment of the Vancouver Japanese Language School. Long-time principal Tsutae Sato, his wife



NOTICE TO ALL JAPANESE PERSONS AND PERSONS OF JAPANESE RACIAL ORIGIN

TAKE NOTICE that under Orders No. 21, No. 22, No. 23 and No. 24 of the British Columbia Security Commission, the following areas were made prohibited areas to all persons of the Japanese race:—

LULU ISLAND (including Steveston)
SEA ISLAND
EBURNE
MARPOLE
DISTRICT OF QUEENSBOROUGH
SAPPERTON
CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER
BURQUITLAM
PORT MOODY
IOCO
PORT COQUITLAM
MAILLARDVILLE
FRASER MILLS
CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER
CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that any person of the Japanese race found within any of the said prohibited areas without a written permit from the British Columbia Security Commission or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police shall be liable to the penalties provided under Order in Council P.C. 1665.

AUSTIN C. TAYLOR,
Chairman
BRITISH COLUMBIA SECURITY COMMISSION

Above: Government notice to Japanese Canadians. Nikkei National Museum 2010.4.4.12.036.

Hanako, and their many fellow teachers worked to teach Canadian-born children the language and culture of their parents. The Satos hoped that these *Nisei* would serve as a "bridge" between the people of Japan and Canada and foster intercultural understanding.

Internment created deep shame for many Japanese Canadians around anything related to Japanese heritage. However, the community experienced a cultural renaissance in the 1970s. At this time, many third-generation Japanese Canadians, who had grown up after internment, had been encouraged by their families to distance themselves from their *Nikkei* identity. These *Sansei* partnered with Japanese immigrants to learn about their roots and lead various cultural and community initiatives. The most well-known result of this movement is Vancouver's annual Powell Street Festival, which brings Japanese cultural performances, displays, and food back to the Powell Street neighbourhood where many of our ancestors lived before the war. It also eventually led to the Redress movement of the 1980s, when Japanese Canadians lobbied the Canadian government to acknowledge the injustice of Japanese Canadians' internment. The Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement, announced in 1988, set a precedent for later apologies such as those for the Chinese Canadian head tax and Indian Residential Schools, and is a major source of pride in our community for how it affirmed our rights as Canadian citizens regardless of race.

The *Nikkei* exhibit's run in our physical gallery space closed in July 2020. This core exhibit centres Japanese Canadian internment in the broader context of our community's culture and experiences in Canada. Since it is such an important exhibit to our mission, to honour, preserve, and share Japanese culture and Japanese Canadian history and heritage for a better Canada, we plan to bring it back periodically using the same overall story arc, but adding new stories of Japanese Canadians that fit each of our broad themes. We also continue to use a film of the original exhibit installation as part of our new digital field trip offerings.

To give a digital tour of the *Nikkei* exhibit, I share my screen with the students and play the video that walks through each section, pausing on various items to give more context and to ask and answer questions about their connections to Japanese Canadian history and community. Tours are about 30 minutes long, and can be combined with one or two additional "modules" on the same day or multiple days: one is a facilitated screening and discussion of a video interview with one of our elders talking about her family's internment experience, the other a tour of the exhibit that is currently in our physical gallery space, *Broken Promises*. This exhibit is an in-depth look at how the Canadian government dispossessed Japanese Canadians in the 1940s and its impact on the Japanese Canadian community.

While nothing can replicate the experience of visiting these exhibits in person, I'm enjoying being able to share our museum with students and teachers again. Even as we are allowed to welcome school groups back to the museum in-person, we will continue to offer digital field trips of the *Nikkei* exhibit, the *Broken Promises* exhibit, and other future exhibits. It is my hope that these digital field trips can help us share *Nikkei* and other exhibits with students outside the Lower Mainland, and across Canada, as well as local students who might find it challenging to visit us in-person. Our exhibits allow us to share *Nikkei* history and culture with students and have discussions about what defines culture and the ways in which culture evolves through generations. I hope all who visit the *Nikkei* exhibit, digitally or in-person, are inspired to think about their heritage and culture, and take steps to preserve it for future generations.

Above: 1. Hanako and Tsutae Sato (centre front row) with the first class to graduate from the Vancouver Japanese Language School after World War II. After years of negotiation, the building was the only dispossessed property returned to the Japanese Canadian community post-war. Nikkei National Museum 1996.170.16.12.
2. Japanese Canadians Redress Rally on Parliament Hill, 1988. Nikkei National Museum 2010.32.124.

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MORE INFORMATION

Book a digital field trip with the Nikkei National Museum: *www.centre.nikkeiplace.org/digital-taiken-reservation*

Borrow a Journeys Education Kit for your classroom: *www.centre.nikkeiplace.org/education/journeys-education-kits*

Explore the newest digital exhibit, *Writing Wrongs: Japanese Canadian Protest Letters of the 1940s* (available in both English and French; includes secondary-level lesson plans): *www.writingwrongs-parolesperdues.ca*

THE HIDDEN HISTORIES OF SCHOOLS

By Janet Nicol, retired teacher, Vancouver

CONNECTING HISTORY to our school and community deepens students' understanding of the past. Consider Vancouver Technical Secondary: students typeset, printed, and bound their own yearbooks from 1922 to 1947, the covers illustrated with linocut art. This unique yearbook collection has attracted the interest of local media, a printers' union, and scholars. Van Tech's rich "hidden" history, as briefly set out here, proves yearbooks are a powerful primary source, especially for social studies and social justice teachers.

Van Tech was founded in 1916 on unceded territory of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish First Nations and the City of Vancouver. The first Van Tech yearbook was produced by students on traditional presses in the school's print shop. A pungent odour filled the air from printer's ink mixed with the oil used to clean the presses. Students hand-set the type and used plates for illustrations. When the presses were rolling, they sounded "like a car backing up," one student wrote in a yearbook.

Lewis Elliott, the print shop teacher, oversaw production and established a Linocut Club from 1921 to 1942. A relatively new medium, linocuts were considered a "democratic" art form following World War I; the linoleum plates were cheap, accessible, and more pliable than woodblocks. An image is carved out, then the plate inked with a brayer. Next, a sheet of paper is placed over the plate and pressed. When the paper is peeled back, a transposed image is revealed. Van Tech students created multiple prints from a single carving, using up to four colours. Students' artwork appeared on the covers and pages of yearbooks, and on the walls of the print shop.

A steelworker linocut image illustrated the school's 1932 yearbook cover, designed by student Milton Parsons, and reflecting the school's pride in manual trades. "The object of a technical education is to make a good industrial workman," the principal noted in the introduction to the 1926 yearbook. When girls were admitted to Van Tech in 1940, they were segregated from the boys, enrolling in typing, nursing, tailoring, retail selling, foods, and hairdressing. Girls also studied academic subjects separately and participated in their own clubs. Marion Barber and Dot Baker joined the Linocut Club in 1943, leading the way toward increased co-education at Van Tech. By the end of the decade, the Linocut Club was gone, yearbooks had a more conventional format, and more courses and activities were a mix of girls and boys.

Teachers could develop a lesson using their own school yearbooks, directing students to document the type of curriculum and extracurricular activities existing in earlier years. A guiding question for students could be, "How has the school re-enforced gender and social class roles—then and now?"

Yearbooks also provide a dynamic entry point for teachers to make connections with social studies curriculum content, such as the history of World Wars I and II. Van Tech provides a rich example. The school had a rifle corps and cadet program for boys, and many students enlisted in both wars. The yearbooks published several photographs, articles, and linocut images related to the war. James Sinclair, the son of school principal, James G. Sinclair, was a student alumni who fought overseas in World War II; his experiences are described in a yearbook article. The yearbook of 1946 had an article stating 1,409 students served in the war. Though still incomplete, a list reported 145 students killed, 31 missing, 74 wounded, 9 prisoners of war, and 34 decorated.

Students also learn by observing omissions in the historical record. For example, Van Tech yearbooks did not mention the internment of Japanese Canadians during the World War II, despite its impact on students. George Obokata, a Van Tech student, created linocuts and wrote about his Japanese heritage for the yearbooks during the 1930s. Reliable online sources indicate Obokata volunteered to serve as a linguist in South East Asia during the war. Afterward, he resided in Ontario and was active in Redress for Japanese Canadians.

Teachers could ask students to brainstorm about a "silence" observed in their yearbooks and then investigate whether this historical gap was subsequently addressed.

This leads to another teaching opportunity on the topic of racial justice. Articles and artworks about First Nations culture in the Van Tech yearbooks illustrated students' interest—but also prejudices. Derogatory "jokes" about racial groups, specifically Chinese and Black Canadians, found their way into Van Tech yearbooks too, the school culture reflecting a society that normalized racism.

Students not of British heritage sometimes offered alternative perspectives. In the 1930 yearbook, Benito Gadarini wrote an article titled "A League of Nations: A Cross Section of Young Canada" for readers to "…know something about our melting pot of a school." While reference to a "melting pot" is a problematic term, Gadarini does make visible a multicultural, not racially homogeneous student population, countering histories that are not inclusive.

Teachers are advised to thoroughly preview yearbooks for racist content and only proceed with the lesson if feeling equipped to do so. Additionally, it is essential teachers ensure proper supports are in place for BIPOC students during every aspect of classroom research and discussions.

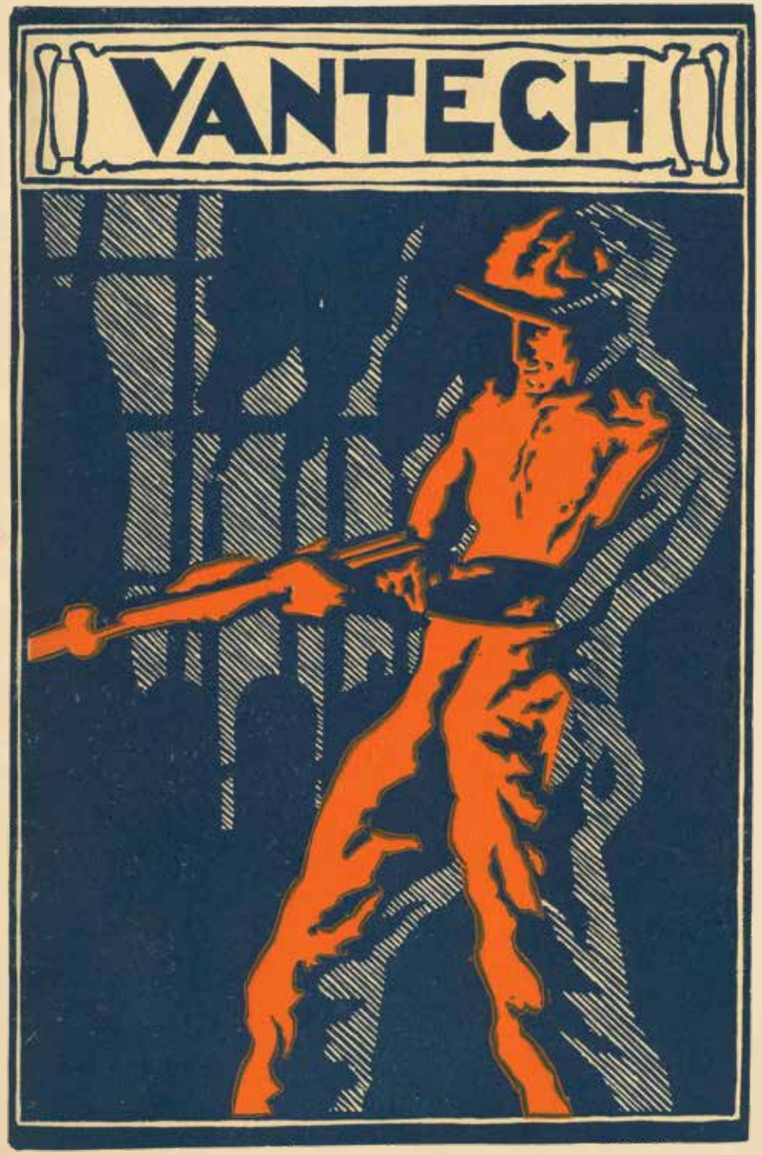
Many of the students enrolled in Van Tech's print shop classes and Linocut Club used their skills after graduation in a variety of ways, from apprenticing in a newspaper pressroom to setting up their own print shop. Tracing students' school-to-work paths provides another dynamic lesson. Bill Wong was another Van Tech student involved in the print shop and Linocut Club. He went on to study civil engineering at the University of BC. No firm would hire him because of institutionalized racism, so he entered the family business called Modernize Tailors. He and his brother Jack were the subjects of a documentary, *Tailor Made: Chinatown's Last Tailors,* and on November 3, 2013, the City of Vancouver declared Modernize Tailors Day in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the shop.

In groups, students could research an alumni, focusing on their subject's challenges, and accomplishments.

Learning in the social studies and social justice classroom is enriched when students investigate "hidden" school histories and make connections to a wider curriculum. As well, students personal and social awareness is enhanced as they consider how past generations of youth navigated social justice issues.

"What has changed?" and "What needs to change?" are a couple of the follow-up questions teachers can ask students after the yearbook project is over. Positive societal change is more likely to occur if the histories we teach are inclusive, truthful, and give value to a diverse range of Canadians, including young people who have walked through our very own school hallways in years past.

Left: Van Tech Yearbook, 1946, inside page, original linocut by Margaret Hannum.
Above: Van Tech Yearbook, 1939, inside page, original four-colour linocut by Sing Lim.
Below: Van Tech Yearbook, 1932, Cover linocut by Milton Parsons, "The Steelworker."



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Robust policy essential for vibrant, inclusive library collections

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By Kristie Oxley, President, BC Teacher-Librarians' Association

Banned books

THE TERM conjures images of books being pulled from shelves and tossed into bonfires. While the truth may not be so dramatic, the result is. Every time a student is denied a book it is in an effort to keep "undesirable" ideas out of that child's reach. Of course, what is considered "undesirable" changes from generation to generation. The sweet story of a child's two moms might be read now during a Grade 1 unit on family. Just two decades ago, the same book was banned for precisely the same reason we include it in our schools today.

No one wants to be accused of banning books or censorship. In education, we have an obligation to protect intellectual freedom, and teachers will passionately defend this ideal. On the other hand, teachers, parents, and other educational stakeholders want to protect students from harmful, negative messages in books and other media. We take seriously our commitment to ideals such as equity, reconciliation, and antiracism and want to see this reflected in the lessons, environments, and resources we create for students. The possibility of crossing the line from careful curation to censorship is ever-present in the school library learning commons (SLLC) and classroom.

So, what do we do? The answer lies partially in the careful creation and application of collection development policies.

Collection development policy

A collection development policy is a set of guidelines that oversees both the acquisition and removal of books and other materials from an SLLC. Far from being a prescriptive list of "approved" materials, a good collection development policy will set out considerations such as content, audience, curricular fit, and social considerations. This helps teacher-librarians (TLs) ask themselves important questions when considering a book for their collection. It also aids TLs in deciding between equally great books when budgets are tight (as they almost always are!). For example, in recent years, many TLs have prioritized authentic Indigenous texts and SOGI materials for purchase as a response to changing curricula and efforts to achieve diversity in their SLLC collections. While these titles may have been prioritized, the collection development policy would still help guide the overall evaluation of these materials.

Building an SLLC collection through new purchases is only one part of collection development. Removal of items, commonly called "weeding," is the other half of the process. Weeding is a constant process and involves scrutinizing materials in an SLLC collection according to specified criteria before removing them from circulation. It is important to note that weeding is a normal part of collection development and does not constitute censorship. As a matter of fact, a vibrant SLLC collection depends on a purchase-weed cycle, without which the collection stagnates and students lose interest.

During weeding, some materials are removed and offered to teachers for classroom libraries. Other items are removed and recycled. Yes, recycled. We tend not to want to throw anything away in education, likely because decades of cutbacks and austerity measures have made us fear that we will never be able to replace what we discard. Some SLLC materials, however, should not be placed in classrooms or donated to other agencies. We've all heard the old story of a student opening a textbook and seeing the sentence, "One day man will walk on the moon," and giggling because it happened decades ago (and only refers to men!). Material that is out of date, factually inaccurate, culturally insensitive, misleading, or even coffee stained and held together by staples can be recycled. Classroom teachers should consider going through their classroom materials and making similar weeding decisions. While items purchased by the district cannot simply be thrown out, discussing identified issues with administration may result in the acquisition of more suitable material.

Collection development nuts and bolts

Overarching collection development policies will be developed by each district, but your district's policy may only refer in general to learning resources and may be equally applicable to SLLC and classroom materials. In this case, TLs can use evaluation tools, such as locally developed rubrics, that help apply the policy and guide purchasing or weeding decisions.

One incredibly helpful resource is the evaluation form in Appendix 1 of the First Nations Education Steering Committee's (FNESC) guide Authentic First Peoples Resources, available on the FNESC website (*www.fnesc.ca*) under the Learning First Peoples tab. This form can be used on its own or to inform the creation of a locally developed evaluation form.

Those who want to learn more about resource selection can also choose to complete the Learning Resource Selection for K–12 Educators course available on Focused Education's website (*www.bcerac.ca*). This course highlights the importance of cultural and social considerations when evaluating resources. Focused Education's K–12 Evaluated Resource Collection is a collection of resources that has been evaluated by educators using the criteria set out in this course. Many districts stipulate that if a resource has been evaluated and approved through this collection, then it is approved for use in their district.

Challenged book policy

Inevitably, books and other materials will be challenged. To be considered "challenged," a TL or teacher must receive a complaint about a book or other material that includes the request that it be removed from use. Often, the challenge comes as a quick question, gone once answered. Other times, stakeholders may want the immediate removal of items from an SLLC collection, classroom, or school.

While parents ultimately have the right to decide what is best for their child, the temptation is to make a sweeping decision that affects all students in the face of parent or stakeholder complaints. Censorship such as this is truly damaging for students who could be denied the opportunity to connect to material that reflects their life experiences, raises their feelings of self-worth, and shows them they are not alone.

A challenged book/materials policy is absolutely essential in ensuring that complaints about materials are taken seriously and put through a rigorous set of steps before a final judgment is made. Often these policies begin with speaking to the TL or classroom teacher and filling out a form; the challenge then proceeds through steps that include a review of the material by a committee composed of teachers, administrators, and senior administrators before a formal, written response is received by the person issuing the complaint. The material being challenged remains available while the challenge is underway. A policy such as this may seem time consuming and onerous, but it protects all parties from unilateral decisions made in the heat of the moment.

Can I keep it as a teaching resource?

When the redesigned curriculum was first rolled out, many TLs were concerned about the lack of Indigenous literature and other Indigenous resources in their collections. Fast forward several years and many professional development events, and the beginning of a collective understanding around authentic Indigenous resources can be seen among TLs. Collection development policies now support the weeding of materials that do not fit this criterion. The question of keeping some inauthentic materials to support teaching topics such as cultural appropriation or racist portrayals has now surfaced. This is starting to become true in other areas too.

There is no definitive answer to this question. Teachers are an incredibly creative, resourceful group of professionals with the ability to use a variety of teaching resources in meaningful ways. When considering using a resource that might be outdated or contain language, images, stereotypes, or themes that are racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise harmful, start by considering the following:

- What is the purpose of using this resource?
- Is the resource likely to cause damage to those interacting with it?
- Is there something else I could use that would better help me achieve this purpose?

Answering these questions may give you greater clarity around using the resource or an argument for purchasing replacement materials.

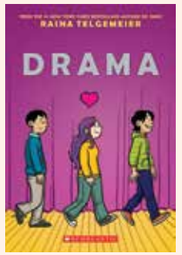
Opportunity and reflection

Curating SLLC collections that reflect the diversity of our students is one of the biggest challenges TLs face. It is also one of the biggest opportunities. Collection development policies can help us select quality resources and weed out older materials that no longer speak to our students. They can also help us fight the urge to withdraw materials without proper consideration, an action that may in fact hurt students by denying them the opportunity to see their reality reflected in print.

Some frequently challenged books

Asha's Mums, by Rosamund Elwin

Beyond Magenta, by Susan Kuklin



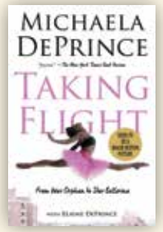
Drama, by Raina Telgemeier

George, by Alex Gino

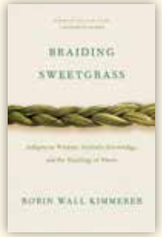
My Mom's Having a Baby!, by Dori Hillestad Butler

The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas

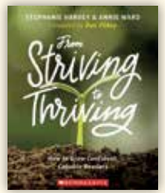
Summer reading list



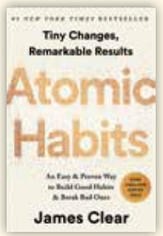
***Taking Flight* by Michaela DePrince**
Recommended by Ginger Lidemark, President, BC Dance Educators' Assoc.
The extraordinary memoir of Michaela DePrince, a young dancer who escaped war-torn Sierra Leone for the rarefied heights of American ballet. Michaela DePrince was known as girl Number 27 at the orphanage, where she was abandoned at a young age and tormented as a "devil child" for a skin condition that makes her skin appear spotted. But it was at the orphanage that Michaela would find a picture of a beautiful ballerina *en pointe* that would help change the course of her life.



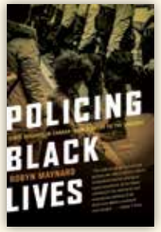
***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer**
Recommended by Jonathan Dyck, President, Environmental Educators' Provincial Specialist Assoc.
Drawing on her life as an Indigenous scientist, a mother, and a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices.



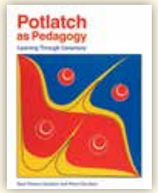
***From Striving to Thriving: How to Grow Confident, Capable Readers* by Stephanie Harvey and Annie Ward**
Recommended by Janine Fraser, President, BC Primary Teacher' Assoc.
Instead of wasting time on fragmented, skill-and-drill interventions that don't work, this book is about crafting targeted, personalized instruction guided by formative assessment to help readers find books to love and engage with.



***Atomic Habits* by James Clear**
Recommended by Derek Degear, Assistant Director, Field Service
Atomic Habits is a wonderful resource for those seeking personal growth within an already busy life schedule. I am amazed by the transformative power of small and incremental changes to my daily routine.

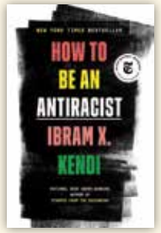


***Policing Black Lives* by Robyn Maynard**
Recommended by Shanee Prasad, President, Anti-Oppression Educators Collective
Delving behind Canada's veneer of multiculturalism and tolerance, *Policing Black Lives* traces the violent realities of anti-Blackness from the slave ships to prisons, classrooms, and beyond. A necessary read for educators wanting to develop an antiracist pedagogical practice.



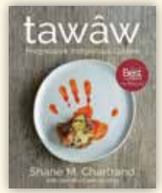
***Potlatch as Pedagogy: Learning Through Ceremony* by Sara Florence Davidson and Robert Davidson**
Recommended by Kyle McKillop, President, BC Teachers of English Language Arts
In this inspiring book, educator Sara Davidson and her father, the artist Robert Davidson, show how traditional Haida practices can be embedded in our teaching practices today.

***New on the Job: A School Librarian's Guide to Success* by Hilda Weisberg and Ruth Toor**
Recommended by Sarah Wethered, member, BC Teacher Librarians' Assoc.
This book provides practical advice for new teacher-librarians on all aspects of the job. This book would also be good for more experienced teacher-librarians looking to reinvigorate their practice.



***How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi**
Recommended by Robyn Trask, General Counsel
In *How to Be an Anti-Racist* Ibram X. Kendi explains that, "The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it." I particularly liked this book because Kendi breaks down a variety of concepts related to antiracism and weaves his discussion of history and policy with his own personal story.

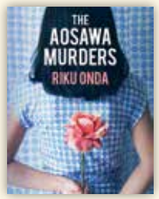
***Pull of the Stars* by Emma Donoghue**
Recommended by Lucie Ferrari, Assistant Director, Professional and Social Issues
I could not put this book down. Amazing and complex with so much content: politics, social issues, and a beautiful love story. Incredible!



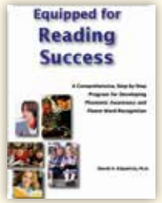
***Tawâw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine* by Shane M. Chartrand**
Recommended by Melissa Edstrom, President, Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Assoc.
Acclaimed chef Shane M. Chartrand's debut cookbook explores the reawakening of Indigenous cuisine and what it means to cook, eat, and share food in our homes and communities.

***Soutenir les lecteurs en langue seconde* by Renée Bourgouin**
Recommandé par Sophie Bergeron, President, Association Provnciale des Professeurs de l'Immersion et du Programme-Francophone BC
Ce livre s'adresse aux enseignants de français langue seconde qui cherchent des façons de soutenir les lecteurs afin de les aider à devenir des lecteurs confiants et compétents en leur proposant plusieurs interventions en lecture.

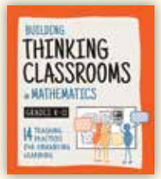
***The Horizon Leans Forward* by Erik Kar Jun Leung, et al.**
Recommended by Mandart Chan, President, BC Music Educators' Assoc.
Compiled by Erik Kar Jun Leung, and with contributions from a diverse team of distinguished wind band professionals, this book shares the profound insights and firsthand experiences of people of colour, women, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals working in the wind band field.



***The Aosawa Murders* by Riku Onda**
Recommended by Emily O'Neill, Information Specialist, Information Services
For lovers of murder mysteries, this is an atmospheric, unsettling, and unconventionally structured story of a mass poisoning and the enigmatic blind girl who is its only survivor.



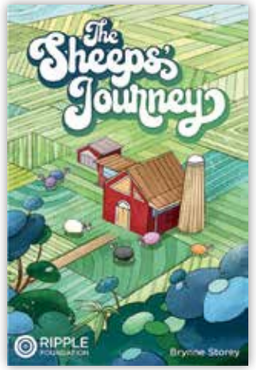
***Equipped for Reading Success* by David A. Kilpatrick**
Recommended by Danielle Neer, President, Learning Assistance Teachers' Assoc.
This book provides research-based support for implementation of a program targeting phonemic awareness and fluent word recognition. These two components are integral to a literacy intervention program.



***Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics* by Peter Liljedah**
Recommended by Susan Robinson, member, BC Assoc. of Mathematics Teachers
Building Thinking Classrooms offers a guide to effective change within teaching practices that get students thinking.

Award-winning story about belonging by BC student

Review by Sarah Dolan,
teacher-librarian, North Vancouver
The Sheeps' Journey published by
Ripple Foundation, 2020



OUR SCHOOL, Brooksbank Elementary, is lucky enough to be home to some great young talent, including one pupil who became the winner of last year's Kids Write 4 Kids contest, a program of the national youth education charity Ripple Foundation.

The young author I refer to is Brynne Storey, who was 10 years old at the time of writing her winning short, fictional story, *The Sheeps' Journey*. With an elegant writing style, Brynne addresses some important themes in this heart-warming adventure. The narrative follows the protagonist, a sheep named Pan, through the highs and lows of his journey.

Pan lives in a far-away land on a planet called Marllile, which is similar to Earth but with one fundamental difference: all the sheep are multicoloured (blues, pinks, and greens). Pan is a white sheep, and although close to his sheep sister, Katie, he never feels a true sense of belonging.

A real page-turner perfect for students in Grade 3–6, the reader can never be sure what Pan and Katie might encounter next. The story follows the siblings overcoming new challenges together, protecting one another but also seizing all of the adventures life holds, leading them to a place where they both belong.

The author's evocative language makes it easy for young readers to envision in their minds what's taking place inside the pages of this book, and many themes can be examined in the classroom: bullying, belonging, standing up for what you know is right, survival and adventure, and the strength of love.

To learn more about the author, purchase books for your classroom, and find out how pupils can get involved in the Kids Write 4 Kids contest head to www.ripplefoundation.ca.

CLASSIFIEDS

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- 35 years of contributory service, with a minimum of age 55
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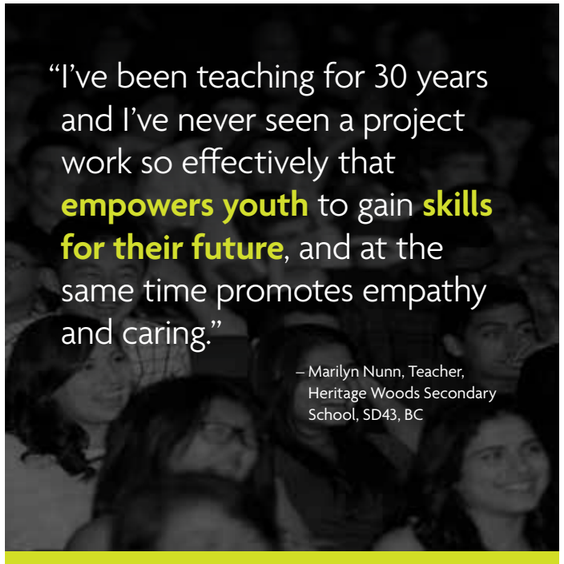
- "Factor 90" if you are between ages 61 and 65
- age 65.

It is up to you to apply to withdraw from long-term disability.

Ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave, which, when combined with 120 days of benefits from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach one of the milestones mentioned above.

BCTF

To apply call BCTF Income Security at 604-871-1921.



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Participation in mediation is voluntary and confidential. Outcomes of mediation are not reported to union officers or your school district.

You can request to work with a mediator who has a similar background and life experience to yours. Mediations can be conducted in French, upon request.

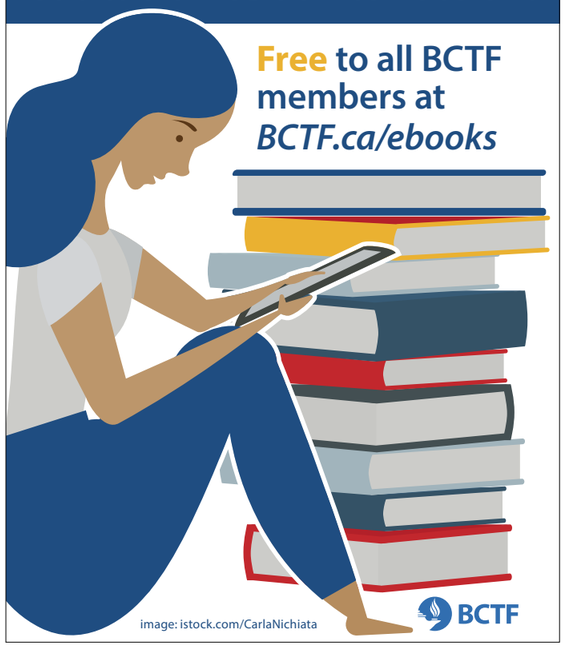
For more information and to access IMS, contact Sherry Payne, Nadia Bove, or your local president.

BCTF

Sherry Payne
IMS Co-ordinator
604-871-1803
1-800-663-9163
spayne@bctf.ca

Nadia Bove
IMS Administrative Assistant
604-871-1823
nbove@bctf.ca

Check out the BCTF's new education eBook collection!



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Above: Natasha Tessier and her Grade 2–3 students at Muheim Elementary School in Smithers, BC, collected and painted bottle caps to create this installation as they learned about reusing and repurposing materials. Check out this blogpost (*https://bit.ly/3gXVsJL*) to see where Natasha got her inspiration.

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