

Teacher

Magazine of the
BC Teachers' Federation

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Nov/Dec 2015



GENDER
expression,
SEXUAL health,
and the new
CURRICULUM
Education for everyone



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This is your MAGAZINE

Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? An event, topic, or issue you want your colleagues to know about?

If so, consider writing for *Teacher*.

We also welcome letters to the editor. If you have any thoughts about any of the articles you have read here and want to share your opinion with other teachers, send your letter to teachermag@bctf.ca.

For more information about magazine themes or to submit an article, contact Susan Croll, editor of *Teacher*, scroll@bctf.ca or 604-871-1877.

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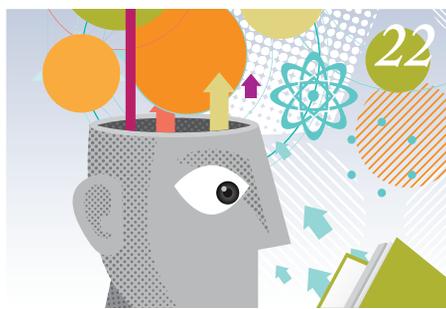
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Correction: We incorrectly listed the previous name for the BC Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (**BC TESOL**) in the Sept/Oct issue of the *Teacher*.



Canada chose change!

COLLEAGUES, the September/October 2015 edition of *Teacher* magazine was all about change and the federal election. Just as many of you did, I woke up on October 20 relieved that Stephen Harper would no longer be Prime Minister.

The tail end of the campaign saw the Conservative Party embrace tactics that were designed to stoke fears, stir up racism, and divide Canada. I was so proud to see Canadians reject the politics of fear and division so soundly.

Like you, I will be watching the Trudeau government closely to ensure they follow through on important progressive promises.

This issue of *Teacher* magazine is another call for change. Over the years, the BCTF has done a lot to advocate for all of the students we teach, and we have worked hard to make space through our social justice programs to ensure our schools embrace diversity.

But, we are hearing from more and more children, youth, and teachers who feel the school system is not as supportive as it could be for folks who are trans, gender questioning, or non-binary. Whether it's making an effort to use their preferred pronouns, or ensuring schools have inclusive and accessible washrooms, there are many ways we can help trans+ members of our school communities.

One simple thing we can do now is get the proper policies in place across BC. There are still 20 school districts that do not have specific antihomophobia/antitransphobia policies. That's unacceptable. It's time for the provincial government to stop dragging its heels, enforce their own rules, and ensure those districts get it done.

Let's keep working together to make our schools safe and inclusive for everyone!

Does your school district have an antihomophobia/antitransphobia policy?

Visit the BCTF Social Justice webpage www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17994 to find out. Please contact your Local President if you are interested in working to get your district to adopt such policy.

Le Canada a choisi le changement!

CHÈRES ET CHERS COLLÈGUES, le numéro de septembre / octobre 2015 du *Teacher* magazine parlait du changement et de l'élection fédérale. Comme beaucoup d'entre vous, je me suis réveillé le 20 octobre au matin soulagé d'apprendre que Stephen Harper ne serait plus premier ministre.

La fin de la campagne a vu le Parti conservateur utiliser des tactiques conçues pour alimenter les craintes, attiser le racisme et diviser le Canada. Je suis très fier de voir les Canadiens rejeter si clairement la politique de la peur et de la division.

Comme vous, je vais suivre de près l'évolution du gouvernement Trudeau pour m'assurer qu'il respecte ses importantes promesses progressistes.

Ce numéro du *Teacher* magazine est un autre appel au changement. Au fil des ans, la FECB a beaucoup plaidé en faveur de tous nos élèves. Par le biais de nos programmes de justice sociale, nous avons travaillé dur pour assurer que nos écoles acceptent la diversité.

Mais, nous entendons de plus en plus d'enfants, de jeunes et d'enseignants qui estiment que le système scolaire n'est pas aussi favorable qu'il pourrait l'être pour les gens transgenres, non binaires ou en questionnement. Que ce soit en utilisant leurs pronoms préférés ou en assurant que les écoles ont des toilettes accessibles et inclusives, il existe de nombreuses façons d'aider les membres trans de nos communautés scolaires.

Une chose très simple que nous pouvons faire maintenant est de mettre en place des politiques appropriées à travers la Colombie-Britannique. Il y a encore 20 conseils scolaires qui ne disposent pas de politiques spécifiques anti homophobie / anti transphobie. C'est inacceptable. Il est temps que le gouvernement provincial arrête de traîner des pieds, qu'il applique ses propres règles et veille à ce que ces conseils scolaires le fassent également.

Continuons de travailler ensemble pour faire de nos écoles un endroit sécuritaire et inclusif pour tous!



Jim Iker

Student Vote inspires

THIS RECENT ELECTION campaign was the longest in Canadian history. For the political junkie in me it was gut wrenching, but for the teacher that I am, it has proven to be the most formative. The reason why is that this was my first year sponsoring and co-ordinating Student Vote in my school, Ecole Alpha, in Burnaby.

Working together with another colleague, we watched as our small Student Vote organizing team blossomed from five to over 30 members. Students were excited about the elections and running the electoral simulation for their classmates. They hosted two pizza educationals discussing the electoral process and the platforms of the four major parties.

They organized a "candidates discussion," which all candidates attended (yes, even the Conservative candidate showed up) and asked candidates critical questions about their party's policies and platforms. Our school's Student Vote campaign ended with the vote simulation and they handed out "I Voted" stickers to all student voters.

Throughout the campaign, our students were organized, professional and enthusiastic, and showed great commitment to the democratic process. As a new teacher, know that I have faith in the future. With students this impassioned and dedicated, there is no struggle, current or future, we cannot overcome!

Shanee Prasad, secondary social studies teacher, École Alpha

Taxes. To pay or not to pay? Well, that is the question.

ASK THAT QUESTION each time you turn on the tap and have clean drinking water. Ask that question as dirty water from your showers and toilets is processed before being returned to the water cycle. Ask that question when driving on a road or enjoying a national park.

Most importantly, ask yourself that question every time you visit the doctor or access any service provided by someone who attended public school or a post-secondary institution.

Everything we enjoy in Canada and hope for the future depends on tax dollars in some way or form. To think that we can improve our country or strive to better the lives of every Canadian with less tax dollars is ridiculous.

It's not a matter of pay your taxes and be quiet. It's more a matter of pay your taxes and give a damn.

Jennie Boulanger, SD41, Burnaby

Retired teachers list still published?

IN THE PAST *Teacher* used to print a listing of teachers who had retired. I enjoyed reading through that, looking for people I had worked with, or in earlier days, those who had been my teachers. I looked forward to the day my name would be there for others to see.

I retired from the Surrey district at the end of June 2014. I read the magazine online. I kept looking through all the magazines as they came, and never saw a listing again. Maybe it is too soon to look for a list of those retiring in June 2015.

A friend of mine who retired a few years earlier than me never found the list either, so I know it was not just a mistake of me missing it.

Don't you run that list any more?

Kathy Enders, retired teacher

Editor's note: Due to space constraints, we have not run a list of retired teachers since 2012. Many local teacher unions and associations continue to print the names of retiring teachers.

Editor's note: We received too many responses to the September/October Teacher to include them all. Your comments and thoughts are important to us. Please keep them coming.

Resources for sanctuary school policies

THE BCTF COMMITTEE for Action on Social Justice want to thank *Teacher* magazine for publishing Daniel Tseghay's article "Teachers are not border police," which highlights the plight of migrant families living without status in BC, and fear deportation while attempting to access education for their children in our public schools. As the antiracism teacher advisory group, we appreciate that our work has allies and that attention to vulnerable migrant families is getting raised.

In 2013, our committee (CASJ's Antiracism Action Group) developed a draft policy based on policy passed by the Toronto School Board, the first school board to adopt an official sanctuary school policy in Canada.

As mentioned in Tseghay's article, the Executive Committee passed a motion in February 2014 supporting each local to work collectively with school boards to implement a sanctuary school policy. The first locals to begin this process were Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA) and Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association (VESTA); both part of the Vancouver Teachers Federation (VTF). In May 2014, they brought a sanctuary school proposal to Vancouver School Board for consideration and approval. While work is underway to adopt this policy, we want to share a number of resources for locals who also want to implement a sanctuary school policy.

Please visit the BCTF website <https://goo.gl/1k5xbF> to find out more about sanctuary, access resources, and how you can raise this important issue in your school district.

*Antiracism Action Group,
BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice*



The Gender Spectrum Glossary

Queer Terminology

www.qmunity.ca

Gender spectrum The idea that there are many gender identities (woman, man, cisgender, trans, two-spirit) and a range of gender expressions (ways people present their gender identity through hairstyle, clothing, behaviours, etc.).

Gender identity A person's internal sense of being a man, a woman, genderqueer, etc. This is not the same thing as a person's biological sex.

Gender dysphoria A psychological condition marked by significant emotional distress and impairment in life functioning caused by a lack of congruence between gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression The ways a person presents her or his sense of gender to others, e.g., through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.

Genderqueer Refers to individuals or groups who identify outside of the male/female binary. This is a politicized term or identity often used by people who intentionally challenge dominant gender norms.

Gender non-conforming Refers to people who express gender in ways that differ from social expectations of the sex and gender assigned to them at birth.

Gender fluid A fluctuating mix of the gender identities available.

Cisgender A person whose gender identity and gender expression match the gender typically associated with their biological sex. For example, a female who identifies as a woman.

Pangender A person who identifies and or expresses the many shades of gender. Multi-gender and omni-gender are other terms used.

Trans An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from what they were assigned at birth. Some trans people may choose to medically transition by taking hormones or having surgery. Some trans people may choose to socially transition by changing their name, clothing, hair, etc.

FTM Generally used to refer to anyone assigned female at birth, but who identifies or expresses their gender as male all or part of the time.

MTF Generally used to refer to anyone assigned male at birth, but who identifies or expresses their gender as female all or part of the time.

Intersex Refers to people whose reproductive or sexual anatomy is not easily defined as male or female. There are a variety of ways someone could fit in this category, ranging from having ambiguous genitalia to having a mixture of XX and XY chromosomes. The word hermaphrodite was historically used to describe these individuals, however, this word is considered highly offensive today.

Two-spirit An Aboriginal term describing the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender expression or sexuality, but encompasses them both while incorporating a spiritual element.

Social transition The social process that a trans person may go through when shifting from one gender expression to another. This may include steps such as changes in style of dress and the selection of a new name and pronouns.

Medical transition A term most commonly used to refer to the medical process that a trans person may go through when shifting from one gender expression to another. This may include steps such as hormone replacement therapy and/or surgeries.

Pronoun The word one uses to describe themselves, such as he, she, they, ze, hir, etc.

Transphobia Acts of discrimination directed at trans individuals and/or those who are perceived as such are based on ignorance, prejudice, and stereotyping.

The past, present, and future of SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION in BC

By Glen Hansman

A short history

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION is a relatively recent addition to British Columbia's curriculum for K–12 students, and the BCTF was one of the main advocates to make it happen. The 1969 Annual General Meeting, for instance, passed the following motion: "That the BCTF believes that family life and sex education should be an integral part of the school curriculum."

Back then, there was no provincial curriculum on sexual health education, and only a handful of school districts had locally developed programs. These were first introduced in the early 1950s, in conjunction with the province's ambivalently named Effective Living curriculum.

Paired with physical education, and largely focused on puberty and human reproduction, sex education programs were under attack for years. As William O. Marble wrote in a 1978 issue of *Teacher*, "as a result of pressures on school boards, many districts have either banned sex education programs completely or severely limited them."

The BCTF persisted in its calls for Family Life Education (the nomenclature of the day) to be included as an official part of the BC curriculum. Thanks to the work of the BCTF's Status of Women Committee, a flurry of activity occurred in the early 1980s, including intense lobbying of Minister of Education Brian Smith, who reportedly supported the concept but did not have his party's caucus onside. Nevertheless, government formed a committee that led to the *Family Life Handbook*, finally published in 1986 after many delays because of a change of minister. Smith's replacement, Bill Vander Zalm, who later became Premier, was apparently less supportive.

In the wake of a high-profile child abuse case at that time, the BCTF increased its

lobbying, publicly calling on government to provide investigative and support services to protect children from abuse. We demanded the introduction of comprehensive anti-abuse and family life programs for all BC schools. It took the AIDS crisis, however, for Premier Vander Zalm to finally announce in 1987 that a family life program was in the works. But teachers expressed concerns about the program's shallowness, and its hurried implementation. In a 1989 issue of *Teacher*, Ed Harrison and Allen Wootton noted, "The perception that people are afraid of AIDS meant that a school program addressing its origin was good politics on the premier's part. But good politics does not necessarily make for good education or a good family life program."

All students should have the right to learn what they need in order to make safe, wise choices.

Fortunately, matters improved as further curriculum revisions were rolled out during the 1990s. For one, the Ministry of Education involved the BCTF more meaningfully in the curriculum development process. Components of sexual health education were included in personal planning at the elementary and secondary grades—similar to what is now found in Health and Career K–7, Health and Career 8/9 and Planning 10 documents.

While sexual health education was officially implemented in BC, the availability of in-service for classroom teachers was inconsistent and not all students in all communities were taught all aspects of the curriculum. Controversy did not go away either. Discussion about homophobia in schools and positive representation of lesbians and gays in the curriculum and in learning resources produced substantial debate in BC for the next two decades.

In 1980, for example, Kamloops teachers brought a motion to the BCTF Representative Assembly calling on delegates to make an official goal of the BCTF to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation from the school system. Although the motion passed, significant and lengthy debate took place within the Federation and amongst parents and the greater public.

Teacher magazine published several angry letters from members in response to the Kamloops motion that today would not be published because of their bigoted content.

It wasn't until the late 1990s that efforts to address homophobia in BC schools really took off—thanks to the efforts of the many teachers involved in Gay and Lesbian Educators BC, and other supportive people. Greater awareness to include lesbian and gay sexuality in the broader curriculum occurred, but it did not necessarily translate into inclusion in sexual health education. Sexual health education was typically taught in a heterosexual context, focussing on reproduction and sexually transmitted infections.

The present: Shaping the new curriculum

Teachers were involved in drafting the new physical and health education (PHE) curriculum. It is their belief, along with the belief of the BCTF, that all students need safe, welcoming learning environments. Students must see themselves in all curricula, including PHE, and receive information that is accurate and up-to-date.

“Not having this information could have negative consequences for individual students, their current or future partners, and potentially for the health system and broader society.

Like the previous curriculum, the new PHE will have primary students learn how to correctly identify body parts, including genitalia and sexual organs. Primary and intermediate students will also learn about recognizing and preventing abuse.

As they do now, Grade 4 students will continue to learn about the bodily changes associated with puberty, and about human reproduction. AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections are also dealt with in later intermediate grades, along with new content: a direct reference to sexual orientation—a long-overdue addition. Students in the secondary grades are taught about sexual decision-making and consent.

Classroom teachers are still responsible for delivering the new PHE curriculum, just as they are now. No provisions for opting-out of any provincial curriculum exist, including the sexual health education content found in PHE. Alternative delivery remains available

as an option that parents can choose, but schools still have the responsibility of assessing the learning of each student for all aspects of the curriculum.

New curriculum requires new in-service and Pro-D

Too often, individual teachers do not have access to in-service or professional development opportunities on sexual health education that could give them the confidence to use language that is current, impart information that is accurate, or take into account what students already access online and through apps.

Given the dearth of learning resources and in-service in many school districts, teachers often rely on the Internet to find information about sexual health education. Coupled with the lack of in-service and professional development opportunities some students end up graduating without getting the information they ought to receive. Not having this information could have negative consequences for individual students, their current or future partners, and potentially for the health system and broader society.

The BCTF has told the Ministry of Education we are interested in collaborating with them to develop BC specific resources to support the sexual health education components of the new PHE curriculum.

We have also expressed that we want to work with them to develop a plan to ensure that teachers who will teach the new PHE curriculum will have access to high-quality in-service and professional development opportunities in their school districts.

In the end, it is simple: all students should have the right to learn what they need in order to make safe, wise choices—regardless of whether they self-identify as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Likewise, the information students receive must also reflect that diversity.

What is ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY?

Families who wish to address the current curriculum or the new physical and health education curriculum other than instruction by a teacher in a regular classroom setting may do so. This is not new. The Ministry's long-standing alternative delivery policy provides students, with the consent of their parents or guardians and in consultation with their school, the opportunity to arrange mutually agreeable alternative means for addressing these learning outcomes. This might include home instruction with an agreed-upon package from the school, registration in a distributed learning course, self-directed studies, or in another way suggested by the school, parents, or student involved.

This does not excuse students from having to meet the prescribed learning outcomes (or what is known in the new curriculum as the learning standards). Students whose families choose alternative delivery still need to be able to demonstrate to the school that they learned and understand the prescribed learning outcomes. Schools are responsible for assessment.



New study affirms importance of school connectedness for transgender youth

A new study entitled *Being Safe, Being Me* explores a broad-range of issues confronting trans youth today: identity, sexuality, home life, discrimination, mental and physical health, and safety at school and work.

The *Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*, published in 2015 by the University of BC, surveyed trans youth in all 10 provinces and Northwest Territories. Of the 923 respondents, 209 were from BC—the highest number except Ontario.

Some good news is that BC youth reported the second-highest level of school connectedness. With zero being disconnected and 10 being highly connected, BC's score of 5.6 was ahead of all other provinces except Quebec at 6.0. The national average was 4.9. The report says "participants with higher levels of school connectedness were almost two times more likely to report good or excellent mental health compared to those with lower levels of connection to school."

The researchers found that much more needs to be done to make schools safe for trans youth, who reported feeling least safe in washrooms and change rooms and most safe in classrooms and school libraries. They recommend that "schools and school districts should work with trans youth, parents of trans youth, trans community leaders, and professionals to develop effective policies and programs that create supportive school environments." Strategies could include:

- adopting explicit gender-inclusive school policies
- training for teachers, school counselors, and administrators on gender identity development and gender-affirming approaches
- awareness campaigns and education for students
- making gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms available.

To read the full report, visit:

<http://goo.gl/KVQuHs>

Taking on a SENSITIVE topic



Susan Croll photo

Teaching inclusive, positive, sexual health education

By Susan Croll, Editor, Teacher

THINKING BACK two generations ago to when I was a student, the only sexual health education I remember was in Grade 5. Our teacher told the boys to leave the classroom and then set up the film projector. She handed out a sample size package of Kotex brand sanitary napkins. We watched a film about the biological aspects of menstruation and that was it. No discussion followed and no questions were asked.

Shift forward to 2015. **Lisa Shopland-Black**, **Tamara McKay**, and **Susan Trabant** are three passionate sexual health education teachers who love what they do and care deeply that all of their students not only get the most up-to-date information possible, but are represented and valued in any instruction about sexual health and gender identity.

Lisa and Tamara both teach at Lord Byng Secondary in Vancouver. Ten years ago they began offering sexual health education for Grade 8–12 students as part of a core mandatory program. Building on the success of their instruction and a hunger for information from their students, they hold voluntary monthly “Sex at Lunch” sessions for Grade 11 and 12 students, and an annual, “Sex Ed Reach for the Top.”

Upwards of 200 students attend these “Sex at Lunch” sessions. They come to hear and ask questions about “Sex and the Law” or “The History of Sex.” As well, students have access to a local doctor who liaises with their program.

Susan works at College Heights Secondary in Prince George where she dons a few different hats including teaching family studies, health and career education to elementary and secondary students, organizes peer tutoring, and sometimes teaches English and geography. But she is particularly proud to be the District Inclusivity Resource Teacher. She comes to this position with a wealth of experience as a workshop facilitator on gender expression, Queer/Straight Alliance organizer, and community activist. She is just completing her training to become a certified sexual health instructor too.



Left: teachers Lisa Shopland-Black and Tamara McKay. Above, top: teacher Susan Trabant. Below: Susan's jeep in the pride parade, open for all QSA students and teachers to join in.

Aiming to create school communities that are accepting and inclusive, yet diverse, all three teachers oppose using a heterocentric framework when speaking and teaching about sexual health education. Lisa explains that she and Tamara are open and matter of fact about sex ed. "One of our goals is to remind our students of their right to authentic sexual and gender expression. We make it very clear that when we are speaking about sex that we are not speaking about one kind of way of being sexual, or one way of expressing yourself. Our goal is not to categorize, but instead to accept, and we convey that to our students."

Susan talks about how many LGBTQ kids see themselves as different and, in fact, are often treated differently by their peers. "One way teachers can support their students is to create a classroom environment where differences are seen as something to celebrate. Put up an LGBTQ poster or decorate with rainbows. Acknowledge their differences, find their purpose and strengths in the classroom, and in the very least, normalize all differences." (See pages 19 and 26 for resources.)

She also comments how schools are set up in a binary fashion, where girls go here and boys go there and when lineups are determined by

gender. "This can be confusing for trans kids who identify one way, but are seen another way because of biological anatomy. It's also confusing for cisgender youth who deal with their own sense of what's right in the world, but lack education about gender issues, and then express their discomfort when they see someone in the 'wrong' bathroom."

Lisa, Tamara, and Susan see the difference education and support make for their students. When students are struggling with their identity, Lisa and Tamara support their students with compassion and empathy—and provide them with resources. Susan runs an inclusivity room in her school, open to any student who needs a safe space. Safe spaces and school groups like Queer or Gay Straight Alliances go a long way in helping kids belong in their school community. Students can raise their issues, talk about their challenges, and come up with ways to create more inclusive schools.

Despite the support students receive at school, their family and home experiences may be opposite. As Susan says, "It is hard enough to be a person who doesn't fit into society's norms, but when you are rejected by your own family, you can develop a sense of worthlessness that can consume you."

All three teachers work with parents. Susan facilitates workshops for parent groups about LGBTQ issues and meets with families to help them support their children. Lisa and Tamara hold a sex ed information session for parents at the beginning of each school year. They let parents know the value of their children learning about sexual health education and that students have a right to this information based on the curriculum.

The revised curriculum will not fundamentally change how Lisa and Tamara teach or what they teach. But they say it will give school boards and schools the scope and flexibility to decide how to teach it and what to focus on. Furthermore, changes to this part of the physical and health education curriculum remind everyone of the importance and legitimacy of sexual health education. They are in the process of organizing a new provincial specialist association for sexual health education teachers. "We see the new curriculum as an opportunity to organize a community of sex ed educators to facilitate mentoring and share information and resources." They expect to hold their first conference in early 2017.

In 2014, Susan's school district approved a discrete antihomophobia policy that stated

education for staff and students is imperative to help LGBTQ students or those whose who have LGBTQ family members. The policy was the springboard for creating the district's inclusivity position.

She applauds the Prince George district's commitment. "While we still have issues in our schools with homophobia and transphobia, we address them as soon as they pop up. Admin in our schools and at the district office are on board with combating homophobia/transphobia, and students are learning that it will not be tolerated." The district has also purchased resources and paid for in-service and professional development for her and other interested teachers.

The staff at Lord Byng are an encouraging and supportive community too. Students are becoming more aware of issues, the language used to discuss gender-related issues, recognizing their own sexual rights—and to have these rights and identities included in sexual health education and in resources.

Except for specific questions concerning contraception and pregnancy, Lisa and Tamara reflect that many of the questions students ask about sexual health are common to most students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression. They want to know how to meet people and if they will be liked, when it's the right time to engage in sexual activity, how to negotiate sexual boundaries, if they are "bad" if they've watched porn online, how to access medical care or counselling, or what the symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection are. In other words, they are young people who are sorting themselves out, discovering who they are, and challenging prescribed gender roles that society has doled out for eons.

Inclusive, high-quality, sexual health education can help students navigate this chapter in their lives and assist them in developing into informed, knowledgeable, self-confident adults. "In addition, you have to be frank and positive when you teach sexual health ed," says Susan. Thanks to teachers like Lisa, Tamara, Susan, and teachers everywhere, who take on this sensitive subject and teach their students with the respect and value all young people deserve.

Teaching Sexual Health Education in K–12 classrooms

This free BCTF workshop provides teachers with resources and strategies to teach sexual health education. Visit <http://goo.gl/0mhjP6> to find out how to book the workshop.

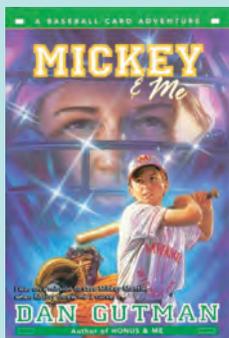
A reading RAINBOW

By Lucinda Tooker, teacher-librarian, Maple Ridge

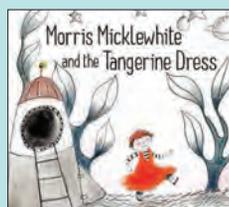
FINDING BOOKS that model acceptance and respect for a variety of lifestyles, families, and individual choices is not hard. Websites such as welcomingschools.org and humaneeducation.org provide teaching and learning strategies, as well as annotated bibliographies.



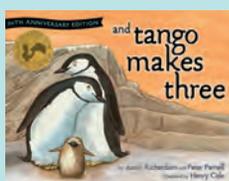
There are many, many books featuring non-typical female characters. We all know how *The Paperbag Princess* (ISBN 9780920236826) asserts her independence in the ever-popular children's picture book by Robert Munsch. I also enjoy *Beautiful Warrior: The Legend of the Nun's Kung Fu* (ISBN 9780590374873) by Emily Arnold McCully, and *The Princess Knight* (ISBN 9780439536301) by Cornelia Funke.



For older readers, there are *Rickshaw Girl* (ISBN 9781580893084) by Mitali Perkins, and the *Protector of the Small* series (ISBN 090129004997 and 090129004997) by Tamora Pierce. In *Mickey and Me* (ISBN 9780064472586), part of Dan Gutman's *Baseball Card Adventure* series, the protagonist, Joe Stoshak, travels through time to 1944 Milwaukee where he meets the Milwaukee Chicks, an All American Girls Professional Baseball team. He learns about female professional athletes and the struggles they faced in that era.



Non-typical male characters are harder to find, which is likely the result of a more firmly entrenched gender bias. In *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (ISBN 9781554983476) by Christine Baldacchino, the title character struggles to fit in after being criticized for choosing an orange taffeta dress from the classroom dress-up trunk. He likes the sounds it makes and its colour, but the other children are highly critical and ostracize him. Eventually, he wins them over with his resilience and creative play.

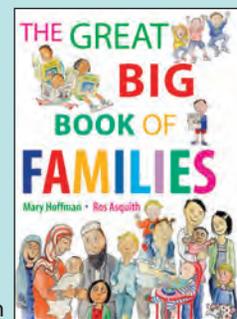


A true story from the Central Park Zoo in New York City, features a pair of male penguins who build a nest and are given an egg to hatch. *And Tango Makes Three* (ISBN 9780689878459) is also the winner of the Henry Bergh Children's Book Award from the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

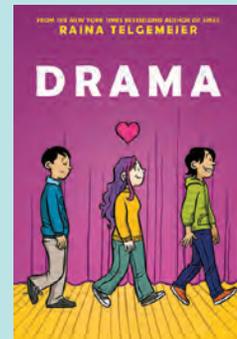
I also really like *Meggie Moon* (ISBN 9781845064433) by Elizabeth Bagulaey, and *Pirates and Princesses* (ISBN 9780525422297) by Jill Kargman and Sadie Kargman. These books feature boys and girls who play together, abandoning their already-entrenched notions of what is a "girls' game" or a "boys' game" and delighting in each other's company.



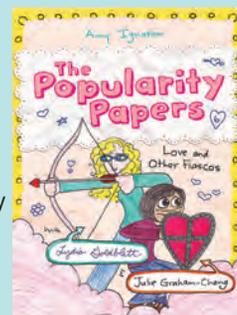
Inclusive schools and classrooms might want to have a number of books on their shelves, including *The Great Big Book of Families* (ISBN 9781845079994) by Mary Hoffman. Todd Parr's *The Family Book* (ISBN 0316738964) and *We belong together: A Book about Adoption and Families* (ISBN 9780316016681) are modern classics, especially for the youngest readers. In *King & King & Family*, two kings travel far and wide after their wedding and eventually adopt a little girl. In *Donovan's Big Day* (ISBN 9781582463322) the main character excitedly prepares for some big event, which is revealed at the end to be the wedding of his mothers.



Representing a variety of relationships, either peer-to-peer or within families is also a popular topic for children's literature. I prefer the ones where non-traditional families or relationships are just part of the mix. One of the most popular books in my library is the graphic novel *Drama* (ISBN 9780545326995), by Raina Telgemeier. As one would expect from the title, there is a lot of typical middle-school drama—some of it is between boys and girls, and some is between boys and boys.



Middle-school aged girls are also mad for the *Popularity Papers* series, in which Julie and Lydia journal about their efforts to survive and even thrive in junior high. One of the main characters lives in a blended family and the other happens to have two fathers. But what enthralls the readers at my school is the first-person narrative style.



A confirmation of who they really are

One teacher's journey

by Susan Croll, Editor, *Teacher magazine*

FOR 46 YEARS, Robin has been living a secret life. Ever since they were a young child, they felt uncomfortable with their gender. They began to experiment with female clothing when they were 10, but their desire not to be seen as a boy was something they kept hidden and private. The only time they felt they could express themselves as female was at Halloween when taking on a different persona is acceptable.

Thanks to a growing and vocal trans movement that is talking about their issues and their struggles, Robin is ready to reveal to the world who they really are and unsurprisingly, the pronoun “he” will no longer be part of their identity.

Robin is also a teacher and in many ways, being a teacher makes it even more complex to come out as a trans person. Not only does a teacher have to deal with their own family, friends, and relatives, but coming out to a school community of colleagues, students, and parents can be daunting. Thankfully, Robin works in a school district that already has specific policy supporting trans employees and students.

While Robin knows that the process of coming out as a trans person will change many of the relationships they have with colleagues and students, they do not want to disappear while the transition process happens and then simply return a year later.

“I want to be able to say to my colleagues that this is happening, that I am changing, and that I am becoming who I really am,” Robin explains. “Some of my colleagues may not understand why I am doing this because in their eyes I am a successful male.”

They say that it's been the support of their partner that made it possible for them to come out. “My wife is extraordinarily supportive and accepting. She loves me for who I am as a person not for my gender. I have her unconditional love. What I wear does not matter to her.”

Good counselling helped Robin immensely. “I learned that what I had felt for most of my life is gender dysphoria—the unease and dissatisfaction I had with being assigned a boy, while really I felt that I was a girl. Counselling was amazing. I went to a clinic for trans-identified people and my counsellor knew the right questions to ask me. They helped me clarify what I was feeling and move forward with my decision to express my gender identity outwardly.”

Understandably, few teachers working in public schools have identified themselves as trans people, but as Robin says there are likely many teachers who are coping with their gender expression secretly. They suggest that teachers questioning their gender identity find a knowledgeable and supportive counsellor who is fluent with gender dysphoria.

Besides counselling, Robin encourages teachers to try to connect with the trans community—that is if one exists in your

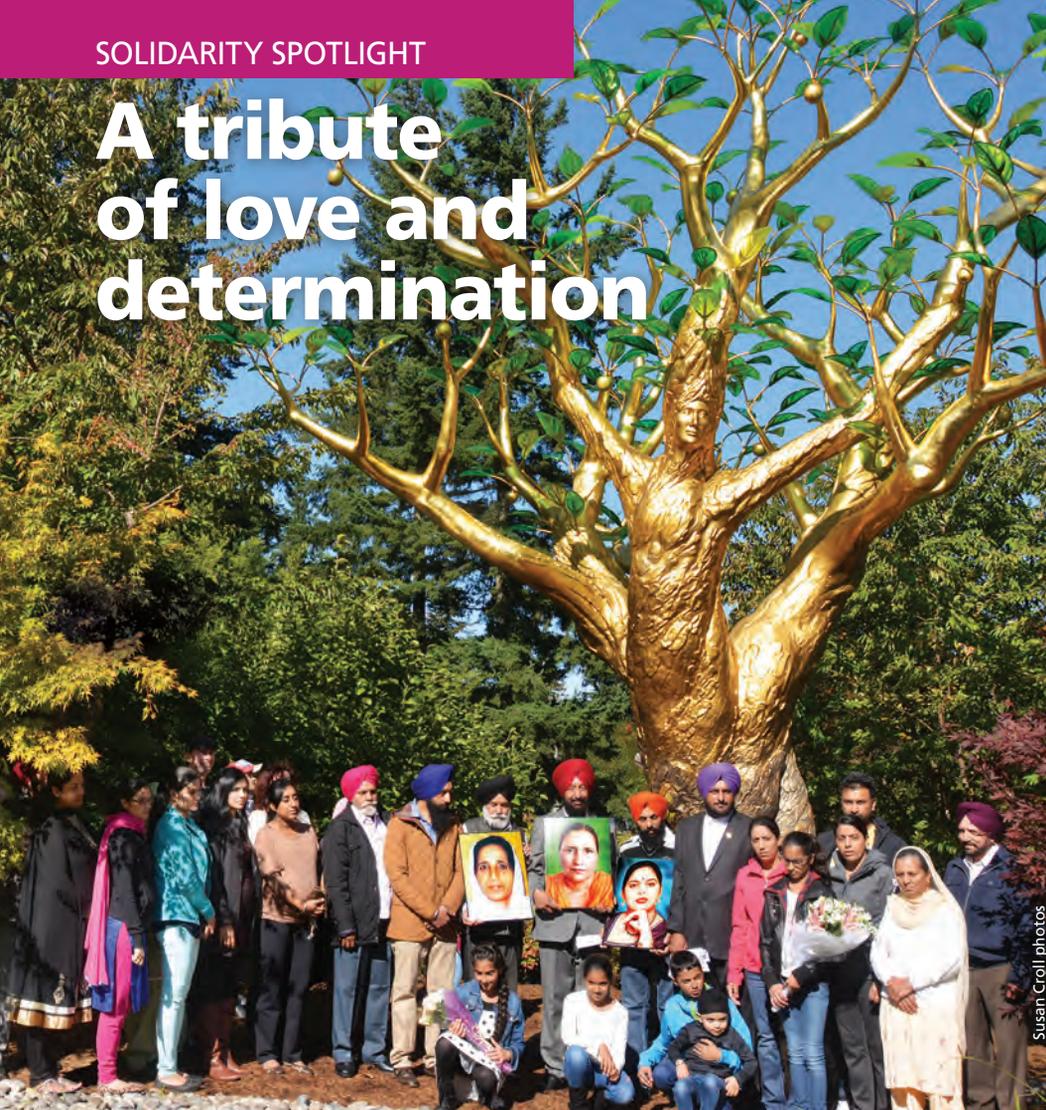


“I want to be able to say to my colleagues that this is happening, that I am changing, and that I am becoming who I really am.”

community. “Go to an event, attend the trans march if your community has one, try to find some trans people and make some friends. Sometimes you have to turn to the Internet and Facebook for support. A lot of people dealing with gender identity can end up feeling depressed if they get isolated. Luckily, that did not happen to me because I had support.”

In the end, Robin says that trans people want their families, friends, and colleagues to know that regardless of how they look and express their gender that they are still the same person. “Give us your support and respect. Really, what has changed, is that my gender expression now confirms who I really am.”

A tribute of love and determination



Avneet Sidhu, daughter of Sarbjit Kaur Sidhu



BCFed President Irene Lanzinger, BCFed H&S Director Nina Hansen, past BCFed President Jim Sinclair

ON A COLD, DARK, March morning in 2007, Sarbjit Kaur Sidhu, Amarjit Bal, and Sukhvinder Kaur Punia were crammed into an overcrowded van without seatbelts, without proper seating, and without a driver who had a valid licence to operate the van. They were just three of 17 women going to work in a Chilliwack greenhouse in a van that had bald and improperly inflated tires. Riding in this unsafe van supplied by a labour contractor was not unusual but on this rainy day, the van crashed and flipped, killing Sarbjit, Amarjit, and Sukhinder. Many of the other 14 women were badly injured. Some of the survivors are still not able to work today.

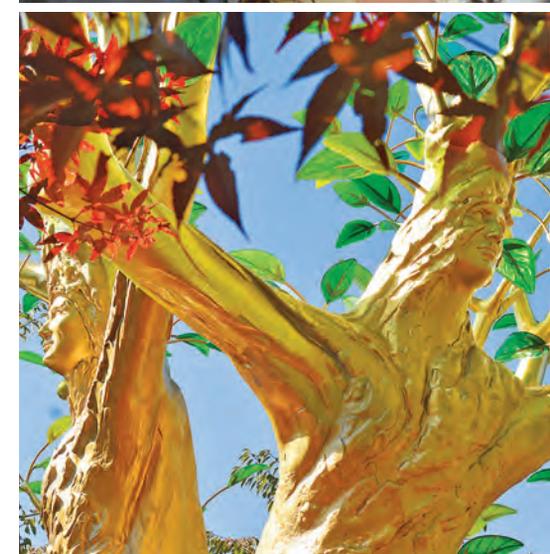
Eight years later, over two hundred people turned out in Abbotsford on October 3 to take part in the unveiling of the Golden Tree—a beautiful, public monument dedicated to these farmworkers who lost their lives. The BC Federation of Labour, along with the women's families, and other community organizations commissioned Mission, BC artists, Dean and Christina Lauze, to create a memorial that could be a lasting tribute to the three women, and to all farmworkers who plant, grow, and harvest much of the food British Columbians eat. The

only monument of its kind in Canada, this 22-foot-tall golden tree graces the International Friendship Garden behind the public library in Abbotsford. The tree is stunning with the faces of three women engraved into the tree's main branches. Translucent leaves and golden apples hang from the branches and on a sunny day, as it was on October 3, the tree simply shimmers and gleams.

Just days after the 2007 accident, Jim Sinclair, former President of the BC Federation of Labour, met with the women's families. Understandably, the



Artists Dean and Christina Lauzé





Above, family members hold portraits of Sukhvinder Kaur Punia, Amarjit Kaur Bal, and Sarbjit Kaur Sidhu.

families were devastated by the accident and the loss of their mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, aunts, and cousins. But even in the midst of their grief, the families stated they wanted one thing and that was justice. With the assistance of the Federation of Labour the families lobbied for regular inspections of farmworker vans as well as for an immediate inquest into the accident.

Following the inquest, the BC coroner's office delivered 18 recommendations, including the need for regular and mandatory van inspections conducted by the Ministry of Transportation, instead of private companies. Initially, the driver of the van and RHA Enterprises, the company that owned the van, faced eight commercially related charges. The crown dropped six of them. In the end, the driver was fined a mere \$2,000 and prohibited from driving for one year.

The police had recommended 29 criminal charges, however the Crown did not act on any of the recommendations. Inspections are still done by the private sector. Not all of the coroner's recommendations are yet in force either.

Although the Golden Tree can never replace the women whose lives were lost, its presence is a beautiful reminder of the collective determination of the labour movement, communities, and families to improve both the safety and working conditions for all BC farmworkers.

Besides her accomplishments as an artist, Christina Lauze teaches in Mission, and is a proud BCTF member who attended her first BCTF AGM last year. The BCTF donated \$1,000 to the building of the Golden Tree.

“The families have made significant strides in their quest to bring awareness to the working conditions of Canadian farmworkers. We hope that this artwork will serve as a symbol of their strength, love, and determination, as well as a lasting reminder of the need for meaningful change. We are deeply honoured to have been involved.

—Dean and Christina Lauzé, artists, D'arts





In their words

What STUDENTS want TEACHERS to know

“MY NAME IS AJ, I’m 15 and in Grade 10 at Kitsilano Secondary in Vancouver. I identify as agender when I need a label to express myself, but I mostly just feel like a human being. I don’t like using pronouns for myself as they change super often and it can be really confusing for people.

Being agender in the public school system has been... interesting. Most of the time it’s no big deal, but there’s always that one person who just has to enforce the gender binary onto us.

Grade 1. “Pink is a girl’s colour and blue is a boy’s colour.” Most of elementary school. Playing truth or dare and being asked who you have a crush on—and expecting me to say someone of another gender. Grade 6 through 9. Gender segregated sexual health education. High school. Segregated PE class.

So yeah it’s really hard sometimes when I have to constantly fight the gender binary. It’s hard to explain how some people don’t fit the binary and/or don’t experience it at all. Especially when there is little to no representation of genderqueer people in the media. But it can also be really fun explaining my story and helping people feel more comfortable and more “normal” (whatever that is). It’s a really great feeling to have knowing that because of me, my friends, and fellow trans folk, we are changing the world and it is being noticed.

“BEING OUTSIDE the gender binary in the school system can be a major challenge. “Ladies and gentlemen,” “boys vs. girls” are both two examples of gendered language and sex-segregated activities that really aren’t necessary. It makes the space an unsafe space for trans and non-binary people. Schools often try to be inclusive, such as having a qsa (queer-straight alliance) or having rainbow stickers on their doors, but when they’re not actually acting inclusive, it’s an issue. Teachers can try to switch over from gendered language to gender-neutral language, such as “students,” “friends,” “folks,” or not assume people’s pronouns and use the gender-neutral pronoun “they.”

When you go to find the washrooms, there are typically two. Boys. Girls. Now that there’s more pressure for gender-neutral inclusive washrooms, most schools have them. But they are often washrooms for people with disabilities, and/or very far away from the other washrooms. It can be challenging enough to use an “inclusive” washroom, but if you’re a trans person using binary washrooms, it’s even more of a struggle.

Overall, the school system is trying its hardest to be inclusive. There are still several issues that need to be fixed, but over time hopefully things will evolve and we will eventually not have to focus on gender diversity as an issue.

*Beth Flaumitsch, age 15
Gender non-conforming
King George Secondary, Vancouver*

“AS A QUEER STUDENT of the public school system in BC, there tends to be a daily theme of interactions that seems to repeat year after year. My name is Willum, I identify as non-binary. As a person of several minorities it is always hard to find a place where some part of my identity isn’t disliked. School is the hardest place to feel accepted. It gets so hard to be polite to every person that asks me “what’s that?” when I’m asked if I’m gay and I reply with “I’m a pan-romantic poly sexual.” At school I feel so pressured to be one or the other, pick a side—just say I’m gay to make it easier. Between the ignorance and discrimination I face on a daily basis, simply focusing on school is impossible. How can anyone learn when they have to spend all their energy on protecting themselves from emotional and physical harm? Teachers play a major role in my performance and well-being at school; whether it’s making sure I don’t get paired up with the kid yelling slurs at me from across the room, or allowing me to use the teachers’ washroom as I am not welcome in either the boys’ or girls’. The most effective form of assistance is education. I have one teacher who often incorporates “sensitive” issues into class, women’s rights, heteronormativity, queer rights, and the like. By doing this on a regular basis she sets an example to her students that these topics are to be discussed openly, and should not be ignored or shunned. Practices such as those will ultimately have the most effect on assisting queer and other minority students.



“My experience as a queer non-binary person in school has not been easy. High school in general is not easy, but being undeniably different doesn't help.

Coming out as queer has been pretty positive; coming out as non-binary, on the other hand, has been met with some difficulties. Firstly, the washroom situation isn't great. While we do technically have a non-gendered washroom, it can only be accessed with a teacher's master key. So, whenever I need to use the washroom, I end up missing a fair amount of class time going back and forth from where the key I have access to is located, to where the washroom is located.

Another issue I've found is with general visibility; assemblies tend to address the school with "ladies and gentlemen," and documents like the dress code are largely separated based on gender. Security checks before dances are also divided in this manner. It makes it uncomfortable for me, because I have to decide which category to put myself in (although I'm fairly certain if I went in the boys' line I would be asked to move).

Finally, my pronouns have been met with some reluctance. While I have had some great reactions, I've also had some not-so-great ones, like my drama teacher telling me "if it's not offensive, [he's] not changing."

If you work in a school and have an LGBTQ+ student, one of the best things you can do is accept them. Support from teachers is huge. If a student asks you to use a different name or different pronouns to refer to them, do it without grilling them on their reasons. Make your classroom a safe space by shutting down offensive language—not just homophobia or transphobia, but also sexism, racism, ableism, etc. It will mean a lot to your students and make school better for everyone.

Dani, 17 (they/them)

“Being LGBTQ+ makes high school a lot more difficult, especially for trans kids. That's the big thing. There's a lot more things we have to be careful about, and being ourselves is not always the safest option, especially in a place as judgmental as high school. Puberty is happening, and it's hard enough already without having dysphoria, or the overbearing "something is wrong with my body," feeling on top of it. I'm lucky enough to attend a school with such a strong, confident LGBTQ+ presence that there isn't a lot of blatant homo/transphobia because people respect my identity. It definitely makes things easier, but that doesn't stop me from having a lot of anxiety and stress about being myself while at school. There is the whole situation with my birth name being different, there's also washrooms I have to worry about, change rooms, and there's so many more things that I need to worry about in order to feel safe and comfortable in my body, and in my environment. Sometimes my school work isn't my priority because of all the other things I have to worry about. It's the same for a lot of my trans friends that are still in school. To help us, it's not that hard. Just respect our identities, do your best to understand terminology, and use our names and pronouns so we can focus on learning.



*Everett Montinola, age 17
Genderqueer/nonbinary
They/Them
Moscrop Secondary, Burnaby*

SHIRLEY CLEMENTS retires with hip hop energy

By Janet Nicol, Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver



"60-Year-Old Kills Hip Hop Routine—LIVE!" ellentube.com/videos/0-979q28fp/

SHIRLEY CLEMENTS, a dance and physical education teacher at North Surrey Secondary school, was about to close the door on her 25-year teaching career when she prepared 40 students for Outbreak, an annual dance competition.

"I thought, 'this time I'm going to dance,'" Clements says in an interview.

She never dreamed more doors would open—including an appearance on Ellen DeGeneres's television show with 12 of her top students.

"The experience on Ellen was surreal," she says. "But then, my life has been full of serendipity."

Clad in a red jacket with sequins and track pants, Clements and her students moved to Bruno Mar's "Uptown Funk" in a fast-paced hip-hop break-dance routine. Clements's energy was infectious. She even threw in a high kick and performed a double spin—on her head.

Surrey's student dance competition, which now boasts more than 750 participants, was created 19 years ago by Clements,

after she and other teachers successfully expanded the district's program. Money from admission tickets has gone toward a \$5000 scholarship as well as the purchase of "on loan" tap shoes for students.

She even threw in a high kick and performed a double spin—on her head.

Clements, who retires this October 31, teaches beginner, intermediate, and advanced dance courses, all electives. She also teaches an "elite" student group during "x" block.

"You can feel the electricity in the audience," Clement says about the dance competition where she made her mark

last January. Captured on video, one of her former students uploaded the clip to "Ellen Tube"—the official web site of Ellen DeGeneres.

"Students were coming up to me and saying, 'did you know you are on Ellen Tube?'," Clements says. The school principal approached her too. "He asked me if he could tweet it out."

After thousands of hits, the video got Ellen's attention and in June she invited Clements and twelve students to appear on her show. Clements says they practised all summer. Their hard work paid off when they travelled to Los Angeles in September and gave a great "repeat" performance on Ellen's show.

"They are my love and they are part of my heart," Clements told Ellen about her students. "They work their butts off and

Photos courtesy of the Ellen Show

they show me love and respect, and they're the nicest kids on the planet. I couldn't ask for more wonderful students to be here today."

The trip also included a visit to the Millennium dance studio, among other tourist destinations.

"I gave them an hour to shop in the mall on the final day," Clements says. "My students are all shoe fanatics. They bought \$180 shoes. They like to trade their shoes with each other too."

Ellen presented Clements with a \$10,000 cheque from Shutterfly. Clements says she plans to set up a dance studio for youth in San Pancho, Mexico, where she and her husband own a second home. She hopes the studio will also host cultural exchanges between local youth and students she'll invite from Canada.

Dancing since she was a child, Clements trained in ballet and "character" dancing—everything from flamingo to jazz. She keeps in shape by dancing three hours a day, often alongside students as she shows them steps. Clements also choreographs her students' routines but says she is open to students' ideas.

"I collaborate with my students," she says. "The kids will say, 'let's try this.'"

Students also help choose the music. In the rap world of harsh street slang, Clements tries to be vigilant, editing out inappropriate words. "There's no swear words allowed in the music at the school competitions," Clements says. "It's a family affair."

Clements will retire with the assurance that her dance courses will continue as a younger teacher takes her place. She appreciates the value of the program in public schools, providing a creative outlet for youth. "There are students who can't take dance outside of school," she also observes. "It's expensive."

Some of her former students have become dance teachers, providing another satisfying legacy. Her students have also used their acquired talent to entertain on board cruise ships, in music videos, and at dance competitions, including the popular TV show "So You Think You Can Dance."

Though Clements has two grown children, her students are like family too—and she will miss them. "They call me Nana C," Clements says. "I love the kids."



Being an LGBTQ ally

Did you know there is a guide to help teachers and school staff to become active allies to LGBTQ students? This guide offers suggestions to make classrooms and schools a truly safe place, free of slurs and bullying.

By displaying this rainbow sticker in your classroom and school, you're saying that

- **you are an ally** to LGBTQ students, staff, parents, community members, and visitors.
- **you are helping** to end the oppression of LGBTQ people and children of LGBTQ parents.
- **you are committing** to educate the school community about homophobia and transphobia, speak out about homophobic and transphobic incidents/practices in your school or community, and promote equal respect and treatment for everyone.
- **you are identifying** yourself as a "safe" and supportive person for LGBTQ students to talk to about their questions and/or concerns.
- **you are pledging** to make classroom and school activities inclusive for LGBTQ students, staff, parents, and community members.

For further information, see <https://goo.gl/VAIIP4>.

District ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT programs

Caring or controlling?

By *Daniel Storms*, Assistant Director,
BCTF Field Services Division

WE ALL WANT OURSELVES AND OUR COLLEAGUES to be healthy. We also know not everyone is healthy all of the time and that we may need to take time off work because of a cold or the flu, or sometimes for more serious medical issues.

Our collective agreements have sick leave provisions and are intended to be used as needed with unused amounts accruing year after year. Some teachers retire with 300 or 400 unused sick days; however, some colleagues are not so fortunate and need to use sick leave as is their right.

Within the context of saving money and underfunding in general, attendance management is now a priority of the provincial government. Based on attendance management programs (AMP) used for many years in the private sector, the provincial government recently mandated BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) to get school districts on board with this "shared delivery project." Their goal is simple, to reduce sick leave, which will in turn reduce TTOC costs and decrease other less obvious costs related to absenteeism.

How does the attendance management program work?

An employer perspective is narrow and simplistic. Employees work for wages and production is maximized when employees come to work regularly. The best way to maximize production, whether it's making widgets or teaching children, is to increase the attendance of all employees.

Attendance-management programs tend to rely on this simplistic approach to labour relations. While on the surface these programs may not seem overly formal, managers, and in the case of school districts, administrators and human resources personnel, follow a manual that takes them step-by-step through how to conduct "casual check in" conversations all the way up to disciplinary meetings.

The employer first identifies people with absences deemed "excessive" and asks them to attend a meeting to discuss their absenteeism. They may ask if there are issues outside of work or medical conditions the employer should be aware of and can help with.

Employees' attendance continues to be tracked and if improvements do not occur,

further meetings are held outlining the expectation of regular and improved attendance.

Why should teachers be concerned about AMPs?

In theory, employers should be concerned about their employees' well-being. The problem teachers have with the government's model of "attendance support" is that it appears to be largely motivated by the potential of cost savings, rather than trying to support teachers who may be struggling to stay at work.

The current attendance management models we have seen in school districts negate or marginalize the role of your union to support you in these "attendance support" meetings. Furthermore, we do not favour employers encouraging members to disclose medical information or being told it is unacceptable to be absent "excessively"—a term defined unilaterally by school districts.

Moreover, the BCTF has an extensive Health and Wellness Program that supports teachers dealing with illness, at no cost to school districts. In other words, there is an existing "attendance support" program in place that helps many teachers across the province.

What your union is doing

The BCTF is taking a firm, proactive and reasonable approach to the issue. In districts where the AMP initiative unduly targets teachers with high absences, we will continue to file grievances. We will continue to raise the issue with BCPSEA and to insist they work with the BCTF and have districts put their efforts into supporting the BCTF Health and Wellness Program, and to work with local teachers' associations.

What you should do if asked to attend a meeting about your attendance

If a school administrator or any other school district employee wants you to meet with them about your attendance:

- politely decline and say that you will need to speak with the local union office.
- call your local union office and tell them the circumstances of the meeting request.
- decline to meet with any Board employee without a union representative.
- do not disclose any detailed medical information, including any diagnosis, if a meeting does occur.

WHAT DID WE GAIN in the 2013–19 collective agreement?

Extended health and dental plan improvements

- improvements to the provincial standardized Extended Health Benefits plan (fertility drugs, hearing aids, ortho shoes, orthotics, vision care, naturopath, chiropractor, massage, physiotherapy, psychologist, acupuncture, podiatry/chiropody, speech therapy)
- improvements to local dental plans (basic services, major services and orthodontics)
- for full details see “Improvements in Benefits” inside the BCTF Member Portal on the BCTF website.

Preparation time improvements

- elementary preparation time increased to 100 minutes per week as of 2014–15, rising to 110 minutes per week on June 30, 2019
- provincial joint committee to examine secondary school teachers’ preparation time
- provincial joint committee to examine adult educators’ preparation time.

Improvements for TTOCs

- on-scale rate for each day worked, capped at the equivalent of Category 5 Step 7, rising to Category 5 Step 8 on July 1, 2016

- experience calculation for salary scale purposes: 170 days equals 1 year, salary grid increment to be applied immediately following achievement of 170 days
- increase in allowance for TTOCs in lieu of benefits from \$3 to \$11 a day as of July 1, 2016
- provincial joint committee to examine seniority call-out and fair hiring practices for TTOCs
- seniority and experience recognition for TTOCs conducting union business increased from 20 to 40 days
- seniority and experience recognition for time spent on local/provincial negotiating teams.

Expedited arbitration

- new process will greatly reduce grievance timelines and costs.

Paid leave for Teachers’ Act regulatory duties

- leave with full pay for teachers, including TTOCs, elected to the BC Teachers’ Council or appointed to the Disciplinary or Professional Conduct Board.

Employer concession demands withdrawn

- employer’s concession demands for teacher evaluation procedures withdrawn, existing fair evaluation provisions continue to apply
- E80 and E81 demands that would have allowed government to terminate the collective agreement should Justice Griffin’s ruling be upheld, and would nullify her decision, were withdrawn
- demand that school districts be able to impose unilateral hours of work and work year changes for teachers withdrawn.

Local negotiations

- post and fill provisions are now recognized as local matters for bargaining
- twenty locals successfully negotiated modifications and new provisions to their local agreements.

Economic stability dividends

- Additional salary increases on May 1 of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 if the increase in the province’s Gross Domestic Product exceeds forecasted increases.

7.25% salary increase

Sept. 1, 2014	2%
Jan. 1, 2015	1.25%
July 1, 2016	1%
July 1, 2017	0.5%
May 1, 2018	1%
July 1, 2018	0.5%
May 1, 2019	1%

\$105 million retroactive grievance fund

- Approximately \$2,700 per teacher, prorated, as a settlement to the Bill 33 class size and class composition grievances.

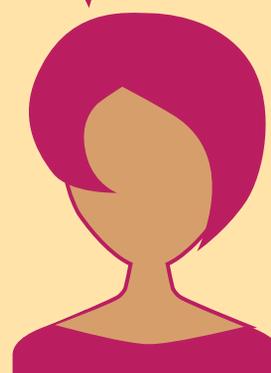
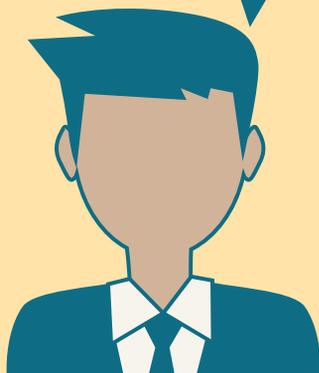
Education Fund

Education Fund established to hire additional teachers to address class size, class composition, and the provision of specialist teachers

- 2014–15—\$75 million
- 2015–16—\$80 million
- 2016–17—\$80 million
- 2017–18—\$80 million
- 2018–19—\$85 million

No to Co-operative Gains Mandate

- Government attempted to trade off current collective agreement provisions for any monetary gains achieved, but there were no concessions from our previous agreement for improvements made.



Adult educator survey reveals....

By *Margaret White*, Senior Research Analyst and

Charlie Naylor, Senior Researcher, BCTF Research Department

ADULT EDUCATORS teach a diverse student population in varied settings across the province, but less is known about their working conditions. For this reason, the BC Teachers' Federation conducted a survey of adult educators. The survey results provide insights into the workload issues of adult educators and the extent to which ongoing funding cuts undermine working conditions, contribute to work stress, and erode job satisfaction.

Working conditions and workload issues

Adult educators spend a considerable amount of time outside of their paid work hours on teaching-related activities with over one-half spending from 10–30 unpaid hours per week. The greatest number of adult education teachers spent the most amount of unpaid time on "Marking" (6.64 hrs) and "Doing preparation" (6.38 hrs). Only one-third of adult educators in the survey have paid preparation time. Adult educators expressed a sense of injustice and frustration over not having the same preparation time provisions as secondary teachers, despite heavy workloads.

Adult educators have a more fragmented teaching schedule than those who teach school-aged students. They face ongoing challenges with irregular, ever-changing, and split schedules; almost one-half of those surveyed work split shifts and two-thirds work evenings.

The survey results suggest underemployment is an issue for many adult educators. One-half of adult educators in the survey teach on a part-time basis. While some choose to work part-time, one-half of these adult educators would prefer a full-time contract. One in four indicated the school district reduced their FTE teaching assignment from the previous year.

Over one-half of respondents teaching for at least five years reported decreased job satisfaction and two-thirds reported increased workload and stress. The five most stressful factors for adult educators (out of a possible 54 factors) are

- attitude of the provincial government
- job insecurity
- reconfiguration of adult education programs
- inadequate preparation time
- lack of control over course schedules.

Only one in four adult educators indicated having good work-life balance "most" or "all" of the time.

Job satisfaction tended to centre on the teaching and the professional relationships with students. Adult educators find it is fulfilling and rewarding to work with adult students and feel they make a difference in their lives, but working conditions lower job satisfaction. It is the multiple sources of stress related to workload, job instability, and an increase in Ministry directives that is most challenging for adult educators. Ongoing cuts to adult education are increasing workload: which means less time to spend with students, job insecurity, and anxiety about how they will be affected by funding cuts.

Many adult educators consider leaving the profession

Almost one-half (43.7%) of adult educators would not recommend adult education as a career because of ongoing cuts to adult education programs, and therefore limited career prospects. And 40% of those surveyed are considering leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement. Reasons adult educators are considering leaving the profession include difficulty finding/keeping a full-time contract, systemic instability, and uncertain future of profession.

Turning the situation around

Adult educators are also concerned about the disparities with K–12 teachers in prep time, portability of seniority, and professional development. When asked to rank priority areas for improving working and learning conditions, adult educators ranked 1) Aim for parity with K–12 teachers, 2) More paid time for planning and preparation, 3) Improve opportunities for collaboration with peers and 4) Address workload issues.

Poverty and adult education

- Almost all adult educators teach students who are poor, with one in six adult educators indicating at least one-half of students they teach are poor.
- Most (71% to 88.3%) teach students who encounter poverty-related barriers such as work-schedule conflicts, childcare, transportation, illness/disability, financial, and unstable housing.
- Adult educators rated the adequacy of resources very low. At least six out of ten respondents (who answered the question) rated the adequacy of resources as either "Not very" or "Not at all" adequate:
 - staff training on poverty issues (82.8%)
 - food programs (73.2%)
 - administrative support (68.5%)
 - counselling services (66.7%)
 - access to computers outside of school hours (60.2%).
- The qualitative data indicates funding cuts have undermined programs and resources that support adult students to overcome poverty-related barriers to completing their education.
 - less program flexibility (self-paced programs, restrictive rules)
 - fewer staffing resources (counsellors, outreach workers)
 - loss of funding for resources to address basic needs (eyeglasses, transportation, childcare, food).

Adult educators are finalizing a new workshop, *Poverty: an issue in adult education*, which will soon be available for BCTF members. Please contact Michelle Davies at mdavies@bctf.ca for detailed description of the workshop and for booking information.

Unpaid
prep work
6.38 hrs
per week

Two-thirds
reported increased
workload
and stress

One-half of those
surveyed spend from
10 to 30 unpaid
hours per week

Unpaid
marking
6.64 hrs
per week

One-half of those
surveyed teach
part-time

For a full report of the survey results, see
www.bctf.ca/AdultEducationStudy/.



BCTF calls for co-ordinated, province-wide services for youth mental health

Are you 65 or have you reached Factor 90?

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How and when to apply

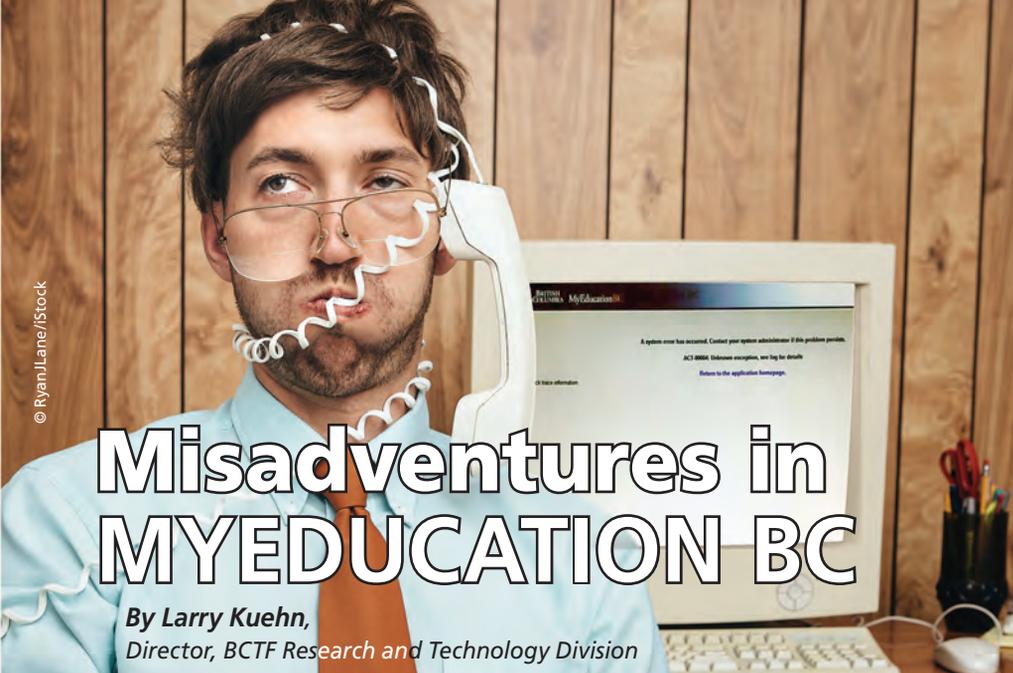
A member who has attained age 64, or has reached "Factor 88," or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the long-term portion of the SIP. Ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave, which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach "Factor 90" or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

To get an application, go to <http://tinyurl.com/7qrrnxx> or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

This past summer, the BCTF presented to the government's Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. The union proposed six recommendations, and if acted upon, will substantially help teachers working with students dealing with mental health issues. As well, students will benefit because they will be able to access co-ordinated youth services. Here are our recommendations:

- 1. Expand school connectedness projects.** Funds were only available for a couple of school districts that formally participated in the Directorate of Agencies for School Health (DASH BC) in 2014/15. Research shows correlations between school connectedness and academic benefits. When students feel supported by adults at school, they feel more motivated to participate in class, complete homework, and are more likely to value school. Investing in a range of proactive approaches reduces incidences of mental illness.
- 2. Provide mental health services in schools.** The current level of support from health professionals in schools is inadequate. Health professionals, such as nurses and even psychiatrists, should be available to provide direct services to students and to advise teachers about approaches to supporting students' mental health. Any provision that provides health-professional expertise should not be at the expense of current school staffing, such as school counsellors.
- 3. Establish a commission to initiate and co-ordinate province-wide mental health approaches and resource development in K-12 schools.** The BCTF is eager to participate in such a commission to develop system-wide supports and strategies to support children and youth mental health.
- 4. Provide the BCTF with a grant to support our Teaching to Diversity online resource.** A grant will help to disseminate mental health resources to teachers, build awareness and capacity through professional development, and to improve connections between health professionals and teachers.
- 5. Increase the number of school counsellors and specialist support teachers in K-12 schools.** Teachers are increasingly reporting concerns about youth suicide, depression, anxiety, self-harm, and other mental health issues. School counsellors, special education teachers, and other specialist teachers are best placed to support individual student's problems and to liaise with teachers, parents, and other health professionals.
- 6. Remember and address the mental health needs of youth who may be additionally marginalized.** Children in care, Aboriginal youth, youth of colour, LGBTQ youth, and youth with disabilities may have different and even greater challenges accessing support for mental health concerns. Increased efforts must be exerted to ensure more readily accessible services to potentially marginalized youth.

Visit the Teaching to Diversity webpage at www.bctf.ca/issues/resources.aspx?id=24017.



Misadventures in MYEDUCATION BC

By **Larry Kuehn**,
Director, BCTF Research and Technology Division

Problems with MyEducation BC seem to make the news on a weekly basis. The first big news item of the school year was the case of the missing hard drive which, at the time we go to press, still has not been recovered. The second problem involves the technical problems and glitches many teachers face when they try to log in to the system, its slowness, adding marks, downloading class lists, and so on. But there are other questions about MyEd BC that also need addressing.

The first question is whether all of the data collected is truly necessary. New technologies make it possible to collect massive amounts of data, also referred to in the Orwellian vernacular, as “big data.” This data can then be linked to other databases. All that connected data can be “data mined,” using algorithms to process the data.

Plans for MyEducation BC allow for a mass of data to be collected and stored in the program, although that is not in place now. It is not just the usual—student demographics, courses taken, grades achieved, photos of students, parent/guardian contact information. Students are expected to upload projects and videos, teachers to provide formative assessment information about individual students, to send and receive email within the system, to build portfolios of student work over the K–12 years, to hold individual education plans for students with special needs, and to record behaviour issues and discipline—all in a central database. This raises a number of red flags that both teachers and parents need to check out.

The first red flag concerns “data-based instruction.” Some people who promote data-based instruction also talk about “personalization,” which in many cases means using the computer to design a

pathway through learning. Many teachers question this approach, fearing this kind of personalization produces isolation. True personalization should be about relationships of teacher and student working together on the education pathway for the student, rather than following what is really a standardization determined by computer algorithm.

“How many people will have access to MyEducation BC? One million.”

Linking across databases with different types of information on the same person raises a second red flag. Government has already announced they want to link MyEd BC data with what seems to be the data from the Integrated Case Management System in the Ministry of Social Development. While integrating data has certain appeal, concerns about this matter should not and cannot be ignored.

Do parents really want the linking of data in multiple databases about their children and, in some cases, about the family of the children? What are the chances of this linked data getting released inappropriately with information that may not even be correct, because it hasn't been verified? Lost hard

drives and failure to encrypt are only a couple of dangers.

Even the National Security Agency in the U.S., with more security than anyone else can imagine, had its data released publicly by a former employee, Edward Snowden. He downloaded it and released it to some of the world's leading media. In BC, we have had police officers fired because they went looking for data on individuals, even though they had no right to it.

How many people will have access to MyEducation BC? One million people. That's right, one million.

Besides 40,000 teachers, counsellors, all the administrators and support staff, the plan calls for every student from Grade 6–12 and every parent and guardian to be able to get into MyEducation BC through a web browser. Access is supposed to be authenticated by a single “service card” that everybody in BC will have. This is the same card that will be used for medical services, driver's licences, police incidents, social services and any other provincial government services.

Even if all the technical problems currently causing a data disaster are solved, many other important questions need answering. The issues are important enough that a research project has been initiated on big data. Elizabeth Denham, BC's Privacy Commissioner says “This project will probe big-data surveillance and analyze its scope, effectiveness and implications.”

These questions need to be asked

- How much data do we want to be kept on our students?
- How do we want data to be used to make decisions about the many important areas of our lives?
- Do we agree with linking our personal data, health records, social services records, and educational data so they can be mined to determine important aspects of our lives?
- Who do we want to have access to data and how can we be protected so others do not have access?

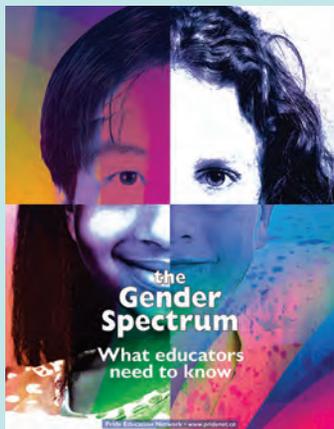
Teachers need to be involved in answering these questions. It's time for the government to conduct a comprehensive review asking what kind of data is necessary, who has access to it, and how it is stored.

The BCTF Table Officers have met with the Minister to present teacher concerns and the BCTF will present a brief to the provincial government on the range of issues.

Sex ed resources for teachers

Workshop: Teaching Sexual Health Education in K–12 classrooms

Issues such as porn, sexting, violence against women, gender diversity, and sexual orientation can get missed because we're not quite sure how to raise them. This BCTF workshop provides teachers with resources and strategies to include these topics in teaching about sexual health.



The Gender Spectrum: What educators need to know

This booklet provides teachers with ideas to take action and leadership on gender expression. As well, you will find a glossary, activities, and lesson plans for Grades K–12.

Dealing with Name Calling

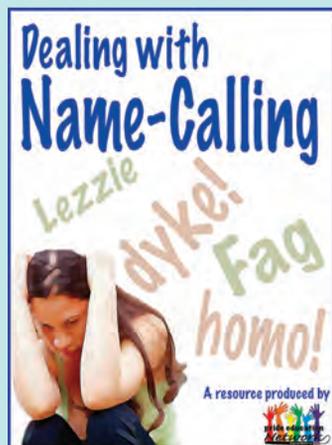
This booklet includes a school-climate quiz, how to support students, breaking the silence around name-calling, and responding to the hurtful phrase, "that's so gay," lesson plans, books, video resources, and professional development.

Sticks and Stones

c2001, National Film Board
This 17-minute documentary, suitable for children in Grades 3–7, looks at the lives of children aged 5 to 12 and how homophobic language affects their lives. Children of gay and lesbian parents share their sense of isolation, their fear of discovery, and their struggle making choices and facing intimidation. Animation sequences are added to illustrate simple concepts and the history of homophobic slang words. The video liner provides background, discussion points, and activities.

Straight Laced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up

(67 min) (secondary) c2009 Groundspark
Straightlaced reveals the toll that deeply held stereotypes and rigid gender roles play in all our lives and offers both teens and adults a way out of anxiety, fear, and violence. This documentary highlights fifty students who take viewers on a powerful, intimate journey to see how popular pressures around gender and sexuality are shaping the lives of today's teens.



Downloadable posters

- *Your Family is Welcome* bilingual, double-sided, (elementary)
- *"That's so gay" is so yesterday* (secondary)
- *Genderbread person* explaining gender and sexual diversity



Downloadable pamphlets

- *LGBTQ youth resources*
- *Ten steps towards starting a gay-straight alliance*
- *Passed your LGBTQ policy?*

LGBTQ lesson plans:

Topics include fairy tales and gender roles, homophobia in sports, and First Nation's perspectives of gender.

Visit the **BCTF LGBTQ webpage** for a complete list of all print and video resources available to all teachers at no cost. Go to bctf.ca, click on the Social Justice tab, and follow the links.

ERAC, the Education Resource Acquisition Consortium, has an online collection of resources for BC teachers on sexual health education. Visit them at <http://goo.gl/eRZ81d>.

Ten ways homophobia affects straight people

1. Homophobia forces all people to act "macho" if male, or act "feminine" if female. This limits our individuality and expression.
2. Homophobia puts pressure on straight people to act aggressively and angrily toward LGBTQ people.
3. Homophobia makes it hard to be close friends with someone of the same sex.
4. Homophobia often strains family and community relationships.
5. Homophobia causes youth to become sexually active before they're ready in order to prove they are "normal." This contributes to an increase in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
6. Homophobia prevents vital information on sex and sexuality to be taught in schools. Without this information youth are putting themselves at greater risk for HIV, and other STIs.
7. Homophobia can be used to hurt a straight person if they "appear to be gay."
8. Homophobia makes it hard for straight people and LGBTQ people to be friends.
9. Homophobia makes it hard to put an end to AIDS.
10. Homophobia makes it hard to appreciate true diversity.

My name is Alison Dawson and I am a teacher in Cranbrook. I work with secondary international students, teaching them English, as well as cultural aspects of visiting British Columbia.

We have been learning about residential schools, which inspired some of the students to sign up to take the English First Peoples course. They are writing persuasive essays about residential schools. I hope that you will be as inspired by them as I am.

One of my students remarked on the similarity to herself when she first met Aboriginal students at her new school. She queried which Asian country they could be from. Now, she proudly knows who these distant cousins are as she sits in English First Peoples with them.

My students are able to relate to being away from their loved ones. They are excruciatingly aware of the struggles of identity tied to language, and how difficult it is to fit into a foreign social structure.

They will be returning to their homelands to be the harbingers of change and understanding. They are thirsty for the truth. It behooves us to allow them to have the full experience and make these two courses mandatory for all visiting international students.

*Yours truly,
Alison Dawson
Teacher SD5
Cranbrook, BC*

International students First Peoples courses open eyes and minds



FOR ME, it is difficult to understand and to learn about First Nations People. It's not only just because of everything being in English, but also the fact that this is a very profound subject, which leaves a great impression on those who study it.

To be honest, I've never really thought about First Nations people before I took the English First Peoples class. I knew that First Nations people existed here, but I just had no knowledge about them. So when I took English First Peoples class, I was very shocked at finding out how the Aboriginal people had been mistreated by the white people. At the same time, I felt shame at my own ignorance.

In fact, we had indigenous people in Japan as well. I know this because we learned about them in history class. But, in the text book it said people despised them and ordered them to do disgusting jobs and then they were isolated from the rest of Japanese society. I realized in this one sentence that these actions caused much sadness and pain. It is also interesting now for me to see how this reflects what happened in BC too.

It is truly difficult to know everything about history. However, I strongly believe that, at least once, an individual should strive to learn and understand about Aboriginal people in BC. In fact, they are the First People living in this land, and therefore, we should respect them.

Also I thought, non-Aboriginal kids are so very lucky that they have a chance to learn about Aboriginal peoples' situations firsthand by having each other as classmates.

By studying First Nations social studies and English First Peoples, all International Students will have a good opportunity to think about their country's first peoples, as well as their personal growth with this knowledge for the future.

Mana Tsutsumi (Grade 12)

*Mt. Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook, BC
Attends Toukai Gakuen High School in Japan*

I BELIEVE that international students who come to BC should take First Nations history classes. This is my opinion and here are my reasons why. A lot of international students think that Canadian people are very friendly and they make us happy. However, since coming to BC and studying First Nations history, there are a lot of sad stories as well. When I learned this history, I felt dismayed because my preconceived image was so totally different from reality. There are also a lot of racial problems, such as discrimination.

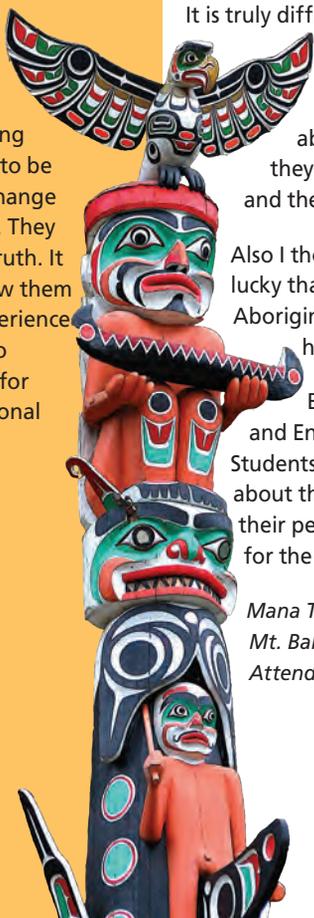
Canada is 149 years old, and before Canada became an independent country it was a British colony. A long time ago, before the arrival of the French and the English, there were a lot of Aboriginal people in Canada. However, the British and the French came to Canada to get resources such as gold and fur. They used the knowledge of the Aboriginal people to help them find these treasures, then many First Nations people had to vacate from their land for the new British settlers. After that, the Canadian government built residential schools for Aboriginal children, where the education they received was questionable. They also had to work a lot as if they were slaves.

In Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada, there has been a lot of immigration, including a lot of refugees, which has developed multiculturalism. Quebecers were tolerant with this, however, some wanted to build a more unique/distinct society. Where has this left the First Nations people in Quebec?

In summation, if I did not learn about First Nations history, I wouldn't understand what it is that makes Canada so unique. International students arrive with only the "good" image of Canada. What I want them to learn about is this complicated and troubled history for Aboriginal people. By doing so they are also exchanging ideas about their own cultures. I am hoping that we can exchange our ideas with people from around the world and generate understanding about First Nations people and their role in Canadian history, now and into the future.

Takeshi Hattori (Grade 12)

*Mt. Baker Secondary School Cranbrook, BC,
Attends Toukai Gakuen High School in Japan*



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M.Ed. in Educational Administration and Leadership (EDL1) Info Session

Location: Ladner, Delta Manor Education Centre, 4750 57th Street

This cohort-based learning experience offers participants an opportunity to engage in a conversation about the aims and alternate means of delivery of education in the 21st century.

4:00–5:00 p.m. Contact Linda Haftner at 604-822-4499 or linda.haftner@ubc.ca.

November 19 Langley
UBC M.Ed. In Curriculum Studies, (IBTL Cohort) Info Session

Location: Langley, RE Mountain Secondary School, 7755 202A Street

November 26 North Vancouver
 Location: Carson Graham Secondary School, 2145 Jones Avenue, North Vancouver
 The UBC M.Ed. in Curriculum Studies leading to an IB Advanced Certificate in Teaching and Learning Research is designed for those who wish to pursue professional study in education, and deepen their understanding of teaching and learning. 4:00–5:30 p.m. Contact Yvette Kharoubeh by 604-827-5662 or yvette.kharoubeh@ubc.ca, or visit bit.ly/1ihy1sH.

November 27 Abbotsford

November 30 Victoria

February 1 North Vancouver

February 24 Richmond
Save Your Sanity Behaviour Workshop

Colleen DeVeyrac's Save Your Sanity workshops concentrate on presenting skills and strategies to increase resiliency in students as well as providing specific strategies for educators to decrease their stress levels and reactions to challenging situations. Colleen is committed to presenting workshops that are engaging, informative, and motivating to all participants. Visit www.saveyoursanity.ca or phone 250-572-4144.

JANUARY 2016

January 8 Online
MEd in Modern Languages Education French (FRM5) Online Info Session

This engaging Masters program, taught online in French, responds to the needs of teachers in French programs (francophone or immersion) and of French as a second language (intensive or core). The program also offers a stimulating cultural component that includes summer courses in Montréal. Visit the FRM5 website. Online info session: January 8, 2015 4:00–5:30 p.m. (PST). Contact Linda Haftner at 604 822 4499 or by email at linda.haftner@ubc.

February 18–19 Vancouver
BCAEA Alternate Education Challenge and Change 2016

Location: Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. Keynote Speaker: Deanne Leung M.Ed., R.C.C. from the Stepping Stones Counselling Group. Keynote Topic: Building Healthier Brains: The Neurobiology of Trauma and Attachment. Register at bcaea.com/conference.html Contact: DJ Pauls djpauls@shaw.ca Website: bcaea.com

February 25–26 Vancouver
SEA of BC (Special Education Association of British Columbia) Crosscurrents

Features a range of speakers sharing current research and best practice related to inclusive education, including, anxiety and mental health, social-emotional learning, self-regulation, autism, indigenous education, behaviour, executive function, English Language Learners, gifted education, literacy, numeracy, and working with education assistants. Keynote speaker, British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond. Contact searegistrar@gmail.com Website www.seaofbc.ca.

PD Online Calendar

bctf.ca/PDcalendar
 Changes/additions: msteele@bctf.ca



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TUESDAY JANUARY 19
INFO SESSION: 6-730 PM
[SFU SURREY SFU.CA/MATE](http://SFU.SURREY.SFU.CA/MATE)
MATESRY@SFU.CA

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Creating a GENDER-INCLUSIVE school culture

BCTF workshop available

www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17988

This workshop will help develop an understanding of the risks facing trans* students (as well as the protective factors), increase familiarity with terminology used by the trans* communities, and increase awareness of gender identity and gender expression. Best practices for supporting a student through gender transition within the school system will be covered. Although the focus is on trans* students, gender inclusive schools help all students to feel safe at school.



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