BC Teachers' Federation

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REGULAR FEATURES

THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE

Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? Know of a project at your school or in your local you want to share with colleagues?

Then consider writing for *Teacher*, the flagship publication of the BCTF! Submission guidelines are available at *bctf.ca/newsmag*. We also welcome letters to the editor. Send your letter to *teachermag@bctf.ca*.

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

Deadlines

Jan/Feb 2021	November 6, 2020
March 2021	January 8, 2021
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Larry Dureski, Cranbrook, takes *Teacher* up Fisher Peak in the BC Rockies.

Retired Qualicum teacher Cathy Van Herwaarden reads her latest *Teacher* while her dogs Ziggy and Toby snooze.

Send photos of you or your colleagues reading* Teacher *to teachermag@bctf.ca and you could be featured!

Colleagues and neighbours Brigitte Boily, Vancouver Elementary, and Michael Sheppard, North Vancouver (below), enjoy their latest issue of *Teacher*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BCTF President Teri Mooring

Your health and safety comes first

By the time this edition of *Teacher* is printed and mailed out, school will have been back in session for a few weeks and it is hard to predict how it will have unfolded. Based on the first couple of days, we know that the promised personal protective equipment wasn't available everywhere and class sizes for many teachers are still too large to allow for physical distancing.

Throughout this time, the BCTF and our locals have not let up on our public advocacy to ensure teachers and students are as safe as they can be. Whether it is in the media or in direct calls with government officials, we are making sure health and safety deficiencies are identified and fixed.

I know many of you are still very concerned about the safety of schools. Our continued efforts are focused on getting school districts to spend the $242 million in federal funding to make remote learning accessible in every district and reduce class sizes and school density overall. We know the federal funding is not enough to reduce class density in every local in the province. But it is a good start, and it does put this choice within reach for the provincial government.

I also know we are all eager to do everything we can to support our students in these very difficult times. Supporting our students in these worrisome and anxious times is so important. Taking care of ourselves and ensuring our workplaces are safe is even more important. If that means wearing a mask and face shield, do it. If that means creating a culture of mask wearing in your classroom, do it. If that means staying as physically distant as you can, do it. Your health and safety comes first.

If, at any time, you are concerned about the conditions in your classroom, please contact your local union representatives immediately. Any safety concerns about working conditions must be reported to the employer promptly. Your local union can support you in doing that. Every local has site-based health and safety representatives, staff representatives, and local-wide representatives who can assist you. Local unions also have local presidents and other members working hard to troubleshoot and advocate.

If your stress levels are high and you need some help, please keep *StarlingMinds.com* in mind. It is a free and confidential online cognitive behaviour therapy program for BCTF members.

Thank you and take care.

MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

Votre santé et votre sécurité passent en premier

Au moment où cette édition du magazine *Teacher* sera imprimée et envoyée par la poste, l'école aura recommencé depuis déjà quelques semaines et il est difficile de prédire comment cela se sera déroulé. En se basant sur les premiers jours, nous savons que l'équipement de protection individuelle promis n'était pas disponible partout et que la taille des classes est encore trop volumineuse pour de nombreux(-euses) enseignant(e)s pour pouvoir permettre la distanciation physique.

Tout au long de cette période, la FECB et nos sections locales n'ont pas cessé de défendre publiquement nos intérêts afin de veiller à ce que les enseignant(e)s et les élèves soient le plus en sécurité possible. Que ce soit dans les médias ou lors d'appels directs aux représentant(e)s du gouvernement, nous veillons à ce que les lacunes en matière de santé et de sécurité soient identifiées et corrigées.

Je sais que plusieurs d'entre vous demeurent inquiet(e)s à propos de la sécurité des écoles. Nos efforts continus consistent à amener les conseils scolaires à dépenser les fonds fédéraux de 242$ millions, afin de rendre accessible l'apprentissage à distance dans chaque conseil scolaire et de diminuer la densité des classes dans tous les locaux de la province. Toutefois, il s'agit d'un bon début et ce choix est placé à la portée du gouvernement provincial.

Je sais également que nous sommes tous et toutes soucieux(-euses) de faire tout notre possible pour soutenir les élèves dans ces temps difficiles. Soutenir nos élèves durant cette période inquiétante et angoissante est si important. Il est d'autant plus important de prendre soin de nous-même et de veiller à ce que nos lieux de travail soient sécuritaires. Si cela signifie de porter un masque et une visière, faites-le. Si cela signifie d'établir une culture du port du masque dans votre salle de classe, faites-le. Si cela signifie de rester aussi physiquement distant(e) que possible, faites-le. Votre santé et votre sécurité passent en premier.

Si à tout moment vous êtes inquiet(e) concernant les conditions dans votre salle de classe, veuillez contacter immédiatement les représentant(e)s de votre section locale. Toute inquiétude de sécurité concernant vos conditions de travail doit être rapportée à l'employeur sans délai. Votre syndicat local peut vous aider à le faire. Chaque section locale dispose de représentant(e)s en santé et sécurité sur place, de représentant(e)s du personnel et de représentant(e)s à l'échelle locale qui peuvent vous aider. Les syndicats locaux ont aussi des président(e)s locaux(-ales) et d'autres membres qui travaillent ardemment à trouver des solutions et à vous défendre.

Si vos niveaux de stress sont élevés et que vous avez besoin d'aide, veuillez garder en tête le site *StarlingMinds.com*. Il s'agit d'un programme de thérapie cognitivo-comportementale en ligne gratuit et confidentiel pour les membres de la FECB.

Merci et prenez soin de vous.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TQS info led to higher salaries

As a local president, I appreciate every opportunity I get to support my members. The article on page 14 in the March issue of *Teacher* magazine on the policy changes for the Teacher Qualification Service (TQS) did just that. I sent out the information from the magazine to my 330 members and was able to help 4 colleagues in my local access a higher-category placement. I encouraged everyone to apply, especially those from out of province, and it paid off! Thanks for the information!

Shelley Balfour, Local President, Cranbrook District Teachers' Association

Hi Shelley,

That's wonderful news. I'm glad your members were able to get their category upgrades and higher salaries!

Jennifer Kimbley, *Acting Editor,* Teacher

May issue uplifts, stirs happy memories

This magazine just made my day, especially the tribute to Larry Kuehn by Nancy and Jennifer. With the COVID-19 isolation policy, I could only show this article via FaceTime to my husband, Roland, who was very involved [with the union] during his teaching career. He smiled when I showed him this photo and acknowledged good times spent with Larry years ago.

On the cover where teachers miss their students … does that school only have two male teachers? That brings back memories of teaching in Coquitlam where our elementary school only had a male principal and vice-principal with the rest of us females in the "trenches."

Greetings from a rainy day on Vancouver Island,

Lennor Stieda, retired now for 20 years!!!!

Hi Lennor,

I'm told that there are six male teachers at Lena Shaw Elementary, but not all were featured in the photo collage.

Jennifer Kimbley*, Acting Editor,* Teacher

Fasting in schools

Thank you for the informative feature on students fasting during Ramadan in your March issue. The suggestions about how to support students will apply equally to others who also observe a fast every year. You may very well have Bahá'ís among your students and staff who could be fasting during school hours.

The Bahá'í fast is observed during the 19 days immediately preceding the date of the spring equinox (about March 21). Bahá'ís abstain from eating or drinking between sunrise and sunset. Bahá'ís may begin to fast after reaching the age of 15 and may stop fasting when they reach the age of 70.

Best wishes,

Myles Ferrie, Tech Studies, Point Grey Secondary, Vancouver

Troubled by antisemitism article

I was troubled to open my latest *Teacher* magazine and see a de facto endorsement of the teaching resources provided by Fighting Antisemitism Together (FAST) at their website *www.voicesintoaction.ca*. A quick glance at the site reveals that they promote and include in their teaching materials the erroneous and dangerous conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism (see their Unit 6). Their website goes far beyond the controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism that was recently rejected by Vancouver City Council and is controversial across the globe for its inclusion of criticism of Israel as an example of antisemitism. The FAST website includes, for instance, in their definition of "the new antisemitism," holding the opinion that, "Israel has little interest in dialogue."

At the most basic level, a political belief is not a religion, and equating the two (anti-Zionism = antisemitism) can and is used to demonize and in some places criminalize political views. The *US Anti-Semitism Awareness Act*, for example, criminalizes critique of Israel as it is included as an example of antisemitism in the IHRA definition. This and similar laws have been used to stifle free speech and to silence, in particular, activists supporting Palestinian human rights.

I am an anti-Zionist Jew myself and according to the FAST website that makes me an antisemite. Using this definition of antisemitism erases my right to define my own identity as a Jew, an identity that has nothing to do with the state of Israel. It also conflates my criticism of Israel's human rights record with antisemitism. It, in fact, undermines me as an antiracist activist myself, including work I do to combat antisemitism, because I have a critique of Israel, I am, according to them, an antisemite. The net effect is not only to take and contort my own Jewish identity, but also to make the world a more dangerous place for me to live, because legitimate antiracist activists, who fight antisemitism and for Palestinian rights, are now being falsely labeled as antisemites.

I hope *Teacher* will provide some balance by giving space to one of the many Jewish organizations that do antiracist work and do not adhere to the IHRA definition or the equation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, such as Independent Jewish Voices (IJV). I recommend in particular the article "Antisemitism in context: Its use and abuse. An IJV Report" on their website at www.ijvcanada.org. I also hope *Teacher* will choose to highlight the work of the many Palestinian human rights activists who want to ensure that our antiracist education also includes teaching about the Nakba and the views of the Middle East land question from a non-Israeli point of view.

Tara Ehrcke, teacher, Greater Victoria;
Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ) member

School district adult education programs: A pathway to success

Adult education students come from diverse backgrounds: they may be school-aged youth who don't "fit" in the mainstream system, young adults who need to graduate, new Canadians, or older adults who wish to upgrade or retrain.

School district adult education programs offer learners a valuable second chance to graduate and succeed.

Many high school graduates lack the necessary prerequisites to enter post-secondary programs (e.g., English 12, Anatomy & Physiology 12, Foundations of Math 11). In addition, numerous colleges require prerequisite courses to have been completed within the previous five years; thus, students must repeat them.

School district adult education programs provide more flexibility than colleges, meeting the needs of mature students who are often juggling the challenges of family responsibilities and varied work schedules.

Many new immigrants to British Columbia look to their English language learning classes as safe and welcoming places. Indeed, for many newcomers, school is their first community.

All adult education students, regardless of their goals, work hard to upgrade, retrain, or rise above minimum-wage jobs.

Unfortunately, adult education students are funded at less than two-thirds the level of K–12 students. They do not have access to counsellors, educational assistants, and other supports.

In order to continue providing valuable adult education programs, adult education teachers seek adequate and equitable support and funding to ensure these learners have the opportunities they need to graduate or to upgrade. We owe them a solid second chance!

By Joanne Shaw and Karen Jogha,
BCTF Adult Education Advisory Committee members

Mothers of Xsan book review

The *Mothers of Xsan* series you shared in *Teacher* magazine looks very interesting. During the past decade in the classroom, I enjoyed finding resources and stories to bring an Indigenous perspective to the classroom. I particularly valued the stories that centred around nature, as there is a deep connection for students when they can relate the stories to their own environment and the forests that surround our communities. As Indigenous communities and ecosystems are constantly under threat from government and industry, it's important students understand the true value of our ecosystems and the woven connection Indigenous peoples have with their land.

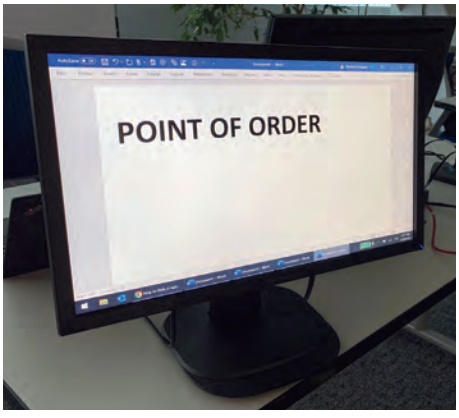
Thank you for sharing!

Derek DeGear, BCTF staff

BCTF holds

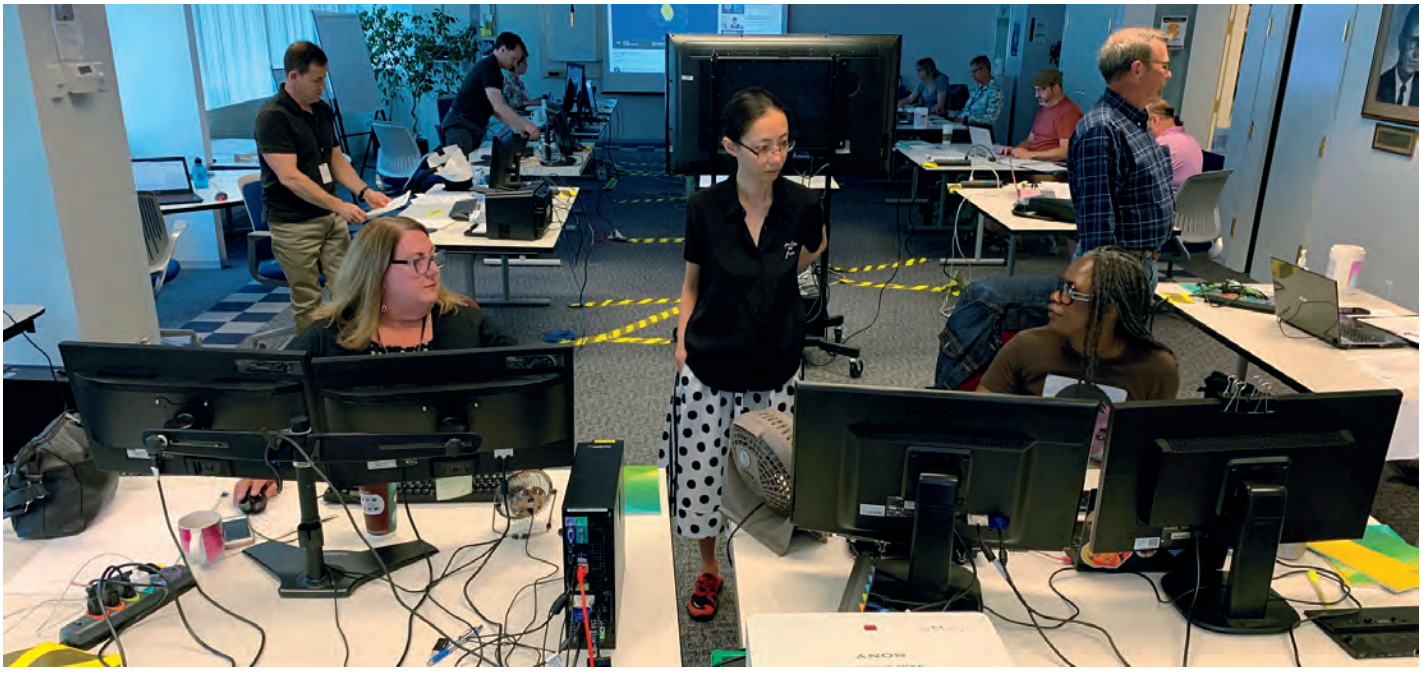
Online AGM

After the March AGM was cancelled the BCTF opted to have an online meeting. We used three platforms to conduct the meeting: Simply Voting, YouTube Live, and Stratcom Telephone Town Halls. EventMobi was used to share documents, updates, candidates profiles, and for delegates to connect with each other. Delegates joined from their homes around the province, and the staff and BCTF volunteers involved worked at the BCTF office in Vancouver under very strict COVID-19 safety precautions. Other unions were keen to learn from our experience because we were able to successfully hold our AGM in such an unusual situation.



AGM engagement

I loved the fact that, although we were working with clear limitations in the platforms, and although we knew the virtual AGM could not replicate the in-person meeting, the delegates really engaged and made the meeting come alive. There were so many moments that felt like the 'real' AGM—the motions to amend the agenda, the candidates' speeches and Q and A, the efforts to add new business, and the many points of order. I was really glad to see that delegates were taking control of the AGM, as it should be, and that their feistiness was not diminished. – Moira Mackenzie, past Executive Director of the BCTF



online AGM

Meet your new Executive Committee

The elections for Full-Time Table Officers resulted in Teri Mooring, President; Clint Johnston, First Vice-President; and Carole Gordon, Second Vice-President; being elected (pictured top row, left to right).

Your new Members-at-Large are Peggy Janicki, Aboriginal designation (second row, left); Benula Bunjun, racialized designation (second row, centre); and Robin Tosczak (second row, right), Katherine Trepanier (left, third row), and Matt Westphal (third row, centre) were elected to non-designated seats.

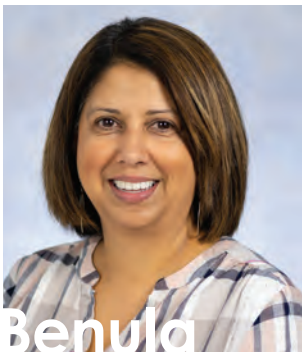
Members-at-Large Violette Baillargeon (third row, right) Karen Edwards, Rae Figursky, and Jody Polukoshko (bottom row, left to right) were not up for election this year and are continuing in their terms on the Executive Committee.


Teri


Clint


Carole


Peggy


Benula


Robin


Katherine


Matt


Violette


Karen


Rae


Jody

Opposite: Communications staffer Rich Overgaard cleans up some analogue technology after the online AGM (top); A monitor alerts the chairs they have a Point of Order (centre); Staff and volunteer members in AGM headquarters at the BCTF building (bottom). BCTF staff photos. **Right:** EC photos by Luis Isidoro, except P. Janicki and K. Edwards (provided).

A positive learning environment for all

By Madeline Barber, staff writer, Rick Hansen Foundation

"ONE OF MY MISSIONS is to teach kids how to make society more inclusive, so any kid with a disability won't have to go through the challenges I had to face when I was growing up," says Vanessa Pollard, a teacher at Miller Park Community School in Coquitlam.

TEACHING WITH A DISABILITY

Over the years Vanessa has taught from Kindergarten to Grade 5. No matter what grade the students are, Vanessa is always open about the fact that she's hard of hearing. She says it can be encouraging for students of all ages to see that she has a disability and she is successful—embodying the lesson that challenges can be overcome.

As part of her mission to empower students and foster inclusive learning environments, Vanessa uses educational resources from the Rick Hansen Foundation School Program (RHFSP). These bilingual resources, which include toolkits filled with curricula-aligning lesson plans and activities for all grades, are available for teachers to download for free.

ABILITIES IN MOTION

Vanessa is a big fan of the RHFSP Abilities in Motion toolkit, which has lessons and activities for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. These resources increase awareness about the importance of accessibility and inclusion through communication, teamwork, mentoring, and creative thinking.

"The Abilities in Motion toolkit is very clearly laid out, and I love the visuals. My colleagues and I love the activities and the fact that it categorizes based on different disabilities," she says. "It's very holistic. It's a phenomenal resource."

She also says that after doing one of the lessons or activities students clearly have a deeper understanding of the experiences people with disabilities have. "It gives them the responsibility of what they can do to help out on the playground, classroom, or in their community."

RHF AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Another resource available to educators are RHF Ambassador presentations. RHF Ambassadors are individuals with different disabilities who share their stories with schools and community groups. RHF Ambassadors put a face to disability and facilitate important conversations about inclusion. They also offer students the opportunity to ask questions about disability with someone who is comfortable sharing their experience.

Vanessa herself is an RHF Ambassador, and with her educational background she is a natural when it comes to engaging young people. Recently, she presented to a group of Girl Guides. She connected her own personal story and the importance of inclusion to the topic of mindfulness—something she knows students are currently learning about in school.

Like the toolkits, teachers can book a free RHF Ambassador presentation for their school. For those in remote communities, there are two digital versions of presentations available.

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Vanessa is excited to continue delivering presentations and teaching kids about inclusion. Resources like those provided by RHFSP are important, she says, because they help create important conversations.

Vanessa Pollard, Rick Hansen Foundation Ambassador. Jennifer Kimbley photo.

These compassionate conversations lead to more social awareness and confidence for people with disabilities, ensuring they feel comfortable in their classroom and community. "They won't have to fear any negative consequences because they have a disability, and they'll feel accepted and included because they're just being seen as regular people."

To learn more, and to download your free resources or to book an RHF Ambassador presentation, visit *www.RickHansen.com/Schools*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Madeline Barber is the staff writer for the Rick Hansen Foundation, communicating the importance of accessibility and inclusion. She is also the co-publisher of SAD Magazine, supporting under-represented, local, and emerging artists.

Code-switching:
Navigating colonial systems as IBPOC students and teachers

By Kiran Sidhu, teacher, Richmond

CODE-SWITCHING: you may have heard this term used in language circles, often lauded as a testament to the resilience and functional capability of people of colour who speak multiple languages. According to Oxford, it is defined as "the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation." In reality, there is a whole lot more to code-switching than merely language. For many of us, code-switching between languages also means code-switching between different sets of ideas, beliefs, and values, a whole other identity when the situation requires. This "skill" can be harmful for many of our Indigenous, Black, People of Colour (IBPOC) teachers and students alike, who routinely switch between identities on a daily basis in order to be successful in British Columbia's classrooms.

Growing up in a Punjabi household in Vancouver, I quickly learned to code-switch between English and Punjabi with ease and fluency in both languages and cultures. It was easy to see that to be successful at school, a predominantly white space dominated by orderliness, structure, and liberal white female teachers, I needed to not only speak English, but to also be composed, work on assignments alone, follow arbitrary rules, and sit in formation for six hours a day.

At home, I was a completely different Kiran. I was loud, boisterous, and funny. I spoke out of turn, was outspoken, and participated in communal activities with my siblings. The rules and values I found comfort in at home were in such drastic contrast to those I encountered at school.

I found myself self-editing for teachers at school in order to be accepted and valued as a good student. My home identity was never affirmed at school, never invited into the classroom. The implicit messages my teachers sent me came in what was missing from classroom practices, missing from the books we were reading, missing from the projects we were given, and missing from the games we played. I don't remember ever reading a story or novel with an IBPOC character or author, nor a mention of ethnicity, culture, or identity in school. Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be a way to be successful at school without leaving my identity at home, so, at school I constantly had to hide a part of who I was.

Author Kiran Sidhu photographed in Janaury 2020 by Luis Isidoro.

School-aged Kiran at home. Photo provided by author.

As harmful as this practice was to my identity, it has greatly informed my practice as a teacher. I now know that when we expect our students to exist a certain way, we are telling them that there isn't value in their "other" ways of being, and that is an unjustly projected belief that our students will internalize.

I know that emotional damage is done when young people can't be themselves. When we don't bring their narratives, stories, values, and experiences into our classrooms we are propagating violence on their sense of identity. When teachers transpose their white gaze and colonial lens onto IBPOC students, we are causing great harm.

I know that valuing a single path to success in schools is not helping anyone. I know that we must de-colonize our schools, practices, and beliefs, but we also must put in the work because it will not be easy to dismantle centuries of harmful practices. As a teacher who is a product of the same colonial system I now teach in, I am committed to learning and unlearning in order to be truly inclusive in spaces I hold power. Can you say the same?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Some readers may be more familiar with the acronym BIPOC where IPBOC was used in this article. The BCTF will engage members of colour this year to talk about how we use language and terminology like this one to ensure our editorial standards align with the community's needs and expectations.

There is no vaccine for racism

By Amanda Kong, teacher, Coquitlam

AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATE, I am strongly opposed to racism and inequity. This sensitive topic is often brushed aside because of fear. With the growing rise of anti-Asian sentiment because of COVID-19, racism, discrimination, prejudice, and micro-aggressions are quickly spreading, like a "new" virus. However, this virus, unlike COVID-19, has existed for a long time. It managed to survive by adapting itself to changing environments. People often lump racism and other traits, such as bigotry and ignorance, together as mutually inclusive, such as the belief that a person cannot be racist if they are well-intentioned or progressive. Like COVID-19, racism mutated to survive in our society, so that while explicitly racist language and attitudes are no longer acceptable in polite culture, other, seemingly innocent language and attitudes are where racism survives and propagates.

For example, the question, "Where are you from?" identifies the person questioned as a perpetual foreigner. Power inequity is established when such a question is asked, no matter how well-intentioned. This inequity creates a sense of helplessness, because speaking or standing up usually, in my experiences, results in being labeled as "sensitive" or "difficult." Both labels close any potentially helpful dialogue to resolve the conflict or inspire solidarity. In fact, it sometimes feels like calling people out on their racism is less acceptable than the act itself.

As I write this article, I am able to process these complex emotions as I realized that we all have voices. It is a biological need to want to be heard and understood. We can keep opening up the conversations and creating hashtags to promote tolerance, kindness, and empathy; however, good words and intentions don't always translate into good actions.

As an Asian-Canadian or Canadian-born Chinese, I struggled with reconciling eastern and western cultural values of "silence." When I was young, my grandparents taught me to stay silent to avoid conflicts. To quote Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, "Silence is a source of great strength." Conversely, in western culture, silence can be viewed as a void that needs to be filled. In other words, I should speak up and stand up for myself.

I recall my earliest memory of racial inequality when I was forced to attend an English as an additional language (EAL) class in elementary school. To this day, I am baffled at the rationale of my having to read passages below my reading level. However, at the age of seven, I was more concerned that I would no longer have time for arts and crafts, as this time was dedicated to the new EAL class.

My mother quickly and decisively reacted by having a conversation with my classroom teacher. During the conversation, the teacher apologized but never gave a

"As educators, we need to guide students to find their voices as they research the biological and social construction of race and racism."

reason for my sudden EAL placement or the apology itself. After that, I happily resumed my art class. My mom told me the entire exchange was awkward, and it became apparent that I had been singled out, not based on merit, but on race. It is only later in my adulthood that I realized that every single Asian student in my class was pulled out to attend EAL. This conflict could have been easily silenced, but my mom spoke up for me.

Recently, familiar feelings of conflicting cultural norms surfaced as I felt the social pressure of wearing a face mask (or not). In Asia, masks are encouraged as a civic duty to help prevent the spread of diseases. Since the outbreak of SARS, masks have become a symbol of solidarity and reassurance. In contrast, there is a cultural resistance to wearing masks in the west. Perhaps western communication relies more heavily on facial expressions and there is a greater emphasis on individuality. Mask-wearing can thus be seen as forced conformity, and not an act of solidarity. Some feel that mask-wearing displays vulnerability and fear. As we are hard-wired to disguise fear under threat, masks are then associated with weakness.

Overall, in the west there is a lack of social solidarity in mask-wearing, as some people take this threat of pandemic in a personal manner. Unfortunately, the debate around masks has resulted in stigma, so that those who do wear a mask draw unwanted attention. I realized that masks can help protect others from the virus, but not racism. As a person of colour, I am aware that my mask-wearing face consciously and unconsciously triggers anxiety, fear, and anti-Asian discrimination.

As a biology teacher, I wanted to channel these negative thoughts on racial inequity by increasing awareness in the biology curriculum. In the beginning, I wanted to create lesson plans with hooks, learning goals, teacher notes, and suggested activities. However, racism is such a deep, divisive, and difficult topic that each teacher may approach it differently to adapt to their students.

I also learned the importance of having a voice, and I challenge teachers to empower students to come up with inquiry questions pertaining to racism in their eyes. Power imbalances and systematic racism affect all voices. As educators, we need to guide students to find their voices as they research the biological and social construction of race and racism. Race isn't real, but racism is very real. This global pandemic has shifted our attention to our vulnerabilities and changing social norms.

Experts and leaders do not know what the future may hold. As teachers in these unprecedented times, we are not the experts in the classroom. I believe when we act instead as facilitators and mediators, students will challenge their own beliefs and identities. Learning becomes memorable when it is personal. This learning opportunity also helps us, as teachers, to open our eyes to the complexities of power inequalities. None of us are immune to racism, and there is no vaccine.

SAMPLE INQUIRY TOPICS

- Is race genetic or socially constructed?
- How do micro-agressions affect health and well-being?
- What does it mean to be a person of colour?
- How do our own cultural experiences influence the development of perceptions of race?
- Is there an undue burden on people of colour to manage experiences of racism for others?
- What is racial privilege?
- How is genetics reshaping the conception of race?

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

- The belief that there is more genetic variation between races than there is within them.
- The belief that racial groups differ cognitively and behaviourally simply because of genetic differences between races.
- People of the same racial group are genetically uniform.
- People of disparate races are categorically different.
- Biologically influenced abilities cannot change.

Source: *bscs.org/our-work/rd-programs/towards-a-more-humane-genetics-education/*

Tech ed during COVID-19: Safety, engagement, and access



By Kieran Forde, Rachel Ralph, and Jillianne Code,
Faculty of Education, UBC

HAVE YOU EVER taken swimming lessons? (Or did you just get tossed into the lake and told, "Sink or swim!"?) In those lessons, you get into your swimsuit, jump in a pool, and learn how to exhale underwater, to hold your breath, and various strokes to keep you afloat. Now, imagine doing those swimming lessons online.

Not the same, is it? Sure, you can practice holding your breath and flap about on the floor imitating the different strokes, but not much else. That is similar to what happened to tech ed teachers in BC when they had to figure out how to teach their students to build birdhouses or use a welder, but online.

In the same way that learning to swim requires getting wet, the tech ed curriculum requires the opportunity to experience tools and materials in a "hands-on" context. The suspension of in-class instruction in K–12 education in BC on March 17, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in "emergency remote teaching" (ERT).

ERT, a sudden switch to teaching and learning online, came with a myriad of challenges that many educators were unprepared for. As educators of tech ed teachers at UBC, we wanted to survey the tech ed teachers in BC and present a snapshot of the challenges and impact of ERT.

One of the main barriers to learning was the lack of student access to the tools they needed. Further, there was no way to ensure student safety if hands-on lessons were attempted remotely. Here's one teacher's explanation:

"I cannot deliver instructions on safety or procedure, nor can I assign project work to students without supervising them on tool/equipment use. They might not have access to any materials, tools, or other supplies."

Many teachers said that this led to a lack of student engagement and explained that they could only work on units that focused on theory. One teacher wrote, "Student buy-in has been low. Many of the reasons for signing up for a tech ed class (hands-on work, physical project to take home, the teacher) are not the same or entirely missing from online learning."

In addition, the lack of student access to "shop tools," as well as digital tools, both hardware and software, hampered teachers' ability to engage with students. Many teachers pointed out that their students lacked the computer hardware—"Few students with mice ... tough to do 3D modelling work without"—and licensed software that they needed to complete assignments—"Many of the projects that 'could be done from home,' can only be completed by about 10% of my students."

Where these tools were available, teachers highlighted other access issues: "Some students have one computer for up to seven students in a household." These access issues were compounded when a student's family situation was facing additional, and often more pressing, concerns: "Limited WiFi due to remote residence, inability to logon due to district issues, family is in a crisis with food and lodging."

Looking to the future, teachers were concerned that tech ed would be severely affected if classes continued to be taught online in the fall. Several teachers expressed sentiments, such as, "This will kill tech ed if we do not go back or find a way to provide students with technology." Several also mentioned the fear that student enrollment would drop if students couldn't experience the hands-on components of Tech Ed. For many students, the hands-on component was the very reason they chose the elective: "Kids want shop classes because they want to be active and learn by making and doing."

At the same time, some teachers saw an opportunity in the sudden experience of ERT, with one noting, "Remote learning has a lot to offer, especially in a blended model, but tech ed cannot be fully converted to remote learning." The experience of providing instruction online during ERT has shown that some parts of the tech ed curriculum can be conducted effectively online: "One could do all the power tool safety orientation online using videos and quizzes and perhaps a module on hand drafting and design"— but other parts would need to be done in the classroom.

As we move forward into the hybrid learning environment, considerations around the hands-on element of the curriculum have come to the fore. The BC Ministry of Education *Continuity of Learning Planning Guide for Teachers* explains that the in-class instruction may focus "on those parts of the curriculum that are more effectively taught face-to-face, such as science labs and other hands-on learning." In reimagining the delivery of tech ed, the teachers will benefit from familiarity in approaching tasks with a design mindset. Tech ed teachers will not be alone in this challenge. They can support each other through the BC Technology Education Association (see text box below). They can also learn from colleagues in other "hands-on" subjects, such as home economics, fine arts, music, and physical health education. It is likely their colleagues in these subjects also needed to overcome the difficulties around access to tools, equipment, space, and materials. As a result, sharing successful strategies with such colleagues could be quite helpful.

While some of the preparatory work for teaching someone to swim can be done out of the pool (breathing exercises, modeling strokes, etc.), it is hoped that the online component of the tech ed curriculum can do some front-end online work, with the rest being hands-on. Hopefully, some of the lessons learned from being thrown into the deep end during ERT will transfer into better online teaching and learning in the future. The provision of limited in-class instruction will allow tech ed to not only stay afloat but to thrive and be recognized as a valuable, perhaps even critical, elective in the years ahead.

JOIN A PSA TODAY!

The BC Technology Education Association ***(bctea.org)*** is a provincial specialist association (PSA) of the BCTF. PSAs are channels for members to exchange ideas on research, teaching strategies, curriculum development, and other shared interests, including how to navigate emergency remote learning in these challenging times. Whether you teach a hand-on discipline, like tech ed, or academics, like social studies, there's a PSA for you. Learn about the BCTF's 32 PSAs at ***bctf.ca/PSAs***.

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COVID-19 and climate change:
Managing existential anxiety in your students

By Ruvini Amarasekera, MD Candidate, UBC Faculty of Medicine

"THIS IS A VERY CHALLENGING TIME for teenagers in particular," said BC's Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry in one of her daily addresses, and she could not be more right. COVID-19 has thrown us all a curveball, but for youth, this hits especially hard.

Even before this pandemic, youth anxiety was a concerning issue. Anxiety disorders in youth are common and are associated with higher rates of comorbid psychiatric conditions, suicidality, and difficulties with cognition, attention, sleep, academic performance, and maintaining peer relationships. Despite the stark outlook, there is a silver lining: teachers can play a large role in maintaining students' mental well-being by supporting them to use strategies to manage anxiety.

Normal feelings of existential anxiety, or anxieties about our survival as a species, can result from real threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In a May 2020 statement, United Nations health experts warned that this pandemic may lead to a long-term mental health crisis. Since the COVID-19 pandemic is the largest global event that has occurred during the lifetime of today's youth, they may be especially affected. For instance, adolescents spend much of their time with peers outside the home; these interactions are limited during the pandemic. Additionally, adolescents graduating during the pandemic face an unsteady job market and an uncertain post-secondary education experience, providing only more potential anxieties.

As we are amidst this pandemic, I cannot help but draw parallels between COVID-19 and climate change. Perhaps this is because both the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are driven by our global economic model. Capitalism has encouraged industrialized farming and the trade of wild and domestic animals, creating more opportunities for pathogens to pass between species. For instance, the avian influenza (bird flu) is commonly spread when the virus passes from wild fowl, to domestic poultry, and then to humans. Similarly, scientists believe the SARS-CoV-2 virus originated from bats and/or pangolins that humans came into contact with during wildlife trading. Similarly, capitalism has encouraged us to overconsume non-renewable resources such as oil and metal to drive our economies, with little regard for the environment.

As these human activities have negatively affected the climate, many people feel fearful, a feeling psychologists call "eco-anxiety." Eco-anxiety, another example of existential anxiety, is a well-justified response to a real threat: there is ample evidence that human-driven activities are leading to coastal erosion, thawing permafrost, and increased heat waves, droughts, and flooding.

There are also significant health effects associated with these changes, including the spread of infectious diseases, a loss in land-based food security for Indigenous populations in Canada, and increased respiratory conditions because of air pollution. Inuit peoples have described the impact of climate change on their environment and culture through the word *uggianaqtuq* (pronounced OOG-gi-a-nak-took), meaning "friend who is acting unpredictably." No matter how real the threat is, psychiatrist Dr. Lise van Susteren explains, "You want to be anxious enough to take action, but not so anxious that you become paralyzed."

"... teachers can prepare themselves to address students' ongoing fears and worries about climate change, along with their concerns about the pandemic."

Eco-anxiety may disproportionately affect youth because it feels like the world is looking to them for solutions. "We have been increasingly concerned about anxiety and disempowerment in our [youth] audiences," says Dr. Mary-Wynne Ashford, a retired high school teacher and physician who offers high schools a 90-minute presentation about preventing nuclear war. "They tell us they feel helpless, particularly about climate change. We do not want to add to their sense of a world out of control, but rather to make them aware that we can make a difference."

Youth may be uncertain about their futures and feel frustrated toward governments and large corporations because of their inaction, a sentiment voiced by youth activist Greta Thunberg. As we return to schools this September, teachers can prepare themselves to address students' ongoing fears and worries about climate change, along with their concerns about the pandemic.

So, what are some ways you can be prepared? There are many strategies that can be applied to the COVID-19 pandemic in the short-term and extended to climate change over time to manage existential anxiety and promote mental wellness. Below are some suggestions.

Strategies to manage anxiety and promote wellness

Be vigilant for students showing signs of mental distress, especially those who have pre-existing conditions. Start conversations with students about how the pandemic has affected them to gauge their mental well-being. This can also be applied to eco-anxiety; provide space for discussions about current events, including their emotional impact on students. Be aware of the healthcare professionals available to support students.

Take students' concerns seriously; this is a large worry for students reaching out to their teachers for support. It is normal to feel anxious during a pandemic; validate their feelings. Being non-judgmental, empathetic, and an active listener may be enough to put your students' minds at ease, as students often look to their teachers for reassurance. These skills will be particularly important to practice during online teaching, where non-verbal communication is limited.

Be especially mindful about how these issues affect your students individually. Their socio-economic status, ethnicity, and gender, among other factors, may affect their experience, and it is important to acknowledge these differences. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked an increase in overt anti-Asian racism; it will be particularly important to be aware of and stop any bullying that may occur in the classroom.

Identify yourself or other school staff as a resource to students and their families. There are also many websites that can provide guidance outside of the school setting: the BC government's erase website *www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase* and Open School BC's Keep Learning webpage *www.openschool.bc.ca/keeplearning* are two examples.

Provide students with tools to manage their mental well-being. Explore coping strategies such as meditation, exercise, creating art, limiting news consumption, and connecting to others.

Remember that youth are resilient. During the pandemic, youth have found creative ways to stay connected, manage their feelings of anxiety, and help their communities. Similarly, youth have been leading climate justice discussions and are at the forefront of recent climate strikes. Show them you care by supporting their advocacy and community initiatives. Taking action is the best way to manage normal feelings of existential anxiety.

Be a good role model. Practise physical distancing, wash your hands properly, and follow the government's guidelines. Regarding climate change, take the time to learn about climate issues and support climate justice efforts. Practical ways to reduce your school's eco-footprint can be switching from paper to electronic systems for assignments and using green transportation.

Take care of yourself. As the adage goes, "you can only give to others what you have yourself." Take some time to reflect on how these uncertain times have affected you. Your hard work, patience, and care are appreciated by your students, their families, and the community.

While this pandemic may have temporarily changed the school system, there are lessons that we can all learn. The strategies above can be useful to address students' existential anxieties both in the coming months and beyond. As teachers, you can help foster mental wellness in your students; this will be especially important to keep in mind as students navigate their lives with COVID-19.

(Re)considering the role of police in schools for Indigenous students

By Dr. Victor Brar, teacher, Surrey

THE TRAGIC DEATH of George Floyd at the hands of Minnesota police has brought the topic of police relations with minorities to forefront of civic discussion. This debate has spilled over into Canada with several recent cases of police brutality against Indigenous people.

Schools are a microcosm of society, and the same discussions are also taking place in schools as they undergo a level of deep introspection regarding the necessity of having a police presence in schools, particularly as it relates to the social-emotional well-being of Indigenous students. Indigenous peoples have suffered generations of damage in all aspects of their existence at the hands of key institutional structures, which include schools and law enforcement, and as educators we need to closely (re)view the nature of this relationship.

Academic literature is replete with cases of how Indigenous learners are amongst the most vulnerable segments of the student population. We need to be more responsive to the needs of historically marginalized groups regarding having police present in their schools and to make progressive and concrete changes.

The intent of this opinion piece is not to malign the police—they perform an inherently dangerous function that is necessary for the safety and success of a civil society—but rather spur a debate among educators as to why we need to (re)consider their

role in schools given their historically fraught relationship with Indigenous communities.

The roots of this unsettling relationship between schools, the police, and Indigenous students lies in the racist chapters of Canadian history and unjust government policies of assimilation and paternalism. The historical injustices that Indigenous Peoples have suffered at the hands of successive Canadian governments have been clearly illuminated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of 2015 that described the overall policies of the government toward Indigenous Peoples as "cultural genocide."

Residential schools were a key institutional mechanism employed by the government to pursue its relentless policies of assimilation and paternalism, and it utilized the levers of law enforcement and the judiciary to do so. From this historical perspective, generations of Indigenous Peoples have (and rightfully so) a very fearful attitude about schools and law enforcement as being institutions that were complicit and active agents in their cultural erasure.

The TRC recommended authentic healing and reconciliation take place to give Indigenous Peoples their rightful agency, but I wonder if that can happen in the presence of police, who represent an institution that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their homes to place them into residential schools where many suffered irreparable physical and psychological harm? It is hard enough for schools to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples given the role they played in that trauma. Having police present in schools might only hinder the small gains that are being made.

But what is clear from the TRC is that the systemic and legislated racism that Indigenous Peoples have endured for generations in Canada makes them an extraordinary case that deserves extraordinary considerations. Perhaps it is time for educators to put our relationship with police on pause and look for an alternative that is sensitive to Indigenous learners, and to this end I provide what I believe to be a sensible and pragmatic solution.

Moving forward, I believe that the educative function that has been fulfilled by the police could be performed by other groups that have a positive connection with Indigenous Peoples. What's to say that important police-administered educational programs in schools cannot be effectively done by other professionals in the community that Indigenous students do not fear?

Furthermore, couldn't schools include professionals of Indigenous ancestry and have them take a more prominent role in education of Indigenous youth? True reconciliation cannot take place in the presence of fear, and the death of Mr. Floyd marks the time to correct historical wrongs. We can ignore these injustices no longer.

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Surrey Teachers' Association Convention: A virtual success

By Erin Coleman and Kevin Amboe, teachers, Surrey

OUR CONVENTION COMMITTEE lost seven months of work in an instant—or so it appeared at first.

The Surrey Teachers' Association (STA) organizes the largest annual teacher-organized professional development opportunity in Canada. Enshrined in our collective agreement, the convention is held on the first Friday of May. Workshops are hosted at four school sites in Surrey, and there are multiple excursion sites around the Lower Mainland. Thousands of BCTF members attend the one-day event as workshop participants and presenters.

It takes a year to plan our convention. At first, the work is slower: just the basics of confirming bookings with the district for the use of buildings, considering keynotes, and electing a new convention committee. The work crescendos just before spring break. This year we had completed all the planning: Ryan McMahon, an Anishinaabe comedian, podcaster, and writer was booked as keynote, more than 200 sessions were scheduled, 10 excursions were confirmed, four sites were organized, the catering was contracted, and volunteers were in place. We were ready to open registration after returning from spring break.

Then COVID-19 came. It felt like April Fools, but the joke didn't go away.

The world was in a pandemic and we were under physical isolation protocols. The Ministry of Education, unions, and districts were scrambling to form a plan for continued educational opportunities for students. Teachers were scrambling for ways to provide those opportunities.

The convention committee was faced with a decision. Do we go ahead with convention and how? Teachers were facing some of the steepest learning of their careers, and they needed professional development support and collaboration with colleagues.

This event is in our collective agreement and we were not willing to budge on giving up our rights to organize, plan, and host this amazing teacher-directed conference. That left us only one option—we committed to continuing with a virtual STA Convention. We decided to shift from the plans for 3,600 people in buildings with catering, room set-up, projection, and sound technology, to a virtual format.

We had four weeks.

In doing so, we became the largest virtual teacher-organized professional development opportunity in Canada.

With less than a month to prepare, our convention committee re-created the event into a virtual format. It was not just the committee that had to adapt, we needed presenters to convert their workshops to online sessions as well. In the end, we had 110 virtual sessions. Ryan McMahon, our keynote, agreed to present a webinar format.

We needed technical support for our vision. EasyReg, the conference software service that we use for registration, was instrumental in the construction of the virtual format.

> *"... we became the largest virtual teacher-organized professional development opportunity in Canada."*

We consulted with them regularly while we simultaneously developed and implemented our plan, and with their help, we settled on the appropriate platform for our needs. They provided training sessions to presenters. They booked more than 100 Zoom meetings and adapted our registration system to be able to send out the Zoom meeting information to each registrant. They also assisted by hosting trial runs with presenters the week prior to the conference to test out this new-to-us medium. Lastly, EasyReg provided vital troubleshooting support on the day of convention.

There were several celebrations:

- Triple the number of attendees at our Aboriginal sessions with an average of 1,000 registrants during each session time slot.
- The keynote had over 3,000 attending during a single time slot.
- Presenters from Ontario and Washington were able to participate.
- More than 300 attend pensions workshops.
- We were able to host a lunchtime executive question and answer session with over 100 members attending.

If you are considering a partial or fully virtual conference, here are some highlights and hints:

- Have a trial run with presenters.
- Ensure that all members who think they are registered check their email for their registration confirmation.
- Identify moderators from the committee or executive to support presenters if they would like to have help navigating presenting and accepting live questions during the session.
- Assign volunteers to join the start of every workshop and, ensure that the session gets started smoothly.
- Have an ongoing Zoom meeting for your volunteer team on the day of the event to be able to come and go from as needed throughout the day. This allowed for ongoing and up-to-date identification of challenges and developing solutions immediately.

Three unintended consequences of a virtual convention:

- No complaints about the food.
- No complaints about the parking.
- Over 60 presentations already signed up for next year's convention from those who were unable to present virtually this year.

What would we do differently next time?

We're already planning for next year and the focus will be on a virtual format again. We'll try a hybrid model, if health regulations allow small gatherings, but are excited to be able to use and apply what we learned from our experience this year.

Quotes and comments:

"Convention Day was like my first day teaching on my practicum: I had no idea what to expect, no idea where things were, or even how the day was going to pan out, but I knew I wanted to be there. Convention was a challenge, but a great adventure." – Nota Spencer

"Thank you so much, Erin and the whole convention committee. I just registered and it went very smoothly! I'm really looking forward to the keynote and my workshops. I am so impressed with the convention committee moving this whole event (the largest yearly PD event in BC, I might add!) online on quite short notice. Amazing!"
– Anne McNamee

"Thank you for all your hard work team! The keynote was amazing, and both of my workshops were excellent!"
– Jatinder Jassal

"Bravo to all for changing course and working with the reality of our circumstances." – Laura Barker

"I registered yesterday, and I am stoked to participate! I love that there are workshops super relevant to what is happening right now, and they are taught by actual teachers! Who better to learn from? Thanks for making this available to all of us, and for transitioning so seamlessly into an alternate format to accommodate the changing times!" – Violette Baillargeon

SEPF: A Francophone education in BC

By Jennifer Kimbley, BCTF staff

WHICH LOCAL UNION spans the entire province of British Columbia? Le Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du programme francophone de la Colombie Britannique (SEPF), SD 93!

With over 6,000 students (and more joining every year) at 47 schools around the province, SEPF is the local union for Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF, which translates to Francophone school district), and offers BC curriculum in French. Some of these sites are stand-alone schools, such as École Régionale Gabrielle-Roy in Surrey, a K–12 school, and others are separate programs run within English school district buildings. Some SEPF schools are in buildings that were not designed to be schools.

CSF is public school, and it's different from French Immersion. "Our district offers French education for students who have the right to be educated in French as outlined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*," says Stéphane Bélanger, SEPF President.

"French Immersion is for students who want to learn French as a new language."

Section 23 of the *Charter* guarantees Canadian citizens living in BC the right to have their children educated in a Francophone education program. This provision protects French speakers in a minority context because there have been many cases of assimilation for Francophone minorities who did not have access to education in French. For students to be admitted to the program, one of the following must apply:

- Their first language learned and still understood is French.
- At least one of their parents must have received primary school instruction in French (not French Immersion).
- They have received or are receiving education in Canada in French (not French Immersion).

SEPF faces some familiar challenges with recruitment and retention of teachers. "It's very tough to keep teachers, especially with the cost of living in British Columbia and the low salaries," says Stéphane. "Also, many members find it challenging to get their experience and education recognized."

Most of SEPF's 542 members come from outside of British Columbia. The majority are from Québec and the eastern provinces, but some are from Europe and Africa.

This distance from home can be challenging. Flights home are expensive. The pandemic has compounded the secluded feeling caused by distance. "Due to COVID-19, many members felt isolated from their loved ones and family," says Stéphane.

There are perks to working and studying in this district. All students have access to an iPad or MacBook Air, and most contract teachers get either an iPad Pro or MacBook (depending the grade they teach).

There are other benefits as well. Parents appreciate the depth of the language instruction.

"I like that it's an authentic environment, where everyone who works in the school is using French as their primary language. The secretary is using French, the custodian is using French, the counsellor is using French," says mother of four and BCTF Executive Committee member, Violette Baillargeon. "For me, having learned a second language when I moved from Montréal to British Columbia, I knew that total immersion was the way to help my kids learn the language."

Parent Cécilia Huard is also a fan. "The CSF offers a rare opportunity of a bilingual education in the public system. I love the multiculturalism and the diversity of the community," she says. "There are people from all over

the Francophone world (Québec, North Africa, Switzerland, Belgium, France …) all bringing their own uniqueness in term of accents, food, music, etc. It's enriching for the kids!"

Students are happy with the program also. Recent high school graduate Cloé Wilkie says, "I loved being part of the French school program. I found it to be a lot more intimate than regular school, in terms of relationships with my peers, but also teachers. It felt like family."

"Having a second language in Canada has been really helpful for me in terms of finding work as well," she says. "If I do indeed have kids one day, I'd certainly put them in the French school program."

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Supreme Court of Canada rules BC violated French-language education *Charter* rights

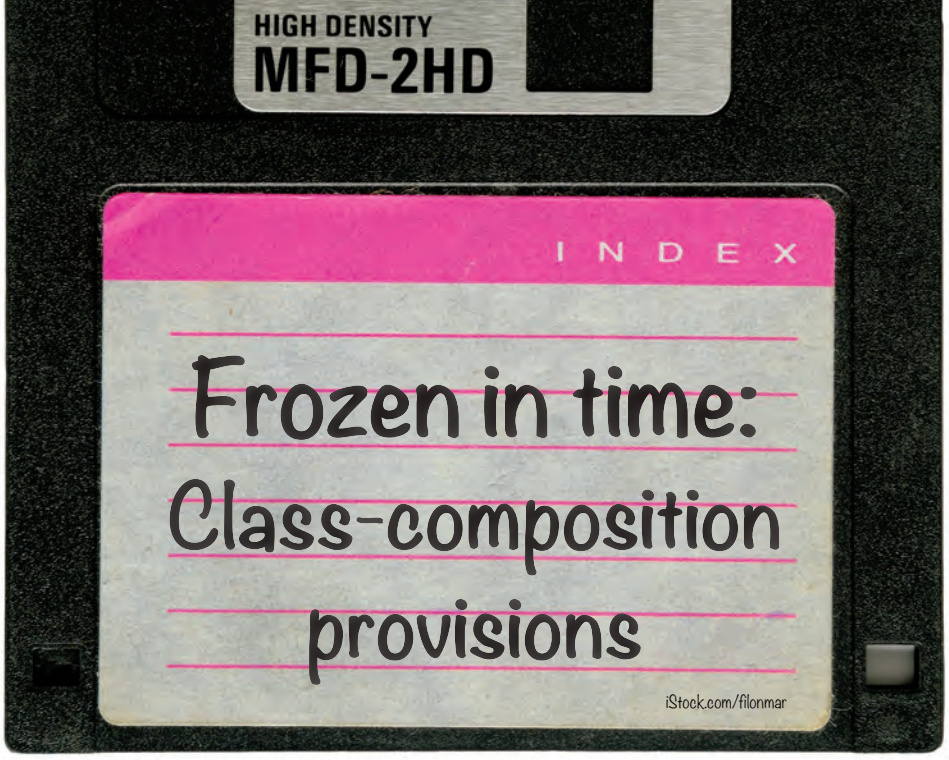
This June, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered the government of British Columbia to pay $6 million in damages for underfunding the French district's school bus transportation system and $1.1 million for operations.

The 7-2 decision said the BC government's funding for the school district, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), violated section S.23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees education in one of Canada's official languages.

The case was brought by some parents and the school board, who argued the provincial government had denied their *Charter* rights with systemic underfunding of SEPF schools.

This ruling will have a lasting effect on Francophone education in BC. "More schools will be opened over the next years," says Stéphane Bélanger, SEPF President. "The court decision orders schools to open in specific areas, such as Burnaby and Victoria."

Above: École Régionale Gabrielle-Roy, a stand-alone K–12 Francophone school in Surrey. Jennifer Kimbley photo. **Opposite:** BCTF EC member Violette Baillargeon with her children. Photo provided.



By Kip Wood, teacher, Nanaimo

SIXTY-FIVE TIMES. That's how many times the BCTF and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) bargaining teams had met across the table before November 2019. Labour Relations Board-appointed arbitrator Dave Schaub worked with the parties for 16 of those sessions. On November 8, BCPSEA issued a statement that included a quote from Stephanie Higginson, President of the BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA):

BCPSEA developed its bargaining objectives through extensive consultation with the 60 boards of education in the province. Our member boards were clear in their feedback to BCPSEA—we need changes to the restored language, which was originally negotiated in the 1980s and was already out of date in the 1990s.

In fact, BCPSEA made no attempt to do any updating. Their only proposal sought to eliminate class-composition provisions entirely. Further, they did not entertain any working-conditions provisions for any teachers who did not have those guarantees, and all BCTF proposals to update existing provisions were dismissed. The only BCPSEA proposal that resembled a counteroffer was to replace all class-composition provisions with a "Workload Assessment Committee" that gave the superintendent the power to decide what happens in a workload dispute. The attempt to strip previously negotiated provisions—the same provisions that were restored by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2016—was BCPSEA's position (hence the position of 60 school boards) for almost six months (April 2 – September 26, 2019).

The contract language that was restored by the Supreme Court of Canada decision was negotiated between 1988 and 1993 when all employment matters were bargained locally. The Nanaimo board, that Ms. Higginson is now a part of, along with the local teachers' association in Nanaimo agreed to working conditions provisions in 1991. In addition to primary class-size reductions and non-enrolling ratios being established provincially in 1998, those 1991 provisions remain frozen in time.

In 1994, the government of the day, only six years into the union model for teachers and their local employers, decided to decertify teacher locals and school boards and create a "two-tiered" model where provincial parties would assume the roles of certified bargaining agents and local parties would negotiate matters that were not cost items. Now that the 2019–22 Collective Agreement has been ratified by the respective sides, eight rounds of bargaining have occurred under the two-tiered model. No changes to class-composition provisions have been made in any of the eight rounds. In five of the eight rounds, bargaining working conditions was prohibited by a 2002 law (Bill 28)—the law that was deemed unconstitutional nearly 15 years later. But even when the parties could negotiate working conditions (1995, 1998, 2019), class-composition provisions were not modernized, updated, or revised.

Three rounds of full-scope local bargaining (1988–1993) led to disparities across the province. So, will the disparities ever be addressed, and will the existing provisions be revised through bargaining so that they are no longer "out of date," as has been suggested? It's safe to say that the provisions will be frozen in time into the future unless an attempt is made by the employer to address the workload of teachers.

It's clear that the employer has made no attempt to update working-conditions provisions for almost three decades. It's also clear that teachers, no matter where they teach, deserve to have workload limits in their collective agreement and the BCTF will continue to work toward that goal.

Then there are matters that need clarification:

- Did "extensive consultation" between school boards and BCPSEA take place?
- Is BCPSEA working for school boards or acting on their own?
- Do trustees and BCPSEA believe that teachers should have meaningful input regarding their working conditions, or do they believe that the employer, or the government, should dictate those conditions?
- And finally, what does updated language look like?

Until those questions are answered, provisions that are close to 30 years old will be frozen in time for years to come, and, until then, the provisions will remain "out of date."

Taking time

Understanding consent culture in a pandemic

By Derek DeGear, BCTF staff

WE WERE FORTUNATE to have not experienced a pandemic before COVID-19. The pandemic in many ways is a collective experience, and everyone in our communities and schools is navigating the challenges that have come with this, including the lockdown and move to only essential services, and now the staged "reopening" of society and school.

Although we are all affected by COVID, the challenges and barriers faced in navigating our interactions under this lens is unique for every individual. How can we ensure that our personal boundaries are respected? How do we understand what colleagues require to feel safe and comfortable when we work together? How can we use these times to teach students about a culture of consent?

There is a wide disparity in individual assessment of risk and personal levels of comfort. We see it in our communities. There are individuals wearing masks outdoors, while many are not. Some individuals always maintain a two-metre distance, and others are more flexible with their bubble when shopping or taking transit. While I enjoy the reopening of my favourite restaurants that I feel have good protocols in place, others are not yet comfortable dining out in any conditions. We may even know someone in our community who has stayed home throughout the pandemic, getting all required items by delivery, because of a substantial risk to their own health. Human comfort and risk management is complex and diverse, and ensuring we speak for our own boundaries, while respecting others, requires communication and consent.

Most of us do not have previous pandemic experiences to draw from here ... thankfully. However, without experience and practice in navigating consent in this new way, there is an increased chance we unknowingly violate the boundaries of those around us. Of equal concern is the potential for our own boundaries to be violated by others. A culture of consent applies beyond human sexuality, and the pandemic has presented a unique opportunity to further develop our awareness of how consent culture applies in all our interactions, practise our consent skills, and integrate consent culture into our school community.

Central to consent culture is taking the time to understand the boundaries of another and clearly express our own. This means not just rushing through our human interactions, but taking the time to pause, listen, and clarify to ensure we authentically understand and are not assuming what someone is comfortable with.

For example, I am trying to remember to pause before I enter a shared space, such as a colleague's office, to ensure I have clarified if the other person would prefer we move together to a larger space for our conversation or if I should come in. I try to remember to ask and then pause, to give others the time to consider the request, seek clarification from me if needed, and respond. This is not about a rush to yes or no. It is about clarity of how to move ahead when both of us may have very different COVID considerations and personal comforts. We also need time to consider our own boundaries, seek understanding, and then respond. Once boundaries are understood and consent is received, I know I can then move safely forward with kindness, respect, and greater confidence.

For our students, modelling the communication of consent during COVID is an opportunity to instill a valuable life skill that will apply in all aspects of their lives. The more practice children have in communicating consent, the more likely they are to apply this in the future to express their own boundaries and respect those of others. The opportunities to model and practise this in COVID are endless: navigating hallway traffic, washroom etiquette, shared workspaces, lunch tables, stairwells, and so forth. Establishing this culture of consent in our classrooms and schools now can go a long way to creating safe and inclusive spaces long after this pandemic reaches its eventual, and welcome, conclusion.

Explicit boundaries are an act of kindness, as they provide both parties with the road map to co-exist in even complex times such as these. Let's pause and take the time to ensure boundaries are understood and authentic consent is both given and received when working and learning together.

Author and Field Service assistant director Derek DeGear (right) and *Teacher* assistant editor Sarah Young (left) physically distancing in the BCTF office, aided by newly installed glass partitions. Jennifer Kimbley photo.

The importance of cultivating a growth mindset of intelligence

By Rob Broughton, school counsellor, West Vancouver

"YOU'RE SO SMART!"

Sounds like a nice compliment, right? Unfortunately, telling children that they are smart is damaging. It's counter-intuitive for most of us—what's wrong with telling children something positive about themselves? Should it not build their confidence and sense of self, make them feel more capable of facing the challenges that life presents? What's the possible downside of that?

As it turns out, there's a significant downside.

Research around the importance of cultivating a growth mindset of intelligence, rather than a fixed mindset, has been ongoing for the past decade. The basic idea is a profound questioning of the idea of intelligence generally. When intelligence is viewed as fixed—something that one has or doesn't—it removes a sense of control for kids. Perhaps it's genes, upbringing, or just a lucky chance that one is smart. But whatever the case, it's not about working hard and trying one's best.

A growth mindset, on the other hand, purports that intelligence, and learning in general, is the result of hard work. Sure, some things will come easier to us than others, but in the end, we are in control of what we accomplish. It's us who do it—not our genes, not some immutable characteristic of ourselves, nor anything else beyond our control. We can control a significant part of our own growth.

When a fixed view is internalized, success and failure in learning settings become meaningless. If a child can do something, this is a result of their intelligence, not their effort. They didn't do anything to achieve this, they're just lucky that they were smart enough. And, more ominously, if they do encounter challenges, there's little point in putting effort in. Because, if they were "smart," they'd be able to accomplish whatever task was put before them. In fact, perhaps it even means they're not smart, that they've been lied to about their intelligence.

There's a reason why process and effort, rather than innate ability, needs to be emphasized with kids. Children and teenagers are so in the moment that they don't have the ability to observe processes from beginning to end. Think about yourself: when you reflect on how you learned how to read, what comes to mind? Do you recall the hours your teachers spent reading to you, showing you words and letters, teaching you to painstakingly write your own name? Or does it seem like there was one moment where the squiggles on the page, almost magically, began to make sense and you could pull meaning from what was in front of you?

For most of us, we perceive it to be the latter, even though we know that this is a fiction. But if we believe it to be true, we'll expect it to happen. The trickiness of calculus should just reveal itself to us, essays should form magically from our pens, brilliant debate points should spring out of our mouths as soon as we open them. And if they don't? Well, there's not much point in trying; after all, it would be easy if I was smart.

As a high school counsellor, I meet these kids a little later on. I meet them when they've become paralyzed by fear that nothing they produce will measure up to the intoxicating idea of themselves they received as a youngster. I meet them when they've become so frightened that they can't measure up to the expectations placed on them that they're scared to put in any effort, lest it just become another opportunity for them to fail, to lose their status as a smart person. Obstacles seem impossible to overcome, and it's infinitely preferable to not take the risk in the first place.

There's some sadness to this. After all, these kids didn't do this to themselves. And no one meant to do it to them. The adults in these kids' lives just wanted to make them feel good and to feel good themselves for making a child smile. But there are heavy consequences to praising something perceived as beyond one's control.

Luckily, a better way to praise kids' accomplishments is possible with just a small shift in our thinking. Focus on effort, rather than talent, and praise process, rather than product. Below are a few examples of what this might sound like.

5 things to say instead of "You're so smart!"

"Nice work! Tell me about how you did that." Put the emphasis on what the child did. Help them engage with their choices and hard work, and relate that to their success.

"Nice grade! How did you manage that?" The compliment is fine, but again, relate the accomplishment to the work the child did and the choices they made—not only to their intelligence.

"Tell me about your drawing/test/essay/etc." Leave it open-ended. Let the child tell you about what they did, and leave grades out of the conversation completely. If it's important to them, they'll bring it up.

"Who is someone who helped you learn that?" This develops the child's sense of gratitude and connectedness to their accomplishments.

"What inspired you to put all that work in?" Was it just to get a good grade? Or was there more to the child's experience of learning beyond seeking praise?

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Bullying and harassment: WorkSafeBC legislative review


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By Toni Grewal, BCTF staff

I CAN VIVIDLY RECALL being bullied and threatened by a classmate in Grade 10. It was over a minor incident, but, in typical high school fashion, it morphed into a major melodramatic misunderstanding! Fortunately, the situation resolved itself within a few weeks, and I was not physically harmed nor bullied again. Regardless, that singular event has left an indelible mark on my psyche. I remember it all—the feelings of anxiety, helplessness, uncertainty, fear, and the bully themselves.

Bullying and harassment is, unfortunately, commonplace in schools, and teachers as well as students are being bullied. I have heard from many teachers about how they have been harassed (often repeatedly) by students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. This leaves them feeling demoralized and has a detrimental impact on their overall health and well-being.

For teachers, reporting bullying and harassment is fraught with obstacles: they may not be believed, mocked or ridiculed for attempting to report, discouraged to file a complaint, and suffer recrimination for reporting. If the bully is the principal, what mechanism will ensure that the complaint brought against them will be investigated and by an appropriate party?

According to the BC Federation of Labour, "workplace bullying and harassment can take many forms, including verbal aggression, spreading malicious rumours, personal attacks, hazing, cyberbullying and other intimidating or humiliating behaviours." This is clear and broad-ranging language.

WorkSafeBC's Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) has weaker language. It falls under Workplace Conduct and is defined as follows:

(a) the attempted or actual exercise by a worker towards another worker of any physical force so as to cause injury, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives the worker reasonable cause to believe he or she is at risk of injury, and

(b) horseplay, practical jokes, unnecessary running or jumping or similar conduct.

The OHSR definition above emphasizes physical injury or harm, but it does not make reference to the psychological impact of bullying and harassment on a worker. Also, the examples listed do not adequately convey the overt and subtle types of bullying and harassment that can occur at school sites.

"... workers have the right to a workplace that is safe from bullying and harassment."

WorkSafeBC officers do not investigate whether bullying and harassment has taken place; they investigate whether the employer has a policy and process to address bullying and harassment, and then follow that process. The WorkSafeBC policies only obligate the employer to develop policies and procedures internally for bullying and harassment.

Employers may have developed policies, but will they be acted upon when bullying and harassment complaints are brought forward? What if the bully is the principal? WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety regulations exist to support and defend the rights of all workers, and workers have the right to a workplace that is safe from bullying and harassment.

WorkSafeBC is currently conducting a legislative review on Workplace Violence, Bullying and Harassment Regulations and Policies (Part 4 General Conditions, Sections 4.24 to 4.31). They have released a work plan that states the following:

Concerns have been raised regarding the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of current OHSR provisions dealing with improper workplace conduct and violence in the workplace, as well as current Prevention Manual policies on bullying and harassment. Recommendations have been made to:

(a) Expand the definition of violence in the OHSR to capture the continuum of inappropriate workplace behaviours, which are not captured by the current definition of violence;

(b) Elevate the bullying and harassment policies to the OHSR; and

(c) Address the differing provisions dealing with improper conduct and violence between workers and between a worker and a non-worker.

In September 2019, I attended the WorkSafeBC issues identification session on workplace violence, bullying, and harassment. The participants at the session also included the members of the BC Federation of Labour and representatives from other unions. The WorkSafeBC legislative review is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2020; however, the COVID-19 pandemic could affect this timeline.

Workplace well-being in the time of COVID-19

By Gail Markin, teacher, Langley

THE CASE for workplace well-being is well documented. We know from research and experience that workplace stress has an impact on the health, happiness, and success of the individual, and it also affects their families, their co-workers, and, in the case of educators, their students.

Traditional health and wellness initiatives in the workplace have focused on physical health and safety issues, but we need to look at workplace health and well-being in a more holistic way that includes social, emotional, and mental health as well. Nurturing these aspects of our health is especially important as teachers return to their classrooms this fall, and we find ourselves dealing with new sources of stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the easiest ways to look at health and well-being in the workplace is to consider three interconnected parts: self, other, and system.

Self

A huge part of well-being is the responsibility of the individual to take care of their own health. This traditionally means physical aspects, including sleep, nutrition, and exercise. Increasingly, we are also realizing the importance of including social-emotional learning (SEL) practices similar to the ones we are teaching students. These essential skills include self-awareness, managing emotions, empathy, perspective-taking, and problem-solving.

The same benefits that these skills provide for children also apply in the workplace. Individuals who can recognize and manage their own emotions and build successful relationships with others experience more success in the workplace. More and more employers are supporting individuals in practising both traditional self-care and increased SEL-f care as well, by facilitating professional development and workplace programs that support employee health in this more holistic way.

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Other

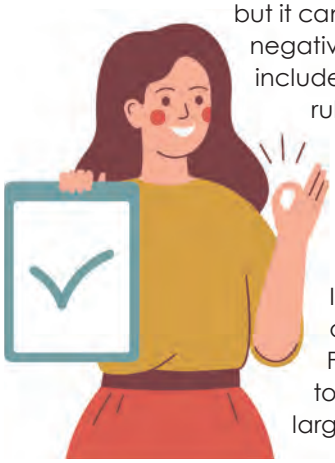
We can only reach a certain level of success all on our own. To reach our full potential we need to work together. More and more, research and experiences point to the important roles belonging and connection play in ensuring health and well-being, both for individuals and for our success in teams and organizations. I could be a very healthy individual and have a strong practice of self-care, but if I go into a workplace where I don't feel valued and cared for, I will not be well.

Mathew Lieberman, a social scientist who studies belonging, tells us that our need to belong is so powerful that it is one of the primary drivers of human behaviour. For a summary of his and others' fascinating research see my Tedx Talk, The Secret to Health, Happiness, and Success (cited below).

Once again, we can take the lead from the classroom, where we have seen how effective it can be when children feel seen, heard, and cared about. The same is true of adults. The highest performing teams are not the ones with the smartest or hardest working individuals, but the ones where everyone feels connected and valued. We need to know that in our workplaces it is safe to share ideas and make mistakes, because that is where creativity and innovation lives, just like in the classroom.

System

The third part of well-being is the system. This one is often forgotten in traditional workplace well-being strategies, but it can have a huge impact in both negative and positive directions. These include things like policies, practices, and rules—both written and unwritten—that either support our well-being or get in the way of it. The system is our way of engaging in the work together.



I think this systems work is often overlooked for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it may seem too big a hill to climb, as our organizations are large and have a long history of doing things in a certain way. It can be difficult to have a sense of efficacy around large systems policies and practices that are steeped in tradition and deeply ingrained in culture. While it is important to include big systems ideas, it is equally important to consider the smaller practices and ways of being in our workplaces that also affect our well-being and may be easier and less time-consuming to change. Anyone who has implemented a new computer system or tool that either made life easier or more frustrating knows the power of systems to change well-being.

The second reason that we are often reluctant to acknowledge the importance of systems in our workplace well-being strategies is that doing so can be interpreted as complaining or blaming either our leaders, or even worse, a nameless, faceless entity. It is important to both name this tension and cautiously avoid getting caught up in this way of viewing the system, as in fact, we are the system. It is people who make up systems and we are all co-creating and influencing them every day.

So, don't be afraid to be curious about why we do things certain ways. Don't hesitate to open up conversations and innovations around how we can make systems work better. These could be small things that make us feel better, like a gratitude wall in the staffroom where we can notice and name good things about each other. It could be how we greet and include TTOCs who come into our building. It could be so many other ways of being in our workplace. It doesn't have to be complicated to make a difference. This, of course, is another lesson you already know from the classroom. It is the small practices and ways of being together that matter.

These three components—self, other, and system—are closely connected and should all be considered when we are looking at workplace well-being. As an individual, I have a responsibility for my own health and well-being. My employer is also responsible for providing me with both a physically and psychologically safe workplace. While we can definitely think of these as a responsibility, we can also see them as excellent opportunities to create workplaces where we learn, grow, and flourish in this noble and important work of education.

Changing the words around is not enough: How to help students avoid plagiarism

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By Lorraine M. Lindsay, retired teacher

IN MY FOURTH YEAR of university, my European history professor assigned the class our first paper. He told us the story of a young man who had belonged to a fraternity and lived in its residence. His fraternity maintained a filing cabinet of "A" term papers written by previous fraternity brothers, meant to be used as resource material for succeeding generations.

This young man, having squandered too much time on partying, realized his term paper was due very soon and consulted the filing cabinet. He couldn't believe his luck when he found a paper on the very topic he'd been assigned! He typed up a copy, handed it in and sat back to wait for his A.

Imagine his shock and disbelief when he instead received an F. He rushed up to the professor's office to complain. "This paper is worth an A!" he cried. "Yes," the professor agreed, "it was an A paper when I wrote it twenty-five years ago."

I told this story numerous times in my career as a teacher-librarian, and I never failed to get the same reaction from students: faces raptly paying attention, mouths slightly open when I delivered the punchline, and then the light dawning in their eyes. Message heard and received.

High school teachers want to prepare those students who plan to go on to post-secondary education for its rigors. This will, of course, mean starting them from a young age, possibly their first year in high school, but preferably in middle school, to understand what plagiarism is, why it's unethical, and what the potential penalties are if caught.

My former colleague Diane Hayashi's excellent article on plagiarism appeared in the Nov/Dec 2004 issue of *Teacher* magazine. In it, she outlined some of the ways in which students commit plagiarism and ways teachers can do their own searching to find their "borrowed" material.

In the sixteen years since her article was published, the Internet has grown in both size and sophistication. A leading site in the detection of plagiarism, *www.Turnitin.com*, identifies a dozen practices of plagiarism on a continuum, ranging from the relatively innocent "inadvertent plagiarism," which refers to "forgetting to properly cite or quote a source or unintentional paraphrasing" to the out-and-out fraud of "contract cheating"—hiring someone to write a paper for you and turning it in as your own work.

Universities take the act of plagiarism very seriously and are consistent in the consequences they mete out for this offence against intellectual property. For example, the University of Victoria lists these actions: a grade of zero for the assignment; a grade of F for the course; rejection of parts or the whole of a graduate student's thesis; and a letter of reprimand that stays on the student's file for four years after graduation.

So, the stakes are pretty high for those students wishing to go on to higher education and professional careers. How can we teach students to avoid this unethical practice?

There is a growing movement toward inquiry-based learning, a teaching strategy that relies on the construction of open-ended questions, i.e., questions that can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" or that can't be answered by entering them into a search engine. Students must research the question's topic, generate facts, and come up with solutions. Critical thinking skills such as identifying bias, making inferences, and determining the material's relevance are also employed to identify the best information to use in order to arrive at a solution.

Working with a trained and experienced teacher-librarian will give your students the opportunity to learn and practise the skills related to research, including determining the most appropriate sources of information, note-taking strategies and formats, and summarizing, comparing, and evaluating the information in order to come to fact-supported conclusions.

I always required my students to turn in their rough notes and a bibliography. If students are taking notes on digital devices, ask them to email a copy to you immediately at the end of class, or at the end of their research time at home. Teachers can introduce students to sites such as *www.BibMe.org*, *www.EasyBib.com*, and *www.MyBib.com*, which come with built-in MLA, APA, and Harvard formats. These two requirements should help foil plagiarism attempts.

To reinforce the importance of the research process, I would use an evaluation rubric (many are available online, with formats ranging from the assigning of points to self-assessments with room for comments). When reviewed prior to a research project, this will give students an additional set of "markers" to guide them toward best practices.

If students are taught the proper research process as adolescents, there will be little or no need to resort to plagiarism in the adult phase of their lifelong learning journey.

Empowering students through inquiry during remote learning

By Lucy Yang, teacher, Delta

IT WAS APRIL 2020—a new normal for remote learning had been tentatively established. News outlets fanned an ever-present sense of anxiety that percolated in virtual staff meetings. Being the front-line support network for students, teachers were their go-to for answers—but we had none. The Ministry of Education and school districts provided many resources for teachers to explore to support the remote learning transition; though welcome, the myriad of links quickly became overwhelming. As a secondary English language arts teacher, I grasped onto the idea my colleagues and I had been discussing: inquiry.

Research has consistently shown that student-directed inquiry is an authentic and meaningful way for learners to take ownership of curricular competencies and content by actively choosing areas of interest to explore. Being motivated by one's interests is even more important in times of uncertainty and isolation to support learning as well as social-emotional well-being.

I skimmed the sections of *Inquiry Units for English Language Art*[1], an accessible and practical text published earlier this year that introduces inquiry structures and ideas teachers can use and adapt for middle and high school. The book explains that inquiry "… honors learning as socially situated and values the exploration of some texts as shared experience … an inquiry approach to teaching English language arts turns the most conventional approach on its head—by framing a consequential problem at the center of group study and introducing texts as sources of data and representations of ideas and life experiences to support exploration and dialogue." This means that instead of grounding learning on particular preselected texts like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, something I would have covered if we had returned to school in April, learning is centred around a problem, question, or theme that is explored through engaging with texts as sources of information and perspective.

This was a game-changer for me. I was shifting the dynamic between me and my students: they were leading their learning forward within the framework I set out as a guide. The learning process was made more effective when they utilized what was accessible and meaningful to them, particularly during remote learning when students had resources unique to their home environment. Capitalizing on students' "funds of knowledge"[2] outside of the classroom allows learning to be socially and culturally responsive as well as more authentic and equitable.

English Studies 12 inquiry project structure[3]

1. Choose a guiding theme, e.g., isolation, love, power, etc.
2. Choose texts relevant to the theme from different language arts streams[4], e.g., Netflix original (new media), young adult novel (literary studies), slam poem (spoken language), etc.
3. Respond to texts through critical analysis and/or creative representation.
4. Final reflection on inquiry process and learning.

There are numerous ways to customize this structure by designating specific platforms to support project layout and presentation, adding in specific text and response guidelines, as well as designing and sequencing activities to promote collaboration and build knowledge. I gave narrative feedback as formative assessment of the critical and creative responses to the texts, serving as stepping stones to the final reflection, which was assessed as a piece of formal writing on a four-point rubric based on Ministry performance standards. This allowed students to stay focused on the process of exploring their theme through engaging with texts and creating content. In the end, the emphasis of my assessment was less on how beautifully a student had drawn a representation of isolation in response to a certain text, but more on their reflection of how their drawing inspired by the text had informed and/or challenged their understanding of isolation.

I was astounded by some of the work my students had created. One student chose the theme of oppression, and all of his texts, from news articles to speeches, related to the Black Lives Matter movement—his responses included original poems and fictional journal entries from the perspectives of victims. Another student focused on loss and examined her favourite albums, accessing music videos, song lyrics, and interviews with artists. One student wrote to me, "I genuinely enjoyed creating my responses … I'm also really liking this project as a whole; being able to discuss aspects of a broader topic from multiple perspectives is very thought-provoking." I was deeply inspired by their work and found myself more connected to my students as I engaged with what they loved—and for that I was thankful, especially during a time when connection became so difficult.

These inquiry projects during remote learning empowered my students to exercise agency by investigating a topic they were passionate about and creating powerful content that was relevant and inspiring. I stepped back and supported their exploration—the students were front and centre at the helm, which really should be the case in education.

1 Forde, D., Bouque, A., Kahn, E. A., McCann, T. M. & Walter, C. C. (Eds.). (2020). *Inquiry units for English language arts: Inspiring literacy learning, grades 6 – 12.* Rowman & Littlefield.
2 Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D. & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice, 92,* 132-142.

3 Example project template on the theme of "change": *www.sites.google.com/deltalearns.ca/lyang*
4 *www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/english-language-arts/12/courses*

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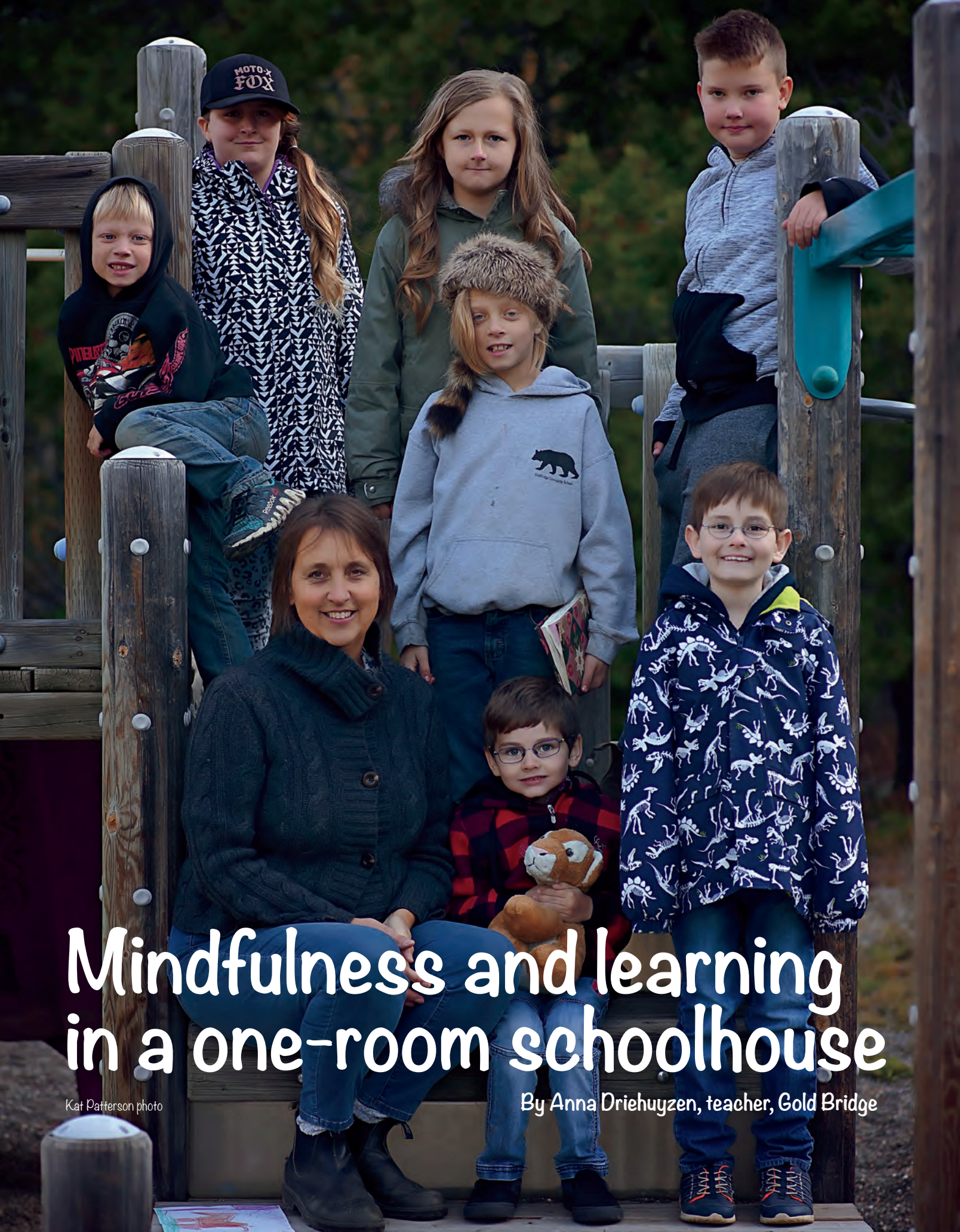

Mindfulness and learning in a one-room schoolhouse

Kat Patterson photo

By Anna Driehuyzen, teacher, Gold Bridge

Anna Driehuyzen with her K–6 students. Last year Anna taught seven children; this year that number may grow to nine, but previous years have seen as few as two.

IN THE VERNACULAR of the yoga studio, school summer holidays had always been like a great "exhalation"—a letting go and release from the schedules and assignments that normally mark the last term of school. Travel, picnics at the beach, and evening campfires were what usually had characterized the languid days of summer—until, that is, it all changed.

This time, we did not experience the euphoric transition from a hectic year-end into the expanse of summer. Instead, a pandemic overturned our lives, and the reassuring school routines were suddenly halted as we all locked down. We held our breath. After weeks of uncertainty and isolation, and with only four weeks before the end of the year, schools reopened and we began a careful return to modified school routines—a "dry run" it was called. Collectively, haltingly, we began to breathe.

As a teacher in a remote one-room school for Kindergarten to Grade 6, I have always been keenly aware of the health of the metaphoric in-breathing and out-breathing rhythms of school routines. Learning does not happen in a vacuum. Rather, it is a dynamic that oscillates between the in-breath and rigours of concentrated academic learning and the out-breath and letting go during play time, creative art classes, or sitting together and sharing stories. These are the rhythms that make a well-regulated, balanced school day. Strangely, the disease that disrupted our lives so critically affects the very organs of our breathing—our lungs and respiratory system.

A one-room schoolhouse is a microcosm of a whole school. Sometimes there is just one child per grade, sometimes none, and sometimes several. To meet each child's needs there is differentiation in teaching to address the diversity of learners and learning styles. While the youngest members of our school have a higher need for active, movement-oriented learning, the older students are capable of longer, sustained focus. As their teacher, I look for opportunities where older and younger students find common ground and engage in meaningful and joy-filled activities together. The struggling, emerging, third-grade reader has the satisfaction of reading simple texts to a captive audience of first-graders; the oldest student gently guides a fourth-grader in a new math concept; and the intermediate group tolerates with patient amusement the distraction of the Kindergartner's noisy enthusiasm, building and toppling towering block structures during an otherwise silent, focused language arts class.

In the remote mountain town where our school is found, over 100 kilometres west of Lillooet in the Bridge River Valley, most of my students live at significant distances from the school and each other. As with all children affected by the collateral damage of the pandemic, the lack of social interaction was a significant downside.

Sheltering-in-place, however, was easier for some than others. Some children proclaimed in amazement that their parents were actually very good teachers. Our students were assigned a project to build the model of a shelter and to write about their experiences in choosing and creating them. A wonderful array of shelters arose that reflected the housing experiences of children in our area, some of which included European homesteads, Indigenous living quarters and ceremonial spaces, and one coronavirus-inspired model of a drive-through restaurant. Transforming what was for some a challenging time of lockdown and isolation, became a source of concentrated focus and enthusiasm. The projects reflected that.

As I prepared to return to school and an uncertain situation in September, a source of inspiration in being mindful regarding educating children came from one of the parents. In calmer, less anxious times, she had always bidden her child farewell with the words, "Be good, have fun, learn lots."

I appreciated the simple wisdom in this little mantra. We are "good" when we develop generosity, forgiveness, kindness, and love for each other. We have "fun" when we bring joyful enthusiasm and playful curiosity to our work and learning. And finally, we "learn lots" when the rich and unique gifts of each learner are understood and embraced.

The words of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry parallel these sentiments from a health and medical standpoint and are another approach to being mindful in the classroom that I have taken to heart: "Be kind, be calm, be safe." These simple and profound sentiments from my student's mother and our Provincial Health Officer have allowed me to return to the classroom strengthened and prepared. I am ready to "breathe" into the new school year with awareness, with courage, and with calm resolve.

Planting a garden trough with a primary class

iStock.com/lindmon

By Vanessa Lundgren, teacher, Burnaby

WHEN OUR SCHOOL reopened in June, the garden trough just outside my classroom had exploded into action. A green labyrinth of curly snap pea tendrils, sturdy stems, and fuzzy poppy buds unfurled out of the bin. Bumblebees zigzagged from plant to plant, stopping to feed on the fresh lavender blossoms that poked out of one end.

Just before March break, my Grade 2 and 3 class had helped me plant this trough. They'd pulled up weeds. They'd circumvented long squiggly worms and pill bugs. They'd mixed the soil with fish compost. They worked very hard to get the trough ready.

We decided to empty the whole packet of a Pacific Northwest wildflower blend, eager to see what would bloom and if pollinators would follow. We also popped in a few snap pea seeds. Later, we learned (the hard way) that a trellis would have been a good idea to support the young shoots. But that March day, we simply patted soil over the seeds, then watered. Little did I know just how meaningful the trough would be for us during the pandemic.

During home confinement we'd left the trough to the elements and hoped for the best. I thought about it and wondered of possible outcomes. Were there sprouts or had the seeds been picked off by birds? Could disease have set in? Was there enough rain?

In April, I quickly snapped a photo of the trough after having collected some belongings from the classroom. "Look!" I'd say, sharing the picture with students on Microsoft Teams. A thick carpet of snap pea leaves had pushed through the soil surface. There was comfort in knowing that in the face of immense uncertainty there was certainty in the plant world.

When schools reopened in June, we were all thrust into so much uncertainty again. School life had changed dramatically in our COVID-19 reality. Returning to our emptier classroom space was difficult. Student voices came through in their work posted on our classroom walls—an indicator of the success we'd had in building a community those first two terms—but also a reminder of what we'd just lost because of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the garden continued to grow. My small cohort of students delighted in the fresh snap peas growing in. It became a game to spot the biggest pea pod, small hands gently sifting through the tangled plant mass (this is where the trellis would have been helpful). The students hovered near the trough, like the bumblebees that now visited our garden.

We aimed to be outside every afternoon. Sometimes, we'd wander further than our garden, exploring the network of alleyways, looking for signs of the natural world in our urban setting. I worried that it might become repetitive, but the students seemed to notice new things each time. It was outside where we felt most ourselves, where we could move more freely, where we could breathe with less worry.

As I write this in July, it's hard to know what to expect in the fall. There will be the usual challenges of developing relationships with a new set of students and establishing our class community. The back-to-school jitters will be compounded by the very real anxiety about the virus. For some children, it may be the first time they enter a classroom since mid-March.

I do know that I plan to return to the garden with my new class; not only for the learning opportunities it gives, but for the social-emotional benefits. It's a tangible and soothing reminder that there's still some familiarity in our world.

And, besides, it will need tending to.

Virtual classrooms raise critical questions


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By Caitlin Patricia Johnston, teacher, Nanaimo

AS SEPTEMBER rolls in, we can be certain the leaves will start to change colour. Cooling temperatures will move their way across the country. And families will spend Labour Day weekend together, one last time, before the kids head back to school.

What we can't be certain of, though, is what will school be like this September?

A novel coronavirus, so small it is measured in nanometers, spread across the globe and came to Canada at the beginning of 2020. COVID-19 threatened to attack the pulmonary systems of everyone on the planet.

Governments around the world made a relatively simple, ethical decision in the face of a global pandemic; they told their citizens to stay at home. Restaurants, cafes, malls, salons, businesses, stores, and, of course, schools, all shuttered their doors.

For teachers and students, the spring semester shifted quickly from brick and mortar status quo to online, virtual quicksand. This was unprecedented. Who could have imagined, in a matter of weeks, moving K–12 students across the world to online learning?

In the early phase of the pandemic, I could imagine foregoing a semester of school. But I could not imagine its complete disappearance into a virtual world (Kindergarten without kids?!).

Shoshana Zuboff's new book, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, is helping me understand the impact of this moment. She wisely discusses the "unrecognizability of the unprecedented."

By this she means that in unprecedented times we try to grasp what's happening through the "lens of past experience." That's why, early in the crisis, I could only imagine a detour that would eventually lead me back to my regular classroom, to do my regular job.

But because I was one of the teachers sent back to school for a partial June opening, I now see how blind I was to the changes occurring. I was blind to them because the changes happening in schools were not only unprecedented in my experience, but historically unprecedented as well. Some Canadians over age 75 recall school shutting down for a few weeks during the polio epidemic, but this global health crisis is happening in the age of the internet.

In September, it appears school will become the site of a real-world experiment in public health care management. If infections increase and schools need to close again, technology giants like Google and Microsoft will be waiting in the wings, primed to steal back the show.

Owners and investors in virtual classrooms, like the former CEO of Google Eric Schmidt and business magnate Bill Gates, believe that the pandemic-driven education program teachers and parents were desperately putting together during the lockdown *is* 21st century schooling.

In a video interview, Eric Schmidt said of the pandemic-driven school closures, "We are now doing a massive experiment in remote learning where we can collect a great deal of data to try and figure out how do kids learn remotely."

Given these unprecedented times, I asked students at my school what they thought about going back to school in September. These students, who will be entering Grade 8 or 9 this September, offered a hopeful refrain, oft repeated: "By September, I think things will finally be back to normal."

Interestingly, not one student I talked to thought we should embrace Google classroom or Microsoft Teams permanently.

For the first time in history teachers must defend themselves against privately owned virtual platforms, that scrape, store, and commodify personal data for profit, as these companies actively seek to mediate children's learning through a screen—permanently.

The sooner teachers and parents can open their eyes to the challenging and complicated social, political, ethical, and psychological dilemmas this threat unearths, the sooner we can engage a critical *public* dialogue about who really benefits from screen-based instruction.

Without reinforcing bonds of trust between parents, teachers, and students through shared values, collective decision-making and open dialogue, the preferred solution to education during the pandemic and beyond could become a screen. In my view, this is not only unwise, but dangerous.

I believe there is an alternative to the techno-fixes sold to us by technology corporations and it's the simple idea that social problems, including those exasperated by a pandemic, are best resolved by socially generated solutions.

Going back the first week, we can be certain of one thing: September will be unprecedented.

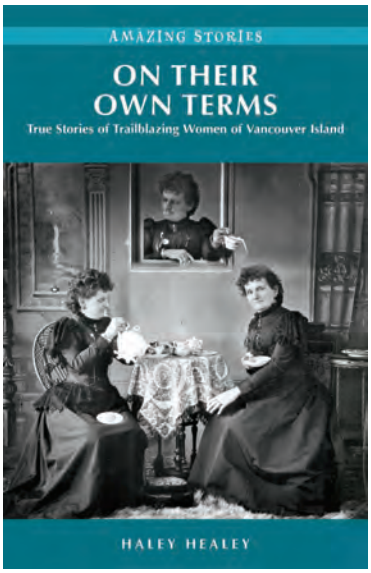
BOOK REVIEWS

BCTF members are busy, and some are writing books!

Reviews by Jennifer Kimbley, Acting Editor, *Teacher*

Learn about notable women of Vancouver Island

***Own Their Own Terms* published by Heritage House Publishing,** 2020



NANAIMO SECONDARY COUNSELLOR Haley Healey has written *On Their Own Terms: True Stories of Trailblazing Women of Vancouver Island*, a collection of concise stories about 17 courageous, independent, and diverse women who shaped the history of Vancouver Island.

Starting with residents of Victoria and working her way up to Cape Scott in the northwest corner, Healey introduces the reader to a dynamic group of women who were born on the island or started their lives in faraway countries and chose to settle on Vancouver Island.

Some women are well-known—Emily Carr and Cougar Annie are featured—while others have will be new to the reader. They were pilots, homesteaders, professional and amateur photographers, social activists, midwives, and scientists. Vancouver Island's first Black teacher, Emma Stark is featured as well.

On Their Own Terms will help teachers looking for true stories of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women who lived unique lives and shaped their communities. Each story covers 4 to 10 pages, making it easy to fit into a lesson.

Prepare primary students for a pandemic-era school experience

***Safe at Home* and *Save at School* self-published by Sue Mark,** 2020

RETIRED BCTF MEMBER Sue Mark has created two children's books about the social situation during this pandemic. *Safe at Home* and *Safe at School* are written in rhyme to engage children in learning the new "rules" to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They are also colouring/activity books.

Sue's books have been featured on CBC Radio, Kamloops This Week, CFJC TV, and Global BC Legislature correspondent Keith Baldrey featured them on his segment. All proceeds go to COVID-19 relief charities, including BCSPCA, Foodbanks BC, and Twin Heart Animal Sanctuary in Tappen, BC.

"These books could be of great assistance to any classroom

Jennifer Kimbley photos

teacher!" says Sue. "I hope to get the information into our student's minds, the activities into their hands, and the money into the pockets of British Columbians who are in need."

Sue is taking orders of any size at *suesiemark@gmail.com* and says that the books have been sold all around the world.

Left: Rosemary Brown in 1993. Dick Loek/Toronto Star via Getty Images.

Should Gladstone Secondary School in Vancouver be renamed Rosemary Brown Secondary?

Anti-systemic racism tide sweeps North America and Europe; toppling statues and calling for name changes

By Noel Herron, retired teacher

IN JULY of this year, Don Davies, the federal MP for Vancouver Kingsway, called on the Vancouver School Board (VSB) to drop the racist, four-time (1865–1894) British Prime Minister's name from this large high school in his riding.

Pointing to the fact that the University of Liverpool, in Gladstone's hometown, had recently erased his name from Gladstone Hall on its campus, Davies saw no reason why Vancouver should continue to honour an individual who opposed the abolition of slavery and whose family profited hugely from the odious slave trade in the British West Indies.

If, according to a VSB spokesperson, "an existing school name is no longer deemed to serve the needs of the school population or the community," then Gladstone's culturally and ethnically diverse population does not deserve a school named after an oppressive colonial family that built a fortune on the blood, sweat, and tears of slaves.

Now that there is international uproar over systemic racism, the VSB needs to step up and revisit its outdated and restrictive current school-naming policy.

Now is the time to rename Gladstone Secondary School.

No school in Vancouver should continue to honour a colonial family that trafficked in people and inflicted unspeakable pain and suffering on fellow human beings.

This call for a name change is about core values and foundational concepts: dignity, justice, respect, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

At this time, not one secondary school in Vancouver is named after a woman. How about renaming this school Rosemary Brown Secondary School in honour of a community leader of colour and an advocate for immigrant families and their children?

Rosemary Brown was the first Black Canadian woman to be elected to a Canadian provincial legislature and was a Vancouver woman of great distinction. She was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 1995 and the Order of Canada in 1996, as well as receiving numerous other prestigious honours, including a United Nations Human Rights Fellowship.

Rosemary Brown's outstanding achievements deserve recognition in a VSB secondary school name.

CLASSIFIEDS

GULF ISLAND GETAWAY, Pender Island BC Website: *ainsliepointcottage.com* Contact Alma at 250-629-3008

NEW SOCIAL STUDIES 11 & 12 planning made easier, more cohesive with "Potlatch Blanket for a China Man" and free teaching plans - as presented at 2019 BCSSTA Conference. Suitable for classroom, online and/or hybrid teaching. Written by a teacher for teachers. Adaptable for Literary Studies. Reviewed in "Ormsby Review." For specifics and free sample lessons, email *AzimuthBooks@shaw.ca*.

Starling Minds offers sessions on coping with COVID-19 anxiety

Starling Minds, an online mental health tool designed for teachers, has a new program for COVID-19 anxiety. There are five short sessions to help you:

1. **Understand** how uncertainty, change, and disruption can increase stress and anxiety.
2. **Set healthy boundaries** to manage the constant stream of COVID-19 information.
3. **Create realistic goals** to keep your life on track during this pandemic.
4. **Learn about strategies** and tools to manage COVID-19 anxiety and worrisome thoughts.
5. **Connect** with a supportive and confidential online community for ongoing peer support.

Accessing the BCTF Member Portal and Starling Minds

To register for this program you will need 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 *app.starlingminds.com/registration/bctf* to register with Starling Minds.

app.starlingminds.com/registration/bctf

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