

BC Teachers' Federation

# Teacher.



Sept | Oct 2019



## New BCTF leadership

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takes the helm  
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## THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE

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

Then consider writing for Teacher,  
the flagship publication of the BCTF!  
Submission guidelines are available at  
[bctf.ca/publications/TeacherNewsmag.aspx](http://bctf.ca/publications/TeacherNewsmag.aspx).

We also welcome letters to the editor.  
Send your letter to [teachermag@bctf.ca](mailto:teachermag@bctf.ca).

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

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**CALM**  
Canadian Association  
of Labour Media

**CEPA**  
Canadian Educational  
Press Association



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Welcome back to a new school year!

The 2019–20 school year is already well under way and I know teachers are working hard to give support to students and each other.

Thank you for all of the work you do in our union, our schools, and our communities. It is an honour to step into the role of President of our incredible Federation.

I had always hoped my first column in *Teacher* would be about a new collective agreement, but despite all of the Bargaining Team's hard work in the spring and summer, we're not quite there yet.

It's not ideal for any of us to have begun this school year with this kind of uncertainty, but I'm confident that we're going to get a deal soon. But, it can't be just any deal. It has to be a good deal for teachers and our students.

I'm very confident that, with the support of a mediator, we can get this round done in a way that makes gains for members and avoids a long, drawn out battle with government.

The BCTF has been very effective about getting our message out and the BC NDP MLAs have felt the pressure from members. Thanks to everyone who has sent an email, talked to an MLA, or attended a local general meeting. With your support, we'll get that good deal we all deserve!

Please see my article on page seven for more information and insight on the current state of collective bargaining.

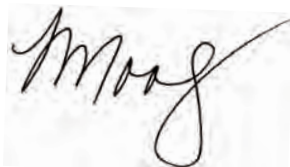
## Taking care of ourselves and each other

The uncertainty about bargaining and our efforts to get a sense of calm and stability in our schools can add to everyone's stress. This in turn can increase anxiety and worry with teachers and those folks supporting members in our local offices around the province. This is a good time to check in with each other and talk about how we can add wellness strategies to our days and live with more balance.

The BCTF has some excellent programs available to our members that can help. From free online mental fitness training, to cognitive behavioural therapy, and other health and wellness tips, there is a lot of help out there for you.

Check out these BCTF websites to start:  
[bctf.ca/balance](http://bctf.ca/balance), [bctf.ca/wellness](http://bctf.ca/wellness), [bctf.ca/safety](http://bctf.ca/safety)

Thank you, and have a great year!



# MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT

## Bon retour dans une nouvelle année scolaire!

L'année scolaire 2019–20 est déjà bien entamée et je sais que les enseignant(e)s travaillent d'arrache-pied pour offrir leur soutien aux élèves et se soutenir mutuellement.

Merci pour tout le travail que vous faites à l'intérieur de notre syndicat, nos écoles et nos communautés. C'est un honneur pour moi d'assumer le rôle de présidente de notre extraordinaire Fédération.

J'avais depuis longtemps espéré que ma première chronique dans *Teacher* concernerait une nouvelle convention collective, mais en dépit du travail acharné de l'équipe de négociation ce printemps et cet été, nous n'en sommes pas encore tout à fait là.

Il n'est pas idéal pour aucun(e) d'entre nous d'avoir débuté cette année scolaire avec ce genre d'incertitude, mais je suis confiante que nous arriverons à une entente incessamment. Cependant, cela ne peut pas être n'importe quelle entente. Il doit s'agir d'une entente satisfaisante pour les enseignant(e)s et nos élèves.

Je suis persuadée que, avec l'aide d'un médiateur, nous pourrions faire en sorte de remporter cette ronde de façon à faire des gains significatifs pour les membres et d'éviter une longue et interminable bataille avec le gouvernement.

La FECB a été très efficace pour faire passer son message et les député(e)s du NPD de la C.-B. ont ressenti la pression des membres. Merci à tous ceux et celles qui ont envoyé un courriel, parlé à un(e) député(e) ou assisté à une assemblée générale locale. Avec votre soutien, nous parviendrons à cette entente que nous méritons toutes et tous!

Veuillez consulter mon article à la page sept pour de plus amples informations et pour obtenir un aperçu de l'état actuel des négociations collectives.


## Prendre soin de nous et des autres

L'incertitude entourant la négociation et les efforts que nous déployons pour créer une atmosphère de calme et de stabilité dans nos écoles peuvent ajouter au stress de tous et toutes. Cette incertitude peut, à son tour, augmenter l'anxiété et l'inquiétude des enseignant(e)s ainsi que de ceux et celles qui soutiennent les membres dans nos bureaux locaux à travers la province. C'est un bon moment pour échanger les un(e)s avec les autres et discuter de la manière dont nous pouvons favoriser notre bien-être au quotidien et comment vivre de façon bien équilibrée.

La FECB possède d'excellents programmes qui peuvent aider nos membres. De l'entraînement mental en ligne gratuit à la thérapie cognitivo-comportementale, en passant par des conseils sur la santé et le bien-être, il y a de l'aide disponible pour vous.

Consultez pour commencer ces sites web de la FECB.  
[bctf.ca/balance](http://bctf.ca/balance), [bctf.ca/wellness](http://bctf.ca/wellness), [bctf.ca/safety](http://bctf.ca/safety)

Je vous remercie et vous souhaite une excellente année!



## Student Vote a highlight of the school year

It was great to see the article promoting Student Vote in the May/June 2019 issue.

When I taught Grade 5, Student Vote was one of the highlights of the school year for both the students and myself. Six out of the seven years I taught Grade 5 had an election (either municipal, provincial, or federal). One year there were three elections.

The study guides for each level of government were excellent. The lessons were well laid out and easy to follow and prepare. The activities didn't jump right into politics, but began with the critical thinking skills necessary to make an informed vote. Besides learning how an election works, the students also learned the responsibilities of each level of government. Most importantly, the students thoroughly enjoyed the activities and got excellent exposure to Canadian government. Come election time, my students were eager to cast their ballot and analyze the results.

I used Student Vote as a base along with information about all candidates. The election buzz in my classroom carried on throughout the day and for weeks leading up to the election. Students could be heard discussing who they thought should get elected and why, talking about candidate platforms, and they knew the candidates' names! Some students were even discussing the upcoming election with their parents and encouraging them to vote.

Although I have returned to teaching Kindergarten, Student Vote is one of the programs that I truly miss teaching.

Student Vote is a treasure. And it's free!

**Michele Dietrich**

Kindergarten teacher, Surrey

**Editor's note:** Registration is now open for the Student Vote 2019 Federal Election. Visit [www.studentvote.ca](http://www.studentvote.ca) to learn more.

## Teacher packaging

I am the staff rep at my school, and I receive *Teacher* to distribute to my colleagues. After I've opened the plastic bag, I have to undo three sets of string, and discard a piece of cardboard! This seems like a lot of packaging, time to put together, and quite a pain to get into. Are you able to put the magazines into large envelope for our small school? For larger schools, a cardboard box seems more practical and recyclable/reusable than the packaging we're using right now.

Please consider this suggestion for future mailings of *Teacher* magazine. We are always talking about making the world a better place, so why not try this?

**Melissa Dundas**, teacher, Mission

Hi Melissa,

BCTF staff count and prepare 1,376 packages of the magazine to distribute across the province. This work is done with efficient processing and the lowest cost in mind.

Each package with more than six magazines is wrapped in string. These packages come with a mailing card and cardboard backing, costing \$0.20. An envelope strong enough to hold up to ten magazines would cost \$0.75.

Once staff have prepared the magazines for mailing, they are bagged in plastic. Canada Post requires that small packages wrapped with string be bagged, otherwise they could catch in the machines at the post office.

There are 12 schools that require 95 or more copies, and they receive boxed shipments. These boxes are free as they are saved by BCTF staff and reused for the magazine shipments.

In our ongoing efforts to use resources responsibly, we have not opted for the higher-priced envelope option. With so many packages being shipped five times a year, the shipping costs add up!

Thanks,

**Jennifer Kimbley**, Acting Editor, *Teacher*





**BCTF's**

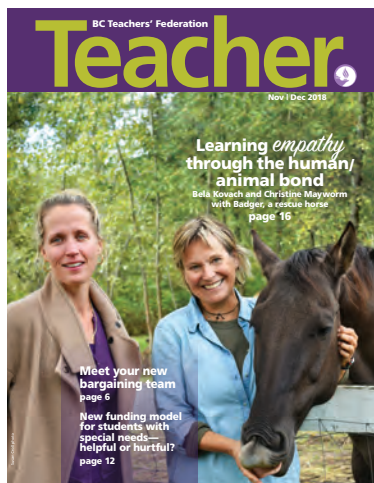
**Teacher**  
**magazine**

**wins awards!**

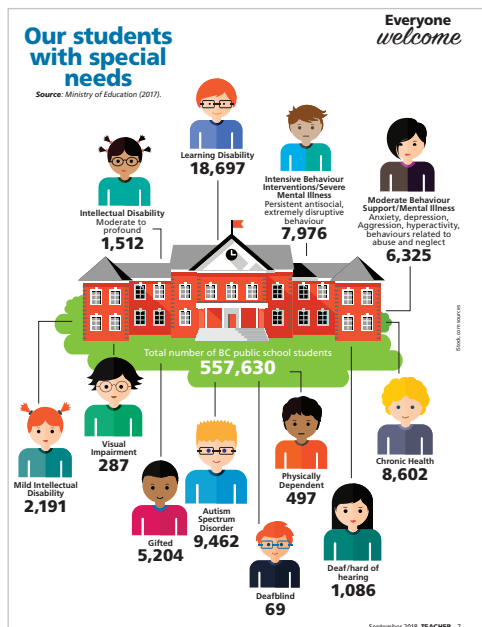
**CALM**  
Canadian Association  
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**The Canadian Association of Labour Media  
has awarded *Teacher* magazine two awards:**

**2019 Best Photograph, Volunteer Produced—  
Brent Chudiak, Salmon Arm teacher, for  
The Knowledge Keepers Project in the May/  
June 2018 *Teacher* magazine.**



**The November/  
December 2018 issue  
also received an  
Honourable Mention.**



**2019 Freeperson Award  
for Best Infographic—  
Karen Steel, Teacher  
Assistant Editor/Designer,  
for Our Students with  
Special Needs in the  
September/October  
2018 *Teacher* magazine.**

**Congratulations**

**to all who worked on**

**these award-winning pieces!**

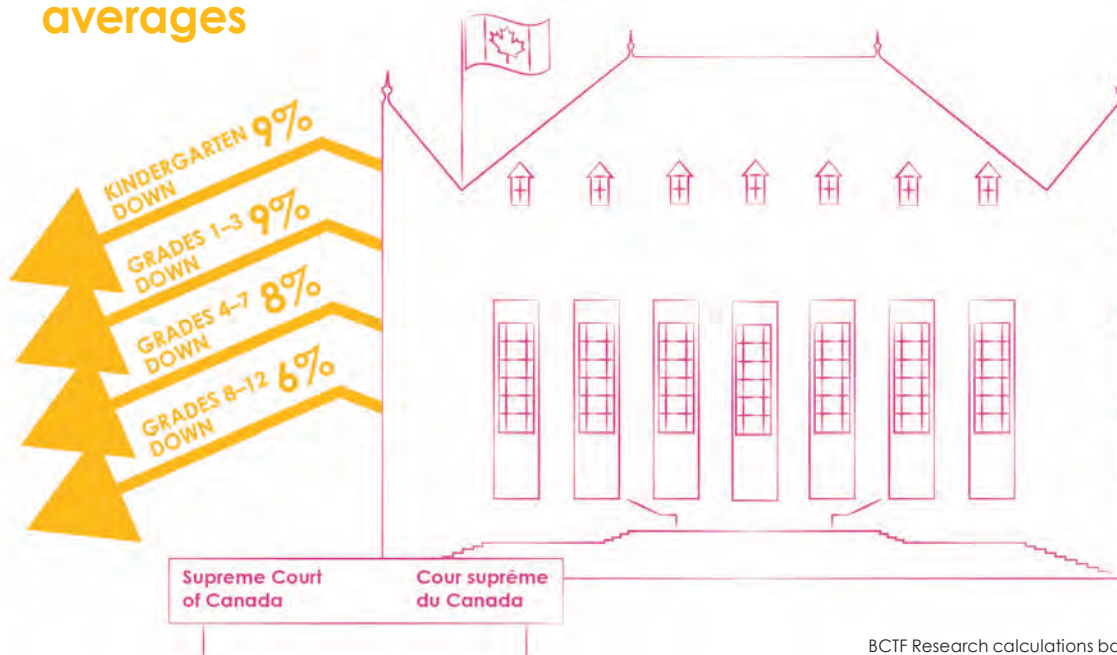
# Teaching and learning conditions: **Better** in the collective agreement.

**SINCE BC TEACHERS** won our Supreme Court of Canada case and implemented our restored language, BC schools have seen significant improvements in staffing and class sizes. There's a lot more work to do, but the progress since 2016 shows teaching and learning conditions are better in the collective agreement.

Class size, class composition, and staffing ratios in our agreements have been the primary drivers of improved resources in our schools and protect against government cutbacks. Just look at what is happening under right-wing governments in Alberta and Ontario right now.

## Here's how far BC has come since our win at the **Supreme Court of Canada**:

### Lower class-size averages



### More specialists in schools

BCTF Research calculations based on Ministry of Education data. Data on class-size averages indicates changes from 2015-16 to 2018-19. Data on specialists indicates changes from 2015-16 to 2017-18.



# The state of negotiations:

## Back in mediation during the first week of October

by Teri Mooring, BCTF President



**LIKE ALL OF YOU**, I had hoped that this school year would have started with a new collective agreement in place, or at least, general meetings to discuss a potential new deal.

The BCTF Bargaining Team worked incredibly hard throughout the spring and summer to get us there. Unfortunately, we've been up against an employer, the BC Public School Employer's Association (BCPSEA), that wants unreasonable concessions. Even during 14 days of mediation in the summer, they never took those harmful concessions off the table.

I, like all members, want a deal. But it can't just be any deal. It has to be a good deal and certainly one that doesn't roll back everything we won

back after our Supreme Court of Canada win.

Despite the employer's determination to hold on to concessions, we have made some significant progress on our campaign to get the BC NDP government to take action.

In the spring, BCTF members sent more than 18,000 emails to those MLAs demanding that the concessions come off the table. And then in August we rolled out a province-wide radio campaign that told NDP MLAs that they promised better, parents and teachers expected better, and kids deserve better.

We got their attention! Over the Labour Day long weekend, the Minister of Education publicly stated

the concessions could come off the table. That's a big shift and we hope the employer follows through when mediation resumes.

Since then, a new email campaign was launched (check your inboxes!) and our public pressure has focused on the need for new funding to be added to the table.

We won't be able to address our low wages, recruitment and retention issues, the teacher shortage, and the need to improve student learning conditions without the government making more funding available.

Stay tuned for more updates as mediation resumes, and thank you for all your efforts to support your BCTF Bargaining Team!

## KEY GOALS

### What are the BCTF's key goals in this round of bargaining?

The BCTF Bargaining Team has organized all of our proposals around four key principles: recruitment and retention, equity, parity, and gaining ground. The key goals are to make gains on salary, improve teaching and learning conditions—especially for locals without class-size and composition language, and protect superior provisions for locals that do have such language.

### What would the employer's proposed concessions do?

The proposed concessions, which were still on the table at the time of publication, would:

- remove all class-composition language.
- increase class sizes.
- expand the number of classes without limits.
- replace school-based consultation with a district committee.
- eliminate all specific specialist-teacher ratios.

### Is there going to be job action or a strike?

The current focus remains on getting a good deal in mediation, but we can't predict what the employer will do at the table. However, any kind of job action has to be authorized by you, our members, in a province-wide vote. In addition to that, one of

the BCTF's governing bodies, like the Representative Assembly, would have to authorize such a vote. That hasn't happened. So, it's premature at this point to be contemplating job action.

### How can members help?

All members are encouraged to attend their local general meetings as they are held, read the various bargaining updates on the portal, and talk with colleagues about the impact of the employer's proposals and lack of government funding. Check your emails for the latest mass email campaign to BC NDP MLAs, and please continue engaging on social media, meeting with those MLAs, and participating in local political action initiatives. •

# Meet the new BCTF leadership



Marilou Strait photo



by **Jennifer Kimbley**, Acting Editor, Teacher

**TERI MOORING** assumed the helm of the BCTF as President on July 1. After six years as second and first vice-president, she's ready for the challenge.

Born in Prince Rupert, and raised in Quesnel from the age of ten, she did her teaching practicums in the unincorporated community of Hixon and in Prince George. She worked as a resource teacher for a year, but found her passion in the Grade 7 classroom.

"I love where the kids are in their development, getting them ready for the transition to high school, and the curriculum," she says. "I was able to focus on issues relevant to the lives of my students, especially sexual health and addictions."

Teri's journey to President of the BCTF started as the first TTOC representative in Quesnel, followed by being the staff rep in her first year of teaching. "My dad was the president of his union at the pulp mill," she says. "I was steeped in unionism and human rights issues in my very

political family, so being active in the local was a given."

One commitment led to another, and she gained experience and training through many roles: professional development committee, social justice representative, local representative to the BCTF, local vice-president for five years, and four years as a BCTF Executive member. After her kids graduated, she felt ready to become the local president, a role she held for five years.

Teri moved to Vancouver six years ago when she was elected second vice-president. Her children have grown up and started their own careers (both settling in Dawson Creek), and her parents still live in Quesnel. "My family comes to visit me, and I go see them," she says. "Balancing family time is important to us, and a huge challenge, especially now with my grandchildren!" This fall, she'll welcome her third grandchild to the world.

## **TERI'S HOPES FOR THE YEAR:**

To achieve **a fairly negotiated collective agreement**—one that meets the needs of teachers.

To **continue our important work on equity and inclusion** in our classrooms and union.

To lobby **to ensure any funding formula changes for special education respects our collective agreement**, the students' best interest, and does not include a prevalence model for funding inclusive education.

To continue **to build on our networks and support locals**. "It's been a difficult few years, and local leaders have shouldered a lot of the work around defending and implementing our restored contract language."

**Recruitment and retention.** "We need both short- and long-term solutions as there are real consequences for students and teachers. We need certified teachers in all classrooms and to ensure our professionalism and public education are protected."



**CLINT JOHNSTON** is our new First Vice-President, acclaimed at the March 2019 AGM. Born and raised in Chilliwack, he is the father of five children. He and his family lived in Chilliwack when he was first elected to the BCTF, and for the first year he commuted to Vancouver for work. They now live closer to the BCTF building, but he remains as busy as ever.

After graduating from UBC, Clint taught in England for five years. He taught Key Stage Two, Year Four, which would be Grade 3 in BC. When he returned to Canada it was to go back to his hometown, Chilliwack. He taught various elementary grades, including a couple of years replacing teachers on leave from their Grade 2 classrooms and several weeks of French Immersion math in Grades 10, 11, and 12. His last position was a Grade 4/5 class at Central Elementary.

Clint grew up in a union household. His father was a pipeline welder in the United Association 170 Local—Plumbers & Pipefitters, and Clint was also in this union prior to studying education.

"I was always taught that unions were a positive thing for workers," he says. "My actual impetus to get involved in union work was what a lot of members feel—I didn't understand what my union was doing during bargaining and wanted to get involved in order to understand better."

This interest in involvement with the union inspired Clint to run for local president of Chilliwack, a role he held for three years. During this time, he was the lead negotiator for his local's bargaining team during a round of bargaining. He was also the professional development chair and a member of the BCTF Executive Committee for a year.

In addition to his duties as the First Vice-President of the BCTF, he is also in his third year as Vice-President for the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). This summer he was Lead of Delegation for the CTF at the Education International World Congress in Bangkok, Thailand.

#### **CLINT'S HOPES FOR THE YEAR:**

To get **a bargained contract** for members. "It has been clear to me in my meetings and discussions with members over the last two years that this is the main thing on members' minds, and a source of stress and worry for them."

To continue **to work on equity within our union**. "I want to ensure that all members feel welcome, able to participate in, and represented by our governance bodies."

**CAROLE GORDON** was elected Second Vice-President at the March 2019 AGM. She was born in Richmond and raised with her brother in Kelowna by a single mom.

Her Kelowna roots are deep—after high school, she stayed for university, and she has spent her teaching practicums and entire teaching career in the Central Okanagan. Her mom and brother still live there, along with her husband and two sons. "The family chose to stay in Kelowna, and I've moved to Vancouver," she says. "Full-Time Table Officers need to be in Vancouver, so we'll make the effort to travel to each other on holidays and weekends when possible."

The new position and move to Vancouver come at the right time. Both boys (13 and 19) went to the elementary school she worked at, but the eldest is at Okanagan College and the youngest has moved on to middle school.

"I'm missing the soccer and basketball games, but a lot of our activists miss family time. I make the effort to be there when I can. Chatting on FaceTime and Instagram keeps us connected and helps to bridge the geographical gap."

Carole's interest in union activism and the labour movement was sparked by the BC Liberal government stripping collective agreements in 2002. This led her to become staff rep, second vice-president of the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association, president of the North Okanagan Labour Council (NOLC), the NDP candidate in the May 2013 general election and the July 2013 by-election in West Kelowna, as well as a BCTF Executive Committee member for the last five years.

Union activism runs in her family: her husband is a CUPE K-12 member and NOLC President. Her brother is a member of the Hospital Employee's Union. Her dad was a CP Air (now Air Canada) union member, and he was president of his local.

"I'm excited about taking on this role, but the hardest part is knowing I can't go into my school this year. It's closed on weekends when I visit Kelowna. I already miss it. I'd love an invitation to a Lower Mainland classroom, especially elementary music or drama!"

#### **CAROLE'S HOPES FOR THE YEAR:**

**Successful implementation of a negotiated settlement** that sees improvements for all BCTF members.

#### **A progressive federal government.**

"Who is in power provincially and federally impacts labour, education, and families, and that trickles down into our classrooms."

#### **Increased member engagement**

and uptake from locals for opportunities from the BCTF, such as training, conferences, professional development, and induction ceremonies. •

# From Carrot Sticks to Climate Strikes

by Megan Thom, teacher, Victoria



**WHAT COULD BE MORE USEFUL** than growing a carrot? Teaching a child to grow a carrot. At least, that's what I used to think.

When I was 18, I started volunteering for Lifecycles' Growing Schools Program teaching children from Kindergarten to Grade 7 how to grow food. Like many recent high school graduates, I was still figuring out what to do with my life while taking courses at the University of Victoria. In the midst of theoretical and frequently confusing lectures in political science and environmental studies, I found my mornings in school gardens deeply satisfying. I could handle the post-modern political theory and the dire articles about species extinction because I was making tangible change: I was teaching children to get their hands dirty and to have the skills and knowledge to grow their own healthy food without spraying it with chemicals and transporting it halfway around the world. If every school does this, I thought, there's hope for us yet.

I was so inspired by my early experiences in school gardens that I became a teacher. I still firmly believe in the transformative power of growing food with children. I'm happy to report that 16 years later, almost every school in our district has a garden, many of them created by Lifecycles.

I have, however, come to believe something else: it is not enough.

Sixteen years ago when I would go into classrooms with Lifecycles, we were often the first lesson the students had ever had about this nebulous phenomenon called "climate change." We spoke of it in simple and non-threatening terms to Kindergarteners, likening it to a

"blanket" warming the earth. Today, I teach sixteen-year-olds who have significant anxiety resulting from their fears of the future. Their sports camps have been cancelled because of wildfire smoke, they fear rising water levels, and their newsfeeds bring them horrifying images of pollution, droughts, and famines. They have been told by the world's leading scientists that Earth will be a disaster by the time they are 28. These sixteen-year-olds are no longer so easily pacified by getting out of class for a morning of playing in the dirt. They are anxious, uncertain, and deeply angry at the adults who allowed this to happen. And they have a right to feel that way.

In response to climate change, children and youth around the world are taking action. The last student-led climate strike saw over 1.4 million youth participating in more than 1,400 cities around the world. Their dedication, organization, and bravery are truly inspiring. But this too, is not enough.

All the marches and all the gardening lessons in the world are not enough to confront the challenge of climate change if they are not accompanied by meaningful and fast-acting policy change. It's time for teachers (and all adults) to follow our students' lead and act on climate change—in the streets, boardrooms, and all levels of government.



Megan Thom photo



# Teachers Take Action

**“It’s time for teachers (and all adults) to follow our students’ lead and act on climate change—in the streets, boardrooms, and all levels of government.”**

## Here’s how:

### **Connect global climate initiatives to local schools**

This school year started with a bang as September 20–27, 2019, saw widespread global action on climate change. Students are taking the lead in unprecedented numbers and teachers have the opportunity to provide practical support and mentorship. We can help keep the momentum going throughout the year with in-school events, community connections, and training opportunities for our student climate leaders.

### **Lobby school boards to declare a climate emergency**

On June 24, 2019, the Greater Victoria School District trustees voted unanimously to declare a climate emergency and committed to developing a climate action plan “that establishes targets and strategies commensurate with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s call to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.” Victoria was the first school district to follow in the path of municipalities, universities, and even countries who are declaring climate emergencies. If every school district

in BC committed to real improvements in our operations and transportation, we could substantially reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Integrate climate education in our lessons and Pro-D**

Our main job as teachers is to educate our students. The BCTF has committed to integrating Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, as well as diversity education to fight racism and homophobia. We need to integrate climate education in the same cross-curricular way in order to prepare our students to meet the future with knowledge, courage, and responsibility. This means a similar push for professional development and current teaching resources to help educators achieve this goal without reinventing the wheel. Much is already available, but we need further resources and professional development opportunities to make sure every educator feels confident and supported in broaching this huge topic with students. Ask the professional development committee at your school or district for workshops and resources on climate change.

Climate change can feel like an impossibly complex and daunting issue to teach. But, like teaching a child to plant a carrot seed, real change is about one small action that you can do right now. With careful nurturing, collaboration, and time, that one small seed will grow into tangible change that we and our students can be proud of. •

### **Teaching Green**

This BCTF workshop has five modules: Creating Climate Heroes, Food Security, Water Rights, Sustainable Resource Use, and Sustainable Transportation. For more information and to book a workshop visit the BCTF website:

[bctf.ca/PD/WorkshopDetail.aspx?id=38740](https://bctf.ca/PD/WorkshopDetail.aspx?id=38740)

# Teaching vulnerable students

by Frank Bonvino, teacher, Burnaby

## A secondary school in a youth detention centre



**AFTER COMPLETING** my term as Burnaby Teachers' Association Local President, I resumed teaching math

at Fraser Park Secondary—a school for youth in custody that operates within the Burnaby Youth Custody Services. This school is a Provincial Resource Program (PRP), a specialized education program that is funded through grants from the Ministry of Children and Families.

The students who arrive here often do so at a difficult time in their lives. Many have not had the benefit of a stable home or regular attendance at school. Many of them have been affected by neglect, abuse, drug addiction, and crime. They have often had the adults in their lives let them down. Attending school regularly with timely access to wrap-around supports period is crucial to giving these kids hope.

Youth in custody, ranging from 13 to 18 years of age, are housed

here and attend school during the traditional school calendar and part of the summer. Burnaby Youth Custody Services has contracted the teaching of youth in custody to the Burnaby School District, which staffs the secondary school through the provisions of the collective agreement, as if it were any other secondary school in Burnaby. We have teachers for math, science, social studies, English, business education, physical and health education, art, woodwork, metalwork, and food studies, as well as part-time teachers in learning support and the library. There is also a head teacher who facilitates the day-to-day operations of the school and a teacher who programs the students' courses to match their individualized graduation path.

Student residents are housed in living units that are located on the top floor of the building; usually, two to eight students will reside in a given unit. The units are furnished with individual sleeping quarters, a common kitchen, and a recreational area. The facility also has a cafeteria where staff prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the residents. Students are transported to and from these units during the school day to classrooms in the rotunda, the main centre on the ground floor. The school day begins even before the students come down to the rotunda for their first morning class. When teachers arrive at school in the morning, we go up to the students' living quarters at 8:15 a.m. to greet them and help prepare for the day.

Students access the same K–12 curriculum other students receive throughout the province, and I am pleased to share that we have several student graduations per year. Enrolment is continuous, as students arrive in custody throughout the year. A typical week may see three to five new student arrivals. These students will arrive at different points in their studies and, consequently, each student will be at a different place in their progress toward graduation. Students stay for as little as a week to as long as a few years, depending on their circumstances. Teachers do not inquire as to the nature of a student's criminal charges or convictions—we simply discuss the length of their stay with them so that we can adequately plan for meeting their educational needs. We assess where they are at, and where we want them to be before they leave.

The student residents also have access to other important services, such as mental health supports, drug and alcohol counselling, and dental care. They can access religious services and cultural supports with religious leaders and Aboriginal-liaison workers regularly on site. There are extra-curricular activities for students, such as music programs and sports, to keep students active in the evenings and weekends.

School and curriculum are vehicles that allow teachers to make connections with students in custody, but the opportunity for them to learn here, and to persevere and overcome, goes far beyond the bounds of the traditional classroom setting—it is transformative. •







## Vancouver elementary and secondary teachers' associations

iStock/jamesvancouver

**Life in locals 39-1 and 39-2**  
by Lauren Donnelly



**IT CAN BE DIFFICULT** to find community in Vancouver, but Commercial Drive is a good place to start. Known as "the Drive," the East Vancouver neighbourhood has a reputation for cultural richness and a counter-culture attitude. It's also home to the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA) and the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA), and they fit right in.

Local 39 is community-oriented by nature. It's the only local in BC with an elementary/secondary split. VSTA President Katharine Shipley is in her fifth and final year, and VESTA President Jill Barclay is in her first year after being elected in May.

They share the same space and own the same building, but they operate separately. The split allows them to focus on the respective challenges of elementary and secondary teachers, and to ensure both voices are heard at the district level.

Despite having different challenges, they do share common ground. "The restored language hasn't exactly meant smaller classes," said Katharine. "So that's been hard managing people's expectations, including our own in the local, and then disappointments about how that's actually worked out."

The last few years have been an ordeal for local 39. In 2016, BC Liberal Education Minister Mike Bernier fired the nine elected Vancouver School Board trustees after they refused to balance their budget. The district has been in the news for declining enrolment, potential school closures, and a TTOC shortage that has been hard on all members, particularly on non-enrolling teachers. But Vancouver teachers are nothing if not resilient.

Former VESTA president Chloe McKnight recalls feeling apprehensive about how members would react to disappointments. "I'm going to this meeting and thinking, are people going to be upset or angry," she says. "And I'm always so blown away by people's optimism and support, and tenacity—like, all right, on we go—this is just what we do."

Vancouver is a wonderful place to teach in many ways. It has a passionate membership with a strong history of activism and involvement with the BCTF—including former BCTF presidents Glen Hansman and Irene Lanzinger and BCTF Executive Committee Member-at-Large Jody Polukoshko.

Vancouver was one of the first districts to have a SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) policy, and they are known for being progressive and open to having challenging conversations.

Both presidents are optimistic about the relationship with their new board and their district's first female superintendent, Suzanne Hoffman. "It's kind of like the ship was about to bank and now it's like back in the water and it's moving forward," says Katharine. "So that's really positive."

Fostering community can be an uphill battle in Vancouver where a notoriously high cost of living has pushed families out. But, according to Katharine, the health of the public education system is worth fighting for.

"How else do you have a civic pluralistic society?" she asks. "If we segregate kids through private education—I think that's the first step to losing a cohesive community identity." •



L: Former VESTA president Chloe McKnight, R: VSTA President Katharine Shipley; Lauren Donnelly photo

# Speaking up and stepping up for gender equity

**IZZY WONG IS A LEADER** at Point Grey Secondary School in Vancouver. The Grade 12 student is one of two public relations representatives on student council. She also plays and coaches volleyball.

Last year Izzy was asked to play on the boys' volleyball team because they didn't have enough players—something she says she wouldn't have had the confidence to do before she joined the school's We for She group.

The group is only three years old, but it has made a big impact. Physical health education and food studies teacher Stacey Yip now leads the group. She says that it started when teacher Helen Sinclair (who has since moved to Churchill Secondary) noticed that the girls in her class would fall silent during group discussions.

"We were wondering how we could find a way for these girls to find their voices," said Stacey. "To not be afraid to stand up and speak their minds."

There are now about 30 students from Grades 10–12 in the group. They meet in October to prepare for the We for She conference hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, the provincial government, and the Women's Enterprise Centre. After the conference, the group debriefs and

develops a plan for how they'll spread the message of gender equity to support young women to speak up, step up, and take action.

Part of stepping up includes organizing the school's International Women's Day celebration. Last year the group planned a week's worth of activities. They offered a zumba class for students by donation. Students were encouraged to donate toiletries for the Salvation Army's Belkin House. School librarians hosted a women in literature session. A personal safety workshop facilitated by the Vancouver Police Department was also a popular event.

Stacey says that next year she'd like the group to build awareness around sexual harassment in the workplace. "A lot of these kids are working now," said Stacey. She's looking into collaborating with another secondary school to expand the group's reach.

As an original member of the We for She group, Izzy is an example of the group's messages in action. She's hopeful that speaking up will carry the message of equity even further.

"I want to see it grow more within the school and maybe go throughout the community as well," said Izzy. "The more people that know the better." •



Stacey Yip photo

# Planting seeds of empowerment in young minds

## LOCAL PROFILE

Life in locals 39-1 and 39-2 continued

**A COMMUNITY GARDEN** on the rooftop of Vancouver's Charles Dickens Elementary School is bringing students from Kindergarten to Grade 7 closer to the local ecology.

Kelly Kent took over the garden in 2013 and developed a five-year plan that has transformed the rooftop into a growing, living space.

"Part of my vision was to teach children about their local ecology and learn how to be caretakers for that," she says. The rooftop garden is a safe space away from the bustling playground where kids can read while snacking on fresh peas and strawberries right out of the garden.

Last year the school started a "decolonizing our local ecology" project focused on teaching children which plants and animals are local to their environment, what invasive plants are, and how they affect our local ecosystem. The school was awarded a BC Green Games grant for the project, and staff used the prize money to expand student learning by taking field trips to forests and wetlands. Kelly says that the project has encouraged deep questioning in her students.

"Some of the questioning that the kids came up with was, 'If the bullfrog and the starling come in and take over, what about Europeans?'" she said. "'Are settlers invasive species?'" So they're making connections to reconciliation work that we've been doing in the school system."

Indigenous Elders have shared their knowledge and traditions with the class. The garden has fostered community collaborations with the Environmental Youth Alliance and a workshop where UBC students taught the children to make tea infusions from their Indigenous food and medicine garden.

Every year the garden yields new gifts by evolving to include a new facet of learning. Last year Kelly's class used applied skills and math to plan, design, and build a geodesic greenhouse.

This year they're dabbling with blue orchard mason bees. It's all part of students learning how to build an ecology that will support native species.

There's a new project every week, from making salves, to planting seedlings, to building bird feeders, to harvesting and cooking what the garden yields. Kelly recalls students harvesting yarrow to treat their own minor playground injuries—it's called nature's Band-Aid for a reason. Students keep their own plant foraging notebooks where they do botanical drawings and list plants' uses. They're empowered to harvest the flowers, food, tea, or medicine they've grown in the school's garden.

"It's exciting to have this knowledge at their fingertips," Kelly says. "It's a really powerful confidence builder for the children."

Kelly wants to extend growing season beyond the confines of the school year, and she is developing a drip irrigation system to alleviate some of the summer watering duties. It's been a learning experience for her too.

"One of the benefits of teaching is that you can enrich your own life by enriching the learning of the kids," she says. "And gardening is so much fun."•







Janet Stromquist photos

# Reconnecting with the land restores teachers' spirits after hard emotional labour

by Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF staff



## GATHERED UNDER SUNNY

skies on the shore of Kawkawa Lake, two dozen teachers listened

in rapt attention to the renowned Stó:lō historian and cultural advisor Naxaxalhts'i, Albert "Sonny" McHalsie, as he shared his knowledge of S'ólh Téméxw, the beautiful lakes, rivers, and mountains within the unceded traditional territory of his people.

This special Pro-D and wellness day was the BCTF's way of saying "thank you" for the important and difficult work they do as Aboriginal education workshop facilitators. Along with a few non-Aboriginal colleagues, they were taking a day out of time, reconnecting with the land, learning place names and concepts in the Halq'eméylem language.

As the bus headed upriver, Sonny emphasized that he was sharing both sqwélqwel, true facts and personal histories, as well as sxwōxwiyam, the creation stories of Xexá:ls, the Transformers. He spoke of the origin of the great blue heron, of the mountain that looks like a man from upriver and a woman from downriver, of the once-overwhelming abundance of

oolichan in the river now decimated by overfishing downstream, of the beauty of the women's fasting grounds high in the hills, now logged out. At the lakeshore, he told of the sacred mask from the time of the 1782 small pox epidemic, when up to 90% of the population perished. "Whole villages were wiped out. They found the people dead in their canoes, in their homes."

"The things we talk about in the classroom can be very traumatizing for people of Aboriginal heritage," said Jesse Halton. "But that day, connecting with the land, putting my hands into the waters of Kawkawa Lake, was so reinvigorating! I could feel those lake people."

In Hope, the bus turned into the Telte-Yet Campsite to view the site of a sqemel, a traditional pithouse. "Or, as the anthropologists would say, 'a circular semi-subterranean winter dwelling'," Sonny noted dryly, making air quotes as he indicated a deep round indentation in the earth. He asked four teachers to stand in designated spots to show where the house posts would have been and explained how the pit houses were built to be cool in summer and warm in winter.

That was an emotional moment for Dani Pigeau and her father Harold Lock, who is a cousin of Sonny's. The two men's great-great-grandfather, Sexyel, also known as Captain Charlie, inhabited the very house that once stood there.

"Standing on that place where my ancestors lived was overwhelming. It's a sacred site that now is a commercial campground. They don't know that's where we lived and died. The sacred space is covered up, but you can still feel the spirit energy there," Dani said. "I'm so grateful we still have our Knowledge Keepers. That day was big—a really big gift for me."

For Brian Coleman, the trip evoked nostalgia overlaid with a tremendous sadness. "I have a lot of fond memories of driving that road through the [Fraser] canyon as a child, with my dad and my sisters. Dad would tell stories, but back then I never understood all the loss," he said. "How full that land is! Yet so much is lost."

Just how much was lost, and when, and where, and by whom—these are among the hard lessons Canadians are beginning to learn and teachers are mandated to teach. To support

members, the BCTF offers 12 different workshops on topics including the legacy of residential schools, infusing Aboriginal content, Indigenous perspectives, decolonizing, and much more. And they are in high demand: of 296 workshops delivered in the 2018–19 school year, 94 were Aboriginal education workshops. The facilitators are highly trained and deeply committed to this work, but it demands hard emotional labour.

"It's like having PTSD and being triggered all the time. I live this history, I own it. So, retelling it is like ripping off a Band-Aid every time," says Jacquie King. "At the same time, it's super rewarding because people say thank you so much for sharing. People wouldn't gain the same insights without our authentic voices."

The facilitators expressed frustration at the continuing ignorance of some Canadians about this history, despite the lengthy hearings and massive reports by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

"People say OMG! I didn't know! But how could people *still* not know?" asked Peggy Janicki. "I'm not very empathetic to that position anymore. I've been teaching this history for 16 years now."

Still, it remains the fact that generations of Canadians learned absolutely nothing about the residential school system: the 150,000 children taken and the 6,000 who died; the hunger; the tuberculosis; the physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse. The true history is so shocking and brutal

it is often met with skepticism, crossed arms, and even eye-rolls.

"You get the fact-checkers in the room, immediately opening their laptops or going on their phones looking up whether what I'm saying is true. It's like, 'I don't believe that because I've learned something different my whole life'," said Claire Akiwenzie. "A lot of people are giving their full attention, but there's always someone who's not having any of it. They're totally walled up."

**"I'm so grateful we still have our Knowledge Keepers. That day was big—a really big gift for me."**

Nodding, Heather Froste added: "Last year I found the reaction to be a lot more of 'Yeah, yeah, okay, just give me the lesson plans.' People don't want to do the work. They just want to check off the box. Residential school history—tick! But that's not an act of reconciliation."

Not only do some question the veracity of information, they challenge the very identity of the presenters. Carlo Pavan noted that all workshop presenters experience resistance from time to time, no matter what the topic. "But the difference is that we're talking about us—our history, our lived experiences, our identity. So, when you experience resistance to your own identity, the emotional cost is much higher. You feel invalidated. I often wonder if the SOGI facilitators feel the same way."

Branden Peters agreed: "Some of the resistance is white fragility, because this history does unsettle people. It makes you feel things. Discomfort and guilt are two horns on the same goat."

A middle-school principal once asked Peggy to "take it easy on the staff" because they had felt heartbroken after doing the Blanket Exercise. "Sorry, there's no gentle version of this history," she said. "It's a pedagogy of discomfort."

Unsettling as it may be, teachers are called to confront these uncomfortable truths. There have been significant changes to BC's curriculum around infusing Aboriginal history and culture, and the BC Teachers' Council's new professional standard requires educators to "contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing."

Jean Moir has been doing just that in her Grade 3-4-5 classroom, helping to pilot the BCTF resource *Gladys We Never Knew*, about Gladys Chapman, a little girl taken from her home in Spuzzum to Kamloops Residential School, where she died of tuberculosis at age 12.

"Visiting Gladys's grave was one of the most profound learning experiences my kids ever had. It was an amazing opportunity for them to connect to her story with their hearts, as well as their heads," she said as the bus passed the Chapman family cemetery near Spuzzum.

"Children are hard-wired for fairness, so when you teach them about the historical and current injustices, they are outraged and eager to take action. Now my students are going home and educating their parents about the true history of Canada."

Jean urged other non-Aboriginal teachers to dive into this work with open hearts and minds.

"It really is a personal journey, and once you start engaging with this history it takes on its own momentum," she said. "You confront your own shame and discomfort and biases, but it's all so worth it. When you acknowledge something difficult and go through it, you come out a better person." •



Naxaxalhts'i, Albert "Sonny" McHalsie



# ReconciliACTION:

## Action at the heart of reconciliation

by **Regie Plana-Alcuaz**, teacher, Aiyansh; and **Serena Mohammed**, teacher, Richmond

Republished from the Summer/Fall 2019 BCTF Social Justice Newsletter

**THIS YEAR'S PROVINCIAL** social justice and Aboriginal education conference, ReconciliACTION: Witnessing and Walking Forward Together, brought Local Social Justice Contacts and Local Aboriginal Education Contacts together to learn from each other, network, and share experiences. On the first night, the collective mood in the Red Cedar Ballroom—an apt location, given the symbolism of this tree of life—was uplifting.

The conference started off with a territorial acknowledgment and introduction from the evening's emcees. Keynote speaker Rueben George, renowned antipipeline activist from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, gave a humorous and invigorating speech that showed how persistence and perseverance are key to achieving one's goals. Many teachers left the room that evening inspired to take action.

The following day was no less inspirational. The morning plenary set the tone with poignant accounts from the three guest speakers. These included Peggy Janicki, Indigenous mentor teacher who developed the SOGI 123 weaving project in Mission; Saylesh Wesley, teacher, trans woman, and activist of Stó:lō and Tsimshian ancestry; and Tyler Jacobs, Squamish Nation LGBTQ2S+ activist, artist, and fashion designer. Each provided examples from their lived experience that underlined the urgency for action—not just lip service—to improve the lives of First Nations peoples, particularly those who identify as Two-Spirit.

The beauty that they wrought from the pain of the past, exemplified in the stories they shared and the items they produced, affirmed their strength and creativity in spite of—or perhaps even due to—the adversity they faced. "It's important to hear about SOGI from

people with lived experience. We can be allies but can't speak for others. The three speakers were wonderfully engaging and genuine," says Kiran Sidhu, a Richmond teacher.

One of the Saturday morning workshops, Decolonizing, was led by Brian Coleman, who sits on the BCTF's Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC). The workshop's objectives were to examine themes of decolonizing, explore examples of reconciliation, and reflect on participants' own paths toward this goal. The first activity allowed teachers to become aware of how much we still have to learn about the colonization of First Nations peoples. Coleman shared articles and other media evidence on the role reclaiming Aboriginal language plays in decolonizing and as an essential first step in reconciliation. The workshop provided an excellent springboard for self-reflection and inspired participants to carry out further research into the topic.

Another workshop, led by AEAC member Carol Arnold, focused on using the Aboriginal Lens and incorporating Aboriginal ways of knowing and being into students' learning experiences. The workshop offered three key messages. Participants learned about the significance of helping students develop a positive relationship with the Elders, peers, and teachers in their communities. They also heard that children learn best through interactive activities that are connected to the natural environment and to culture.

Finally, participants learned about the importance of celebrating and acknowledging the resiliency, strength, contributions, and diversity of Canada's Indigenous people.

During an afternoon workshop entitled Settler Conversations, Antiracism Action Group member Ryan Cho facilitated participants' discourse through guided questions. Participants discussed the necessity for teachers who are settlers to advocate for Aboriginal students, and they also considered how teachers can improve their practice and meaningfully commit to acting as allies for the Aboriginal students, families, and colleagues in our districts. Teachers left the workshop with the realization that they still had much to consider regarding their roles as settlers and allies.

"I learned compelling stories from other teachers about who they are and where they and their families come from. Hearing these stories helps me to appreciate that everyone we meet represents another step in a journey that began in time immemorial," says Tyler Emoff, a teacher from Prince Rupert.

Butterflies in Spirit, a Vancouver-based dance group, formed to commemorate and raise awareness of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada, wrapped up the conference with an animated performance that brought members to their feet and inspired many to contribute financially to their cause. Participants left the conference energized by their colleagues from across the province and inspired to take action. •



L to R: Tyler Jacobs, Peggy Janicki, and Saylesh Wesley





United Way photo

# Period Promise: Transforming society

by June James, BCTF staff



**IT STARTED OUT** as Tampon Tuesday in March 2017 and in 2019 it became Period Promise. The annual United

Way Period Promise Campaign has been a local response to a global issue.

Monthly menstruation products are necessary, and there are so many people who can't afford them.

Neal Adolph, United Way Director of Labour Participation explains, "With Tampon Tuesday, we saw how in-kind donations of menstrual products were making a concrete difference in people's lives, right away. But we also knew that by partnering more deeply with the labour movement, and with government, we could tackle period poverty on an even wider scale. Period Promise continued the valuable menstrual product donation drive, while also launching a policy agreement wherein organizations commit to providing menstrual products free of charge in their facilities."

At the February 21–22, 2019, BCTF Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

*That the Federation publicly endorse and provide a donation of \$500 to the United Way campaign Period Promise and encourage members to donate menstrual products to a United Way donation box at the AGM, and further, that locals be encouraged to raise awareness and organize support for the campaign in their home district.*

We collected products at the AGM and I delivered our donation to the United Way at their Period Promise Campaign Celebration on April 4.

Dr. Selina Tribe, a professor, mother, and advocate, spoke about how her lobbying inspired the Board of Education for New Westminster School District to adopt such a policy on February 26. She is also lobbying the federal government to make free menstrual products available in public institutions Canada-wide.

The next day, Rob Fleming, BC's Education Minister, issued a ministerial order that all BC public schools will be required to provide free menstrual products for students in school washrooms by the end of 2019.

"Students should never have to miss school, extracurricular, sports or social activities because they can't afford or don't have access to menstrual products," said Fleming. "This is a common-sense step forward that is, frankly, long overdue. We look forward to working with school districts and communities to make sure students get the access they need with no stigma and no barriers."

Annie Ohana, an inner-city high school teacher, welcomed Fleming's announcement. "The provision of free menstrual products means we take away the barriers of income and parental support and provide a safe learning environment for all of our students, not to mention an end to the period-shaming that so many of us were socialized into."

Annie's students agree. "If I have my period and I don't have extra pads, then I go home early, don't stay after school for help or clubs. This change allows me to stay in school and be more involved," says one tenth grader.

Commenting on current and future progress, Neal Adolph says, "At United Way we know that when local citizens mobilize and donate to help others, it's amazing. And we know when we collaborate to build sustainable, long-term solutions to social issues, our impact is even greater. We're proud that Period Promise has managed to do both, but we know there is still so much to do. Period poverty doesn't start or end at public schools, and so we've got to keep pushing right until we have free menstrual products available for everybody wherever they need them."

Thank you United Way, for your advocacy on a human rights issue that should have been addressed long ago. •

# Teaching haiku



iStock/brusinski

by Naomi Beth Wakan, poet and author



## AS THIS IS A BRIEF

introduction to the teaching of haiku, I should immediately simplify things

by telling you that the five-seven-five syllable count of Japanese haiku is not applicable to writing haiku in English. The typical form used is roughly two beats, three beats, two beats. The syllable count is not important, catching the moment is—what is happening right here and now. Discuss with your students what “a moment” is and how one could “catch” it. They (haiku is both singular and plural) are not about ideas or emotions, nor for the use of metaphors and similes. The students are going to tell how “this” is like “this,” not how “this” is like “that.” Haiku are merely what one is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

Answering “What? When? and Where?” is helpful for beginners.

The **what** is something that is attracting their attention through their senses. Ask the students to list sound (motorbike), sight (something moving or very striking), smell (cooking), taste (food and drink), touch (roughness or smoothness).

The **when** should indicate the time of day or season. Ask the students to list seasonal words, such as robins (spring), sandcastles (summer), pumpkins (autumn), and icicles (winter).

The **where** should indicate where the event or object is located.

Ask your students to write three sentences answering what, when, and where, and remind them they are recording one moment only. Point out that the sentences will be written in the present tense as they are describing what is happening here and now. Explain that they need to use very few words, and they should remove words that are not doing any work. As an example:

~~I am entirely on my own~~ going down the hill on Main Street

~~The street is deserted and I am on my~~ skateboard

~~In the distance I can see~~ the early morning sun coming up.

“I” is not necessary as we know the writer is speaking. “On my own” could have “alone” as a substitute word, so there is no need to write “the street is

deserted.” Of course the sun is in the distance, and if it's rising, it must be early morning, so we don't need those words. With some editing, we have:

down Main Street  
alone on my skateboard...  
the rising sun

Capital letters should be used for proper nouns only. Punctuation should merely indicate how one part of the haiku complements or contrasts the other, and here I used an ellipsis. The two images of the student skateboarding and the rising sun are known as juxtaposition and help the haiku, when read, to give rise to ideas and emotions—one moment and two contrasting or complementary images.

Ideas and emotions can arise when reading the haiku. Ask your students what ideas and emotions they have after reading the skateboard haiku. For me, this haiku suggests adolescence: the loneliness of it, yet the strange feeling of power as new skills are acquired. The rising sun adds to the feeling of coming into full power as an adult. It is a simple image, yet it captures that time of life very well.

Haiku are not a list. The two images must have a spark joining them.

## Four of Naomi's seasonal haiku:

*end of summer  
pinned to the park noticeboard  
a bikini top*



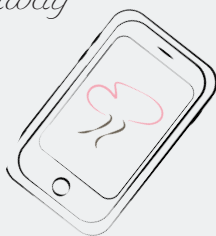
*heavy frost  
in the white crocus  
a sleeping bee*



*autumn wind  
in the used-clothing store  
Halloween costumes*



*under the cherry blossom  
teens twitter away  
eyes down*



**Naomi Beth Wakan** has written over fifty books, including *Haiku— one breath poetry*, an American Library Association and Canadian Children's Book Centre selection. She is the inaugural Poet Laureate of Nanaimo and the inaugural Honorary Ambassador for the Federation of BC Writers. [www.naomiwakan.com](http://www.naomiwakan.com) •

# Lifelong influence: Remembering my favourite teacher, *Mr. Shuto*

by **Larry Hayes**, Trustee, Burnaby Board of Education



L: Norm Shuto, R: Larry Hayes

**"I am a very proud product of Burnaby's public school system."**

**IT WAS THE FALL** of 1967 when I met my favourite teacher, Mr. Norm Shuto. I was in Grade 7 at Armstrong Avenue Elementary, and he was my homeroom teacher. He specialized in science, and I LOVED science!

I grew up and we didn't keep in touch; however, six or eight years ago I was approached by a gentleman at a Remembrance Day ceremony. He asked me if my name was Larry Hayes. Would you believe it? Even after all these years – and after teaching me for only one year – Mr. Shuto remembered me and my younger sister. Just amazing!

During the civic election period in October 2018, I responded to questions posed by the Burnaby Now newspaper, one of them being: "What three people would you invite to a dinner party?"

I answered, "My boyhood hero Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon for going where no one has gone before, my favourite teacher, Norm Shuto, for encouraging my creative learning, and my late

parents to tell them how their unselfish hard work has made me want to emulate their ideals."

I met Mr. Shuto at an event in the fall and asked him if he would be my guest and attend our inaugural SD41 board meeting and swearing-in ceremony. He was delighted and honoured to do so! I was proud to introduce Mr. Shuto to our Burnaby school district senior administration team and let them know how he influenced my life. He told them how touched and humbled he was with the article in the Burnaby Now. I think this story perfectly illustrates the influence that teachers and school staff have on the lives of the children that they serve, and how the power of community helps shape our collective future.

Just thinking about this wonderful teacher still inspires me, and the fifty-two years that have passed has only made this feeling stronger! Thank you to all educators for everything that you have done, and continue to do, in helping many, many other students like me. •



# Heard about the changes to teacher education at SFU?



**by Janet McCarron**  
Faculty of Education,  
Simon Fraser University (SFU)

## **16-month program now at SFU**

**I RECENTLY ATTENDED** a professional development opportunity in Vancouver. There were hundreds of teachers exploring new assessment practices, and I took advantage of the opportunity to connect with my district colleagues. I rarely have that chance now that I am seconded to the Faculty of Education at SFU where my partner, Cynthia Clerc, and I help arrange the student teachers' field experiences. I was surprised that so few teachers knew about the changes to our largest program, the Professional Development Program (PDP), which is now 16 months long.

When teachers first hear about the change, they inevitably think that it is a fantastic idea. Many believe that their own one-year programs left them overwhelmed and unprepared to face the complexities of setting up and leading their own classrooms. The architects of SFU's PDP would agree.

## **New semester: Education 400**

In September 2018 SFU added a four-month semester, Education 400: Foundations of Education and Schooling, to the beginning of the program. During that first semester, student teachers examine their emerging professional identities and responsibilities by broadening their understanding of teaching and learning beyond their lived experiences. They also begin their program-long inquiries, including

those related to special education and Aboriginal education.

While there is no practice-teaching in the first semester, the students do take part in three field experiences. In their first guided observational experience, GO1, they examine community contexts. For example, they might see how the services provided at a school reflect the socio-economic needs of the neighbourhood. In the second set of guided observations, GO2, student teachers visit a school district to see how it operates as a whole. One of our student teachers, Astrid Hin Wong, found it "was an invaluable opportunity to observe various teachers in their classrooms and to learn about the diverse programs and supporting roles within the school district I aspire to teach in." GO3 sees student teachers partnered with community organizations that provide teaching and learning opportunities that are different from those seen in typical classrooms.

## **Coursework and practicum**

After the students have examined education with that broad lens from September to December, they narrow their focus to their specific grades and subject areas in EDUC 401/2 from January to April. With the assistance of generous school associates, the SFU student teachers have their first taste of preparing and leading lessons for five weeks starting in February. All of their professional coursework,

including pedagogy, curricular studies, and assessment, is completed during the summer semester before they begin EDUC 405, their certifying practicum in the final semester of the program from September to December. They are then ready to continue their journey into the profession.

## **Growing teachers**

Sometimes practising teachers ask me if our program has fewer applicants now that it is 16 months long, but in fact, we have more applicants than ever!

Fall 2017—last year of the 12-month program—568 applicants

Fall 2018—first year of the 16-month program—926 applicants

Fall 2019—second year of the 16-month program—1,077 applicants

Joseph Mensah, a current student, found that "Education 400 was an amazing experience that really prepared me for continuing my educational journey. I was able to make connections with staff, peers, and students, which has helped my growth tremendously."

We expect that our enhanced program is providing our student teachers with an even better opportunity to integrate theory and practice into fantastic teaching and learning environments. •

# Students with special needs in French Immersion

by Sylvie Afilal, teacher, Surrey



## THERE ARE MANY

misconceptions about teaching in the French Immersion program, and the presence of students with special needs in this program is, for some, a source of debate. I often find myself in discussions with parents and colleagues as we struggle with the question, "What is the best placement for students with special needs in the French Immersion program?"

I believe all students can successfully learn an additional language when they receive adequate support in English and French. This can be challenging, because like our colleagues in the English program, French teachers find that services for students are insufficient.

One girl came to my Grade 2 class functioning at a beginning Grade 1 level. She learned how to speak French, but writing, reading, and math were difficult. She received learning support in French (also known as learning assistance in other districts) two to three times a week in 30-minute blocks.

By mid-Grade 2, we had her assessed by our speech language pathologist (in English) as a preliminary to a psych-ed assessment. The results showed some areas of strength and some concerning areas of challenge. Her parents were aware that whether she remained in French Immersion or transferred to the English program, she would encounter the same difficulties. They trusted the school to provide support for their daughter.

We continued to provide services mostly in French and our learning support teacher tried to squeeze in some sessions in English from her already full caseload. In Grade 4,

she had a psych-ed assessment (in English). The results confirmed a severe learning disability, and her parents decided to remove her from the French Immersion program.

This decision was hard for the child, the parents, and the teachers because we knew that with better support, she would have been able to learn in an additional language. School districts must allow and fund our school-based team professionals to provide the support that is needed in both English and French, because catering to only one language is not in the best interest of these students.

Students with special needs are often diagnosed around Grade 4, because that gives them time to mature and learn the additional language so an assessment that reflects their real abilities can be done. In my experience, by Grade 4 the academic gap is huge, and students' self-esteem and motivation are negatively affected.

When I worked in a dual-track school (where the French Immersion and

English programs are side-by-side), the dilemma was also to ensure a balance of services between the two programs. The elephant in the room is that French Immersion receives federal funding that supplements district funding, so there are more resources. Funds usually go to books, computer/tablet applications, and cultural programs in French. This funding is never for services for students with special needs; however, educators know that human resources are what is needed most when supporting students.

In my early teaching years, I was unsure of how to cater to the wide needs in my classroom and advocate for services for my students. Now that I am a seasoned teacher, I see the lack of appropriate and timely services as the system failing some students in French Immersion.

We have students with special needs in French Immersion, and I for one would love to have them continue in the program; however, the low level of support is a barrier for them. •



iStock/Highwaystarz



# Climate crisis and conserving nature

resources compiled by Harold Gopaul, retired science teacher, Coquitlam

**TACKLING CLIMATE SCIENCE** in the classroom can be daunting. Here are some helpful resources compiled by retired science teacher Harold Gopaul. You can also find Harold's newly revised resource "Climate Crisis: Physical Science, Natural Variability, Anthropogenic Impacts & Mitigating Emissions" on TeachBC: [teachbc/bctf.ca](https://teachbc/bctf.ca)

## **Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions**

<https://is.gd/xUPMGf>

Teaching resources with mini-lessons, including questions and discussion points to guide teachers. Lessons include: CO<sub>2</sub> and the Greenhouse Effect, Mother Nature's Influence, Observable Changes, An Introduction to Climate Modelling, The Climate of British Columbia, Projected Climate Change in British Columbia, Climate Impacts in British Columbia, Adaptation.

## **Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy**

<https://bit.ly/2lOKX5B>

A BC government website. Access "Environmental Protection & Sustainability" link for topics such as Clean BC, Climate Change, Plants, Animals and Ecosystems, and much more.

## **World Wildlife Fund Living Planet @ School**

<https://is.gd/n1zjvS>

Canadian students and educators can take hands-on action to help protect nature. Divided into K–8 and 9–12 and has activities suited for either classes or schools.

## **World Wildlife Fund's Wild Classroom**

[www.worldwildlife.org/teaching-resources](http://www.worldwildlife.org/teaching-resources)

Choose from a variety of toolkits featuring information guides and activities about some of WWF's priority species and conservation goals. Students will learn how their actions help shape the future of nature through these subject-integrated lessons.

## **The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2018 Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C**

[www.ipcc.ch/sr15](http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15)

"We have 12 years." There are five chapters but you may only need to access the "Summary for Policymakers" for your classroom needs. Read about greenhouse gas projections for a 1.5°C and a 2.0°C warming by 2100 and why 195 nations from their Paris Pledges would likely have the world arriving at about 2.6°C–3.2°C warming if we do not advance ways to reduce greenhouse gas.

## **UN Environmental Programme: Emissions Gap Report 2018**

<https://is.gd/z62KWK>

"The world is at last beginning to tackle its fossil fuel addiction. Coal is no longer competitive, and wind farms and solar installations are gathering pace... we need to make an almost existential change, the solutions are there, and we have no excuse...The science may be frightening, but the solutions are clear. The only missing link is leadership... to bridge the gap to ensure global

warming stays well below 2°C and 1.5°C."

—Joyce Msuya United Nations Environment Programme

## **Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene**

[www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252](http://www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252)

Researched by Will Steffen and 12 climate scientists at [pnas.org](http://pnas.org). A must read on understanding consequences of leaving the Holocene and into a new epoch, the Anthropocene, and the likely progression onto Hothouse Earth if we exceed 2°C warming by 2100.

## **The Race of Our Lives Revisited by Jeremy Grantham**

<https://is.gd/a5DTHC>

You will not be disappointed with this 34-page white paper. "It was always going to be difficult for us—Homo sapiens—to deal with the long-term, slow-burning problems that threaten us today: climate change, population growth, increasing environmental toxicity, and the impact of all these three on the future ability to feed the 11 billion people projected for 2100." Loaded with graphs and with considerable back-up data and supporting exhibits. I read it twice for things to sink in!

## **Canada's Arctic Marine Atlas**

<https://is.gd/8yXDZ6>

Provides an overview of the marine mammals, seabirds, fish and other wildlife that thrive in our northern waters—and highlights the importance of a healthy ecosystem for the people who live there.





iStock/Matt Paim

### **Natural Resources Canada**

[www.nrcan.gc.ca/home](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/home)

Natural Resources Canada (NRC) is a website administered by the Federal Government of Canada. NRC seeks to enhance the responsible development and use of Canada's natural resources and the competitiveness of Canada's natural resources products.

### **Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change**

<https://is.gd/hMbQdV>

"The PanCanadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change presented here is our collective plan to grow our economy while reducing emissions and building resilience to adapt to a changing climate..."

### **Canadian Chamber of Commerce: "A Competitive Transition"**

<https://is.gd/VaDgZl>

Very informative on carbon tax and strategies for clean growth while supporting a carbon tax with realistic projections for the economy and environment. Canada's greenhouse gas pledge at the Paris Conference in 2015 was ambitious and would not meet reductions for a 1.5°C or 2.0°C. Read why Canada would not meet its projected reductions.

### **NASA: Global Climate Change**

[www.climate.nasa.gov](http://www.climate.nasa.gov)

Click on "Resources" and "For Educators." There are nine sites such as "NASA's Climate Kids" and "Climate Change Lessons."

### **Canada's Changing Climate Report**

[www.ChangingClimate.ca/CCCR2019](http://www.ChangingClimate.ca/CCCR2019)

By the federal government—how and why Canada's climate has changed and what changes are projected for the future.

### **David Suzuki Foundation**

[www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

A wealth of information on climate solutions, biodiversity, and ways to act locally, online, and at home.

### **A Global Deal for Nature**

[www.globaldealornature.org](http://www.globaldealornature.org)

This website connects with preserving nature and biodiversity for reducing greenhouse gas as carbon sinks in conjunction with the Paris Agreement.

### **Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation**

[www.leonardodicaprio.org](http://www.leonardodicaprio.org)

The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation also provides information on climate change and preserving nature and biodiversity.

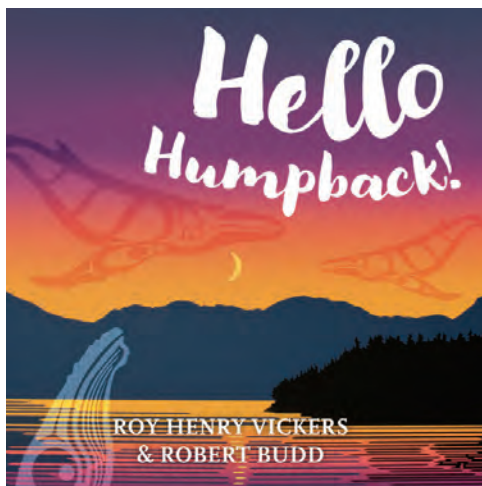
### **Search the internet for these climate scientists**

Paul Beckwith, University of Ottawa;  
Johan Rockstrom, Stockholm Resilience Centre and the Potsdam Institute;  
and Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam University. They have excellent videos on YouTube. Good for secondary students, parents, and classroom discussion. •

# Picturesque coastal landscapes and wildlife

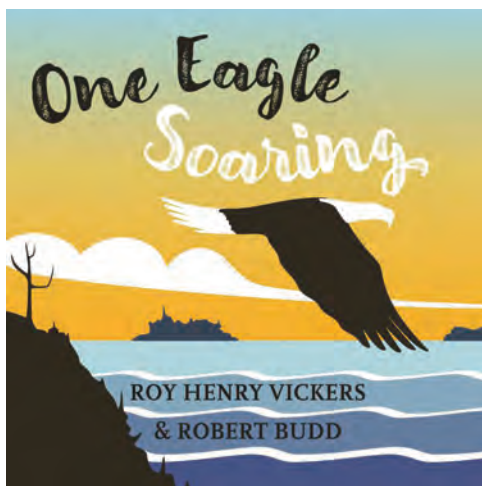
Published by Harbour Publishing, 2017, 2018, 2019

Reviewed by Kerry Richardson, retired teacher

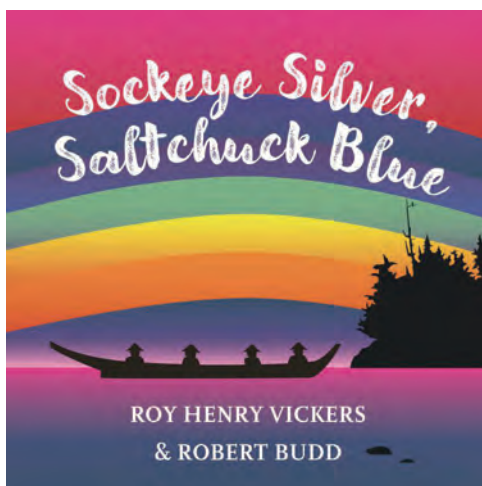


*Hello Humpback!*, *One Eagle Soaring*, and *Sockeye Silver, Saltchuck Blue* are a series of board books for babies and toddlers illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers and written by Robert Budd.

These books are best read to children with plenty of time for exploring the pictures. They are simply gorgeous. The delights of the natural West Coast world are portrayed with Vickers' mesmerizing Aboriginal designs, breathtaking colours, and intriguing textures. You need to move the book into just the right angle to reveal mysteries in the gleaming ink.



While these board books are designed for little hands, there is nothing childish about them other than simple rhymes. Each page is its own work of art. Teachers may wish to know that the print is not conducive to teaching children to read, if that is their intention: the print is either upper-case or handwritten in a style that may be difficult for early readers to decipher. The vocabulary, rhyming, and incidental learning, however, will give rise to many enriching conversations.



Roy Henry Vickers was born in the Nass Valley in northern British Columbia and is a well-known carver, painter, and print-maker.

Victoria historian Robert Budd is the author of *Voices of British Columbia* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2010) and *Echoes of British Columbia* (Harbour Publishing, 2014), which won second prize in the BC Historical Federation's writing competition in 2014. •

# Teaching and parenting: How to ignite passion for service

Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019

Reviewed by Suzanne Munroe, teacher, Vancouver

*How to Raise Successful People* is written by Esther Wojcicki, mother of Susan Wojcicki, CEO of YouTube; Janet Wojcicki, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco; and Anne Wojcicki, co-founder and CEO of 23andMe.

Esther is also a public school teacher. Woj, as she is known by her students, has taught journalism at California's Palo Alto High School for the last thirty-six years. This book explains her unconventional approach to parenting and teaching.

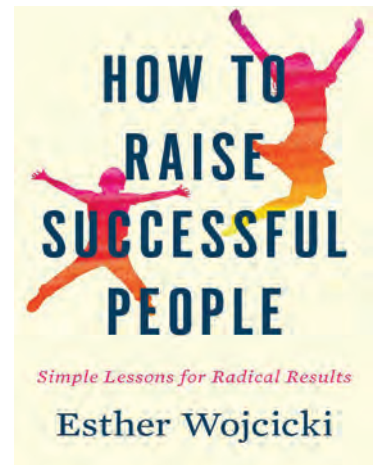
After growing up in poverty and neglect, the author resolved to teach her daughters to be independent and assertive. Her motto when working with

kids is known as "TRICK": trust, respect, independence, collaboration, and kindness.

During her teaching career, Esther has observed some concerning trends, including a "grit deficit" and increasing anxiety in students. She points to the fact that many parents now say they value achievement over kindness.

Meanwhile, the mother of two CEOs defines success as loving what you do and contributing to society. She recommends igniting a passion for service in children. It's that passion for helping others that keeps Esther in the classroom at the age of seventy-six.

Esther's story is inspiring, timely, and



thought-provoking. Her book is an essential read for anyone working with kids today. •

## Teacher wellness in the classroom

Published by humanworks press, 2018

Reviewed by Mike Kimmis, BCTF staff

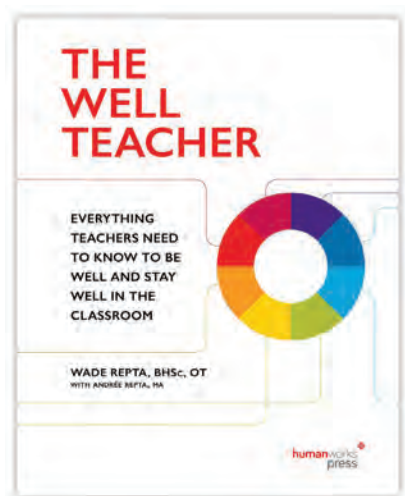
Rewarding, complex, and challenging: three words that best describe the personal and professional lives of teachers. *The Well Teacher*, a new book by Wade Repta, is a comprehensive resource to help

teachers manage their personal wellness. Repta is an occupational therapist with 20 years of experience helping teachers in BC return to work. His book is an accumulation of what he has learned during his career.

The book is well-organized with color-coded sections that cover a myriad of topics on teacher wellness. This includes not just physical and mental health, but topics specific to the profession, such as teachers' voices and chemical sensitivities. The author did not intend the book to be read cover-to-cover, but rather that teachers read sections of the book that apply to their personal circumstances. Throughout the book are symbols that reference websites, videos, and printable items that can be used to supplement the

information in the text. Key takeaways and notes are found in the margins of each chapter.

I suggest you read the first chapter on teacher wellness. The concept of the wellness wheel is introduced: the idea that wellness is made up of several psychosocial and physical components. If you map your wellness wheel, you will notice areas where you are thriving and others where you need support. The author acknowledges that it is unrealistic to expect anyone to lead a perfectly balanced life, so he designed the wheel to help teachers balance the areas that need the most attention. I recommend this book to teachers at any stage of their career. •





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## Check out the BCTF PD Calendar!



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[bctf.ca/PDcalendar](http://bctf.ca/PDcalendar)



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*Vancouver: November 30*

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*Vancouver: December 17; Victoria: December 18*

**TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**—Building a Culture of Strength  
*Vancouver: January 27; Victoria: January 30*

**PLAY THERAPY**—Tools for Helping Children and Youth  
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