



September 2020

Welcome back to the 2020–21 school year following a very surreal spring with the Covid-19 pandemic, calls to end racism, and the ongoing fight to save the environment. Despite the changes, we hope you are eager to find new ways to bring social justice into your classrooms, schools, and communities.

Teachers are facing increased pressures as most students and teachers return to full time school-based learning this fall. While the pandemic has made it challenging for teachers to adequately address students' health and safety needs, it has also exacerbated the impacts of societal inequities related to race, Indigeneity, income, class, gender identity, and sexual orientation. There has never been a more important time for teachers to play a role in social justice.

How can teachers adequately address these issues while limited by safety measures under the pandemic? At the BCTF Summer Leadership Conference in August, social justice contacts from across the province considered this question and came up with innovative ideas which they are eager to share with teachers in their locals. Summer Conference electives included workshops on racism, intimate partner violence, and climate justice. Check with members of your local executive who may have attended some of these sessions.

While the devastating impacts of global warming continue to manifest, social distancing measures have slowed the momentum of the climate justice movement. At the 2020 Winter Representative Assembly, BCTF local representatives passed the following motion:

*That the BCTF develop a campaign to encourage all teachers to incorporate climate change action into their teaching.*

The BCTF [Environmental Justice](#) webpages feature resources to bring climate action into your classroom. The [Climate Action Resources](#) document on the [Environmental Justice](#) webpage includes an extensive list of resources to engage students in addressing the climate emergency. Check out the new Teach Green workshop module: Taking Action on Climate Justice, which is featured in the workshop section below. As you navigate this school year, remember that the BCTF has resources available for teachers on the [BCTF](#) website under the [Social Justice](#) heading as well as lessons found in [TeachBC](#).





Ask your staff rep or school-based social justice rep about the September BCTF school mail-out which included the following Social Justice items:

- **BCTF Social Justice Calendar of Events** highlighting important national and international dates
- BCTF **Social Justice Newsletter**, this edition focuses on social justice issues that have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

**BCTF Social Justice Program Calendar of Events**



7: Labour Day

8: International Literacy Day

15: International Day of Democracy

21: UN International Day of Peace

20–26: National Forest Week 100 Year Anniversary

26: International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

30: Orange Shirt Day

The monthly editions of *Seeds of Social Justice* highlight resources teachers can use to engage students in relevant activities. The editions are emailed to local presidents and local social justice contacts for distribution to BCTF members. You can also find the latest edition of *Seeds* on the [Publications page](#) of the BCTF website under [newsletters](#), [bulletins](#), and [alerts](#).



The **Social Justice Binder** contains useful documents for teachers, including information on social justice grants, workshops, resources, and tools to help incorporate social justice into your classroom. Ask your local social justice contact to download and share the electronic version of this resource from the Social Justice Contact tab on the BCTF member portal.

**COVID-19 Resources from TeachBC**

**Racism and COVID-19:** As the outbreak of COVID-19 has increased people's fear and anxiety, so, too, has it magnified the historic legacy and present reality of racism in society. This short document provides you with information about resources and services to support people experiencing racism, as well as resources for teachers and students to build the necessary skills to advocate in support of those impacted by racism.

**Supporting LGBTQ2S+ youth during COVID-19:** The BCTF is a strong supporter and partner of SOGI 1 2 3, a provincial program that helps educators make schools inclusive and safe for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI). Within the context of COVID-19, critical social distancing measures have distanced teachers and students from their physical school communities. Scout Gray, SOGI 1 2 3 Program Lead for BC and Alberta, shares what impact the pandemic is having on youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+, and what teachers can do to support them.

**Mental Health – Professional supports for teachers and during COVID19:** As you connect with your students and their families, you may hear the stress and anxiety in their voices. Students and families may share struggles with you and look to you for support and answers. This short guide, produced by the BCTF, provides you with information related to mental health and COVID-19, as well as contact details for organizations that can provide further support.

**Racism and COVID – Supporting IBPOC teachers:** The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately shone a spotlight on the multiple forms of racism that were prevalent in Canada long before the onset of the pandemic. If you are a teacher who identifies as Aboriginal, First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Indigenous, Black, or a Person of Colour (IBPOC), your union has multiple support available to you to address both the individual and structural impacts of racism.



A big thanks to BCTF members who participated in the Facilitators' Institute Training (FIT) this August. These teachers are now available to facilitate the following new or revised Social Justice workshops at no cost at a school-based, local, or regional professional development day. This year's workshops were designed for virtual delivery. To learn more about social justice workshops, click on the workshop image below or visit [Social Justice Workshops](#) on the BCTF website.



## Opportunities for Members



If you have a passion for social justice and are looking for a way to contribute to your school without committing a large amount of time, this might be the time to put your name forward as your **school-based social justice rep**. The time commitment required for this role depends on you. Teachers with limited time can help by simply forwarding social justice-related information from the BCTF and local social justice contacts to teaching staff. School contacts wishing to play a larger role may choose

to work with colleagues to set goals and carry out projects. School-based contacts can also advocate for policies related to social justice within a school, local, or community.



Did you know that the BCTF provides grants and funds to support teachers in carrying out social justice projects? If you have a project in mind for the 2020–21 school year, you are invited to apply now. To learn about additional grants, including the [Ed May Social Responsibility Education Fund](#) and [Local Social Justice Grants](#), visit the [Social Justice Grants and Funds webpage](#).

The [Provincial Social Justice Initiatives Grant](#) is awarded on a yearly basis to support social justice projects that have an ongoing and systemic impact on teachers and students across the province and in their community. Projects may involve local community groups but should not be donations to these groups. The total amount of grant funds awarded in each school year is a maximum of \$5,000. This amount may be awarded to one applicant or divided between two applicants. The deadline is **December 2, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.**

There will be three BCTF Regional Social Justice Conferences available in the 2020–21 school year. [Regional Social Justice Conference grants](#) are designed to provide funding for social justice conferences to be held throughout the province. The intent is to build regional capacity and support the growth of social justice. Funding occurs on a biennial basis. Applications are now available to support members in their initial planning.

Please take the time to review the options in your area and consider attending one of these BCTF sponsored Pro-D events. Stay tuned for more details in an upcoming SEEDS.

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