

BC Teachers' Federation

Jan/Feb 2025

Teacher



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BCTF

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THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE



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

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

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

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On the cover

BCTF members Ramona Cruickshank and Terry Ann Webster helped facilitate the first annual Anti-Racism Symposium, hosted by the BCTF. Read about their and other members' experiences at this event on pages 16–17.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

AS WE STEP into this new year, we enter into the last six months of our current collective agreement. Many members have been hard at work at their local bargaining tables, which opened in November, and continue to fight to improve their local conditions. To all the folks who worked tirelessly to advocate for members at the local bargaining tables, thank you.

Now, as those tables come to a close, the Federation continues preparation for the provincial bargaining table to open. I am grateful that we will be represented by such a dedicated and passionate group of teachers at the provincial bargaining table. You can read more about each member of the Provincial Bargaining Team on pages 11–13 of this edition.

In late fall, the Federation sent letters to Premier David Eby and the new Minister of Education and Child Care Lisa Beare, to outline our objectives for public education. We hope the mandate letter to the Minister will provide clear direction on a long-term, fully funded work force strategy that speaks to the growing gaps in services to students across BC.

Our letter to the Premier also highlights some of the stated priorities from the NDP's election platform: mental health counsellors in every public school and education assistant support for students. As we work with this new government, we will hold them accountable for each promise made during the election period.

I am looking forward to building relationships with the new government and Minister of Education and Child Care to improve working and learning conditions in BC schools. We need measurable, outcomes-based investment in public education and the recruitment and retention of teachers. As we noted in our letter, a thriving public education system is the cornerstone of any democracy, and of any society's commitment to equity.

In solidarity,



Clint Johnston,
BCTF President

Clint Johnston
photo by
Sunjum Jhaj

MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT

AU DÉBUT DE LA NOUVELLE ANNÉE, nous entrerons dans les six derniers mois de notre convention collective actuelle. De nombreux membres ont travaillé d'arrache-pied à leurs tables de négociation locales depuis novembre, et continuent de se battre pour améliorer leurs conditions locales. Je tiens à remercier tous ceux qui ont travaillé sans relâche pour défendre les intérêts des membres aux tables de négociation locales.

Maintenant que ces tables s'achèvent, la Fédération se prépare à lancer les tables de négociation provinciales. Je suis reconnaissant que nous soyons représentés à la table de négociation provinciale par un groupe d'enseignants et d'enseignantes aussi dévoués et passionnés. Pour en savoir plus sur chacun des membres de l'équipe de négociation provinciale, consultez les pages 11 à 13 de ce numéro.

À la fin de l'automne, la Fédération a envoyé des lettres au premier ministre David Eby et à la nouvelle ministre de l'Éducation et des Services à la petite enfance, Lisa Beare, afin de présenter ses objectifs en matière d'enseignement public. Nous espérons que la lettre de mandat de la ministre sera assortie d'orientation claire pour une stratégie de main-d'œuvre à long terme, entièrement financée, qui répondra aux lacunes croissantes dans les services aux étudiants de toute la Colombie-Britannique.

Par ailleurs, dans notre lettre au premier ministre, nous avons mis l'accent sur certaines des priorités énoncées dans le programme électoral du NPD : mise en place de conseillers en santé mentale dans chaque école publique et le soutien d'un aide-enseignant pour les étudiants. Dans le cadre de notre collaboration avec le nouveau gouvernement, nous lui demanderons de rendre compte de chacune des promesses faites pendant la période électorale.

J'ai hâte de nouer des relations avec le nouveau gouvernement et la ministre de l'Éducation et des Services à la petite enfance afin d'améliorer les conditions de travail et d'apprentissage dans les écoles de la Colombie-Britannique. Nous avons besoin d'investissements mesurables, basés sur les résultats, dans l'enseignement public et dans le recrutement et le maintien en poste des enseignants. Comme nous l'avons souligné dans notre lettre, un système d'enseignement public vigoureux est la pierre angulaire de toute démocratie et de la volonté de toute société à atteindre l'équité.

Solidairement,



Clint Johnston,
Président de la FECB



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for highlighting the Boundary School District in the November/December issue of the BC Teachers' Federation's *Teacher* magazine. I enjoyed reading about our district and the positive impact of the four-day school week. However, I think it's important to share a bit more context about how this model came to be.

The article mentions the benefits of a shorter week for travel and long commutes, which are definitely some of the upsides. But those weren't the original reasons for the change. In 2001, the district was staring down a looming budget shortfall caused by declining enrolment and cuts to government funding. The Board of Trustees consulted with parents, staff, CUPE, and even another district in Saskatchewan, before making the decision. It wasn't an easy choice, and many parents and CUPE members opposed it at the time. Despite that, the board voted to move to a four-day week for the 2002–2003 school year.

I think understanding the financial pressures behind this decision sheds light on the tough choices rural districts often have to make. Today, it's great to see that the four-day week has become something the community supports, but it's important to recognize how it started as a creative response to financial challenges.

Thank you for letting me share this perspective, and for the work you do to bring stories like these to light.

Sincerely,

Kyle Tapper,
teacher



REAL ACTS OF CARING

through intentional acts of kindness

By **Melissa Burdock** (she/her), teacher, Penticton; **Harriette Chang** (she/her) school counsellor, Coquitlam; and **Jennifer Mitchell** (she/her), teacher, Penticton



REAL ACTS OF CARING (RAC) is about doing something caring and kind for others and not expecting anything back. Each year, RAC is highlighted by a special week, RAC Week, and the next one will be February 9–15, 2025. This RAC Week is a milestone: it will be the 20th one, and students are encouraging as many people as possible to get involved!

RAC was created by Grades 4–5 students at Central Community School in Port Coquitlam in 2005, and has since spread throughout the Coquitlam School District (43) and to many other communities in British Columbia and beyond. On Thursday, February 6, 2025, students in the Okanagan Skaha School District (67) will be holding a virtual assembly open for any classes to join. Designed for K–7 classes, this 45-minute event, hosted virtually through Microsoft Teams, is like a kindness pep rally that will leave students excited about engaging in acts of caring and kindness. This is the fifth year that Grade 7 students from KVR Middle School in Penticton have been running this event, and they are excited to offer it to *all* students across the province. Throughout this virtual assembly KVR students, as well as special guests, will share the science behind kindness, examples of ways to be kind, reflections on the impact of kindness, and they will facilitate interactive sharing and connections from students across the province. Information to sign up for this virtual kindness pep rally is available on the Real Acts of Caring website at www.realactsofcaring.org, as well as through ERASE BC. We hope to “see” you there!

Melissa Burdock, a teacher in Okanagan Skaha, first heard about RAC while she was a teacher in Coquitlam. When she moved to Penticton, she decided to bring this idea with her and implement it in her school. Today, she and her teaching colleague Jennifer Mitchell, as well as a number of their colleagues in the district, have embraced RAC, integrating it into their pedagogical practices to promote caring and kindness in their schools and communities.

What exactly is Real Acts of Caring and how did it begin? Harriette Chang, a school counsellor in the Coquitlam School District, explains:

In early December 2005, I had been struggling to create lesson plans that would inspire a group of students with a wide range of learning needs and behavioural challenges. I read a story from one of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books about people doing something kind and unexpected for others and not expecting anything in return. After a few moments of silence, while the students took in this seemingly strange concept, a loud and lively discussion erupted. This



**Get involved with the 20th
Real Acts of Caring Week,
February 9–15, 2025!
Visit www.realactsofcaring.org
for more information.**

Left: Students in Coquitlam participating in Real Acts of Caring. Harriette Chang photo.

“... students and parent volunteers were fundraising and organizing events even though the caring and kindness week had ended. In the school, students were placing treats on fellow students’ desks and offering tutoring at lunch. In the community, students were visiting homes for the elderly ...”

idea was weird, they argued, and several more minutes of discussion ensued. But then something amazing happened: they experienced a total mind shift, and before long they were planning how they could and would implement a special caring and kindness week for the whole school. The second week of February 2006 was chosen, to coincide with Valentine’s Day. But they asked why stop with just the school? Why not involve the whole city of Port Coquitlam? I was somewhat astounded by this reversal, but I encouraged them to write letters to the mayor. The following Monday morning I had 13 letters on my desk. Within days those 13 students met with the mayor, and before the week was out they had successfully presented to city council members and a proclamation was passed that a special caring and kindness week would take place February 13–17, 2006, in the whole city of Port Coquitlam. We had a lot of fun celebrating this special week by giving out coffee and cookies to community members, and at school students participated in a range of helpful activities for staff members.

After that first caring and kindness week, students continued to plan and carry out these acts in the school and in their community, often on their own time. The following September, four of the original students insisted on having another caring and kindness week in February 2007. This time they wrote more letters and lobbied with more municipal governments. They even contacted the provincial government requesting that this week be recognized for the whole province of BC. Incredibly, the provincial government agreed and passed a proclamation, inviting the students to Victoria for the hearing!

The whole caring and kindness idea became infectious as more and more students and educators became involved. By mid-spring, students and parent volunteers were fundraising and organizing events even though the caring and kindness week had ended. In the school, students were placing treats on fellow students’ desks and offering tutoring at lunch. In the community, students were visiting homes for the elderly (building a stunning garden for one of them), paying for customers’ drinks at local coffee shops, opening doors, and handing out flowers, balloons, and handmade cards with loving messages. Soon a media frenzy began, and suddenly students were being interviewed and featured in a number of television news stories, newspaper articles, and radio talk shows. The following year the students were awarded the 2007 Newsmaker of the Year by the Tri-Cities in BC. The fame and recognition were unexpected outcomes. Although exciting, the students assured one another that it was not about becoming famous but about genuinely spreading the idea of doing something caring and kind for others without expecting anything in return.

In 2008, the students decided to rename the club Real Acts of Caring—RAC, which they believed would more closely reflect their goal: to promote planned and authentic acts of caring without expecting anything in return. The students wanted to make RAC a common language in schools and communities throughout BC, and to highlight the program by celebrating RAC Week each year during Valentine’s Day week. By 2010, RAC students were achieving their goal, and schools from many parts of BC were sharing their own RAC stories with us.

RAC has continued to grow and evolve. Besides participating in real acts of caring, students have been lobbying their local and provincial governments to have RAC Week recognized each year. Students also have been invited to present at several schools in other districts and give numerous presentations, including talks at professional development days for BCTF members. A group of RAC students serve on the RAC Steering Committee, formed in 2015, along with educators and parents who meet regularly to make important decisions about the direction of RAC. In 2019, RAC became a non-profit organization.

Over the years, we have been contacted by numerous educators who have heard our RAC stories and are looking for ideas as to how they can further promote RAC. The RAC Educator’s Manual (see www.realactsofcaring.org) was created to meet that need with all proceeds going toward supporting the RAC program. Our goal is to share with you what we have learned from our students and to show you how RAC can have a tremendously positive impact on a school climate. RAC is a joyous and inclusive way for students and educators to learn and grow as they build school connectedness through caring and kindness.

Back in December of 2005, we could never have predicted that 13 students from an inner-city school (some as young as eight years old) would be instrumental in creating a program that would have such far-reaching and profound effects on so many. We could never have imagined the heart and dedication on the part of these young people to make our world a better place. Never could we have guessed that it would be they who would teach us that, in the pursuit of a dream, anything is possible.

You can get involved by promoting and celebrating RAC Week at your school February 9–15, 2025. Visit www.realactsofcaring.org for more ideas and updates. •

Right: Students in Penticton participating in Real Acts of Caring. Melissa Burdock photo.



IDEAS AND RESOURCES

IDEAS FOR REAL ACTS OF CARING IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- Plan an activity to share with seniors in your community.
- Plan a kind act with a buddy class at your school.
- Write a note of appreciation for someone in your school.
- Share with a friend why you are grateful for them.
- Hold the door open for someone.
- Plant a flower that supports your local environment.
- Send another class kind notes.

RESOURCES TO PROMOTE CARING AND KINDNESS

- **Be Kind** by Pat Zietlow Miller and Jen Hill
- **Kindness Is My Superpower** by Alicia Ortego
- **Kindness Makes Me Stronger** by Elizabeth Cole
- **Say Something** by Peter H. Reynolds
- **When We Are Kind** by Monique Gray Smith



BARGAINING 2025 BEGINS

“I love everything about the bargaining process. It is a process of hope for better.”

– Joanne Hapke,
Provincial Bargaining
Team member

WITH OUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT expiring this June, now is the time for the Provincial Bargaining Team members to be seconded from their classrooms or union offices and begin working together full time, developing strategies for success and crafting proposals to make improvements for teachers across the province.

New to the bargaining process? Here are some nuts and bolts:

The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is the certified bargaining agent for all of BC's 51,000 public school teachers. We sit across the table from the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA), which bargains for BC's 60 public school boards. While local matters are negotiated at the school district level, all cost items—including compensation—are bargained at the provincial table.

The BCTF is committed to giving members a voice in setting our priorities for each round of bargaining. To that end, we hold a Bargaining Conference about one year before every collective agreement expires, where teachers from across the province come together to discuss the issues and agree upon our bargaining objectives. It's no surprise that workload, salary, and recruitment and retention emerged as key concerns at our Bargaining Conference held in May 2024.

We also strongly believe that teachers themselves are best positioned to negotiate on our behalf. With deep experience in the classroom, our Bargaining Team members understand better than anyone why the improvements we're advocating for are so urgently needed. Our team members are deeply invested in the profession, and they are passionate about supporting teachers both as workers and as professionals.

“This year I am hoping the employer recognizes they need to work on their respect for teachers and the jobs we do,” said team member Joanne Hapke. “We need a wage increase to make this job more desirable. We need to be heard as the professionals we are and get the supports we are requesting for our students and classrooms.”

Our negotiators bring a lot of experience and skill to the table, and a zest for the work. Winona Waldron says she enjoys the intellectual challenge of “crafting language with teeth that members can depend on,” and persuading the employer by “making an argument they can't refute!”

The BCTF's Provincial Bargaining Team is also supported by a diverse group of specialists on the staff of the BCTF: experts in labour law, educational research, employee benefits, health and safety, communications, professional issues, and more. Together, they're committed to achieving the best possible collective agreement to meet the needs of BC teachers.

Watch bctf.ca and future issues of *Teacher* for more information as this round of negotiations opens. •

MEET THE BARGAINING TEAM



ALEXANDRA ADHIKARY

Alex teaches Spanish, French, and English First Peoples at North Peace Secondary School in Fort St. John, on the traditional lands of the Tsáá? çhé ne dane within Treaty 8 territory.

She loves teaching students over multiple years and seeing their language skills grow. "It makes me so proud when students come back

and share stories of how they have used language or content learned in my classroom," she says. "I am also very proud of the safe and welcoming environment I have created in my classroom."

Alex served on her local bargaining team in the last round and enjoyed researching and writing proposals and seeing them unfold at the table. "I look forward to working on proposals at a provincial level on behalf of all members."

Alex has been involved in her local and the BCTF since the beginning of her teaching career because she was inspired by her mom, also a strong teacher union activist. Some of her favourite work has been advocating for new and early career teachers, engaging colleagues locally in social justice work, and learning from our international partners while participating in international solidarity work.

Alex loves travelling and going to the gym. "I recently became a certified spin instructor and there is just something about getting on the bike and hearing the music going that brightens my day," she said. "I love being outdoors, reading, and spending time with family and friends, especially over coffee or tea."

As a full-time classroom teacher for over a decade, Alex has witnessed the changes and understands the severity of underfunding and the reality of unsafe schools. "I value the connections I have throughout the province and have always listened to what is going on for all members." •

JOANNE HAPKE

Over her 35-year career, Joanne has never lost her love of working with Kindergartners. Currently teaching at Harwin Elementary in her home city of Prince George, she says, "I get to spend 10 months with 20 children each year, guiding them to love learning, love themselves, learning how to be a respectful community member, and how to use

their voices to stand up for themselves and others. And when things go sideways, we get to sing and do the Hokey Pokey!"

Joanne has served on the executive of the Prince George District Teachers' Association (PGDTA) for 30 years, first as treasurer, then as vice-president, and finally as president. During her five years as president of the PGDTA, Joanne found advocating for members to be tremendously rewarding: "Supporting struggling members with the help and tools they need and seeing their success in the process made the long days fulfilling."

Joanne has always been a strong advocate for teachers' rights and has broad experience advocating both within the public education system and the broader labour movement as a table officer on the North Central Labour Council.

"I have been at every local bargaining table for the past 30 years: I've visited schools with presentations, I have walked many picket lines, and I was strike co-ordinator each time we went on strike."

Joanne says it's important to identify changes needed to support teachers in our current education system, which are very different from what was bargained 30 years ago.

"Creating language that makes our jobs and lives easier is a very positive experience as we prepare to head to the bargaining table," she said. "I am excited to have this opportunity to be part of a team working for all teachers in the province."

Joanne and her husband David have three kids, a dog, and a cat. She loves to read, garden, and float along the beautiful Nechako River in the summer. •



JOANNE
HAPKE



**DEBBIE
MORRAN**



**TREVOR
TAKASAKI**



**ROBIN
TOSZCZAK**



**WINONA
WALDRON**



**SARAH
YORK**
THESA

DEBBIE MORRAN

Debbie has more than 20 years' experience teaching middle school in Parksville, while being active in her local, the Mount Arrowsmith Teachers' Association (MATA). She served as vice-president and then president of MATA for five years.

In 2015, Debbie came on staff of the BCTF as an assistant director in the Field Service Division. She is currently responsible for collective agreement enforcement (provincial grievances) and supporting the Provincial Bargaining Team.

A veteran of the past two rounds of provincial bargaining (2019–2022 and 2022–2025), Debbie says her most memorable experience came in March 2020, with the world on the brink of the pandemic and our schools about to close. That's when the BCTF team, with the help of a mediator, was able to secure a provincial collective agreement for the members. "It's very different working with a mediator, but it was a great experience," Debbie recalls.

Her proudest moment was achieving a negotiated provincial collective agreement in 2022 that resulted in substantial gains in salary and benefits. "Here in BC, we did very well. Other provinces were not able to achieve the gains that we were able to," she said.

And in the wake of that success, "I really enjoy hearing from members whose health has been positively impacted by the benefit improvements we bargained."

Debbie brings to the table years of bargaining experience, both locally and provincially, and an ability to facilitate groups with diverse perspectives. She takes tremendous satisfaction in collaborating with her fellow team members and writing proposals that will benefit members.

Her hopes for this round? "To continue to build upon the success of the last round, and to keep working toward the shortening of the salary grid." •

TREVOR TAKASAKI

As a person of Japanese Canadian heritage, Trevor experienced "blatant racism" during his early career, experiences that made him doubt he truly had a place in the profession and the union.

But when his local president and vice-president both asked him to consider becoming involved in their local, "I was forced ... to drop my defense of seeing myself as a perpetual outsider. Being invited to the table made all the difference to me. I hadn't even realized I was waiting to be asked."

Once he got started, Trevor has never stopped serving the members of the Maple Ridge Teachers' Association (MRTA). Currently MRTA Vice-President, Trevor has served as president, bargaining chair, and lead negotiator in the local. One of his best achievements was getting a mid-contract modification that included all exceptional students in their class-size and composition language.

"It was a massive win for teachers and, even though many thought it wasn't going to be possible, we succeeded," he said. "It was a team effort, and I was proud to be part of it."

Trevor's teaching experience is in English, philosophy, woodworking, and support for gifted students, first at Westview Secondary and later at Thomas Haney Secondary in Maple Ridge. The class he most enjoyed teaching was Philosophy 12, because he could tap into his educational background and passion for political philosophy.

"Where political philosophy overlaps with bargaining is in using the ability to conceptualize abstractly, think deeply and clearly, consider all possibilities, and process novel arguments and positions effectively," he says.

Trevor and his wife Marcia have three wonderful kids and a new puppy. Together they enjoy camping, reading, and creative pursuits like pottery, leatherwork, woodwork, and gardening. "Anything that has to do with creativity and beauty brings us joy," he says. •

ROBIN TOSZAK

Since she started teaching 14 years ago, Robin has been actively involved in the union, both locally and provincially. She held several elected positions in the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA), including health and safety, grievance officer, and first vice-president. She also represented the GVTA and BCTF on the Victoria Labour Council Executive.

Robin has been a member of the BCTF Executive Committee since 2016, and currently serves as Second Vice-President. She was a lead negotiator in the last round of provincial bargaining and is tremendously proud of what they accomplished, including improvements to pregnancy leave, professional development funding, and a historic salary increase.

"I'm really looking forward to working with fellow Bargaining Team members to secure the best deal possible in this round," she said. "We know there is a teacher recruitment and retention crisis. By bargaining improvements to our collective agreement we can make teaching in BC more attractive and sustainable."

Robin is on leave from the Greater Victoria School District, where she is a primary English language learner and early literacy teacher. Before becoming a teacher, she worked in arts administration and sexual assault response and prevention.

Outside of her union work, Robin is an active member of her local Odd Fellows Lodge. She has also served as the president of the Theatre SKAM Board, and she is currently on the board of the Vancouver Fringe Festival.

"I love spending time looking at mushrooms and lichen in the forest, starting crafts I won't finish, attending weird theatre, and being a very proud auntie to five awesome nieces," Robin says. •

WINONA WALDRON

Currently serving as First Vice-President of the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA), Winona is seconded from an English language learner position to a Grade 1 position. Over her career she has taught K–12 but finds most joy in teaching early primary grades at inner-city schools.

"I love teaching reading. There is something incredible about being present when a child has that first 'aha' moment and realizes they can read," she said.

A wonderfully supportive staff rep at her first school inspired Winona to get involved in the union. "The next school I was at didn't have a staff rep, and I knew I should step up."

From there, Winona went on to serve in many union positions.

"I had the great privilege of being chosen as one of the Women in Negotiations facilitators in 2016, and this led to many opportunities both locally and provincially," Winona said. "I highly recommend that people take the opportunity to put their name forward for union positions that excite them."

Winona took on the role of lead negotiator in the last two rounds of local bargaining in Greater Victoria, and she has served on the BCTF Executive Committee since 2022.

Winona's most challenging role was being president of the GVTA through COVID. And her proudest moment was negotiating the first racialized equity hiring agreement in the province.

In this round of provincial bargaining, she hopes for "a team that works collaboratively together to meet the objectives set by the Bargaining Conference," and to achieve "improvements that every BCTF member can see the benefits of."

In her spare time, Winona is an avid reader, especially historical fiction and Canadian Indigenous authors. She lives with her spouse, two children, and daughter-in-law. Her partner and son are both CUPE members working for School District 61, and her daughter is a student who aims to pursue international law. Two beloved shih tzus and a cat round out the family. •

SARAH YORK

Over her career, Sarah has taught all K–12 grades, science, math, career, physical health and education, and textiles, but her favourite assignment is her current one teaching food studies at Alberni District Secondary School in Port Alberni.

"I love teaching food studies because there is never a dull moment! It's challenging with the tight budgets, seemingly endless grocery shopping for classes, and a lack of supports for kids," she says. "But I love seeing students learning practical skills they will use their whole lives, finding out that they like certain foods that they made for themselves, and figuring out how to collaborate."

She brings to the table an equally broad range of experience in union roles, including Women in Negotiations, professional development rep, health and safety rep, bargaining chair, secretary/treasurer, and local representative.

"I became interested in union work through curiosity about the bargaining process, mostly, and wanting to volunteer in ways that make a difference for my co-workers," she said.

Sarah enjoys the bargaining process because the work is challenging, engaging, and provides opportunities to learn alongside colleagues.

Sarah has one son. She volunteers with Emergency Support Services, which aids families needing accommodation, food, and supplies after an emergency or natural disaster. She is also on the board of directors for Outreach Therapy, a non-profit that offers professional services for children six and under, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and childhood mental health supports. She enjoys sewing and hiking, and she also plays in a marimba band! •



How to write a motion



What is a motion?

A motion brings business before a meeting. Motions contain specific action items.

Why are motions necessary?

Motions allow locals and governing bodies of the BCTF to follow democratic processes to make decisions. Motions get debated and voted on at meetings. After voting, motions are either carried or defeated.

Carried—Action will be taken as specified by the motion.

Defeated—Once decisions are made, the collective position prevails and no further action will be taken.

What is the difference between a local motion and a resolution?

Local motions can be brought forward by any member to a local general meeting. If a local motion that directs provincial action is carried, it will be taken forward to a governing body of the BCTF as a provincial motion, termed a “resolution.”

Resolutions are submitted by the local executive or representatives, on behalf of the local, to the governing bodies of the BCTF: the Representative Assembly (RA), the Annual General Meeting (AGM), and the Executive Committee (EC).

Governing bodies of the BCTF

The RA meets three times a year and has the specific responsibilities of approving the budget and electing the Judicial Council and ombudperons. The RA also makes policy and procedure decisions for the Federation. There are 130 local representatives who attend the RA. The BCTF EC and local presidents attend the RA with voice but no vote.

The AGM consists of approximately 750 voting delegates who elect new BCTF EC members, approve any changes to by-laws, debate local resolutions and EC recommendations, and set BCTF priorities for the year.

The BCTF EC is elected by the AGM and consists of 13 members. Of these members, three of them serve in a full-time capacity: the President, First Vice-President, and Second Vice-President. There are 10 Members-at-Large, with one position designated for a member who identifies as a person of colour, one position designated for a member who identifies as Aboriginal, and one designated for a member who identifies as 2SLGBTQIA+. The EC meets monthly (with additional meetings as necessary) to make decisions about the work of the Federation.

Steps to writing an effective motion

WHAT

- am I asking for?

WHO

- is affected?
- is responsible for the decision?

WHEN

- do I want to see it implemented/changed/reported on?

WHY

- am I writing this motion?
(This is your supporting statement.)

HOW

- will it be accomplished?
- and by whom (the EC, the RA, the AGM, etc.)?

Get started

- Review the *BCTF Members' Guide* at bctf.ca to see what language already exists (CTRL/CMND + F to search key words in the digital guide is helpful!).
- Your motion should start with "That the Federation..."
- Use plain, clear language.
- Pay attention to grammar.
- Keep in mind "separate ideas, separate motions."
- Keep the supporting statement separate from the motion. The supporting statement gives the governing body an understanding of your rationale for the motion.

Review

- Use separate points under a stem where appropriate (e.g., 1, 2, 3).
- Read it aloud.
- Check to see if it is readily understood by others.
- Think about how it will read standing alone in the minutes or *Members' Guide*.

Try writing a motion:

The motion might read as follows: That the Federation investigate which writing implement is the most effective and report back to the Fall Representative Assembly.

A few more important points to keep in mind:

- Motions cannot direct a specific person(s) or group but should be about the Federation overall.
- The Federation does not carry duplicative positions. If something already exists in the *Members' Guide*, you or your committee may want to suggest an update to the existing language to bring more specificity or to align it with current usage.
- When suggesting a change to an existing policy or procedure, items to be removed are struck through, and new words are italicized for clarity. Here is an example:

That the Federation update Procedure 3.M.01—9. as follows:

The Ministry of Education should provide ~~more time for~~ elementary teachers *a minimum of one additional prep day* to conclude year-end administrative procedures and to prepare for next year.

Give it a try!

Turn the idea below into one clear, concise motion:

Teachers write every day. Sometimes they write a lot, other times they don't write that much. What is important is that we make sure that writing is easy for teachers. We believe that in order to make writing as easy as possible, the BCTF should try to figure out whether pencils, ball point pens, gel pens, felt tip pens, or fountain pens are the most effective. Doing this will ensure that whenever teachers want to write, or technology fails and they need to write, they will be able to do so with the utmost faith that their writing implement will work.

This would be your supporting statement.

JOY AS COLLECTIVE ACTION

BCTF hosts first
annual Anti-Racism
Symposium

Untitled poem by Beth Strano

There is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world.
We all carry scars and have caused wounds.
This space
seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,
and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our space together,
And we will work on it side by side.



**Elder
Roberta
Price**

THIS UNTITLED POEM by Beth Strano was on each table at the welcome event for the BCTF's first annual Anti-Racism Symposium. It helped set the tone for the community that would be created over the next two days.

At the opening event, Elder Roberta Price from the Coast Salish Snuneymuxw and Cowichan Nation welcomed all the attendees with a blessing. She also shared a personal story of the unconditional love she has received from her Elders, matriarchs, teachers, and community members. This unconditional love has guided her work, and her hope for the attendees at the conference was that they too would give and receive unconditional love.

The theme for the conference was “joy as collective action.” Joy was intentionally and carefully woven into all aspects of the conference. Participants shared their joy in a “joy is my resistance” photo booth, and workshops and presenters focused on the way joy is intertwined with anti-racism work.

Each presenter was also asked to share what brings them joy when they introduced themselves. This simple question created a more intimate connection between the audience and the speaker. The things that bring us joy are so often similar: time with family, connecting with nature, meeting friends, and sharing food.

Two members, Terry Ann Webster and Ramona Cruickshank, infused liveliness, laughter, and energy into Friday evening's dinner as they shared their joy and prompted folks around the room to share what brings them joy. One member answered the prompt saying Terry Ann and Ramona bring them joy by creating a space where community and joy are at the forefront.

Ramona said she didn't realize how much the room needed the joy she and Terry Ann brought until people shared the impact it had on them.

She called the opportunity to hype up the crowd with a fellow Caribbean educator a gift from Nikitha Fester, Assistant Director of the BCTF Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Office, who had a large hand in organizing this symposium.



**Terry Ann
Webster**

**Ramona
Cruickshank**



**Jatinder
Bir**

**Mahima
Lamba**



**Shyloe
Fayad**

Sunjum Jhaji photos

"The beat and rhythm of the African drum runs through my veins, and I am proud of every attempt to feel free both physically and mentally," said Ramona. "This is my joy! This is my gift!"

Terry Ann noted that attending the symposium gave her a sense of hope. "The acknowledgment of the devastating impact of racism, including the prominence of anti-Black racism in BC, is a vital step forward. The most rewarding part of this work is seeing people's awareness grow and knowing that by confronting these deep-rooted issues, we are creating safer, more inclusive spaces for all, especially our students," said Terry Ann.

Friday evening's keynote by Elliott Ramsey, curator of the Polygon Gallery, included an acknowledgment of the ways racism shows up in different spaces in our communities.

One of the recent exhibits in the Polygon, titled *As We Rise*, featured a collection of photography that centred Black people from Atlantic Canada. Ramsey noted that we most often see Black people depicted marching, protesting, playing sports, or being active in photographs. This collection challenges what we're accustomed to seeing by featuring photos of rest and joy.

"It felt radical to show photos of Black folks relaxing," said Ramsey.

Ramsey also talked about the ways in which he experiences art in gallery spaces. He noted that he tends to show his emotion when he is moved by a piece as an audible gasp or tears. This expression of emotion is your body telling you to research what moved you, said Ramsey.

However, art is understood through lived experience, and not everyone feels safe in gallery spaces. The Polygon Gallery has created Gallery School to try to change that for some students.

Gallery School is a program where elementary classes host a full week of school at the Polygon Gallery instead of their usual

"It was so inspiring for me to spend time with other BIPOC teachers who are compassionately and actively working with anti-racism in our schools. I felt such a sense of connection and commonality." – Shyloe Fayad, teacher, Kelowna

classroom. This allows students to be immersed in the gallery, speak with artists, and draw connections between art and the world around them. Ramsey shared that he hopes this program will allow students to feel safer and more comfortable in gallery spaces so they can experience art more fully going forward.

Feeling safe, whether in gallery spaces, schools, or union spaces, does facilitate deeper and more meaningful learning, but as Beth Strano's poem from the first night of the symposium reminds us, "There is no such thing as a 'safe space.'"

What we can do is focus on creating spaces where marginalized voices are heard, where everyone listens with respect and an open mind, and where there is a commitment to learning from and with one another.

The symposium concluded with participants being asked to write their hopes and dreams for public education on a sticky note. Folks shared ideas from employment protections for marginalized workers in the education system, to more supports for hungry students, and more teachers and education assistants.

Trevana Spilchen, BCTF Executive Committee, shared, "I want an education system where it's not harder to do the job as a marginalized person."

The BCTF's Anti-Racism Symposium works to bring us one step closer to Trevana's dream for public education. Although there is still much work to be done, teachers are leading the way in creating schools that are more equitable and more joyful for their colleagues and students alike. •



Fostering STEM confidence in girls: The WISE Girls toolkit

“... the toolkit offers a structured approach to creating learning environments where girls feel capable, valued, and excited about exploring STEM subjects.”

By **Stephanie Mah** (she/her), equity, diversity, and inclusion specialist, Calgary

REPRESENTATION IS POWERFUL, especially for young children who benefit greatly from seeing successful individuals who look like them. This visibility is particularly meaningful for girls and those from minority communities, who are often underrepresented in fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). When children see role models who share their background or identity, it reinforces the belief, “If she can do it, I can do it too.” The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Girls toolkit was developed with this vision in mind—to build self-efficacy and confidence in young girls by providing them with opportunities to connect with mentors and engage in hands-on STEM activities that foster exploration, resilience, and a sense of possibility.

The inspiration for this toolkit originated in my undergraduate studies at the University of Calgary, where I researched how social factors shape the identities of mixed-race youth. During my Master’s in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University, my curiosity about the phrase, “If you can see it, you can be it,” continued to grow, leading me to examine how self-efficacy—particularly in STEM—develops in young girls. In fields where women and BIPOC individuals are often underrepresented, self-efficacy, or one’s belief in their abilities, becomes crucial in motivating young people to pursue their goals. This toolkit, combining personal experience and academic research, aims to create accessible STEM learning opportunities for girls, empowering them to envision themselves as future scientists, engineers, and leaders. By equipping teachers and youth leaders with a guide for fostering confidence, resilience, and ambition, the toolkit offers a structured approach to creating learning environments where girls feel capable, valued, and excited about exploring STEM subjects. The toolkit’s resources and activities support the idea that developing self-belief and enthusiasm for STEM from a young age can influence a girl’s aspirations and career choices in the future.

The WISE Girls toolkit can be downloaded from bctf.ca/classroom-resources or by scanning the QR code above.

WISE Girls toolkit overview

The toolkit is designed for flexible use in various settings, such as classrooms, after-school programs, and summer camps. The toolkit includes an introduction, glossary, and background research related to factors affecting STEM participation, specifically self-efficacy, race, and gender. Also included in the toolkit are four activities, each designed to introduce STEM concepts while fostering a growth mindset. The first two activities include detailed lesson plans and handouts so teachers can feel confident leading the hands-on STEM activities with students.

Activity 1: Tinfoil ship building (2 hours)

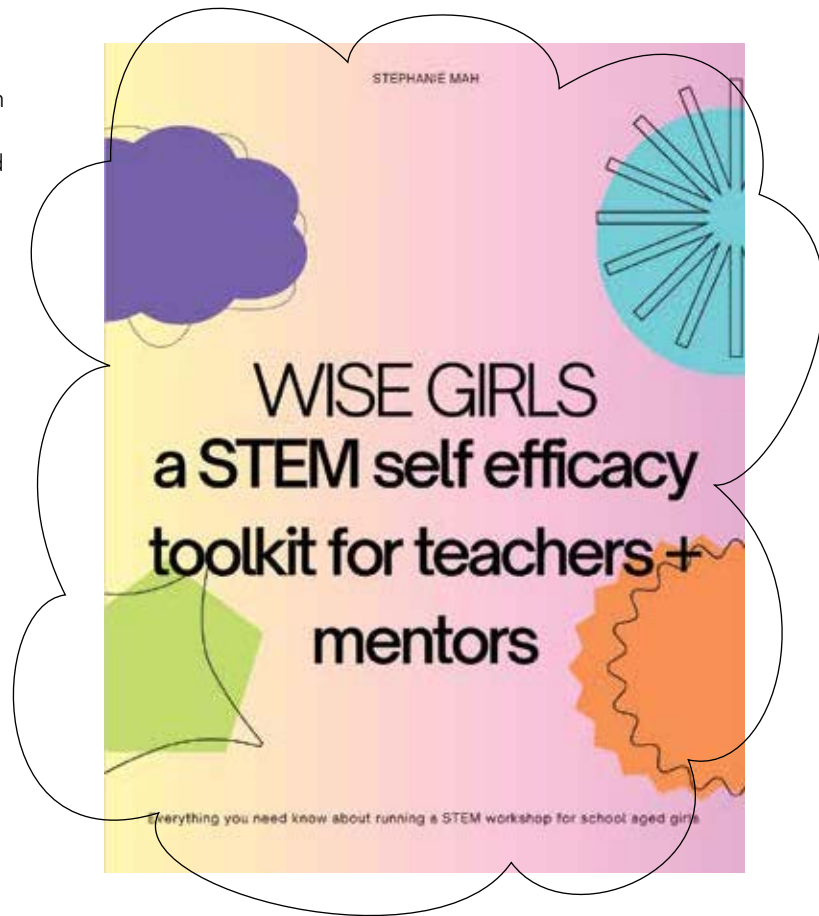
In this hands-on activity, students design, build, and test model ships using simple materials like tinfoil. This activity introduces basic principles of density and engineering while encouraging girls to think critically and creatively. After testing their designs, students have the opportunity to revise and improve their models based on their observations. This approach promotes problem-solving and resilience, showing girls that experimentation and revision are just as valuable as initial success. By taking ownership of their designs, they learn that the process of refining an idea can be as rewarding as achieving the end goal.

Activity 2: Ice cream making (1 hour)

This session combines chemistry and physics concepts in an enjoyable, relatable way. Students make ice cream from scratch, using accessible ingredients to explore molecular changes and the states of matter. This interactive activity allows girls to learn about science through hands-on experimentation, while also providing opportunities for creativity, reflection, and collaboration. By relating the lesson to a familiar, enjoyable treat, this activity helps demystify scientific concepts, making them feel approachable and relevant. The fun, practical nature of this project encourages girls to engage deeply with science in a way that is both memorable and empowering.

Activity 3: Career awareness and mentorship

Beyond STEM activities, WISE Girls includes a career awareness and mentorship session to help girls visualize future possibilities in STEM. This component introduces participants to women in STEM careers, offering them relatable role models who share their background and interests. The toolkit includes suggested discussion questions prompting local mentors to discuss their educational paths, career journeys, challenges, and achievements, giving girls insight into the realities of working in STEM fields. Hearing about mentors' experiences helps demystify STEM careers, showing participants that these fields are accessible and diverse. By seeing successful women in STEM, girls can more easily imagine themselves following similar paths, helping to dismantle perceived barriers and build their confidence.

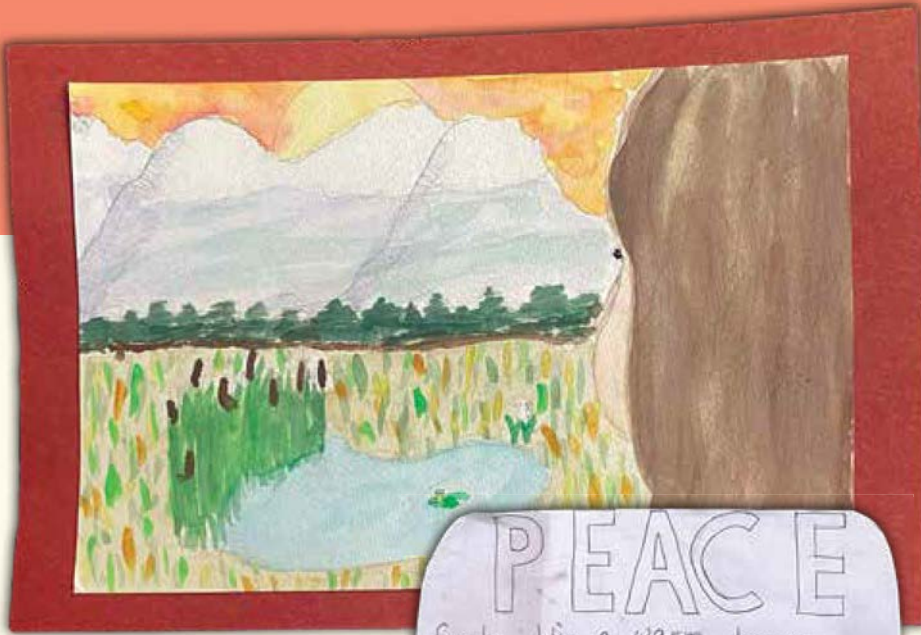


Activity 4: Parent-daughter social event

The workshop culminates in a parent-daughter social event, where families gather to celebrate the girls' accomplishments and reinforce family support as a key factor in building self-efficacy. This event provides an opportunity for parents to see what their daughters have learned and accomplished, helping to nurture an environment of encouragement and pride. Girls can receive certificates recognizing their participation. The social event fosters a positive atmosphere where family members can celebrate together, while also emphasizing the importance of community and support in a young person's journey toward self-confidence and career aspirations.

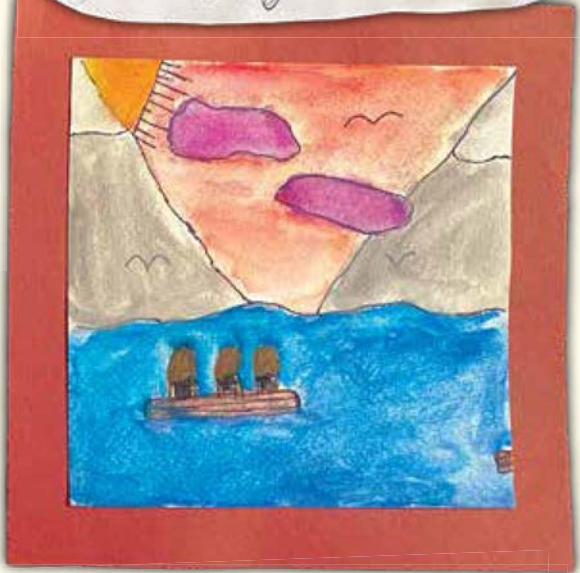
Inspiring limitless potential

Ultimately, the WISE Girls toolkit is about more than teaching STEM skills: it's about nurturing confidence and helping girls see themselves as capable, curious, and worthy of success in any field they choose. By creating spaces where girls feel safe to experiment, learn, and envision their futures, this toolkit strives to inspire a generation of girls to believe that no dream is too big. The goal is to spark confidence, ignite curiosity, and foster the belief that each girl's potential is boundless. Through WISE Girls, my hope is to empower girls to believe in themselves and their abilities, knowing that they have the strength and talent to shape their future in STEM and beyond. •



PEACE
 feels like a warm breeze
 rippling through the trees
 whispering of summer soon to come.

What peace looks like
 To me peace looks like
 three people sitting on a long
 log in the middle of the ocean
 far far away watching the sunset
 after a long day

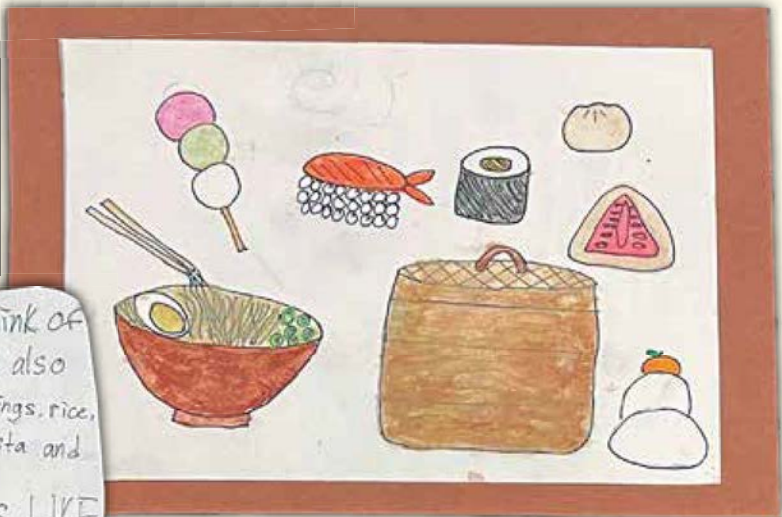


Peace smells like plants
 in a meadow. -matthew



Peace sounds like
 swimming underwater and
 you can hear splashing above you
 Theo

This page: Students at Strathcona Elementary made artwork representing how peace feels, looks, smells, sounds, and tastes to them.



When I think of Peace I think of
 having fun with my family and also
 eating lots of food!: Dumplings, rice,
 mochi, ramen, sushi, pizza, curry, pasta and
 Dimsum!!!
 WHAT PEACE TASTES LIKE

TEACHING FOR PEACE lesson plan

Materials

- *What Does Peace Feel Like* by V. Radunsky
- whiteboard and markers
- paper or journals
- pencils
- art supplies.

1. Definition of peace

Ask students what peace means. Work with your class to come up with a definition for the word peace. Write this on the whiteboard.

Compare the class definition with the dictionary definition of peace: a state of tranquility or serenity.

2. Story time

Read the book *What Does Peace Feel Like* by V. Radunsky to your class. If you don't have access to this book in your school library, you can find videos of the book being read aloud by others online.

3. Journal activity

Share the prompts below with the class:

- What does peace feel like?
- What does peace look like?
- What does peace smell like?
- What does peace sound like?
- What does peace taste like?

Give students time to journal about their examples of experiencing peace in their lives with the five senses.

4. Sharing and discussion

Bring students together to share their responses from their journals. Use the following questions as a discussion guide:

- Does peace mean the same thing to everyone in our class? What about other children around the world?
- Do you think all children are able to live in peace? Why or why not?

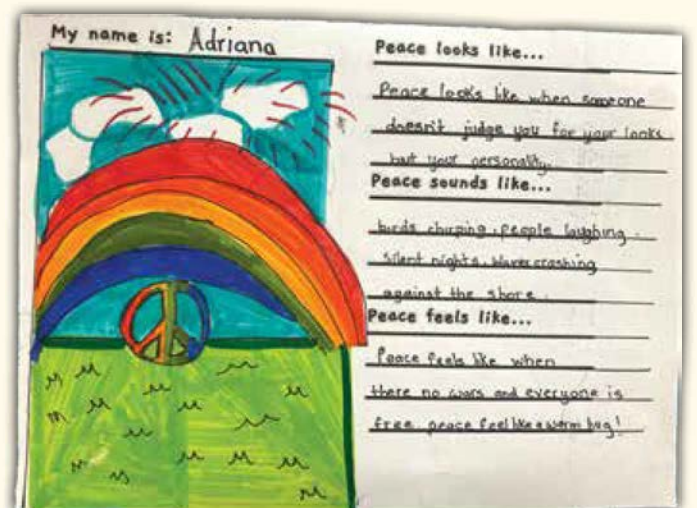
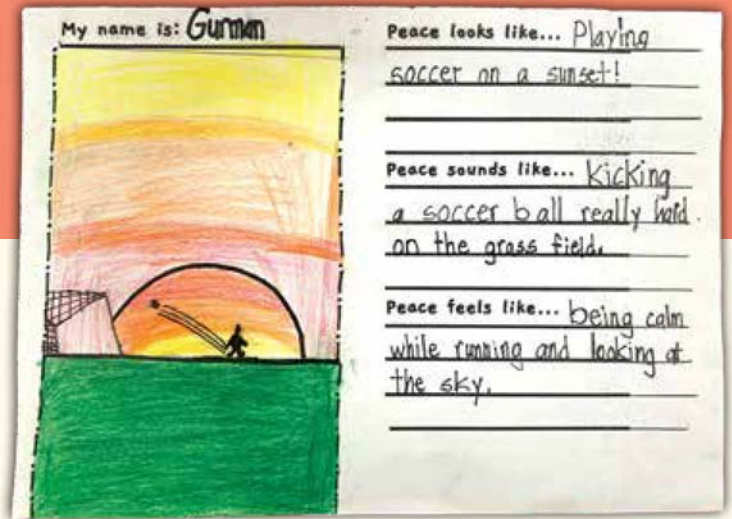
5. Art activity

Ask students to choose one experience of peace from the journal entries to create a picture of peace using their choice of materials. The picture can communicate what peace means to them or what peace looks like in their life. Students can work with little buddies or big buddies in their school to make this picture.

Display student artwork around the classroom or school. Do a gallery walk for students to view each other's work.

6. Extension

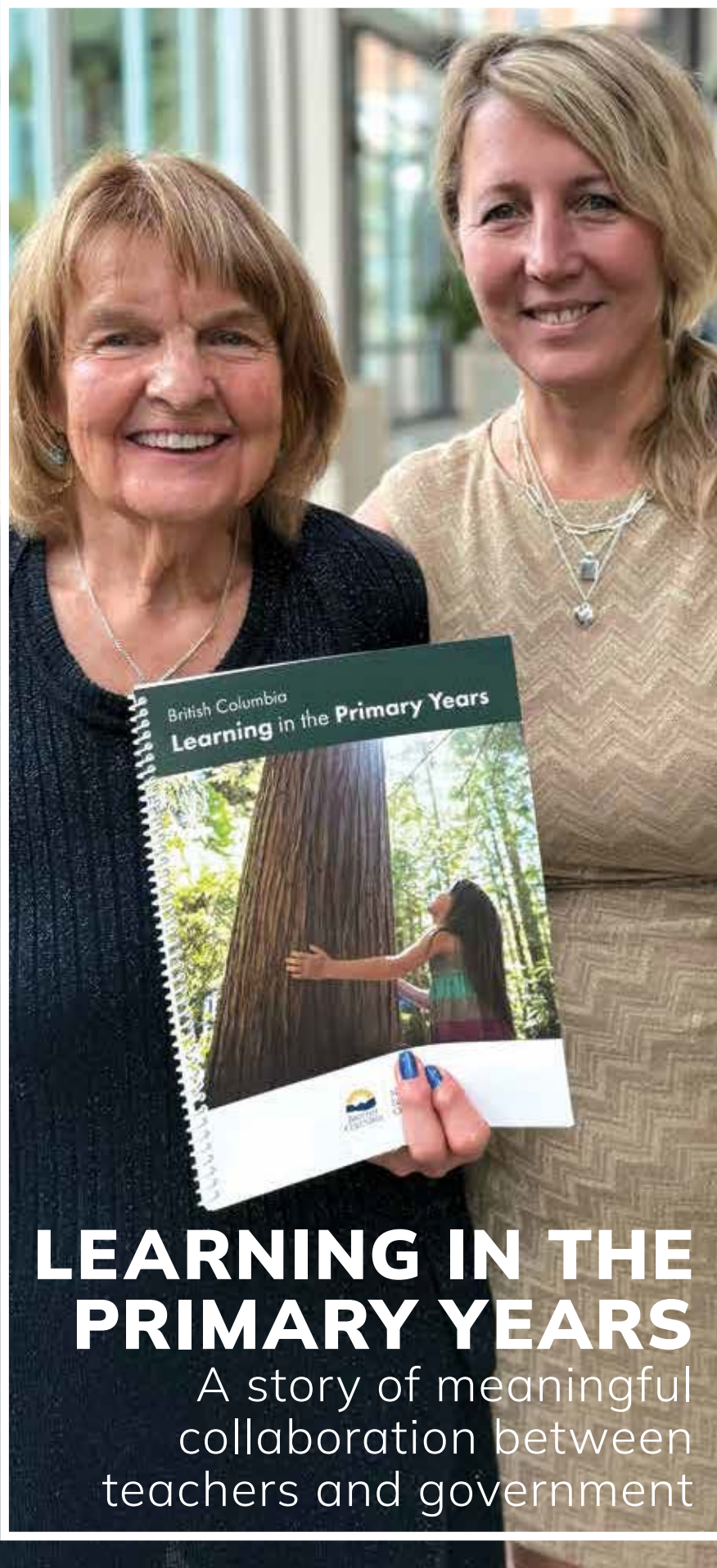
Visit voicesofyouth.org/world-childrens-day-2024 to learn about children around the world who are standing up for children's rights. •



Above: Student artwork from Bonaccord Elementary upon completing this lesson plan. Bonaccord photos by Nandini Aggarwal.

Below: Students from Strathcona Elementary also read *The Color of Your Skin* by Desirée Acevedo and Silvia Álvarez then mixed paint colours, without using the colour brown, to make their skin tone for their handprint on the PEACE sign. Strathcona photos by Kathleen Schepers and Annie Simard.





LEARNING IN THE PRIMARY YEARS

A story of meaningful collaboration between teachers and government

WHEN JANINE FRASER, President of the BCTF's BC Primary Teachers' Association (BCPTA), got up in front of a crowd of 600 people at their annual Provincial Specialist Association Day conference, there was a real sense of pride in the room. The conference, always rich in professional development, was also the launching pad for Learning in the Primary Years: a teaching resource for primary teachers developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the BCPTA, as well as other educators and partners.

Years in the making, Learning in the Primary Years is a reimagined take on the Primary Program Framework first published in the year 2000. The brand-new resource supports learning in Kindergarten through Grade 3, reflecting pedagogy that is inclusive of Indigenous worldviews, as well as the current BC context and curriculum.

When asked about what it meant to work with her primary-teacher colleagues and the Ministry on this resource, Janine called it an "honour." She said, "This isn't just a rewrite of the old document, which was amazing in its own right. It's a new reiteration that really fits the context of today, of how we want to integrate play and joy into our classrooms. Being involved in this process, to me was a huge honour and an amazing mentorship opportunity. I got to work with and learn from people like Carol Johns, who has been a primary teacher and advocate for 50 years."

For her part, Carol Johns really emphasized the deep and thoughtful collaboration between teachers and Ministry officials. "People like Maureen Dockendorf were exceptional to work with and can't be thanked enough. It really feels like the Ministry respects our opinion, our expertise, and our passion," Carol said. "The document really comes to life as a support and resource for teachers because the majority of the writing team were teachers. The heart of the resource is social-emotional learning—play—it lays out that path for teachers. It provides the encouragement, and documented support from the Ministry, for teachers to be playful, to teach and learn in a playful way."

Janine reiterated the importance of the government's support for Learning in the Primary Years. She said, "I feel that teachers,

families, and students have a core document that talks about how relationships and play are foundational; that our mandate is to create joyful classrooms where kids love coming to school. That's what this document will help teachers do."

To celebrate the launch of the resource, Danielle Carter-Sullivan from the Ministry of Education and Child Care helped open the BC Primary Teachers' Association conference with heartfelt gratitude to all the teachers in the room and across the province. To all of BC's primary teachers she said, "Thank you for everything you do to shape the spirits, strengthen the hearts, and love our BC learners—you are the foundation of our education system. There are so many people to thank for their dedication, leadership, vision, passion, wisdom, and perseverance to see this project to the end. Please see the acknowledgments in the back of the book."

"Learning in the Primary Years recognizes teachers as the experts you are, and it captures the spirit of how you holistically develop children to flourish."

Danielle closed her remarks with a poem by Beau Taplin called "The Masterpiece" to express her gratitude:

*You are all the places you have been,
the sights you have seen,
the marvels you have achieved,
and every soul you have touched;
each passing moment another
brushstroke on the canvas.
So rise, live always with passion and heart,
and someday you will look back on your life
and find a work of art. •*

FIND THIS RESOURCE

Learning in the Primary Years is online at qrc0.de/bfZOLp or scan the QR code.



PHOTOS

Opposite: Carol Johns and Janine Fraser, BCPTA Executive Committee members.

Below: Danielle Carter-Sullivan, Executive Director, Early Learning & Child Care, Ministry of Education and Child Care; Alex Peters, Cindy Gleb, BCPTA members. Rich Overgaard photos.





BCSSTA CONFERENCE

Invigorating practice for
social studies teachers

THIS YEAR'S annual BC Social Studies Teachers' Association (BCSSTA) conference, held at UBC, started out with a lot of excitement about the keynote speaker, Chantal Hébert. Hébert drew on her experience as an influential columnist and political commentator as she shared her thoughts on current events happening in our province, in Canada, and around the world.

Teachers joining virtually and in-person had an opportunity to ask Hébert questions about politics, policy, and news before splitting up to join a workshop of their choice.

Conference attendees had a variety of topics to choose from for workshops, including radical thought, lessons to explore economics, classroom activities to understand global conflict, enhancing argumentation skills, supporting newcomer students from war zones, and more.

In a workshop titled Teaching BC History while Revitalizing the Chinook Jargon Language, participants were given an overview of resources that can help them introduce students to the history and legacy of Chinook Jargon.

Chinook Jargon is a language that borrows words from several different Indigenous languages spoken across BC, Washington, and Oregon, as well as settler languages. This relatively easy-to-learn language facilitated conversation between groups with different linguistic backgrounds. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, BC even had two dedicated newspapers published entirely in Chinook Jargon. Today, the language's legacy is still evident in place names across the province.

Workshop participants were given lesson plans and resources to help them introduce Chinook Jargon to their students as part of their exploration of BC's history.

Like all good professional development, some wonderful connections between teachers occurred during this workshop. Tim O'Donnell, a teacher at Tamanawis Secondary in Surrey, shared that his school has a Chinook Jargon name, and he was keen to hear the presenters' interpretations of the meaning.

Paisley Mckenzie, a UBC student who is learning Chinook Jargon, said that she had seen a dictionary define Tamanawis as "spirit" or "power."

Another teacher in the workshop, Emmett Keyserlingk, noted that he came across the word

Nicolas Fillion, SFU (left) and Chantal Hébert (right). Above: Tim O'Donnell (left) and Emmett Keyserlingk (right). Sunjum Jhaj photos.



Tamanawis while working with his BC First Peoples 12 students to write poetry in Chinook Jargon. Emmett used the word Tamanawis in the poem he wrote alongside his students as it was the closest translation he could find to “I feel that too.”

The definition shared with Tim by his school district for Tamanawis was “one who teaches wisdom.”

The presenters noted at the beginning of the workshop that language is more meaningful when it’s shared. This point was highlighted by the collective meaning-making and language exploration that occurred in this workshop.

Other workshops at the conference were every bit as engaging. “I found it really hard to choose which workshop to do because there were so many good options,” said Rylan Vanderwoude, a student-teacher at Vancouver Technical Secondary School, who also said he is excited to try out some of the resources he’s collected at the conference during his practicum.

The planning that goes into organizing this conference starts months, and even years, before the day of the event. BCSSTA executive members are already looking ahead and thinking of themes for future years’ conferences.

“We want to make sure we are providing value for our members while also bringing together academia, teachers, and community members,” said Michael Howitt, BCSSTA Executive Committee member. “We try to combine all these voices to help teachers do the best teaching they can.”

Stephan Biela, a teacher from Chilliwack, reported taking away a lot of new ideas from the conference, but found the connections with colleagues to be the most impactful. “The camaraderie, collegiality, and sense of community that this conference creates is so important—especially for teachers from smaller schools or districts where you might be the only social teacher. This breaks that isolation.” •

BCAMT CONFERENCE

PD adds up for math teachers

HOW MANY TIMES is a toilet flushed in New York City during a commercial break of the Super Bowl?

If you’re the type of person who would ponder a question like this, chat with a colleague about it, or even scratch out some calculations on a piece of paper during a conference break, then the BC Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT) conference might be for you.



Pat Nelson is just this type of teacher, and he travelled all the way from Fort Nelson to Whistler for the 63rd annual Northwest Mathematics Conference this fall. He’s been before and was looking forward to the experience. For Pat the conference provides a chance for him to explore his passions in math education, namely sharing the beauty of math with his students. Pat’s love of math came from his father, whose love of math games, cards, and competition helped shape his life.

This year’s conference provided Pat with a new lens on trigonometry and how to connect with his secondary students, as well as a chance to reconnect with colleagues he’s met over the years.

For Diane Weins, Tamara Shand, Tony Domina, and Shannon Downey, the math conference was a reunion. They are part of a Master’s cohort of students at UBC studying how to teach and learn math in community, and for them reconnecting and digging into how to inspire curiosity through math for elementary students is a key part of their own professional learning. In a workshop on using senses to learn about data, this group took information they gathered comparing eating habits across the globe and prepared yogurt bowls that matched the nutritional intakes based on country. They were able to compare and contrast eating habits, make inferences about agriculture and food security, use weight and measurement concepts, all with a tub of yogurt, some blueberries, and some granola.

Maggie Lai’s path at this provincial specialist association conference was to learn all she possibly could about AI. As a Math 8 teacher from Surrey, she knows that embracing AI is important. She wants some fresh ideas to bring back to the classroom: “I’m really focusing on AI and how I can use that to enhance my teaching. It’s really important that our students know how to use this new tool.” Maggie went on to say, “For me, a lot of times students say, ‘Oh I’m not really good at math,’ but seeing their growth and helping them build confidence in math is the best thing.”

With close to 100 workshops available over three days, teachers from BC, Washington, and Oregon explored curricular math concepts, inclusion, Indigenous ways of knowing math, and how to create rich classroom experiences for math students no matter the age or ability—and more! •



Understanding GenAI through Indigenous ways of knowing

By **Dr. Gregory Sutherland** (he/him), lecturer in Indigenous pedagogies and practice, Simon Fraser University

Another way forward

LATELY, I have found that a great many conversations with fellow teachers inevitably circle around to the complexities of teaching in the milieu of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). When I learned we can actually use AI to detect the likelihood of a student using AI to cheat on their class assignments, I was struck by an overwhelming feeling that there must be a better way forward. I felt as though such approaches didn't align with my pedagogical sensibilities as an Indigenous educator. I am uneasy about the idea of affirming the assumption of wrongdoing on the part of my students. I am equally uncomfortable solving a problem with the technology that created the issue in the first place.

Instead, I believe that the way ahead can be productively forged by looking to educational values that have guided meaningful and rigorous scholarship since time immemorial. My classroom teaching experience, lived experience as a Métis educator, and inquiry into Indigenous research practices have helped me to understand how the tenets of Indigenous education can help us to reframe the discourse around GenAI from one of surveillance, academic dishonesty, and appropriation, to one that is about relationships, ethicality, and respect.

Before outlining some concrete actions that we can all take in our classrooms to foster these values, it is worth acknowledging that, beyond potentially shifting the nature of classroom relationships, the use of GenAI has some implications that can be understood as contrary to the aims of moving this place called Canada toward healing and reconciliation through education.

Features of GenAI through the lens of Indigenous education

The following five examples of the ways that using GenAI can be seen as contrary to the aims of honouring Indigenous knowledge systems represents only a few of the significant points of divergence, but I am hopeful that they might be of value in your future discussions with colleagues about how, or the extent to which, you wish to embrace GenAI in your classrooms.

1. Indigenous scholarly protocols vary from nation to nation, but all include an understanding of permission and the appropriateness of sharing stories, songs, and art, whereas GenAI synthesizes, summarizes, and subsumes any information to which it has access regardless of permission or copyright. The ways in which GenAI changes, manipulates, and takes from all knowledge, art, and stories, many of which may have deep cultural importance, normalizes appropriation in our classrooms.
2. Indigenous scholarly protocols are grounded in a careful acknowledgment of the source of information, whereas GenAI does not acknowledge authorship; it often disguises, misappropriates, or misattributes original source material, and it can create false works-cited pages to disguise this process. Using GenAI in our classrooms perpetuates this kind of disrespect to traditional protocols and, in turn, models this disrespect for our students.
3. Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson¹ teaches us that Indigenous education can only be called so if it comes through the land. Indigenous knowledge systems from coast, to coast, to coast are rooted in place and relation to the land, whereas GenAI is fundamentally placeless, as it is diffused between servers across the planet. As such, the information that is produced through GenAI cannot reflect the teachings that the land offers us.
4. Indigenous knowledge systems recognize the self as part of the process of learning and understanding, whereas GenAI prevents users from honouring themselves as participants in knowledge creation. Who we are and what experiences we bring to learning shapes how we understand the world. If users allow the work of meaning-making to be done by GenAI, no real learning is occurring.
5. Indigenous scholarship is connected to our ethical obligations to the world around us, which includes concern for the other-than-human beings in our ecologies, whereas the energy consumption required to fuel GenAI contributes to deleterious environmental impacts. Accordingly, the use of GenAI in our classrooms is to undermine what Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson² calls our ethical accountability to support the well-being of our communities.



iStock.com/iBrave

Reframing the conversation

While consideration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being can help us to articulate the ways in which using GenAI in our classrooms may be contrary to goals of healing and reconciliation through education, these ways of knowing and being can also enable us to better prepare students to engage in ethical learning practices. In an educational system where many students experience anxiety over academic performance, where so many students are overburdened with extracurricular activities, where the complexity of living arrangements require students to support families with child or eldercare, where increased cost of living forces students to work to support their families, there is little wonder that many students elect to seek out the shortcuts afforded by GenAI. However, I would suggest that Indigenous practices of teaching and learning can help us to welcome students into a better way of learning. The following are three such practices.

ETHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Strong relationships in our classrooms are the best way to inoculate students against the practice of academic dishonesty. If we have strong relationships with our students, they are more likely to recognize their ethical obligations to us as their teachers. If we place trust in students, rather than damaging relationships through an assumed guilt, that trust will be rewarded with ethical conduct because it is about your relationship rather than a set of rules or a contest to determine whose GenAI is smarter. Neither student nor teacher benefit from such contests. Instead, I invite students to make a personal written pledge to themselves that they will engage in the work of the course ethically.

SELF-SITUATING

Inviting students to self-locate in their studies can make the work produced in schools more personal and meaningful. Ts'msyen and European scholar Jo Chrona³ teaches us that acknowledging who we are, where we come from, whose land we are on, and the nature of our relationship to our learning is foundational in Indigenous scholarly practices. As such, affording our students opportunities to do the same in their work can create a more engaged and honest kind of knowledge creation in our classrooms. Students can begin presentations or written assignments with acknowledgment of territory, a statement of their own ancestry, or an explanation of why their work is important to them.

“... the tenets of Indigenous education can help us to reframe the discourse around GenAI from one of surveillance, academic dishonesty, and appropriation, to one that is about relationships, ethicality, and respect.”

UNDERSTANDING OF PROTOCOL

Orienting students to local protocols regarding the sharing of knowledge, gifting of songs, granting of permissions, and respecting privileged knowledge can help students to avoid appropriative practices inside and outside of school, but can also provide students with a framework for critiquing scholarly practices that do not align with these values, such as using GenAI. If students understand the harm that appropriation continues to inflict on Indigenous communities, students will be more likely to see the unethical functions of GenAI as an extension of this harmful practice. A simple practice that I teach my students is to recognize the ancestry of a writer (Indigenous or otherwise) that they are referencing as I have done throughout this article.

Final thoughts

I believe that we must walk carefully in our work to heal some of the harm that school systems have done to Indigenous Peoples in this country, so we must be wary of practices that undermine the curriculum and pedagogy that has been taken up in the name of healing. These three suggestions that I offer here are just a few of the concrete practices that you can implement in your own classroom to create a more ethical space, where students feel connected to each other, connected to their learning, connected to their teacher, and connected to the land. I believe that these sorts of relational approaches will help support an educative, rather than prohibitive, approach to GenAI as it becomes more and more commonplace in classrooms in the coming years. •

1 L.B. Simpson, "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," 2014; jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170, retrieved 11 6 2024.

2 S. Wilson, "What is an Indigenous research methodology?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 2001, 175–179.

3 J. Chrona, *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist education*, Portage and Main Press, Winnipeg, 2022.



Running laps around Lord Roberts Elementary to raise awareness about the federal government's promise to invest in school food programs.

EDIBLE EDUCATION

Teacher goes the distance for food programs

BRENT MANSFIELD has been passionate about food his whole career. He wove it into his teaching practice as a classroom teacher, worked in the non-profit sector on food systems advocacy, and now teaches a unique course at Lord Roberts Elementary School called Edible Education.

Edible Education, now in its seventh year, combines school gardening, food exploration, food advocacy, mindful eating, and celebrating the joy food can add to our lives. As a specialist teacher, Brent teaches this course as a prep offering to all students in the school from Kindergarten to Grade 7.

Exploring the school garden is the first school food experience for students in Edible Education. They plan for two harvests each school year: one in the fall and winter and one in the spring. Over the winter, they look at seed catalogues, vote on what they'd like to grow next, and plan for the next harvest.

In the course students learn about food and culture, interoceptive awareness (knowing when you're full or hungry), and soil science. Students also spend a unit of the course learning about school food programs from around the world. Many parts of the world have universal school food programs where students have access to free or subsidized lunches. In Brazil access to food is even a constitutional right.

The students' inquiry into food programs around the world led them to question Canada's approach. While students at Lord Roberts have access to a pay-what-you-can lunch program, many schools across Canada are still without reliable food programs.

In October 2023, Brent ran 200 laps around the elementary school to raise awareness and call for the federal government to honour its commitment to invest \$200 million per year for five years for food programs in schools. The 200 laps totaled 92 km of running. Students ran alongside Brent in waves, switching off as needed. Brent, however, ran the full 200 laps, starting at 6:00 a.m.

The run got students excited about food advocacy. They went on to write letters to the Prime Minister and their local Member of Parliament about why school food programs matter.

One month later, Brent hand-delivered those letters, along with hundreds more letters from students across Canada, written in collaboration with the Coalition for Healthy School Food. He had travelled to Ottawa to run 200 laps around Parliament.

After the April 2024 announcement to commit \$1 billion over five years (\$200 million per year) to school food programs, Brent was asked if his school would be willing to host the Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland, as part of the announcement of the National School Food Policy.

When Freeland visited, she brought some of the original letters from students that Brent had hand-delivered in Ottawa.

"It was amazing for kids to see those letters come all the way back," said Brent. "They got to see that you can use your voice and creativity to get the government's attention."

“School food programs have the ability to ensure all students are nourished and ready to learn, while supporting them to develop the food literacy and skills to have a healthy relationship with food.”

– Brent Mansfield

During her visit, Freeland participated in Lord Roberts' unique approach to a school food program. The school runs a program called LunchLAB, co-founded by Brent and administered through the non-profit organization Growing Chefs.

In LunchLAB, students are involved in planning, preparing, and serving lunch to their peers. When Brent first co-founded the program, his school was one of very few schools where elementary students prepare and serve lunch for their peers.

The program operates with a pay-what-you-can model. The standard price is \$6 per lunch, but parents/guardians can opt to pay what works for their family.

LunchLAB is set up with a leadership pipeline for Grades 6 and 7 students interested in volunteering. They start as volunteers with the clean team who are responsible for all the clean up when lunch is finished. After some time with the clean team, they can volunteer for the chef team.

Student chefs work with a professional chef-in-residence and sous chef to prepare a delicious lunch for their peers. Every lunch includes a salad bar where students get to choose what and how much they take. The rest of the menu is decided by the chef-in-residence, with input from students. The program works hard to ensure the lunches are a celebration of the diverse food experiences that exist in the school community.

“We want to encourage eating together, taking pride in food experiences, and staying away from lunchbox shaming,” said Brent.

Students take a lot of pride in their work with the clean team and chef team. Over 100 students are signed up to volunteer, and several parents from the school community regularly volunteer to support the program. The program is expanding to a fourth school in the coming months, a task Brent is excited to support.

Brent noted that school food programs don't—and shouldn't—look the exact same in every school. Each school has to imagine what works well for their school community and carve out a program that fits best with their community's unique needs.

The federal funding to implement food programs requires each province to sign an agreement to join the National School Food Program. BC was not able to sign an agreement this fall due to the provincial election. After the funding is secured, there will



Above: Brent running laps at the BC Legislature in front of an installation of lunch trays. **Left:** Brent at Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Photos provided by Brent Mansfield.

be much to do to implement programs in all schools across the province.

Brent's advocacy has continued through the fall: he ran laps from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the length of a typical school day, around the BC Legislature in Victoria in October. He displayed the school lunch trays along with student art and food puns on the steps of the Legislature and was joined by students from Victoria public schools and teachers from the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association.

Through advocacy work, the school lunch program, and the Edible Education course, Brent's students are learning how impactful activism can be, and how joyful and necessary school food programs are.

“School food programs have the ability to ensure all students are nourished and ready to learn, while supporting them to develop the food literacy and skills to have a healthy relationship with food,” said Brent. “It is an exciting time to see BC and Canada developing and expanding these programs, and teachers have a critical role to play.” •



© Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, carnegieart.org
photograph by Charles "Teenie" Harris

BLACK DANDYISM

lesson plan

By Nikitha Fester, BCTF staff

“ISN'T THAT JUST DANDY?” A common yet dated turn-of-phrase to indicate that something is excellent or, when used sarcastically, terrible. The original definition of dandy refers to a “man who draws attention by unusual finery of dress and fastidiousness manners.”¹ The term is used to describe the MET Gala’s 2025 theme *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style*, where Black dandyism will be on full display. The co-chairs of this year’s gala are Colman Domingo, Lewis Hamilton, Pharrell Williams, A\$AP Rocky, and honorary co-chair LeBron James, celebrities all known to be fashion icons. The centring of Black men’s fashion and the almost exclusively male chairing team (*Vogue* Editor Anna Wintour remains chair of the event), suggests a step toward increased diversification and an explicit nod to Black fashion. However, Black people have been vanguards of fashion long before they had access to the MET Museum.

Take for example the zoot suit. Born during the roaring 1920s, this look is identified by its oversized pants with a tapered ankle (to facilitate dancing), oversized jacket with padded shoulders, wide lapels, and fedoras. A decade later the suit saw a resurgence, this time popularized by both Latino and Black communities in the United States. It’s popularity amongst young men was polarizing. On the one hand, it was dubbed the only truly American suit, on the other hand, it was known as a badge of delinquency. The zoot suit rebirth occurred during the Harlem Renaissance and during the Second World War. Thus, American patriots saw its excessive use of fabric as wasteful during a time of need and deemed its wearers draft-dodgers, thugs, and gangsters. An undercurrent of racism and white supremacy lead to the zoot suit riots of 1943. Zoot suits were subsequently banned.²

Nonetheless, zoot-suit wearers persisted as an act of rebellion. Fashion has been, and remains to be, a way to resist and redefine culture. From zoot suits to Dapper Dan, from Telfar Clemens to Pharrell William’s appointment as Louis Vuitton’s Men’s Creative Director, Black men have been and remain innovators of fashion.

This lesson plan is centred around exploring Black fashion. Suitable for Grades 7 and up.

Lesson plan

1. Lead a minidiscussion around fashion trends (what students like, dislike, etc.).
2. Explain to them how fashion can be an act of resistance or rebellion, use the example of zoot suits.
3. Explain to students how Black culture is often appropriated into high fashion, but Black people (Black fashion designers) are seldom known or welcomed into high fashion.
 - a. E.g., stealing from Black designers, use of Black hair stylings (dreadlocks, braids, cornrows) on non-Black models, use of African textiles and jewelry.
4. Watch the following clips about Black fashion with your class (scan QR code above or visit teachermag.ca for links):
 - a. AfroFuturism in fashion
 - b. Dapper Dan (start at 3:00 min. mark).
5. Discuss the student’s take-aways from both videos.
6. For homework have students look up a Black fashion designer and bring an image (printed or on their phones) of a design they like from their chosen designer.
7. In small groups, have students discuss their chosen looks, what they like about them, why they chose them, and where they would wear the outfit, etc.
8. Talk about the term “dandy” and what it means and how it relates to fashion. You could talk about the MET Gala co-chairs as examples of dandy. You could also discuss the queer history of dandyism, specifically centring racialized queer communities’ contributions to cultural innovation.
9. Inspired by the fashion they found, and examples seen in class, have students design their own dandy look.

Materials

- paper person cut out
 - markers
 - pencil crayons
 - fabric scraps
 - magazine cut outs (e.g., images of textures and prints)
 - glue.
10. Have students write a short description of what makes their design dandy. •

1 etymonine.com, 2021 2 See the [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoot_Suit_Riots) article “Zoot Suit Riots” for a thorough history.

Teaching and learning in the Columbia Valley

By **Samara Ridley-Thomas** (she/her), teacher teaching on call, traditional and unceded territories of the Secwépemc and Ktunaxa Peoples

A 6:30 A.M. CALL can seem early, especially on a dark winter day, but it is also so exciting! It means that you have the chance to cover for someone who does one of the most important jobs in the world—teaching the leaders of tomorrow!

I moved to Invermere, BC, from Vancouver with the intention of semi-retiring and just picking up “the odd day” of on-call work in the Columbia Valley. I soon found myself discovering all the different schools in the surrounding area and loving the fact that I got to learn so much about the local area through the eyes of young learners.

One of the first activities I presented to each class I taught, was a challenge to share a picture or description of a favourite recommendation for a newcomer to the area, like me! I made a collection of ideas on index cards with a key ring for handy reference. Here are some of my favourite ideas/comments/recommendations from Kindergarten to Grade 7 students:

Head for a hike in Wilmer at School Hill. They are building a new water system so head back when you see the orange fence.

Watch for cactus on the steep hill.

You should hike Pedley Pass to the tarn, and on a less windy day hike the ridge as well.

Go skating on Lake Windermere, or you can ski on the tracks there too, but watch out for big cracks.

Watch out for bears here...black bears will run from you, but brown bears will run for you.

You should know that you should flash your headlights if you see a deer on the road to let other drivers know to slow down.

When you are in the bush, watch for speedy pick-up trucks.

You should eat ice cream in the winter.

Another simple, yet successful, activity I have done with several classes is stick sanding. I ask students to find a small stick outside and then to sit in a circle with their sticks and a variety of sandpaper, from coarse to fine. The challenge is to strip, smooth, and polish the stick as much as possible. Then we pass the sticks around the circle with the intention of using our senses to see what we can discover about each stick.

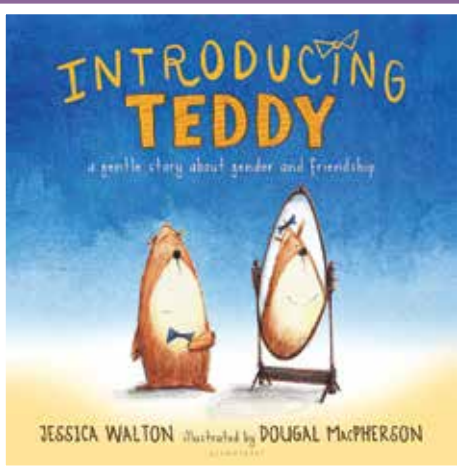
I would highly recommend the TTOC experience to anyone who finds joy in learning something new.

I will have my ringer turned on Monday morning. After all, the snow has started to fall, and so I need to consult with the students about where to find the best ice cream in town! •

Above: Samara enjoying the landscape in the Columbia Valley.
Below: Students select their sticks for sanding. Photos provided by author.



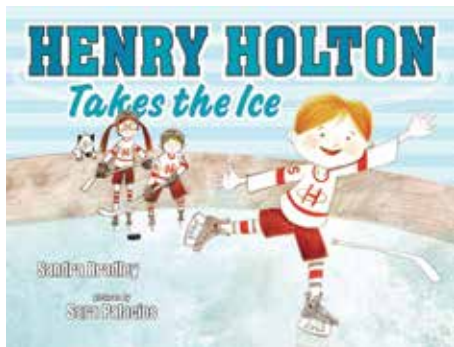
SOGI lessons from Kindergarten to Grade 12



OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, SOGI 123 has taken a fair bit of criticism from some parents and community members. Unfortunately, much of the rhetoric against SOGI 123 is based on misinformation.

So, what is SOGI 123?

One common misconception is that SOGI education is an explicit version of sexual health education. In fact, SOGI-inclusive education is not a separate curriculum or course, and it only includes age-appropriate materials. It's an inclusive education initiative that empowers educators to make schools safer and more inclusive for all students. Most SOGI content is woven into classes across different subject areas.

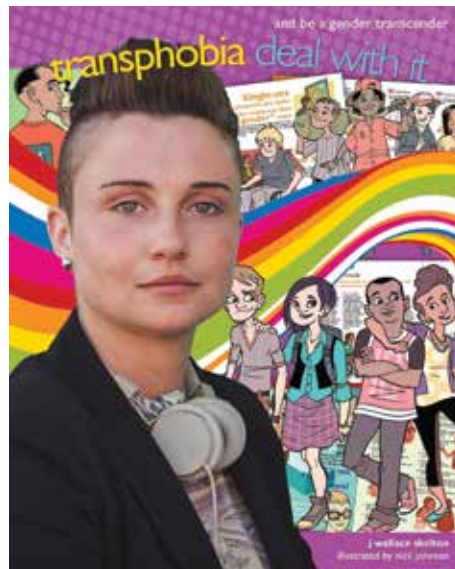
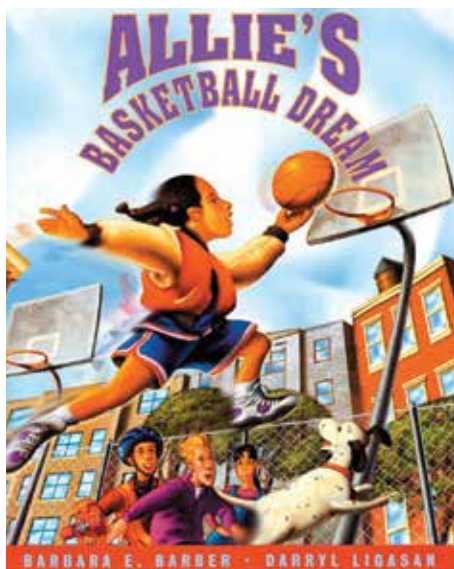


SOGI 123 includes several resources and lesson plans that share age-appropriate information with children related to sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition to being age appropriate, the materials are all aligned with the curriculum in various subject areas.

Teachers can find a variety of resources at sogieducation.org including book lists, podcasts, ideas to introduce intersectionality, and lesson plans. One of the resources highlights three simple strategies to make your teaching practice more inclusive:

- Use inclusive student titles. Instead of saying “boys and girls” use inclusive terms such as “students,” “everyone,” “class,” or even “scholars,” “mathematicians,” or “athletes.”
- Make room for students to do anything regardless of gender. This requires teachers to explicitly counter stereotypes.
- Make your classroom visibly inclusive by displaying rainbow stickers and including representation of a variety of families.

The following are some examples of age-appropriate lesson plans that touch on SOGI content. The full lesson plans for the topics outlined opposite are available on TeachBC at bctf.ca/classroom-resources.



Pictured are just a few of the books and films featured in the resources listed here. Clockwise from top left: *Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story about Gender and Friendship*, for K–3; *The Paper Bag Princess* is used to teach about gender roles in Fairy Tales and Gender Roles, K–3; *Henry Holton Takes the Ice* and *Allie's Basketball Dream* are both recommended in *Questioning Gender Expectations*, Grades 4–7; *Transphobia: Deal with It* is featured in *School Climate Map*, Grades 8–9; and the short documentary *Second Stories: Dep-we-win Ge-ken-am-aan, Our Place in the Circle*, is recommended in *First Peoples Perspectives on Gender*, Grades 10–12.

One common misconception is that SOGI education is an explicit version of sexual health education. In fact, SOGI-inclusive education is not a separate curriculum or course, and it only includes age-appropriate materials.

Kindergarten to Grade 3

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

This lesson explores the diverse types of families that exist in society. The interactive activity teaches students that all families are special, express love, and support their family members in similar ways to other families and are of equal importance and value within society.

BLOW THE WHISTLE ON NAME-CALLING

This lesson encourages students to consider what a caring and respectful environment looks like and what the consequences of name-calling can be. It helps students develop a strategy for group self-monitoring of name-calling in the physical health education class that can be transferred across the school environment.

INTRODUCING TEDDY: A GENTLE STORY ABOUT GENDER AND FRIENDSHIP

This entry lesson to gender identity helps students learn how to be a good friend and to develop understanding and respect for people when their name and appearance change.

FAIRY TALES AND GENDER ROLES

This lesson allows students to explore factors that influence self-identity, including gender roles and identity. Fairy tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to themselves, their families, and communities.

Grade 4 to Grade 7

GENDER IDENTITY, MEDIA, AND STEREOTYPES

This lesson explores the difference between a person's biological sex and their gender identity, and that gender roles and expectations are socially constructed, influenced by media, and evolve or change over time. It highlights that everyone defines their own gender identity, and that this identity needs to be respected.

QUESTIONING GENDER EXPECTATIONS

This lesson explores the expectations we have around gender and reinforces the notion that no one should feel confined by these expectations or teased or put down because of them.

Grade 8 to Grade 9

GENDER IN SHORT STORIES AND POETRY

This lesson uses short stories and poetry to explore how gender roles and identity can be shaped by culture and change over time. Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations.

EXAMINING NOVELS FOR GENDER BIAS

This resource is a checklist of questions to help students think critically and discuss the gender stereotypes and bias presented in various novels.

SCHOOL CLIMATE MAP

In this activity, students create a map of their school that evaluates how safe and welcoming spaces are for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender-expansive students.

Grade 10 to Grade 12

FIRST PEOPLES PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER

In this lesson, students explore Indigenous perspectives of gender and contrast these to European beliefs. Students also consider the impact of these colonial ideas about gender on Indigenous people and communities.

LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY TO EXPLORE GENDER AND SEXUALITY

This lesson explores the language and terminology that help us to understand and discuss the historical inequality faced by gender and sexual minorities. This understanding helps students to think critically about gender and sexuality, which helps promote a more inclusive school and more equitable world. •



Mystery and magic sure to entertain

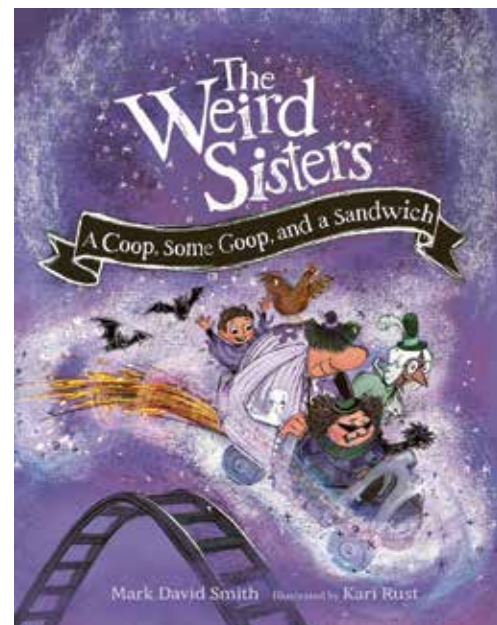
By **Keegan Haselhan** (she/her), teacher-librarian, Coquitlam
The Weird Sisters: A Coop, Some Goop, and a Sandwich,
published by Owlkids, 2024

THE WEIRD SISTERS: A COOP, SOME GOOP, AND A SANDWICH is a delightfully funny children's chapter book, written by local author and teacher, Mark David Smith of Port Coquitlam. This is the third book in the Weird Sisters Detective Agency series but can be read as a stand-alone novel. The first two books in the series are *The Weird Sisters: A Note, a Goat, and a Casserole*, 2022, (nominated for the 2022 Cybils Award and the 2023 Joan Betty Stuchner Oy Vey! Funniest Children's Book Award) and *The Weird Sisters: A Robin, a Ribbon, and a Lawn Mower*, 2023.

In this tale the three weird sisters are helping out at the annual Covenly Fall Fair by giving children thrilling rides on their flying broom, when their cat, a prize chicken, and a frog dressed in an elegant vest and top hat go missing. Hilarity ensues as the weird sisters

(who have giggle-worthy names like Yukmina, Hildegurp, and Glubbifer) attempt to find the missing critters while being stalked by a suspicious man in a large chicken suit who is determined to catch the sisters "using some kind of no-good hocus-pocus." The sisters, who "sometimes needed guidance using their magic appropriately," follow some goopy clues through the fair and make a bigger, stickier mess of things while trying to solve the mystery of the missing "fair fowl," cat, and well-dressed frog. What does a sandwich have to do with all this you ask? Well, you'll just have to read the story to find out. In the end, the sisters have a chance to learn from their past mistakes, own up to their actions, and promise to make better choices in the future.

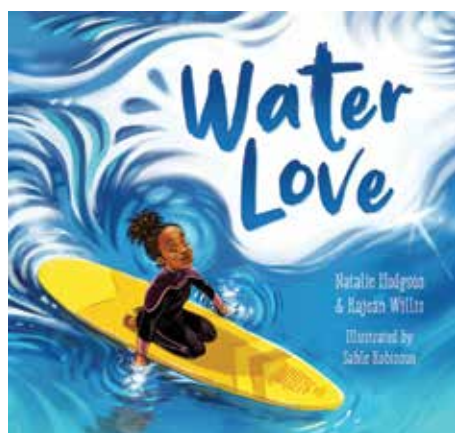
This story is a light and funny mystery full of enjoyable hi-jinks, amusing



alliteration, and entertaining wordplay. The engaging illustrations by Kari Rust are appealing to kids of all ages and the quirky characters are sure to become class favourites. I would recommend that the entire series be added to elementary school libraries and classroom collections as they are quick and fun read-alouds that are sure to entertain any student. •

Editor's pick: Representation makes a splash

By **Sunjum Jhaj** (she/her), Editor, *Teacher*
Water Love, published by Plumleaf Press, 2022



THE MAIN CHARACTER in this story, Kaya, fell in love with water at a young age. But she sees that "no one else looks like me at the pool," and is advised by her friends that "swimming ain't a Black sport."

The picture book follows Kaya as she convinces her mother to let her learn to swim, navigates a lack of representation for Black people in water sports, and changes the narrative of what a swimmer and surfer looks like.

The authors, Natalie Hodgson and Rajean Willis, are both Indigenous Black Nova Scotians. Natalie, who has experience working as a classroom

teacher and school counsellor in Nova Scotia, said, "like the main character, I also fell in love with water at a very young age. However, this is not the common narrative for African Nova Scotians. In fact, the relationship between water and our communities has been distant and often inaccessible."¹

Kaya's story is inspired by the North Preston Surf Program in Nova Scotia that works to make surfing more accessible to Black people.

The story, combined with Sahle Robinson's illustrations, provide representation all students need to see in their libraries. •

Tables would turn

By **Nandini Aggarwal**,
teacher, Surrey

DREAMS AND HOPES give us courage to glide,
Guiding young minds, our hearts remain open wide.
Around innocent souls, we always stay,
But the profession's reality reveals a giant fray.

Mental health crises, racism's ruthless game,
Principal power, and supremacy's inhuman claim
Fresh graduate teachers stress, voices silenced, neglected,
Dreams unseen, mistreated souls, and harassed, muted.

With a bright flame, we start our journey anew,
Yet teaching's shine dims with each passing view,
For the love of teaching, we refuse to fall,
Despite struggles, we stand tall, answering the call.

Tools of our trade, papers and pens,
Never hesitating, we work again and again.
In diverse classrooms, where English isn't the norm,
We nurture each student, helping them transform.

Despite challenges of portable teaching, enduring heat and cold,
With no washrooms nearby, the stories often untold.
Still, we prioritize students' well-being, with care,
Inside and outside classrooms, our dedication is clear.

From novice to experienced, burdens never unfold,
Diminishing enthusiasm, our stories left untold.
If not for the pay, concern may spark,
Yet few continue this journey to embark.

Despite the workload and strain, we gather strength each day,
Driven by duty, though spirits may fray,
Bearing invisible scars, heavy burdens tear us apart,
Yet, we persevere with unwavering heart.

Offering stress relief, forms to fill,
A balm for wounds, time cannot still,
Don't treat us as animals, with pains left unheard,
For a day will come where truth is stirred.

When hearts cry, I want to learn,
But absent are teachers, the tables will turn. •



Nandini Aggarwal photo

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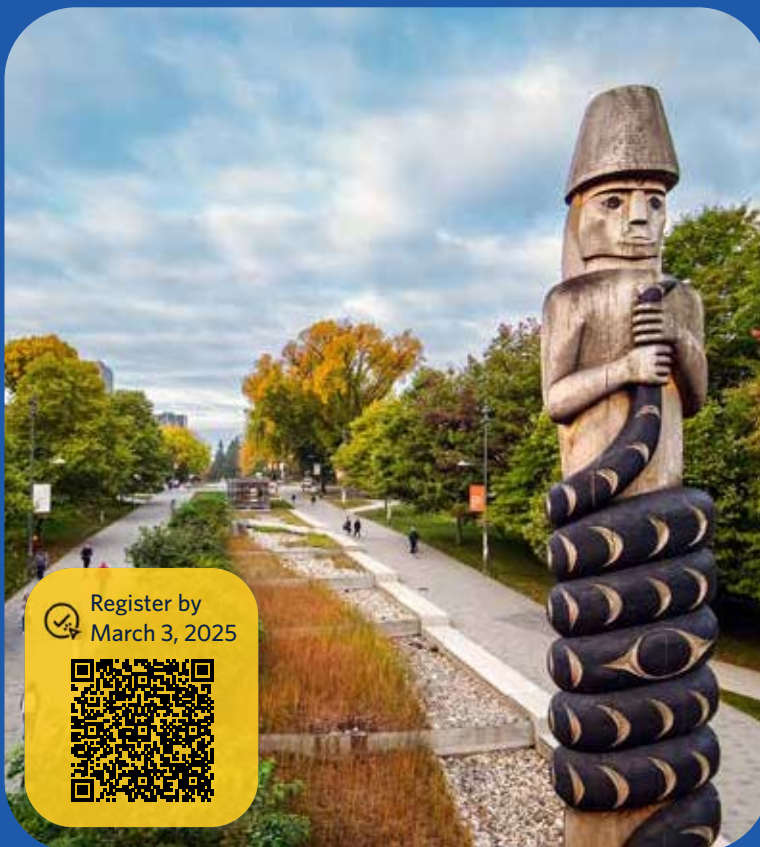
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Engaging with Indigenous Curriculum

March 19-21, 2025

Equipping BC Educators for Decolonizing Pedagogy

A 3-day, in-person institute designed to support BC educators with the new Indigenous-focused graduate requirement.



Register by
March 3, 2025





University of Lethbridge

EXPERIENCE ULETHBRIDGE'S MASTER OF EDUCATION

Major: Contemporary Issues in Education | Theme: Complex Realities of Contemporary Schooling
Major: Educational Leadership

- Reinvigorate your practice while you continue to teach
- Create educational change you're passionate about
- Build on your classroom experiences and leadership skills

Begin Summer 2025

Learn more: go.uleth.ca/master-of-education




PEER SUPPORT SERVICE

Peer Support Service (PSS) If you are new to the profession, have a new assignment, are returning from a leave of absence, are in receipt of discipline, or a less than satisfactory evaluation report, and are on a Plan of Assistance, PSS can help. This confidential service is provided, at no cost to you, in your workplace and online.

PSS consultants use a trauma informed approach in their coaching, and the BCTF Aboriginal Lens guides our support to members: respect, relationship, relevance, responsibility, reciprocity, reconciliation and resilience. Consultants collaborate; share resources, help with curriculum, planning, and assessment, help support behavioural and varied learning needs; and much more.

For more information and to access PSS, contact Sherry Payne, Miranda Light or your local union.

**Sherry Payne, Assistant Director
Professional and Social Issues**

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spayne@bctf.ca

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AMAZING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AWAIT!



Bring your students to experience and engage with the rich culture and history of Northwest Coast art at the Bill Reid Gallery.

Your students will understand through storytelling and inquiry-based learning how ancient knowledge influences their lives today.

They will also explore how cultural treasures and Indigenous knowledge can help them better understand how society is interconnected.

OUR PROGRAMS

- Grades K - 3 | Storytelling in the Gallery
- Grades 4 - 6 | Northwest Coast Narratives
- Grades 7 - 9 | Art and Reconciliation
- Grades 10 - 12 | Interconnections
- Exhibition Tours and Workshops



639 Hornby St, Vancouver BC. | billreidgallery.ca

Program Information and Class Booking - Call 604 682 3455 ext. 229 or email us at education@billreidgallery.ca

BCTF
Kids Matter
Teachers Care



MASTER'S DEGREES IN SOCIETY, CULTURE AND POLITICS IN EDUCATION

EXPAND what you know with courses in philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education, cultural studies, Indigenous education, international and comparative education.

MEET TQS upgrade requirements;

JOIN a community of teachers and learners committed to making more socially, ecologically, and culturally just societies;

APPLY BY February 1st, 2025 (M.Ed.) or November 15th, 2024 (M.A.) to **begin classes** in September 2025.

VISIT EDST.educ.UBC.ca/SCPE



Alumni Educator of the Year Award

nominate greatness

Celebrate the outstanding achievements of UBC Education graduates teaching in a school or community organization

Nominate an educator by March 31, 2025 at educ.ubc.ca/edaward

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Education

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Hands-on STEM workshops K-8

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98% of teachers would book again!





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 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
 BCTF, 100-550 West 6th Avenue
 Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2
 email: teachermag@bctf.ca

Teaching for Peace lesson plan

Turn to pages 20–21 to find the Teaching for Peace lesson plan and to see some of the student art that has been produced by using the lesson.

Pictured above is a collection of work by students at Strathcona Elementary. Photo provided by Kathleen Schepers and Annie Simard.