

BC Teachers' Federation

March 2021

# Teacher.



**Students with diverse  
needs publish book**  
pages 8–9

**BCTF 2021 AGM**  
pages 24–33

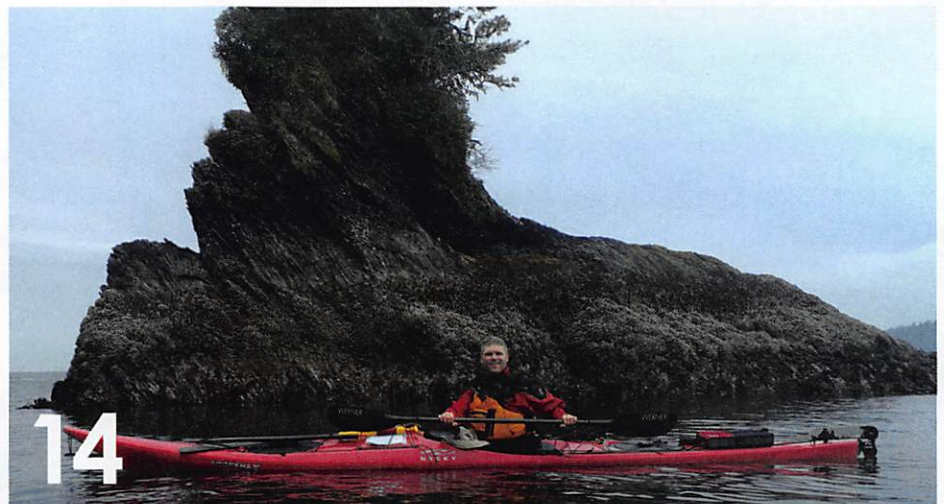
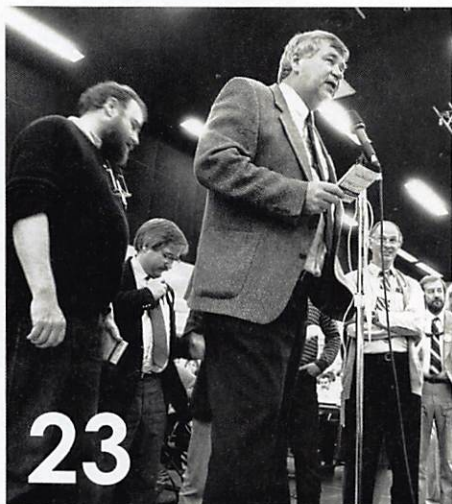
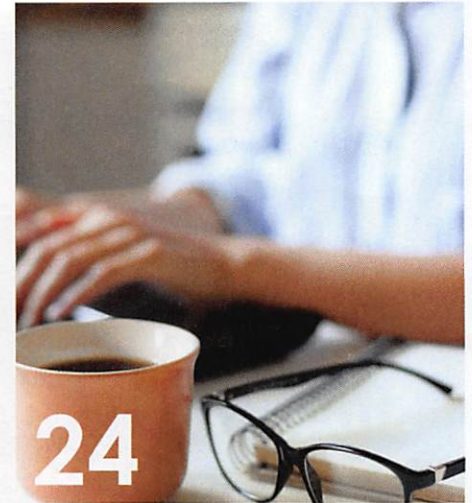
**Missing and murdered  
Indigenous women  
and girls** pages 20–21

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Cover photo: Burnaby student Kalel Rizzuto-Marchese is one of the authors of *1, 2, 3 Count with Me*. Read pages 8–9 for the full story. Joshua Berson Photography.



# IN THIS ISSUE

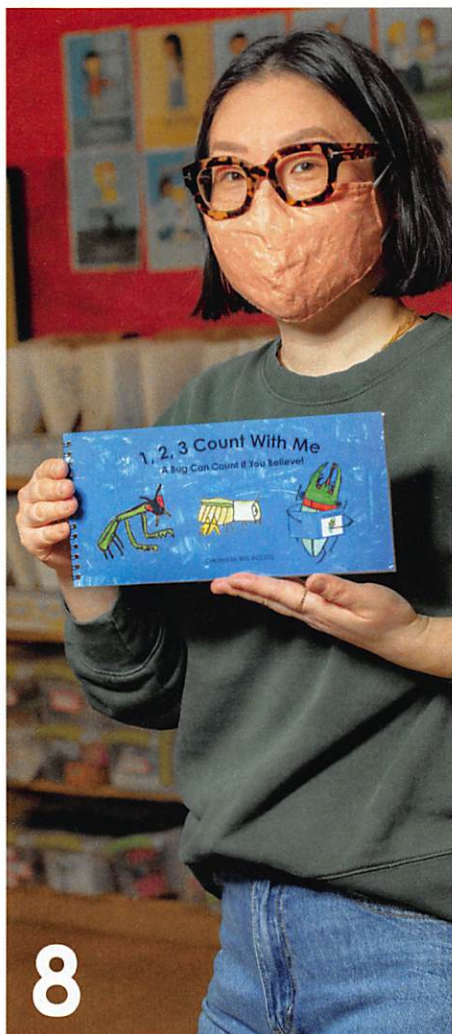


## Volume 33, Number 4—March 2021

- 5 Beyond Black History Month
- 6 Teaching on the spectrum: Perspectives from a neurodiverse educator
- 8 Empowering through action: Students with diverse needs publish book
- 10 The story says it all: Recommendations for supporting students with learning disabilities
- 12 Reframing students with developmental disabilities
- 13 Labour and climate action: Bargaining for our futures
- 14 Living their learning: Three teachers' perspectives on grad school, work, and life
- 16 One year later: Teachers still waiting for adequate COVID-19 supports
- 17 Unique needs and full hearts build community
- 18 Breaking gender stereotypes in textiles classrooms
- 19 Planting trees for a better world
- 20 MMIWG: Breaking the silence, starting the conversation in classrooms
- 22 The BCTF and the Hyatt: 25 years of AGM history
- 23 Pat Brady: BCTF president 1977–79
- 24 BCTF 2021 AGM agenda
- 26 AGM special resolutions
- 30 AGM candidate statements
- 34 April 28: National Day of Mourning

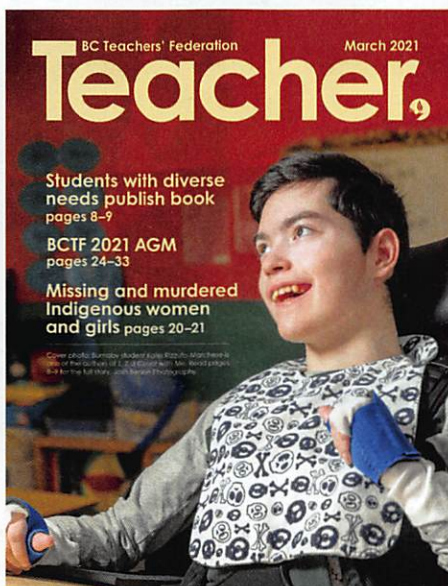
### Regular features

- 4 President's message
- 5 Message de la présidente
- 35 Resource reviews
- 37 Classifieds



8

# 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 [bc tf.ca/newsmag](http://bc tf.ca/newsmag).

We also welcome letters to the editor. Write to [teachermag@bc tf.ca](mailto:teachermag@bc tf.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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Live links are available in the digital version of *Teacher* magazine: [bc tf.ca/newsmag](http://bc tf.ca/newsmag)

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Teri Mooring, BCTF President



## Effective advocacy continues

In early February, the government announced some long-awaited changes to the K–12 COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. These changes reflect months of hard work by BCTF steering committee and working group members, and public advocacy. Despite this work, the changes are not enough to adequately address the breadth of our health and safety concerns.

Besides the changes to the mask policy, there are other enhancements to aspects of the guidelines that should lead to increased safety in schools, such as an acknowledgment that staff meetings should be held virtually, an increased emphasis on barriers, increased clarity on cleaning protocols, and additional advice to support music and physical and health education classes. The changes to both the school health and safety measures and steering committee communication protocols have come about under the new Minister of Education, Jennifer Whiteside, who the BCTF is working with to help develop an understanding of the realities faced by teachers in today's classrooms.

This reality is clearly illustrated in the latest member survey conducted by the BCTF Research Department. You can read about the impact of COVID-19 on teachers' mental and physical health on page 16. Everyone ought to be concerned about these findings, especially government and the Public Health Office.

School safety issues are of concern to the public as well. A recent public survey by the BCTF found the public perceives our messaging as reasonable. A large majority of respondents (83%) agree that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic teachers are facing more job-related stress with increased workloads and health threats.

The BCTF has submitted two briefs to the Minister of Education to share COVID-related and non-COVID priorities to improve public education. These briefs point out new and long-standing issues in public education and provide solutions to address the issues.

In the coming months, we will continue to advocate for needed improvements to health and safety guidelines and for frontline workers to be in the priority order when additional vaccines become available this spring. With the support of the public, I am optimistic that our advocacy efforts will gain traction as we continue to speak up for safe and equitable public education in British Columbia.

Thank you and take care,

Teri Mooring  
BCTF President

# MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

## La sensibilisation efficace se poursuit

Au début de février, le gouvernement a annoncé des changements très attendus aux lignes directrices relatives à la COVID-19 sur la santé et la sécurité de la maternelle à la 12<sup>e</sup> année. Ces changements reflètent des mois de travail acharné de la part du Comité directeur et des membres du groupe de travail de la FECB, ainsi que du plaidoyer public. Malgré ce travail, les changements ne suffisent pas à répondre adéquatement à l'ampleur de nos préoccupations en matière de santé et de sécurité.

Outre les changements apportés à la politique sur le port du masque, il y a d'autres aspects des lignes directrices qui devraient mener à une sécurité renforcée dans les écoles, comme la reconnaissance du fait que les réunions du personnel devraient se tenir virtuellement, mettre l'accent sur les barrières de protection, clarifier davantage les protocoles de nettoyage et obtenir des conseils supplémentaires pour appuyer les cours de musique et d'éducation physique. Les changements apportés aux mesures de santé et de sécurité à l'école et aux protocoles de communication du Comité directeur relèvent du nouveau ministre de l'Éducation, Jennifer Whiteside, avec qui la FECB travaille pour aider à mieux comprendre les réalités auxquelles font face les enseignant(e)s dans les salles de classe aujourd'hui.

Cette réalité est clairement illustrée dans le dernier sondage mené auprès des membres par le département de recherches de la FECB. Vous pouvez lire au sujet des impacts de la COVID-19 sur la santé mentale et physique des enseignant(e)s à la page 16. Tout le monde devrait

s'inquiéter de ces résultats, surtout le gouvernement et le Bureau de la santé publique.

Les problématiques scolaires préoccupent également le public. Un récent sondage mené par la FECB a révélé que le public considère notre message comme étant raisonnable. Une grande majorité des répondant(e)s (83 %) conviennent que, au cours de la pandémie de COVID-19, les enseignant(e)s font face à davantage de stress lié à l'emploi, en plus d'une augmentation des charges de travail et des menaces pour la santé.

La FECB a présenté deux mémoires à la ministre de l'Éducation pour faire connaître les priorités liées et non liées à la COVID-19 afin d'améliorer l'éducation publique. Ces mémoires font état de nouveaux enjeux et d'enjeux de longue date en matière d'éducation publique et proposent des solutions pour les régler.

Au cours des prochains mois, nous continueront de plaider pour des améliorations indispensables aux lignes directrices de santé et de sécurité et pour que les travailleurs et travailleuses de première ligne soient dans l'ordre de priorité lorsque d'autres vaccins seront disponibles ce printemps. Avec le soutien du public, je suis optimiste que nos efforts de plaidoyer vont gagner du terrain, alors que nous continuons de défendre la sécurité, l'équité et la qualité de l'éducation publique en Colombie-Britannique.

Merci et prenez soin de vous,

**Teri Mooring**  
Présidente de la FECB

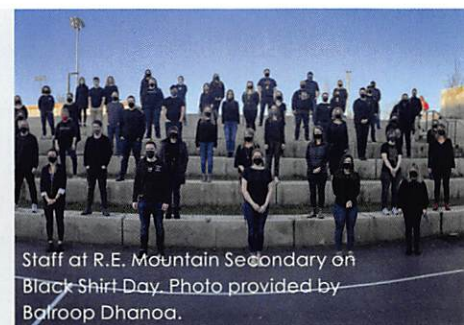


## Beyond BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**OUR GOAL AS EDUCATORS** is to facilitate open and safe dialogue that brings a reckoning of Canada's past with an ongoing commitment to strengthen antiracist education for our students and staff. Starting out in this collective journey, teachers at R.E. Mountain Secondary School have begun grassroots initiatives such as a staff book club, an antiracism learning community, a student union for social justice, videos sharing our students' personal stories, and a shared virtual collection of antiracism stories and resources for staff.

We want to encourage and empower our students to pursue a future of unity in the face of racism and bigotry. Black Shirt Day (January 15) is an incredible initiative from the Anti-Racism Coalition (ARC) of Vancouver. It is an "important step in raising greater awareness of the civil rights struggle and helping foster solidarity against all forms of racism and hate." Participating in an event

such as this sparked valuable conversations and increased our overall understanding of historical and current issues in our classrooms and beyond.



Staff at R.E. Mountain Secondary on Black Shirt Day. Photo provided by Balroop Dhanoa.

Throughout Black History Month, we worked to educate our school community and honour the contributions of Black Canadians. By sharing and celebrating these stories, we are highlighting the accomplishments of Black Canadians and incorporating more Black Canadian history in an otherwise homogeneous curriculum. For too long, certain narratives and voices in Canadian history have been oppressed or ignored. We are committed to rectifying past mistakes—R.E. Mountain appreciates that Black history is Canadian history.

**Balroop Dhanoa**, teacher, Langley

# Teaching on the spectrum: Reflections from a neurodiverse educator

By **Al Friesen**, resource teacher, Langley

**FOR MOST OF MY LIFE**, I didn't know who I was. I knew that being around people was hard, the world was noisy, and I focused on minutiae that others ignored. I felt broken for a long time, constantly berating myself for my inability to be like everyone else and do what others took for granted.

It wasn't until I read Steve Silberman's book, *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*, that I realized there might be a reason why I felt and acted this way. Initially, I read the book to learn more about some of my students, but as I kept reading, I saw myself in people like Henry Cavendish and Asperger's "little professors," with circumscribed special interests and unusual patterns of thought. I remember staying up well past midnight to finish the book and the growing feeling of confusion over whether or not this really represented me.

A few more books and some online tests led to multiple sessions with a psychologist, which ultimately resulted in an adult diagnosis of autism. The diagnosis reshaped my understanding of my past and called into question my future as a teacher, as a parent, and as a husband.

My experiences and struggles, both as a teacher and a student, suddenly made sense. When I was a

student, I could see the answers to math problems as if they appeared beside the question, but would become frustrated when my teachers repeatedly asked me to show my work. Why? I knew the answer!

I might have benefited from a teacher explaining to me that not everyone could find the solution so quickly, that showing my work was a way of illustrating how I interpreted the question, and, if I got it wrong, the teacher could help me find my mistake.


Embarrassing social interactions made more sense, too: in Grade 11, I had asked a classmate out on a date. She replied that she needed to ask her parents' permission before she could say yes, and never spoke to me again. I spent weeks wondering when she was going to talk to her parents and get back to me. It wasn't until years later that I realized she was letting me know in gentle terms that she wasn't interested in me.

I still find it difficult to understand idiomatic language, that "soon" doesn't always mean soon and "later" can be anything from an hour to never. Now that I recognize this about myself, I tell people when I meet them that I prefer they be blunt with me, and if I'm doing something wrong or not doing something they expect, they should feel free to tell me so in

no uncertain terms. This isn't humility, but survival in a world where verbal communication is still a significant challenge for me.

In my ideal world, a teacher colleague would say to me, "Al, there's this kid who's struggling in math. Can you give me one strategy to try?" or "Al, the way this kid is acting is bothering me. I'm not asking you to do anything except listen for a bit—is that okay?" Clear expectations and clear boundaries. Alas, it's not an ideal world, and I continue to muddle through by half-guessing, half-intuiting what others want and, hopefully, stepping on as few toes as possible.

But as a result of my struggle, I have a lot of empathy toward kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and can help some of them navigate this neurotypical world a bit better. Sometimes this means interpreting for them the expression on their teacher's face. Sometimes this means helping teachers understand their students a bit better by interpreting their behaviour and reactions in class: a child with ASD who continually kicks things isn't just angry, but might feel frustrated that they can't communicate what they want with their teacher. Alternatively, the student might be frustrated with how loud it is in the classroom or might just be upset about the fact that their clothes are uncomfortable.



Depending on the metric used, one in about sixty people have autism. That's a lot of people, especially if by "autism" we only (and incorrectly) think of people who are nonverbal or echolalic (repeating phrases spoken to them or that they've heard before), have odd gaits and mannerisms, or need significant help to function in a neurotypical world.

As teachers, we see some students like this who seem locked away from the world, who cannot communicate their needs and desires with us. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we know of quite a few people who have been successful because of their neurodivergence, including Hollywood stars Sir Anthony Hopkins, Dan Aykroyd, and Daryl Hannah. Other notable neurodiverse people include the inventor of Pokémon, Satoshi Tajiri; John Elder Robison, the genius mechanic behind Kiss's many pyrotechnic feats; and Dr. Temple Grandin, an expert in animal behaviour.

In between these two extremes, however, are students whose outward mild oddness (or even seeming normalcy!) hides frustration, confusion, and hopelessness. Depression is one of the most common comorbidities in people with autism, with anxiety and sensory processing difficulties close behind. As someone who has depression, social anxiety, and sensitivities to sound, light, touch, and taste, schools can sometimes feel inhospitable, even as a teacher with much more agency than I ever had as a student.

I'm still trying to wrap my mind around what it means to have autism, and I wonder how many other teachers are out there like me. Are the number of teachers in BC with exceptionalities similar to the prevalence in the general population? Or is it lower because of the social nature of the job? Unfortunately, the stigma around

ASD makes it difficult to know how many other teachers have autism.

Only a few people know that I'm autistic, including perhaps three colleagues and some family members. I worry I would have to go above and beyond to prove my competence, especially at a new school or with new colleagues in the building, if people knew about my diagnosis. Would I face greater scrutiny from district staff? Would it be harder to get a job at a different school? Writing this article, signing my name to a piece of paper that says, "Yes, I'm autistic!" and sharing it with my colleagues has been a difficult process. I don't know how it will be received. I do know, however, that sharing this diagnosis has resulted in some incredible connections at school, particularly with students and parents.

As a resource teacher, I work with students with many exceptionalities, including autism. In this role, I've met more than a few parents who have felt acutely worried about their children. One mother was struggling with her son's behaviour at school and was in despair over his future. That young man reminded me a lot of myself at his age: impulsive, angry, and generally disinterested in school. There was a moment in one particular conversation where I could have tied everything up and walked away, but I took a chance and shared my story with her. She wrote to me later saying she appreciated my honesty, and that she had started to feel more hopeful over her son's future as a result of this conversation.

Sharing my diagnosis with more people could help more families like this, and I feel strongly that

neurodiverse children should have more people in their lives who share their exceptionalities. I met an amazing teacher candidate last year with a learning disability who shared with me their struggle through high school, mostly because of the low expectations of their teachers. This incredible individual made it through a school system that prizes print above other modalities, and despite all the odds against them, is now teaching in a school here in BC. I know they will have an incredibly positive influence on children like them in their classes, and I know our school system will be a better place for having not just this teacher, but other neurodiverse individuals with the courage to share their stories with their students and their peers.

That's one reason why I'm writing this. If there are other neurodiverse people out there who are considering becoming teachers because they want to help people like them, they should be welcomed into our profession with open arms rather than closed minds. We all know that teaching can be a lonely job. If I can offer support to any teachers, present or future, who are like me, I'd love to help!

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Many people prefer person-first language when referring to a diagnosis (e.g., she has autism) to emphasize the individual, rather than the diagnosis. The author of this article prefers identity-first language (e.g., I am autistic) when referring to himself. In situations where an individual has not expressed their preference, BCTF editorial standards use person-first language. 🐾



## Empowering through action: Students with diverse needs publish book

By Judy Chiao, teacher, Burnaby

**FOR EXACTLY TWO YEARS**, six months, and ten days, the students and staff at Burnaby North Secondary's Access program worked tirelessly to create a picture book called *1, 2, 3, Count with Me: A Bug Can Count if You Believe*. The book was created and illustrated by students with diverse needs and was published in November 2020. This picture book demonstrates that creativity and technology allow diverse learners to participate in meaningful ways when we all work together toward a common goal.

Our book was inspired by Leo, our student who is an expert in all things related to bugs. During a lesson on rhymes, Leo started sharing facts on the Hercules beetle. Very quickly, everyone joined in by imagining the escapades of adventurous bugs who live in a colourful, make-believe world. We discussed whether bugs can have personalities and the types of mischief that a bug could find itself in with its friends. Soon, we had a fantastical story filled with adventure, discovery, and humour.

Once we had a story in place, we started to work on creating illustrations. Each page was compiled using

individual images created, drawn, and coloured by different students. Through editing, we superimposed students' illustrations to create engaging and brilliant finished pages that include bugs, vehicles, skylines, and different objects.

Throughout this project, we have been asked by colleagues and families why we wanted to publish a book. Our response has been quite simple: to empower our students and their parents through bragging rights. Our students face many challenges physically and socially, and opportunities for success are not easily available.

When our student Aaron picked up his copy of the book, he held it close and read it out loud to his mother Sue as they drove home. Aaron pointed to his name inside the book and beamed. Afterward, in an email Sue wrote, "I teared up watching his obvious pride."

When Leo's father, Taka, came to pick up his copies of the book, he said, "Inside this book is Leo's name. My wife and I want to show our family and relatives in Japan." As Taka shared this with us, his eyes welled.

As parents, we have been taught that bragging about our children's success is something society frowns upon. However, parents of typical children frequently have the privilege to make the intentional decision to not brag about their child, as they have many more opportunities for success. The families of children with diverse needs are rarely, if ever, given the opportunity to bask in their child's success. Over the years, we have had many parents share with us their frustration and sadness over the lack of opportunities for their child. They become accustomed to the word "no" and being told that their child is not meeting expectations.

This project is also an opportunity for families to celebrate together. Kalel's family reached out after the publication of the book to ask if his little sister could present *1, 2, 3, Count with Me* to her Grade 5 class. She wanted to share the story with her classmates because her brother is an author.

To our students, their families, and our team, this book is much more than a publication. It is an opportunity for readers to discover the story behind

the story, for young children to see that students with diverse needs can be authors, illustrators, and creators. This project creates visibility and builds the expectation that our students can achieve goals like all other learners. Most importantly, this project creates conversations around learning and what we can do as educators to facilitate and forge student success.

In Burnaby North Secondary's Access program, we strive for intentional inclusion. This is achieved by placing the needs of the diverse learner at the forefront, acknowledging their quality of life, and ensuring that they are the ones who learn and, most importantly, have fun in every experience. In our program, we do not have a one-size-fits-all formula to inclusion. We believe that inclusion looks different for each student, and programming is built with the co-operation of the student, their family, and their medical support personnel. By sharing this project with our community, we hope that our readers can join us in advocating for intentional inclusion, in living richly amongst laughter, and in continuing to aspire for a better world. 🍌

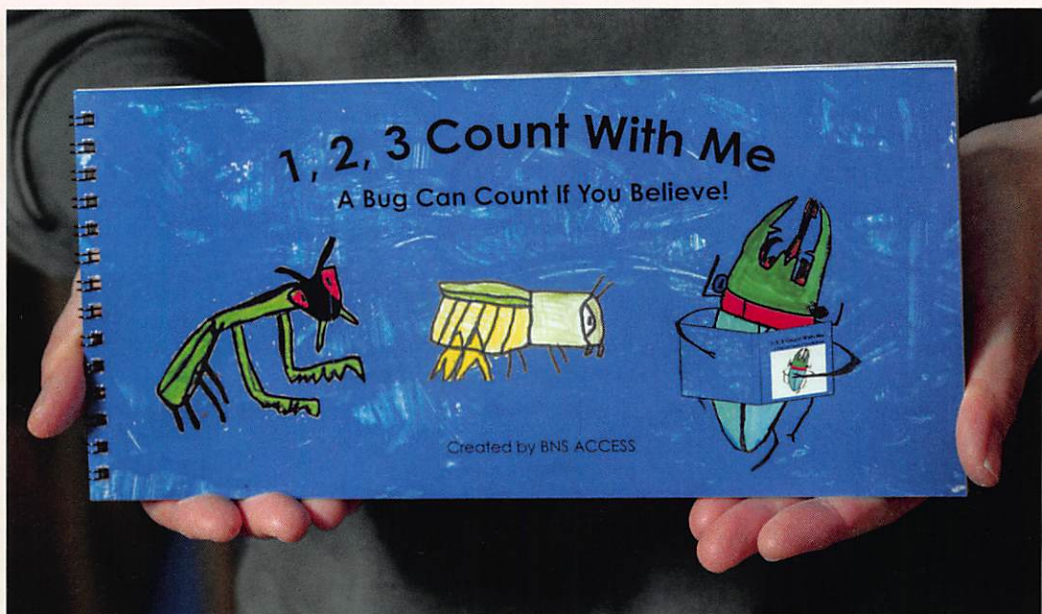
**Opposite:** Judy Chiao reads *1, 2, 3 Count with Me* with Kael. **Above:** The BNS Access program classroom. **Right:** Judy and Jaxxon, another author of *1, 2, 3 Count with Me*. Joshua Berson Photography.



## MORE INFORMATION

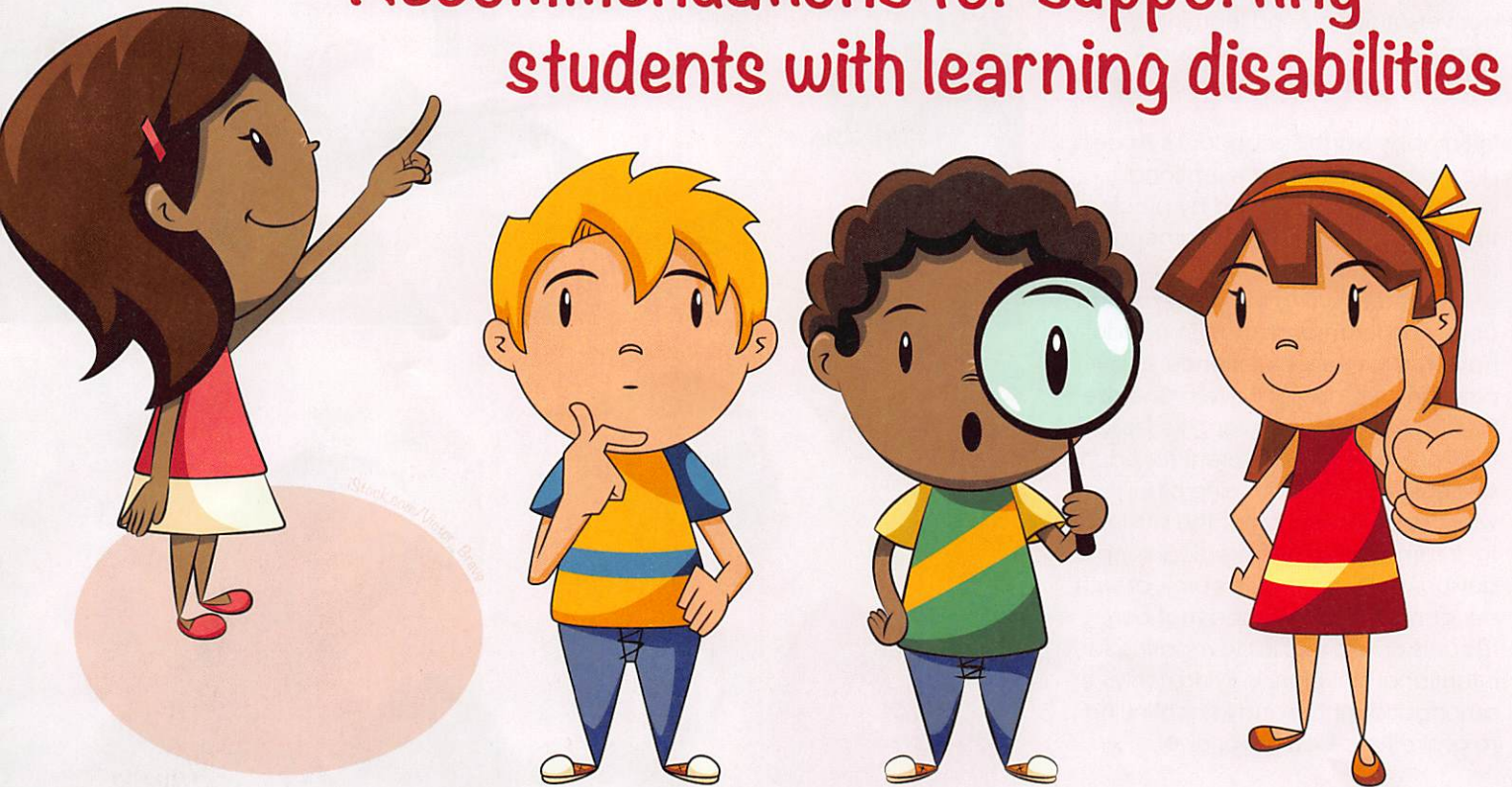
*1, 2, 3, Count with Me: A Bug Can Count if You Believe* (pictured right) is priced at \$15. Each book costs \$10 to print and the remaining \$5 goes toward our Shopify website, packaging, and shipping. Any profit that is made will go toward an activity chosen by the students in the Access program at Burnaby North Secondary. You can order a copy of the book from [bns-access.myshopify.com](https://bns-access.myshopify.com).

**[BNS-ACCESS.MYSHOPIFY.COM](https://bns-access.myshopify.com)**



# The story says it all:

## Recommendations for supporting students with learning disabilities



By **Lauren Goegan**, post-doctoral fellow, Educational Psychology, University of Alberta  
**Gabrielle Pelletier**, doctoral student, Educational Psychology, University of Alberta  
**Lia Daniels**, professor, Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

**SOME SAY** that before you can truly understand someone, you need to walk a mile in their shoes. Students with learning disabilities (LD) are no exception. Learning environments are often not designed to meet their learning needs, resulting in frustration, anxiety, hopelessness, and feelings of inferiority. As two students with LD, we know these struggles firsthand—and yet we did not allow them to curtail our academic ambitions or success. As we've grown as academics, we have learned many valuable lessons and now pair our own stories with research and theory to offer recommendations for supporting students with LD.

We conceptualize our personal stories and experiences in terms of two academic frameworks: Universal Design for Learning (UDL, see [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)) and Self-Determination Theory (see [www.selfdeterminationtheory.org](http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org)). We encourage teachers and other school personnel to draw on UDL because of the increasingly diverse group of learners found in a contemporary classroom. UDL provides suggestions for how to remove barriers in the classroom so that all students can learn. The UDL guidelines are organized to support three main areas of learning, (a) the *why* of learning, also referred to as

engagement, (b) the *what* of learning, said differently, the ways in which materials or information are represented to students, and (c) the *how* of learning, that is, how students are able to demonstrate the learning that has taken place. As we learned about the UDL suggestions it became easy to link them to our own experiences.

We also connect our experiences and recommendations to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a leading theory of human motivation. In particular, a main piece of SDT is that there are three basic psychological needs that support an individual's well-being. Like UDL, these needs are universal. The first need is *autonomy*, being able to have some control over actions or choice. The second is *competence*, feeling capable of success while completing a task. The third is *relatedness*, feeling like you have a sense of belonging or are connected to others. As we think about our own educational trajectories, there were times when teachers supported or thwarted our basic psychological needs through choice or control over learning (autonomy), the difficulty of tasks assigned (competence), and connections to others in the school, including teachers and other students (relatedness).

# Recommendations

## ★ Provide students with meaningful feedback

**Lauren:** I remember writing a paper on the United States of America. Being a terrible speller, I wrote "Untied" throughout. I worked hard on that paper, and then it came back covered in red pen, every misspelling of "United" circled, along with all my other errors. It was devastating. I never wanted to write because I did not think I could. My perception of *competence* was non-existent. I couldn't see past all the red to learn from my mistakes, and it left me feeling discouraged. Instead, feedback that emphasized effort, or focused less on what was wrong and more on providing specific strategies to support future writing, would have supported my learning and motivation. I know I make mistakes when I write, and having positive feedback for how to improve is valuable for my continued growth as a writer.

## 💡 Support students with comprehension, guide their information processing and visualization

**Gabrielle:** I remember having a hard time with reading comprehension because I struggled to remember what I was reading. Anytime I was given a test that included reading comprehension, it was always the worst part of my grade. Over time, I became frustrated and felt defeated before the tests would even happen. Strategies like "chunking" information into smaller components and/or allowing me to use an interactive reading program, where I was able to follow along with the text being read aloud on a computer, would have improved my perception of *competence* as I would have finally been able to demonstrate my knowledge. I still find myself using these skills as I work through complicated tasks.

## ♥ Foster a classroom community where everyone feels welcome

**Gabrielle:** I never created strong relationships with teachers in school. I was not a straight-A student. I was also quite distracted in my classes. Teachers usually appeared to have more positive relationships with my friends who were straight-A students. I had no sense of belonging and thus, my need for *relatedness* was not met. My perceived self-worth in school would have been greater had my teachers made me feel like an important contributor to the classroom despite not being one of the "best" students. This could have been done by creating an accepting and supportive classroom climate where all students are equally valued. Teachers can simply ask themselves, "Have I given each student in this class a fair opportunity to connect with me?" Teachers may also want to encourage all students to actively participate and ask questions, thereby emphasizing that their point of view is valuable. As I train in school psychology, I use my personal perspective with students who struggle and help them know their view is indeed valued.

## 💬 Provide learners with different ways to express what they know

**Lauren:** I always found writing to be very challenging, so when I was asked to complete a report for the first time in school, I felt daunted by the task. This did not seem like a fun activity, or one I would do particularly well at. However, that all changed when the teacher said the report could be written or recorded. Having the *autonomy* to pick the format, I picked the one that best demonstrated my learning and understanding. It also supported my need for *competence*, because the recorded format did not hinder my expression of ideas. When I was limited to writing a report, what I wanted to say and what I wrote were two different things because of my writing difficulties. Having a different way to express what students know can be especially helpful during online learning, where teachers can provide various online formats for students to express their knowledge, for example, making a YouTube video or writing a blog entry.

## 🔍 Provide learners with different ways to perceive and comprehend information

**Lauren:** I was always appreciative when teachers incorporated multiple media sources in their classes. I often had difficulty with written language, and, at times, felt like all the learning involved text. There was always something to read, which never matched my learning needs. Having alternatives, like images, videos, physical manipulatives, or graphs, made what I was learning more accessible and supported my need for *competence*. Moreover, having multiple media options gives students choice and *autonomy* over their learning, to pick the media that best fits their learning needs and preferences. With more access to technology in the classroom these days, the ability to provide different ways to learn information is expanding. For example, lots of books are accessible in audio formats. Even through my doctoral degree I embraced the assistance of technology to help me read complex papers.

## 📌 Help guide appropriate goal setting

**Gabrielle:** I had a hard time with math in Grade 11 when the content became more complex, so much so that I got very anxious and blanked out during math tests. My teacher sat me down and asked how I was doing after they noticed I was struggling. Together we set some goals for my learning, and the teacher provided scaffolds to aid my anxiety, such as checklists for problem-solving. This experience helped foster my *sense of belonging* in the classroom, as I felt connected to the teacher, and they were taking a genuine interest in supporting my learning. Also, this experience increased my perceptions of *autonomy*, because my teacher asked me what I needed: I was part of the goal-setting conversation, instead of simply being told what to do. I use a similar strategy with students I work with and find there is always greater compliance when the goals are co-constructed.

We encourage teachers to keep in mind the principles of UDL and SDT as they look for opportunities to support the learning of all students in their classrooms and beyond. There were many times our learning disabilities could have prevented us from continuing at school; we hope these stories remind teachers that every student can be a highly successful learner. 🌟

# Reframing students with developmental disabilities

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By **Dr. Erika Cedillo**, Director of Public Policy & Programs, Inclusion BC; and **Dr. Leyton Schnellert**, Inclusive Education Research Lead, Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship

**STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES** have faced discrimination and stigma in schools. Extensive media attention has been given to "behaviour" of students with developmental disabilities that is deemed unsafe. They are being excluded from classrooms and ostracized in their communities. Organizations from the United Nations to local parent advocacy groups are calling for action to recognize students with developmental disabilities as full citizens with the right to equitably access education.

Inclusion BC and the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIIC) partnered to create four short films to raise awareness about the exclusion of students with developmental disabilities and to offer key information and possible pathways to success for students, families, and schools. We convened focus groups that included former students, families, educators, Indigenous people, professionals, and community organizations to co-create the vision for these films. Drawing on their lived experiences, participants shared stories and offered examples of the issues and barriers they face. Through this process, we identified the main messages that these films convey to support educators and the community at large to advance inclusive education.

We want these films to inspire future learning for educators by offering knowledge, strategies, and approaches that debunk negative myths about the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The collection is intended to raise the expectations of the educational outcomes of students with developmental disabilities, shift the language from deficit to strength-based, honour cultural approaches, and position students with developmental disabilities as contributing members of classroom communities and our society.

These short films can be watched individually or all together as a series. We invite educators to watch them with their colleagues and with their students. We hope they will provoke meaningful discussions.



## WATCH AND CONNECT

These films are available at [www.inclusionbc.org/our-campaigns/inclusive-education](http://www.inclusionbc.org/our-campaigns/inclusive-education)

Inclusion BC and the CIIC would love to hear about the actions that these films have inspired you to take. You can contact us by email at [info@inclusionbc.org](mailto:info@inclusionbc.org).

## Film 1: Exercising Self-Determination in Our Schools

British Columbia has embraced a competency-based curriculum. At the heart of this pedagogical approach is nurturing self-determination within *all* learners. Every student has the right to set goals, make plans, make mistakes, reflect on their learning, and recognize their growth and agency. The same needs to be true for students with developmental disabilities by supporting them to own their voice and fostering their self-determination like the rest of their peers, so that we all see them as contributors and important members of our society.

## Film 2: Reframing Challenging Behaviour in Our Schools

Centering the voices of self-advocates, viewers are encouraged to consider how our responses to behaviours that are symptomatic of something else can be either identity-supportive or harmful. This film challenges us to shift our perspectives to understand behaviour as communication, so that we can approach a challenging situation with curiosity and empathy to support a student. We need to look at the context and environment in which this is happening. Equally important is the collaboration that needs to occur to support the learning community in the classroom and school.

## Film 3: Getting Ready to Work in Our Schools

Everyone deserves to be recognized as a contributing member of society through employment. Pathways to employment for students with developmental disabilities need to be initiated in schools. In this film, self-advocates, educators, family members, and employment experts spotlight key considerations for nurturing career pathways for students. The expectations for future opportunities need to be higher. Accessing new and diverse employment opportunities comes from giving students the time and space to identify their abilities and strengths, set their own career paths, and gain the confidence to show employers their full potential.

## Film 4: Indigeneity and Disability in Our Schools

We have much to learn from Indigenous perspectives on disability and inclusion. Indigenous communities value every one of their members for their gifts and talents. This film calls educators to welcome the gifts of Indigenous students with disabilities and to recognize their culture as part of who they are and how they learn. Indigenous self-advocates, family members, educators, and Knowledge Keepers explain cultural approaches to inclusion and disability and the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and doing in the education of all children. BC school districts can enrich the learning of all students with this knowledge by connecting with local Indigenous communities and finding ways to collaborate. 9



# Labour and climate action: Bargaining for our futures

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By Tara Ehrcke, Committee for Action on Social Justice member

**AS DEVASTATING** as the pandemic has been, it pales in comparison to what is coming if we do not get our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under control. Fires, floods, and hurricanes are already here, and they are getting more frequent and more deadly. Just like the pandemic has an exponential growth potential, the effects of climate change will come slowly—until they don't. We have passed the stage where stopping it is easy, but we are still in the stage where we can prevent the worst devastation. If (and it's a very big if) we can cut our emissions in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050.

Concern about climate change isn't anything new. Remember the Kyoto Protocol? That was 1997. Twenty-four years ago. Yet emissions since that time have grown, so the new treaties tell us we have to cut back even more. But, so far, United Nations treaties don't seem to be doing the trick.

Things are so bad that two years ago 15-year-old student Greta Thunberg was able to spark a millions-strong movement calling for action. And yet, two years since the climate strikes began, we have a lot of declarations and very few tangible actions.

As writer and long-time trade unionist Jane McAlevey puts it, "Youth have always brought two essential ingredients to social movements: moral compass and an exciting, unique form of energy. Their vision is bold, and they are uncompromising. But to halt and reverse the carbon economy, save the planet, and create a future with jobs that youth will look forward to requires far more power and a serious strategy."

That's where you and I come into the picture.

The history of the 20th century demonstrates the incredible power of the labour movement—perhaps the one force that can push against corporate interests to win real advances. The weekend, paid sick leave, and pensions are all gains won thanks to the labour movement. Also, employment insurance, universal healthcare, and free K–12 education. These are advances that benefit not only the workers and unions that fight for them, but the whole population.

If we are going to stop the climate catastrophe, we will need the labour movement. And the labour movement will have to do more than play a supporting role. We are a group capable of contesting intransigent corporations and the intransigent governments that serve those corporations.

Already there are some inspiring examples of unions using their bargaining power to push for real climate action. In New York State, a coalition of unions worked together under the umbrella of Climate Jobs New York. They developed a bold policy platform to:

- retrofit all public schools.
- reduce energy use in all public buildings by 40% by 2025.
- expand access to residential retrofit programs.
- install 2 GW of solar energy on public schools.
- install 2 GW of utility scale solar projects.
- install 7.5 GW of offshore wind by 2025.
- repair and expand New York City public transit.
- establish a bus rapid transit program.
- construct a high-speed rail.
- establish a just transition task force.

Designed to ensure that workers' jobs are maintained and expanded and that public services are at the forefront of transportation shifts, the coalition of over a dozen unions has already had a major breakthrough, winning a contract for new wind power generation that will supply 30 GW of renewable energy and create 83,000 jobs.

A similar program in BC has massive potential. We desperately need to retrofit our public and private building stock, build new public transportation options such as high-speed rail, ensure we produce enough renewable energy to end reliance on natural gas, and develop a just transition framework that looks at renewable energy as well as inequality, racial injustices, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The BCTF could work with other unions to develop a policy platform and incorporate climate demands in our bargaining processes. Now is the time to develop our goals and strategy and to build alliances with other unions—to work toward real climate solutions.

To that end, teachers and other trade union activists are invited to a Labour Climate Forum, jointly sponsored by the BCTF, BC Government Employees' Union, and other unions, to explore labour's role in solving the climate crisis. The forum will take place on Saturday, April 10, 1:00–4:00 p.m., via Zoom. Registration links and workshop details will be sent through BCTF News eblasts and your local. 📍



Kayaking helps Martin Anevich maintain balance in life and work. Photo provided by Martin Anevich.

# Living their learning: Three teachers' perspectives on grad school, work, and life

By **Hilary Leighton**, MAEEC program head, Royal Roads University; **Kay Bates**, MA candidate and teacher, Kamloops; **Chloe Faught**, MA candidate and teacher, Saanich; and **Martin Anevich**, MA, teacher, and vice-principal, Saturna Island

**AS PROGRAM HEAD** for the Master of Arts in Environmental Education and Communication (MAEEC) at Royal Roads University, I have the great good fortune of accompanying passionate and engaged graduate students in their studies as they perform meaningful and applied research. At the confluence of blended learning, personally significant research, and even complicated, dark, and difficult times, these MAEEC students unearth significant insights, cultivate mastery of self, and embody positive growth by living their learning.

## What surprised you most about grad school and, in particular, research?

**Kay:** I was surprised by the encouragement I received to research something meaningful to me, using research methods that draw out my voice and experience as a woman in education. I often felt education was a process of jumping through hoops just to finish and get a job; instead, grad school is a journey of personal and professional discovery and growth.

**Marty:** Becoming a student again helped me to think through how I can best support the learners in my class. I was reminded of how much effort and care it takes to clearly develop an idea. I remembered how challenging and how rewarding it can be to learn.

**Chloe:** I was most surprised about how diverse research can be. I had no idea of how personal and creative a

thesis could be. I am also constantly, pleasantly surprised at how wonderful and encouraging the instructors and my cohort have been and how important they were to my success. Who knew that the most important aspect of grad school was the gift of friendship and support of so many amazing human beings?

## How has grad school influenced your work?

**Kay:** I would not have considered myself a feminist prior to entering MAEEC. However, my research in ecofeminism has reminded me that women's stories and indeed women's traditional knowledge has value, particularly in this time of crisis. I have also always struggled with being "just a home economics teacher" (some students will even say my class isn't important). After discovering that the students loved to cook during quarantine, I felt empowered to change my classroom to be more "homey," less institutionalized, and more personalized. The home economics room is a place of colours, smells, and touch. I consider it an achievement to help the students back to their physical selves and senses, and connect back to the earth through care, food, and community. For some of them, it is a hard journey and remembering this helps me do my job with compassion and empathy. Doing research for my thesis inspired me to start researching the source of the recipes I use in foods class and talk about it with the students. I realized that these recipes are the result of years of research and experimentation, as much as any science textbook is. Now, I encourage students to use their intuition in foods classes; each of them has a relationship to culture and nature

through food. I look for opportunities for creative self-expression, because identity formation is an important part of the high school experience and I see home economics as a place for students to explore that. A goal of my lesson plan is encouraging an ethic of care for the earth, which also involves caring for each other and all the living beings of our home.

**Marty:** I have been afforded the opportunity to stretch my understanding of best pedagogical practices for environmental learning and expand my understanding of how learning outside in the natural environment can add value to the high school experience. For me, the coursework broadened and essentially deepened my understanding of ecological literacy, complexity, systems thinking, ecopsychology, and communication strategies. I feel more equipped to teach a generation of young leaders how to process their feelings and make informed decisions around the environment.

**Chloe:** It has shifted and expanded my perspective from a teacher in the classroom to someone who can also be a leader for my school, district, and community in environmental education and advocacy. Without the impetus of being a master's student with all of the supports, I do not think I would have had the guts to reach out to my colleagues in education and start an Environmental Education Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA) chapter, the focus of my research inquiry.

### How has your research changed you (e.g., in life, relationships, worldview, sense of identity/self)?

**Kay:** I feel a great renewal in my calling as a home economics teacher, because now I feel that passing on traditional food skills to my students will indeed help them cope with the disruption and transitions that inevitably will come with the impacts of climate change in the future. My family relationships changed too. Role modeling care for the environment has had a tremendous impact on my children. Somehow, my journey inspired one to become a vegetarian. I have also developed a more compassionate relationship with my 80-year-old father as he examines his more traditional views of work and life through our conversations.

**Marty:** It can be isolating as a teacher at a small rural school. My research allowed me to branch out and connect with a wider group of professionals and a community of learners, and that made me feel like I was a kid again. I was able to reconnect with alumni, parents, and community members to investigate the essential elements of a successful environmental educational experience at Saturna Ecological Education Centre that I just wouldn't have had the time for otherwise.

**Chloe:** My research, a case study of the Salish Sea EEPSA chapter I founded, has pushed me to connect and collaborate with other like-minded teachers and educators

within the province. It has empowered me to reach out to this network for help and support and to encourage and support other teachers as they improve environmental education practices in their communities. Some of my pedagogies and practices have positively shifted because of this learning process.

### What challenges have you faced? How have you been able to balance teaching and grad school, especially during the pandemic?

**Kay:** The quarantine did inspire and inform my research topic, a surprising and positive thing amid all the chaos. Connecting food, nature, and women's knowledge was perfectly timed. And I baked! Also, I felt a strong sense of identification with my professors who were also taking on the same challenges as everything shifted online.

**Marty:** I felt like I was a juggler, trying not to drop any of the balls I had in the air: being both a teacher and a student at the same time while trying to embrace a lifestyle of wellness. I have learned that taking a break is productive—like kayak rolling practice, where the opportunity to get out of my head and back into my body was surprisingly rejuvenating. For me, pursuing grad studies was an anchoring force in these challenging times.

**Chloe:** Thesis writing coupled with a pandemic was extremely challenging emotionally and logistically with two little kids at home. I had to take a break for my mental well-being in March when COVID hit, yet, in the end, the thesis and the work was part of the therapy. Not only is the pandemic a chapter in my research now, but this year has helped crystallize the importance of the work I started, because it has further deepened the network connections of environmental educators.

### What advice do you have for another teacher considering grad school?

**Kay:** I can only say that, for myself, I was feeling frustrated and a little hopeless as a teacher, and this MA has helped me feel passionate about my job again. I want to help kids prepare for a future that will be characterized by change, and that requires me to change first.

**Marty:** Look into the flexibility of a program with online learning throughout the school year and short, exciting summer residencies. Also, the option of the Major Research Project completion allowed me to engage in practical and applied research that enhanced and inspired my professional practice.

**Chloe:** Be ready to open your mind and heart to new ways of knowing, to new possibilities, and to new friendships both human and more-than-human. Do not underestimate how challenging and yet how beautiful it will be! Incredibly difficult? Yes! Worth it? Absolutely! 🍀

# One year later: BC teachers still waiting for adequate COVID-19 supports

By BCTF Research Department staff

IN MARCH 2020, BC teachers and students went on spring break and returned to a very different teaching world. A year later, as COVID-19 safety protocols in stores, restaurants, and many workplaces have become normalized, teachers find they are still waiting for adequate safety protocols in their schools. Inadequate safety measures, intensified workload, worsening mental health, and professional burnout are just some of the issues touched upon in the recent 2021 BCTF Health and Safety Membership Survey. Conducted in January 2021, the survey provides a snapshot of the experiences of BC teachers at this point in the pandemic.

## Support for enhancing safety measures

More than half-way through the 2020–21 school year, over half of teachers (57.8%) who are working in BC schools report that they still do not feel safe.

While there was some variation across regional health authorities, teachers overwhelmingly indicated the need for stronger safety measures, such as a more robust mask mandate, physical distancing measures, better personal protective equipment, and improvements to inadequate ventilation systems. The survey found the following:

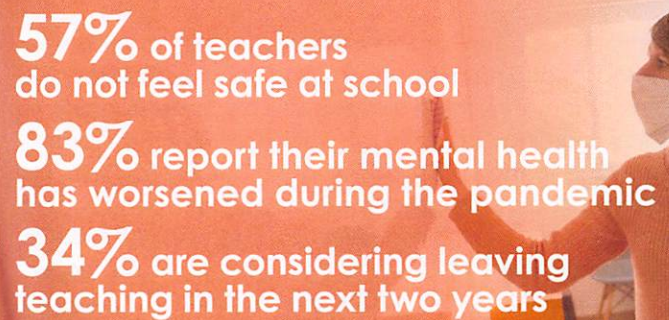
- BC teachers overwhelmingly support mask wearing, with most teachers (86.9%) involved with in-person instruction agreeing that teachers and other adults in their workplace should be required to wear a face mask or face shield all or most of the time. More than three out of four teachers (79.9%) agree students should also be wearing masks all or most of the time in school.
- Only 18.5% of teachers feel that class sizes are adequate for effective physical distancing.
- Only 24.8% of teachers working in-person feel that the ventilation system in their workplace is adequate to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

## Increasing already overburdened workloads

BC teachers were seeing increasingly large and unsustainable workloads prior to the pandemic, and that has only intensified. Approximately three out of four in-person teachers (72.8%) report that their overall workload has increased compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of teachers across BC have experienced this intensification of working hours, but female teachers (74.9%) are even more likely to report a pandemic-related workload increase.

## Impacts on mental health and well-being

Teaching during the pandemic has been taking its toll on BC teachers' mental health and well-being. Most teachers working in-person (83.0%) report that their mental health has worsened during the pandemic.



**57%** of teachers do not feel safe at school  
**83%** report their mental health has worsened during the pandemic  
**34%** are considering leaving teaching in the next two years

Mental health concerns among teachers are not new. Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers indicated widespread stress, weariness, and burnout related to their workload and the reality of teaching in an underfunded school system. But the return to in-person teaching during this pandemic has added considerably to these pre-existing stressors. Increasing workload coupled with the stress and anxiety of not feeling safe at work has led to more frequent teacher burnout, and a worrying number of BC teachers (34.2%) indicate they are now considering a departure from the profession.

There are also gendered dynamics in how BC teachers are experiencing the impacts of COVID-19, including statistically significant findings related to mental health and burnout. Teachers who identify as female (85.4%) were significantly more likely than male-identified teachers (75.1%) to report their mental health had worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also that they were now more likely to leave teaching within the next two years (35.0% of female teachers as compared with 30.7% of male teachers).

## Looking ahead

Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has created new demands and magnified pre-existing concerns, compounding the challenges facing BC teachers and leaving many physically and emotionally exhausted.

Considering that most people in our school communities will not have access to a vaccine until the 2020–21 school year is already over, it is crucial to put in place key safety measures to help keep schools open. The revised COVID-19 K–12 health and safety guidelines announced by the Ministry of Education in early February moved toward acknowledging BC teachers' ongoing concerns. However, there is still much work to be done, and the BCTF will continue our efforts to address the shortcomings of current health and safety guidelines. 📌

## MORE INFORMATION

The full survey report, *Keeping Safe Schools Open in a Pandemic: What BC Teachers Say We Still Need*, can be found at [bctf.ca/HS\\_SurveyReport](https://bctf.ca/HS_SurveyReport).

# Unique needs and full hearts build community

By Nadine Schroeder, teacher, Surrey

**AT THE START OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR,** I knew, based on my experience with my nieces and nephews, that the kids entering my room might need focused attention and extra care. The pandemic has been hard on all of us. My students carry the weight of stress, isolation, fear, and anxiety.

Some of my students spend part of their day crawling away to find calm spaces to hide. A few of my students panic when they are asked to touch anything that has been touched by others in the class. Most of my students are in learner support, more than half are on the food program, and several have experienced the kind of grief and loss that a seven-year-old should not know.

Social-emotional learning is more essential now than ever before.

I have never so deeply felt the need to remind kids that I love them, that I appreciate them, that they make our class better. When a student is struggling, we raise our hands to our hearts and hold them toward the student to empower them with our love. We remember to be kind, even though it can be hard. We all have needs and we respect each need.

Our community is better for all our needs. There is a Band-Aid on our whiteboard along with the words, "We all need different things." I taught my class that if I'm bleeding, I need a Band-Aid, but I do not need to give one to everyone. Many of our classmates have needs that can feel louder than others. I am proud of the way these seven-year-olds are handling learning equity in action. We do not all get the same. We get what we need.

Every morning, my Grade 2 class has a morning meeting. During this time, we

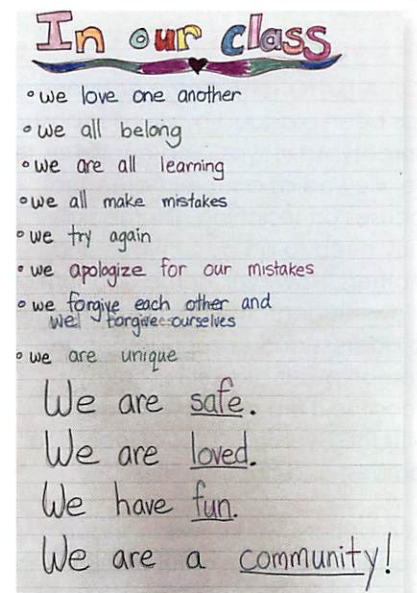
greet one another, share opinions with each other, do an activity together, and work on a morning message. This daily practice gives us time and space to learn about each other and build a community. On the last day of school of 2020, during our morning meeting, students shared compliments after greeting one another. Some compliments were simple, some were silly, and some were remarkably kind.

That day, three of my students came into the classroom mid-way through our morning meeting. We greeted the first late-comer and shared our compliments. My heart was warmed by how nearly every child in the room complimented this student on her kind heart. We greeted the second late-comer, and I was amazed when a student praised this child for their efforts to learn English and how much their English had improved.

The compliments for the third late-comer caused my eyes to fill and the tears to fall. This sweet child gives me a run for the small salary that I earn. Students raised their hands to compliment him. They loved his PJs. They liked the colour of his boots. They liked his silliness. Then came the most meaningful remark: one child proudly announced, "We need him."

Nearly every day from September to November, I would remind this child that we needed him, that he belonged. When he would bolt out of the room, I would leave my class full of other students to find this one, to tell him that I loved him and that I hoped he would come back. Now, my students echo these words of belonging with their peers.

My students know that we need one another. As I write this in mid-January, the student who was told "we need you" is thriving as a leader. A TIOC



Nadine Schroeder photo

recently wrote that this student had been helpful. My September-November self knew this student needed love, but did not know what that love would do.

I once heard a colleague say, "Maslow before Bloom." Needs before expectations, love and acceptance before demands and academics. My work as a teacher this year sometimes seems to lack academics, and honestly, that worries me. But I also feel good about what is happening in my room. Though I find myself wiped at the end of every day, and contemplate quitting on a weekly basis, I can see that my students are learning. They are learning what it means to be a community, a family.

In a school year where I go on many solo walks, take more long baths, read more fiction, and see very few people outside of my students, I know this: I need my students. They need me. They need one another. I believe my students know this too. We all matter. We all deserve to get what we need.

And might I add, dear colleague, we need you. Your resiliency is carrying us all through. Take care of yourself. 🐾



# Breaking gender stereotypes in textiles classrooms

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By Denise Nembhard, home economics teacher, Coquitlam

**FOR A LONG TIME**, home economics has been plagued by gender-based stereotypes. It was, and continues to be, viewed as a subject area that focuses on teaching girls the skills they need to be good wives and mothers. However, home economics allows students the unique opportunity to address and challenge gender stereotypes that exist in society, because it is a subject that deals with the everyday lives of individuals, families, and communities

As teachers, we know language matters. We are mindful of this when we address our classes, replacing "boys and girls" or "guys" with gender-inclusive, non-binary terms. Changing the language that we use in many aspects of sewing, food preparation, and caregiving, helps reinforce that a variety of people sew, cook, and care for others.

Words that are traditionally used for those who sew, such as seamstress, dressmaker, and tailor, are gendered terms and reference sewing only as an occupation. Sewing is connected to identity; therefore, assumptions we make about people who use this craft can speak volumes. Home economics teachers actively work to counter the assumption that only women sew. The Textiles Learning Standards intentionally uses the term "sewists" to refer to those who sew. It is a gender-neutral term that is a combination of sewer and artist (and looks a lot better than the term "sewer").

Images matter as well. Intentionally using and sharing images from hash-tags such as #dopemensew and #queersewing highlight the diversity of individuals who sew for themselves and others. I deliberately search for images of non-gender specific body parts when demonstrating how to

measure. After all, a waist is a waist—does it matter on which body it is found?

For textiles classes, there are increasing numbers of independent pattern companies releasing gender-neutral patterns, which means that students can create clothing and other textile items that allow them to embrace their gender expression. Boxer shorts and PJ pants, a staple of Grade 8 sewing projects, are chosen by home economics teachers because they are gender-neutral projects all students can create, no matter their gender identification.

Modifying a sewing pattern, part of the learning standards, provides another opportunity for students to explore gender identity and expression. For example, students can alter a pattern for someone who wears a binder. The design thinking lens of applied design, skills, and technologies, under which home economics falls, gives students even more freedom and permission to alter, modify, and create patterns and textile items that express who they are and how they want to present themselves to others.

Too often, fashion is thought of as frivolous. It is viewed as little more than people spending money on items they do not need. But clothing allows people to express themselves daily, and Fashion Industry 12 is a course in which students can challenge how clothing can conform to and fight against gender norms. For example, school dress codes often disproportionately focus on what female students are wearing, sexualizing them and policing their bodies. From the width of tank top straps, to the length of shorts, it's usually girls who are told that their outfits are distracting.

Fashion industry students can create school dress codes that remove these gendered "rules" and critically examine other areas of our lives where expectations vary for different gender identities. Students can help normalize and highlight not only gender-neutral fashions, but fashions that run in contrast to what Western societies deem as "acceptable" for men and women's clothing, such as certain types of garments, colours, and even expressing an interest or disinterest in fashion.

Other home economics classes, beyond textiles, also work to explore the effects of gender roles. Food studies classes challenge expectations on women to prepare food for their families and themselves. In child development and caregiving courses, students examine different caregiving situations and push back on stereotypes of women as nurturing mothers who are solely responsible for raising children.

We need to continue concerted efforts to help normalize the idea that sewing, caregiving, and food preparation are not primarily women's responsibilities—the ramifications of which have been demonstrated during this pandemic. If as a society we believe in the importance of successful families, in all their glorious forms, we need to emphasize that everyone, regardless of gender, shares responsibility in the work to make those families successful.

To quote Joe Tong, home economics teacher and adjunct professor in the Home Economics Education Department at UBC, "If home economics education is everyday life skills education, then it's where we will challenge injustices in everyday life." Our classes have embraced this challenge. 🍷

# Planting trees for a better world



By **John Barling**, director of SENS, author, and retired teacher; and **Terry Dyck**, director of SENS

**EACH YEAR**, an area of forest equivalent to the size of Belgium is clear-cut. Eighty-five percent of the world's old growth forests have already been cut down.

This is all rather depressing; however, much can be done to reverse the situation. We can create a better world for our children and grandchildren by helping to reverse global warming through tree planting projects.

Trees provide a myriad of benefits. Through photosynthesis, they absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. Trees are part of wildlife habitats and some trees provide food and medicine. They also moderate climate change, reduce wind, cool the earth, increase humidity, and provide cool shade during hot weather.

Tree roots stabilize soil, reducing soil erosion and limiting landslides and flooding. Their decomposing leaves help to build soil. They can also absorb pollutants, thus enhancing air quality, and they are aesthetically beautiful.

The Sustainable Environment Network Society (SENS) in Vernon has been promoting tree planting projects in North Okanagan schools for the past 35 years. They are now hoping schools throughout BC will join in the tree planting project.

Science magazine reports that there is adequate land around the world to increase forested areas by a third. The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology recommends forest restoration as the best approach for individuals to reduce the threat of global warming. Major reforestation could erase approximately 100 years worth of carbon emissions.

We invite you to join the SENS initiative as an individual, with friends, or as a class, and plant as many trees as you can.

## Ideas to get the project underway

- Create a team of interested, enthusiastic students to work on this project.
- Source sponsorship from businesses in your area.
- Work with a non-profit organization.
- Contact reforestation companies in your location for tree donations.
- See if any local nurseries will donate some trees.
- Choose trees that will thrive in your area e.g., hybrid poplar, weeping willow, aspen, red maple (all are fast-growing trees), or a variety of coniferous species.
- Consider a greening of the school grounds project.

## Preparing each tree planting site

- Plan tree planting for spring or fall.
- Remove or turn over vegetation that may compete with the seedling being planted.
- Dig a hole at least 15 centimeters (6 inches) wide and deep enough to accommodate the roots.
- Gently compress the soil around the tree.
- Larger trees may need a stick and rubber band for support.
- Water each tree and place mulch around the tree to reduce water loss.
- A collar placed around the developing trunk of the tree will protect it from being damaged by critters. ♻️

## MORE INFORMATION

A very good manual that lists ways to make your tree planting successful is available online at [www.treeproject.org.au/manual/grower-manual.htm](http://www.treeproject.org.au/manual/grower-manual.htm).



Finding Dawn, 2006 - National Film Board of Canada

# Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls: Breaking the silence, starting the conversation in classrooms

*This is a modified version of a blog post first written for the National Film Board.*

**By Sonya Rock**, teacher, Prince George

## The missing

Can you imagine what it would be like if your mother or sister went missing and the police waited six months or a year before responding to your missing person report? In the meantime, you can't sleep at night. Every day you're faced with the realization that your loved one is gone, and you re-experience the trauma. When dealing with the police, you're subjected to discrimination and racism.

Your loved one is automatically labelled as someone who has lived a "high-risk lifestyle." This seemingly gives those who are charged with protecting you and your loved one permission to dismiss the seriousness and urgency of your situation. Your phone calls to police are never returned or returned at a snail's pace. You are revictimized—treated like your loved one's life is not important enough to be a priority. You fight to have your voice heard, as society has already made up its mind about who you are.

Your mother or sister is never found. You can never have closure. You will always have a feeling of hopelessness and experience a lifetime of unresolved loss and grief. No one in this country seems to care, or they choose to turn away from the truth. Your loved one has become just another faceless statistic.

Much of society still believes that these stories are not true, or that they happened a long time ago. Some people simply don't believe that such atrocities could be happening in their own backyard.

It is estimated that there have been more than 4,000 missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) across Canada in the last 30 years.<sup>1</sup> When I was 23, I survived an incident that could have added me to the growing list of MMIWG in Canada. I am a survivor. I have lived through everything discussed above. I have a daily fight on my hands because I am Indigenous and because I am a woman. I continue to live under the oppressive policies of colonialism.

In order to break the silence, I encourage all educators and school staff to watch the following two films. I hope they will open an avenue of understanding about what Indigenous people face across Canada, and help educate the youth in our high schools. For it is with youth that a change of heart can begin.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers do not include Métis and Inuit women, or Indigenous women from the United States. The source for these statistics is the recent Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as other reports from the House of Commons and the RCMP.

## Two films for classroom viewing

### **Finding Dawn** by Christine Welch

This feature-length documentary addresses the ongoing epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada. In the film, the family of Dawn Crey reflect on the days, weeks, and months following the discovery of Dawn's remains on Robert Pickton's farm, and what her life was like leading up to her death. Dawn's DNA was one of 23 sets of women's DNA found on the Pickton farm; however, not enough of it was found to have her listed as one of the victims at Pickton's trial. Families of MMIWG who disappeared on the Highway of Tears and in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside also share their stories in the film. [www.nfb.ca/film/finding\\_dawn](http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn)

**this river** by Erika MacPherson and Katherena Vermette  
Fourteen-year-old Tina Fontaine was pulled from Winnipeg's Red River in 2014. Indigenous leaders from across Canada rallied to renew calls for an inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. As a result of this tragedy, the organization Drag the Red was formed by community volunteers. These volunteers scour the river and its shores to search for clues about the missing. As members of this group Kyle Kematch and organizer Katherena Vermette share their experiences of searching for a missing loved one. [www.nfb.ca/film/this\\_river](http://www.nfb.ca/film/this_river)

### Discussing the films with your class

These films and topics are intended for high school students. We have to keep in mind that there continue to be instances of missing and murdered women and girls. Some students may have faced or may currently be facing this reality in their lives, or may know a relative who has lost a loved one in this way. In my own experience, as I watched *Finding Dawn*, I could see myself in the story. Horrifying memories came flooding back, and feelings of intense fear came over me, followed by sorrow, and then anger. For this reason, it is important that educators ensure there are several scaffolding and safety measures in place.

Introduce the topic in a Talking Circle, an Indigenous practice through which discussions and decision-making take place. Set the parameters of the Talking Circle by telling students that it is a safe and sacred space for them to share their thoughts and feelings, and to ask questions about missing and murdered women and girls.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sonya Rock has been teaching for 24 years. Her interests and past work have involved Aboriginal rights and land titles. She has taught Gitksan culture and language in various capacities within her community and as a teacher. She is working on language revitalization through her work as an educator. She has been involved in missing and murdered women's awareness gatherings and MMIWG survivor.

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It's important to have a youth counsellor and a local Elder in the circle. Parents or caretakers should be informed ahead of time that these topics will be covered in class and told what they can do to help their child talk through any feelings that may surface during or after the discussion

As an opening activity, students can imagine that the scenario described in the first two paragraphs of this article applies to them, and write out their thoughts and feelings about how they would deal with this situation.

When discussing MMIWG, educators should address the following questions throughout their unit. They will have to go deeper into the causes that have led to these events. In answering these questions, students will gain a better understanding of the history of Indigenous people in Canada and the impact of these historical events on Indigenous women.

### Questions to consider

Is the MMIWG crisis something that has just surfaced in recent years? What do you think are the reasons behind the tragic deaths of Indigenous women?

How would you describe colonialism, the *Indian Act*, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop, and how have they shaped the lives of Indigenous women in Canada?

How has the ongoing removal of children from their homes by BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development affected Indigenous women?

What can I do as a learner to change the way that I relate to Indigenous people?

I call upon my allies to open up their hearts and minds and stand beside Indigenous people as we continue to fight for the same human rights as every other citizen in this country. My hope for my Indigenous sisters is that one day we will be able to walk the streets and feel safe, and our people will no longer have to worry about their mothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins going missing. ♻️

### CRISIS SUPPORT

If you are affected by the topics addressed in the films, we encourage you to reach out to someone you trust. If you're in need of crisis support, please contact the following organizations:

#### **The Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310**

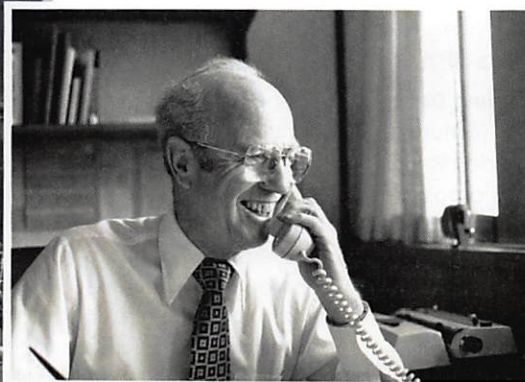
Offers immediate help to all Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

#### **Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868**

A general distress hotline for children and youth, including those who may be experiencing or using violence.

#### **Assaulted Women's Helpline: 1-866-863-0511**

A toll-free support hotline for women who have experienced gender-based violence.



▲ Ken Aitchison, former communications director, 1985. **Left:** The BCTF's 1975 AGM, the first held at the Vancouver Hyatt.

## The BCTF and the Hyatt: 45 years of AGM history

By Sunjum Jhaj, Editor, *Teacher* magazine

**THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)** is a tradition as old as the BCTF itself. BCTF members have gathered every spring for the past 105 years to make key decisions for the Federation and elect the Executive Committee. Since 1975, most AGMs have taken place at the Hyatt Regency in Vancouver.

Manuel Sousa started as a sales manager at the Hyatt 45 years ago and approached the BCTF as a potential client. His point of contact was Ken Aitchison. Ken was a former BCTF president and was the communications director at the time.

"I was just calling different organizations to see if I could get them to hold meetings at the Hyatt. I didn't expect to build such a great relationship with Ken," said Manuel.

Ken invited Manuel into his home for dinner and left a lasting impression on the young sales rep.

"Dinner at Ken's house, with Ken and his wife, was a wonderful experience I will never forget. We had a great relationship for many years. Ken was very business-like when we talked [about] work. He wanted to make sure he was getting the best possible deal for the BCTF, but he was very friendly too. You don't often have a chance to connect with clients like this," said Manuel.

After Ken's retirement in 1984, Manuel continued to form friendships with each BCTF staff person tasked with leading AGM planning efforts.

The BCTF AGM has become something to look forward to for many Hyatt staff. "Teachers are so committed to the environment. Connecting with people, helping each other, it all feels very positive," shared Manuel.

The AGM is unique compared to other conferences because it is a family affair; many members bring their

partners and children, which gives the event a distinctive energy.

In his current role as senior director of sales and marketing, Manuel no longer deals with clients directly, except when it comes to the BCTF. "I still handle the BCTF account myself. I always want to go above and beyond because it's so important to me and I feel I have a personal connection to the BCTF," said Manuel.

In his 45 years of working with BCTF staff to plan the AGM, Manuel noted that very little has changed. He described the AGM as a giant classroom where the teachers are now the students. Members are always very engaged, and there is a lot of interaction.

Lise West, who has worked for the BCTF for over 50 years, noted the same thing. "The technology has changed a lot. We used to do everything by hand and use projectors and transparency sheets. But other than that, it's still very similar in the way it's set up and organized," said Lise.

This year's AGM, like last year's, will not follow the same set up as past AGMs. It will be held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It feels very quiet during spring break at the Hyatt when the AGM isn't here," said Manuel.

Although online meetings limit spontaneous interactions and joyful greetings, we look forward to once again welcoming BCTF members virtually as they shape the future of the Federation. 9

# Pat Brady: President of the BC Teachers' Federation 1977–79

By Ken Novakowski and Larry Kuehn, former BCTF presidents



**PAT BRADY** was a young teacher when he attended his first BCTF Annual General Meeting (AGM). This proved to be the start of an active role he would eventually play in the leadership of the BCTF, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), and the BC Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA). He passed away on November 22, 2020, at the age of 83. Pat was president of the BCTF from 1977 to 1979 but remained active in the work of the Federation for many years after that, most significantly serving as a chairperson at the AGM and meetings of the Representative Assembly (RA). Remarkably, he attended 54 consecutive AGMs. In 1996, Pat was awarded the G.A. Fergusson award for outstanding service to public education, the teaching profession, and the BCTF.

Pat Brady grew up on a five-acre tract in rural Bradner, where his family grew daffodils. Every AGM for many years in the 1980s and 1990s, Pat, who was usually in the chair, announced that the daffodils that graced each local's table were compliments of his family.

Pat was first and foremost a teacher. He taught at the primary, intermediate, and junior and senior high levels during his long career. He spent most of his teaching years in Prince George where, for a time, he thought he might become a school administrator. He soon changed his mind when he found out that to become one in Prince George meant that he was expected to "swear some kind of unofficial oath of fealty to the district administration." He remained in the classroom until his retirement, save for his terms serving in various offices on behalf of teachers. His focus was always on good teaching. When serving on the UBC Senate, something he had the honour of doing for 15 years, Pat put forward the view that the university should be hiring professors who were teachers first and researchers second.

Pat was one of the few BCTF presidents to assume that role without having ever served as president of his local. In fact, he became president of the Prince George Teachers' Association only after serving as both BCTF and CTF presidents. He claimed the job as local president was by far the most difficult of the three. He also recognized that it was at the local level that teachers most came into contact with their union, seeking the assistance and support they needed to continue in their role as teachers.

Pat loved the international work he participated in while serving as CTF president in 1981–82, particularly getting Canadian teachers involved in professional development initiatives in many parts of the world. He also fondly recalled his role as the head of the Canadian delegation at three annual meetings of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession held in each of Nigeria, Brazil, and Indonesia.

After Pat officially retired in 1997, he carried on as a teacher teaching on call in the Fraser Valley. And while he continued to chair RAs and AGMs for the BCTF, Pat also became active in the BC Retired Teachers' Association. Pat served on the BCRTA executive for a number of years before becoming its president from 2000 to 2003. Recognizing the strength of partnerships, Pat encouraged the BCRTA to become involved in the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations in BC, as well as two national organizations: the National Senior Citizens' Federation and Pensioners Concerned. Pat also went on to serve for two years as president of the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers from 2006 to 2008.

Pat Brady always gave freely of his time and energy in the service of teachers and later retired teachers. He chaired the 2020 AGM of the BCRTA only a short time before he passed away. With Pat's passing, teachers have lost an important colleague and friend, one who served them well in so many different ways throughout his long and active life. 🐾

▼ **Below:** Pat Brady speaking at a Special General Assembly in 1987.  
**Above left:** Pat Brady, 1978.



# AGM 2021

BC Teachers' Federation  
Annual General Meeting  
on virtual meeting platform LUMI  
March 20–23



# Agenda

## FIRST SESSION, Saturday morning— March 20, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Call to order

Traditional welcome

Preliminaries

- a. LUMI walk-through
- b. Adoption of chairpersons, chief scrutineer, Resolutions Committee
- c. Chairpersons' orientation session
- d. Adoption of the agenda
- e. Introduction of AGM Ombudspersons and Elders/Healers
- f. Adoption of 2020 AGM minutes
- g. Stewardship Report on 2019 AGM
- h. Report of the Nominating Chairperson

Report of the President

Leadership Report

Public Affairs

BCFED/CLC

11:55 a.m. Greetings—Laird Cronk

12:00 p.m. Lunch

## SECOND SESSION, Saturday afternoon— March 20, 1:00–6:00 p.m.

Finance

- a. Treasurer's report
- b. Recommendations and resolutions

Education Finance

Unfinished business

3:00 p.m. Wellness and social break

Health and Welfare of Students

Unfinished business

4:55 p.m. Call for Nominations

5:00 p.m. Report of the Nominating Chairperson

Election statements from candidates for Full-Time Table Officer positions

Questions and answers session for candidates for Full-Time Table Officer positions

Unfinished business

5:55 p.m. Announcements

6:00 p.m. Adjournment

## THIRD SESSION, Sunday morning— March 21, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Education Policy

Unfinished business

10:30 a.m. Keynote speaker—  
Dr. Shauneen Pete

Aboriginal Education

Unfinished business

11:45 a.m. Stewart Schon Award

12:00 p.m. Lunch

## FOURTH SESSION, Sunday afternoon— March 21, 1:00–6:00 p.m.

By-laws and Constitutions

- a. Report
- b. Recommendations

Unfinished business

3:00 p.m. Wellness and social break

4:00 p.m. Bob Rosen Social Justice Award

International Solidarity Award

Unfinished business

4:30 p.m. Call for Nominations

Report of the Nominating Chairperson

Election statements from candidates for Member-at-Large positions

Questions and answers session for candidates for Member-at-Large positions

5:55 p.m. Announcements

6:00 p.m. Adjournment

## FIFTH SESSION, Monday morning— March 22, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Health, Welfare, and Safety of Teachers

- a. Fee
- b. Reports
- c. Recommendations
- d. Resolutions

Unfinished business

12:00 p.m. Lunch

## SIXTH SESSION, Monday afternoon— March 22, 1:00–6:00 p.m.

Awards

- a. Honorary Membership
- b. Honorary Life Membership

Social Justice

Unfinished business

2:50 p.m. In Memoriam

3:00 p.m. Wellness and social break

4:00 p.m. Political Action

Organization of the BCTF

Induction Ceremonies and Awards

Unfinished business

5:45 p.m. Report of the Nominating Chairperson

Final call for Nominations

5:55 p.m. Announcements

6:00 p.m. Adjournment

## SEVENTH SESSION, Tuesday morning— March 23, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. Elections

Teachers' Teaching on Call

Teacher Education

Bargaining

Executive Director's Report

Questions of advisory committee reports

Unfinished business

11:55 a.m. Announcements

12:00 p.m. Lunch

## EIGHTH SESSION, Tuesday afternoon— March 23, 1:00–6:00 p.m.

Pensions report

Board of School Trustees, School Districts, and BC School Trustees Association

Annual General Meeting Standing Rules of Order

3:00 p.m. Wellness and social break

4:00 p.m. Annual General Meeting

Unfinished Business

New motions

5:55 p.m. Courtesy Motion

6:00 p.m. Adjournment





# SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

## CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

### Executive Committee recommendations

That By-law 5.1 (a) be amended as follows:

There shall be an Executive Committee, which shall consist of a President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Immediate Past-President (when applicable), and nine Members-at-Large, elected in such a manner as to ensure that at least three of the Member-at-Large vacancies are filled at each Annual General Meeting. One Member-at-Large position shall be designated to be held by a ~~racialized member~~ *member of colour* and one shall be designated to be held by an Aboriginal member. The designated positions shall have the same term and role as the non-designated positions. The Executive Committee positions are elected by the Annual General Meeting and shall take office on the following July 1. Each member of the Executive Committee shall be a member in good standing entitled to vote, in accordance with By-law 1.1. An Executive Committee member may be removed from office under the provisions of By-law 1.7 or By-law 7.

That By-law 5.1 (f) be amended as follows:

The Member-at-Large position designated to be held by ~~a racialized member~~ *a member of colour* is open to the election of a member who identifies as ~~racialized~~ *a person of colour*. For clarity, this is intended to include individuals who:

- i. *identify as people of colour, and*
- ii. *themselves or their ancestors are settlers and/or immigrants and/or refugees and/or were brought to Canada; including those members who identify as being Aboriginal.*

That By-law 5.4(a) be amended as follows:

All nominations for positions on the Executive Committee shall be in writing and *shall indicate the position(s) for which the member is being nominated*. The nomination shall be by resolution of a general meeting of a local or shall bear the signatures of at least 10 active members of the Federation in good standing and shall include the acceptance of the nominee. A person who has been nominated for a position may withdraw from nomination for that position at any time *prior to the election by notice in writing*.

That By-law 5.1 be amended to add the following:

*(g) To ensure a gender balance representative of the membership as a whole, at least five of the seven non-designated Member-at-Large positions be held by members who self-identify as women and/or non-binary.*

That a new By-law 5.21 be added as follows:

5.21(a) An Executive Committee member may be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote at the Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting.

5.21(b) An Executive Committee member may also be suspended from office by a unanimous vote of the other Executive Committee members.

That By-law 8.2 be replaced as follows:

8.2(a) The voting body of an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting shall consist of the members of the Executive Committee, the Local Representatives, and additional delegates from each local ("Delegates") elected in accordance with By-law 2. Each local is entitled to one Delegate for each 0.2%, or fraction thereof, of the total voting membership of the Federation as of the previous November 1.

(b) Voting by Local Representatives and Delegates at the Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting is by way of delegate voting. Local Representatives and Delegates act as delegates for the voting members of their local for the purpose of the meeting. Each voting member has one vote, which is allocated to the Local Representatives and Delegates for their local. Each member of the Executive Committee holds a single vote and is not included in the local member count for the purpose of the AGM delegate voting.

(c) When a local includes one or more sublocals, each sublocal shall have the right to representation at the meeting in the proportion of one Delegate for each 0.2%, or fraction thereof, of the total voting members of the Federation who are voting members of the sublocal, without prejudice to the rights of representation of the members of the local who are not members of the sublocal.

(d) Each local's Delegate count for the Annual General Meeting will be made available no later than January 15. Each local's updated membership count, for the purpose of delegate voting, will be made available no later than March 1.



iStock.com/DelmaineDonson

That By-law 8.3 be amended as follows:

8.3 Delegates or Local Representatives from a local may designate either a ~~delegate~~ Delegate from the same local or a Local Representative from the same local to hold and exercise the voting rights of the voting card or cards assigned to them provided that the Annual General Meeting may by resolution limit the number of voting cards that may be held and voted by a ~~delegate~~ Delegate or Local Representative, and provided further that locals may, by resolution of a general meeting, establish rules regulating such transfers of voting cards.

That a new By-law 18 be amended by adding the following and renumbering the current By-law 18 to 18.1:

*18.2 Records kept by the Federation in accordance with the Societies Act are generally not available to the public. If a person, other than a member, wishes to inspect these records they may write to the Executive Director who will consider the request.*

That By-law 21 be amended to reflect the correct numbering of each subsection as 21.1–21.4.

That By-law 22.2 be amended as follows:

That during their term of office, the President be paid 130% of the salary they would have received had they been teaching, *plus an additional 20% of the average teachers' salary.*

That By-law 22.3 be amended as follows:

That during their term of office, the First Vice-President and Second Vice-President be paid 120% of the salary they would have received had they been teaching, *plus an additional 15% of the average teachers' salary.*

## LOCAL RESOLUTIONS

### Chilliwack

That By-law 5.1(c) be amended as follows:

The immediate Past-President serves in a one-year, supernumerary position on the Executive Committee. *The Past-President position will be an additional position on the Executive Committee with voice but no vote on the Executive Committee.* In the event that a President shall be elected to an additional year of office, the Executive Committee position of immediate Past-President shall be vacated.

### Nanaimo

That By-law 5.1(a) be amended as follows:

There shall be an Executive Committee, which shall consist of a President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, an Immediate Past President (when applicable), and nine Members-at-Large, elected in such a manner as to ensure that at least three Member-at-Large vacancies are filled at each Annual General Meeting. One Member-at-Large position shall be designated to be held by a ~~racialized member~~ *member of colour* and one shall be designated to be held by an Aboriginal member. The designated positions shall have the same term and role as the non-designated positions. The Executive Committee positions are elected by the Annual General Meeting and shall take office on the following July 1. Each member of the Executive Committee shall be a member in good standing entitled to vote, in accordance with By-law 1.1. An Executive Committee member may be removed from office under the provisions of By-law 1.7 or By-law 7.

### Nanaimo

That By-law 5.1(f) be amended as follows:

The Member-at-Large position designated to be held by a ~~racialized member~~ *a member of colour* is open to the election of a member who identifies as ~~racialized~~ *a person of colour including those members who identify as being Aboriginal.*

*For clarity, this is intended to include individuals who:*

- i. identify as people of colour.*
- ii. themselves or their ancestors are settlers and/or refugees and/or were brought to Canada.*

### Nanaimo

That By-law 5.4(a) be amended as follows:

All nominations for positions on the Executive Committee shall be in writing and *shall indicate the position(s) for which the member is being nominated.* The nomination shall be by resolution of a general meeting of a local, or shall bear the signatures of at least 10 active members of the Federation in good standing, and shall include the acceptance of the nominee. A person who has been nominated for a position may withdraw from nomination for that position at any time *prior to the election* ~~by notice in writing.~~

# SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

## LOCAL RESOLUTIONS continued

### Vancouver Elementary

That By-law 5.1(a) be amended to read:

There shall be an Executive Committee, which shall consist of a President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, an Immediate Past-President (when applicable), and nine Members-at-Large, elected in such a manner as to ensure that at least three Member-at-Large vacancies are filled at each Annual General Meeting. One Member-at-Large position shall be designated to be held by a ~~racialized~~ member who is a person of colour and one shall be designated to be held by an Aboriginal member. The designated positions shall have the same term and role as the non-designated positions. The Executive Committee positions are elected by the Annual General Meeting and shall take office on the following July 1. Each member of the Executive Committee shall be a member in good standing entitled to vote, in accordance with By-law 1.1. An Executive Committee member may be removed from office under the provisions of By-law 1.7 or By-law 7.

### Vancouver Elementary

That By-law 5.1(f) be amended as follows:

The Member-at-Large position designated to be held by a ~~racialized~~ member who is a person of colour is open to the election of a member who identifies as ~~being a person of colour, including those members who identify as being Aboriginal.~~ *being a person of colour.*

## HEALTH, WELFARE, AND SAFETY OF TEACHERS

### Executive Committee recommendations

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13-C.02—1.8 be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

~~1.8 Failure to acknowledge in writing, within three months at the request of the Plan Administrator, a willingness to participate or co-operate in a rehabilitation program that has been recommended by the member's licensed physician and approved by the Salary Indemnity Plan will result in the termination of benefits, forthwith.~~

1.8 Failure to participate or co-operate in a rehabilitation program that has been recommended by the member's licensed physician and approved by the Salary Indemnity Plan may result in the suspension of benefits during the period of time that the member did not participate or co-operate in the rehabilitation program.

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13-C.02—3.2 be amended to read:

3.2 All claims for benefits shall be accompanied by such forms as are required by the Plan Administrator, specifically:

- (a) claimant application form signed by the member; and
- (b) *with the exception of intermittent absences*, a medical form signed by a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or registered midwife, or in special circumstances, a notarized statement signed by the member; and
- (c) the school board verification of sick leave form signed by an official of the employing school board or local association or the Federation.

*Intermittent absences are defined as absences which occur at irregular intervals.*

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13-C.02—3.7 be amended to read:

A member in receipt of benefits for more than three months will be required to provide supporting medical evidence indicating that the member is receiving ongoing care and treatment by ~~a licensed specialist~~ *an appropriate licensed physician* for that disability, or a registered ~~psychologist~~ *professional* as directed by ~~a~~ *an appropriate* licensed physician except where the Plan Administrator is aware that the disability is terminal.

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13-C.02—3.9 be amended to read:

3.9 Receipt of benefits for an illness which is caused by drug or alcohol ~~abuse~~ *use* shall be contingent upon the claimant's enrolment and ongoing participation in a substance withdrawal program recognized by ~~an addiction medicine specialist~~ *claimant receiving continuing treatment for the use of these substances.*

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13-C.02—19.1 be amended to read:

19.1 Subject to Regulation 7.7, the benefit shall be 65% of the first \$40,000 of gross annual salary, 50% of the next \$40,000 of gross annual salary, and 40% of the balance. *Notwithstanding Regulation 7.7, the basic benefit shall never be less than 50% of gross annual salary.*

That the preamble in Procedure 13.C.02 be amended as follows:

These regulations, adopted by the 1984 Annual General Meeting and amended by subsequent Annual General Meetings, are effective September 1, 1984. Amendments to these regulations by subsequent Annual General Meetings are effective on September 1, following the Annual General Meeting at which the amendments were made, except as otherwise noted September 1, 2020-2021. These regulations apply to members whose first date of eligibility to receive benefits occurs on or after September 1, 2020-2021. Members whose first date of eligibility to receive benefits is prior to September 1, 2020-2021, will continue to receive benefits based on the plan in effect at that time, except as otherwise noted.

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13.C.02—11.2 be deleted and replaced with:

~~11.2 Benefits shall be based on the gross annual salary of the claimant applicable on the last day of work or of sick leave. No adjustment of benefit attributable to increased salary shall be paid except when a claim is closed in one school year and subsequently reopened in the following school year. Then a salary increase, due to a salary grid increase prior to the reapplication, will be recognized. No adjustment of benefits attributable to increases in percentage of contract will be paid until the claimant has returned to work at the new percentage of contract for 20 consecutive working days.~~

11.2 The claimant's benefit rate shall be determined as follows:

- (a) Benefits shall be based on the gross annual salary rate of the claimant as of the last day of work or of sick leave, based on the claimant's contractual entitlement.
- (b) No adjustment of benefit attributable to increased salary shall be paid except when a claim is closed in one school year and subsequently reopened in the following

school year. Then a salary increase, due to a salary grid or negotiated increase prior to the reapplication, will be recognized.

- (c) No adjustment of benefits attributable to increases in percentage of contract will be paid until the claimant has returned to work at the new percentage of contract for at least 20 consecutive working days.

Gross annual salary rate means the member's salary rate as determined pursuant to the collective agreement governing their terms and conditions of employment at the time of disability, calculated using the member's average percentage of contract for the school year, or, if the member is disabled while employed but is not employed for a full year, calculated at the member's average percentage of contract for that part of the school year during which they are employed.

That Salary Indemnity Plan Regulation 13.C.02—19.2 be amended to read:

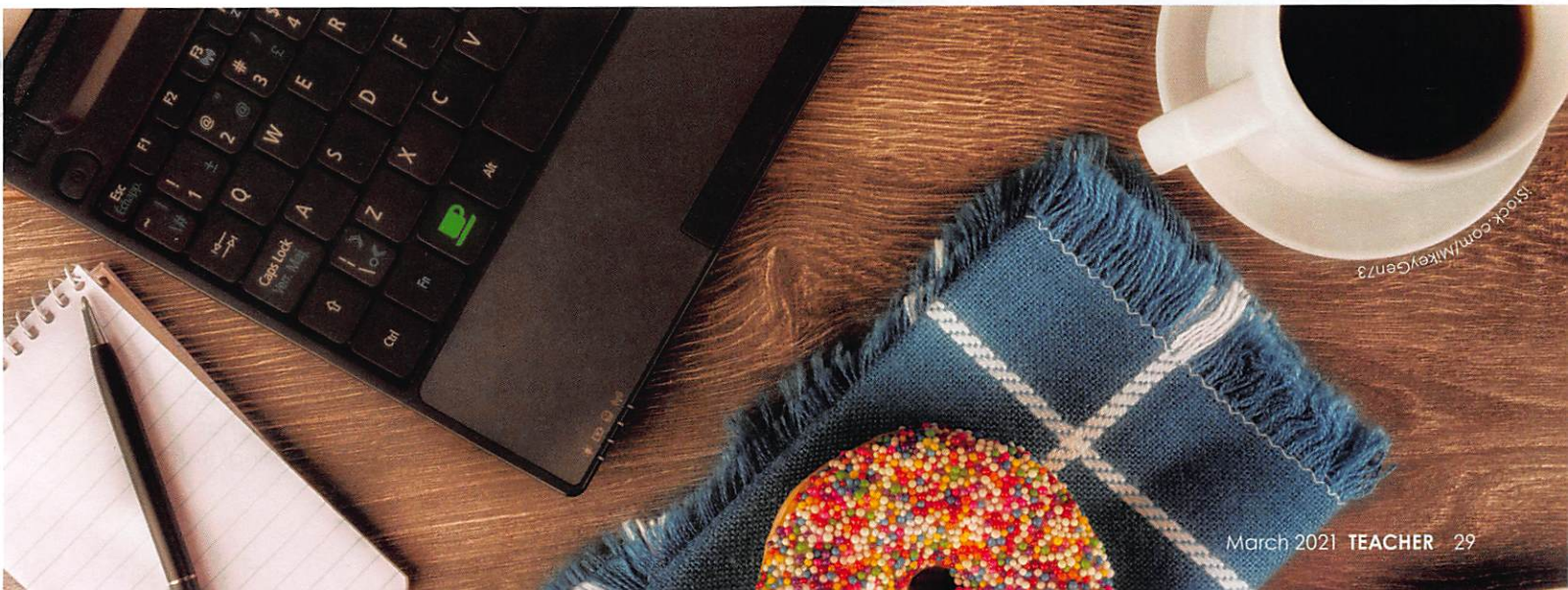
19.2 Gross annual salary shall be the annual salary rate of the claimant ~~applicable on~~ *as of* the last day of work or sick leave, *based on the claimant's contractual entitlement*. No adjustment of benefit attributable to increased salary shall be paid until the claimant has returned to work or sick leave for 20 consecutive working days.

## LOCAL RESOLUTIONS

### Greater Victoria

That the definition for eligibility for benefits under Section 9 of Salary Indemnity Plan regulations be amended as follows:

9.1 To qualify for benefits under this section of the plan a member must be prevented, by illness or injury, from performing their normal employment duties. *During a pandemic, a member may also qualify where the risk factor of severe illness or death from the disease is significantly higher due to underlying medical conditions or age.*





# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES



FOR PRESIDENT  
**Teri  
Mooring  
Quesnel**

**IT'S BEEN MY HONOUR** to serve as president. This year the pandemic has presented extraordinary challenges for everyone, especially for members with health vulnerabilities.

Health and safety are top priorities; advocacy to improve school safety measures continues. Teachers are to be commended for going above and beyond to keep students safe. Unfortunately, this responsibility was downloaded to members because of the inadequacy of government's response.

While the health crisis is top of mind, we must also acknowledge other crises that existed pre-pandemic, are also urgent, and need action—the racial justice crisis—the pandemic has highlighted inequities that have long existed, but we have witnessed an increase in racist actions and attitudes. The climate crisis also continues to be a focus; we have a shared responsibility to work toward a sustainable future.

While we continue to deal with multiple crises, we are also preparing for bargaining. With new leadership moving into the helm at BCPSEA there is hope bargaining will be more productive. Teacher workload, compensation, and the teacher shortage are some of the outstanding issues needing to be addressed.

Opportunities and challenges abound; with your support I would be honoured to continue to work on your behalf.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/teri.mooring](http://www.facebook.com/teri.mooring)  
Twitter: @TeriMooring

## EXPERIENCE

**International:** Education International: Thailand (2019), Trinidad (2018)

**National:** CTF Director

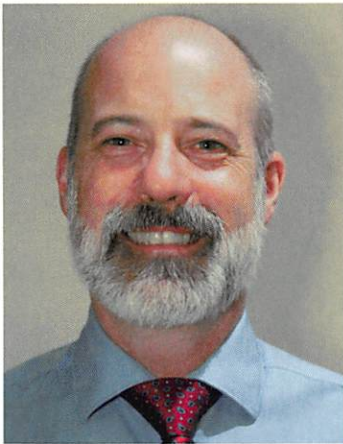
**Provincial:** First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Member-at-Large

**Local:** President, Vice-President, LR, Bargaining Chair

**Teaching:** 22 years intermediate, resource teacher

**Education:** MEd (UNBC), Curriculum/Counselling; BA (SFU)

# FULL-TIME TABLE OFFICERS



FOR FIRST  
VICE-PRESIDENT  
**Clint  
Johnston**  
Chilliwack

**THIS PAST YEAR** has been one that none of us could have predicted last January. The sudden pandemic disrupted members' lives and the work of the union—we continued bargaining—and thrust us all into unfamiliar waters. The word pivot is pervasive now, but "pivot" doesn't adequately describe changing every aspect of how a 45,000-member union works. Staff—like teachers—moved to remote work even as demands increased.

Everything went online: governance, supports, advisory committees, training, all of it. We reacted as quickly as possible to both increase existing local and member supports and create new ones. Media demands and our advocacy expectations exploded, including on local leaders and members. That need hasn't slowed, and progress has been disappointing. But we persevere.

Through this all we completed our regular work in new ways, including a continued focus inward on our equity and decolonization work. New was a task force on improving equity and representation at Representative Assemblies. Their work—and others'—will drive us forward next year. I've been honoured to have a role in this work and remain committed to it.

It would be a privilege to continue to represent all teachers' voices.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/clint.johnston.92](https://www.facebook.com/clint.johnston.92)  
Twitter: @ClintJohnston7

## EXPERIENCE

**International:** CTF Delegation Head, EI World Congress; ISTP 2018; Bolivia 2016

**National:** CTF Vice-President 3x, multiple committees

**Provincial:** BCTF First Vice-President, Member-at-Large

**Local:** President & other

**Teaching:** 18 years

**Education:** BEd Elementary & BHK (UBC)



FOR SECOND  
VICE-PRESIDENT  
**Carole  
Gordon**  
Central  
Okanagan

**WHILE "UNPRECEDENTED"** has become the word to describe this past year, many challenges for members, locals, and the Federation are familiar: workload, learning conditions, adequate funding, and respect. Teachers take on many roles every day. The pandemic context, though, has every member across the province, from Kindergarten to adult education, holding a second job—health & safety manager. I have been proud to advocate on your behalf at the provincial steering committee, to fight for better protocols and support safe working conditions.

The challenges members face did not begin with the pandemic, but this experience has highlighted the inequities and shortages that shape the realities of teachers. This coming year, bargaining will again give us the opportunity to advocate for increased funding to improve classroom conditions and support all members.

This year changed the way we organized training and decision-making. We have learned many lessons, and while we miss the in-person connections, we have also been able to make events more accessible and inclusive. Supporting locals in their own equity work and carefully integrating new and existing structures will improve engagement for everyone.

It would be a privilege to help steward the Federation for another year.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/carole.gordon.921](https://www.facebook.com/carole.gordon.921)  
Twitter: @CaroleGordonBC

## EXPERIENCE

**Provincial:** Second VP, 2yrs; Executive, 6yrs; Pensions; CTF Trustee; AGM, 18yrs

**Local:** Executive (Second VP, Health & Safety, Bargaining), Staff Rep

**Community:** Provincial Candidate, Labour Council President, United Way

**Teaching:** Elementary Prep, Classroom (28 yrs)



FOR MEMBER-AT-LARGE  
**Violette Baillargeon**  
Surrey

**THIS FEBRUARY** marks 11 months since the start of a pandemic that would disrupt and reshape schools and communities. As part of an Executive 14 months into challenging contract negotiations and faced with forced school closures, my perspective shifted to the immense uncertainty ahead. I canvassed members tirelessly and, ultimately, I was proud to aid in achieving a negotiated agreement without the need for job action.

Being in leadership in education during this time meant taking stock of new circumstances quickly. It meant reimagining the potential of our profession and safeguarding against private interests eager to capitalize on the crisis. Most importantly, it meant supporting teachers as they reoriented themselves and found solutions to the countless challenges facing their work. As a full-time classroom teacher and parent of school-aged children, I continue to bring this crucial perspective to the Executive table.

As I end my first EC term, my perspective shifts again. I am buoyed by the engagement in locals and informed by a diversity of viewpoints. As we pivot to future climate-related disruptions and cultivate resiliency, I vow to continue doing this work collaboratively and I remain humbled by the flexibility, resourcefulness, and tenacity of BC teachers.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/violette.baillargeon](http://www.facebook.com/violette.baillargeon)  
Website: [www.violettebaillargeon.weebly.com](http://www.violettebaillargeon.weebly.com)

## EXPERIENCE

**Provincial:** Executive Committee; Peer Support; Mediation; TriNational delegate: Chicago, Mexico; AGM; Peru Project; SJ/SURT Facilitator

**Local:** EC—LR, MAL; Environmental Justice Co-chair; Bargaining Co-chair; International Solidarity

**Teaching:** 20 years—French/Spanish, IB, FRIM, AdEd



FOR MEMBER-AT-LARGE  
**Rae Figursky**  
Burnaby

**AS ONE OF YOUR VOICES** on the Executive, I'm committed to member-driven decisions that make us a strong, professional, social justice union. I've worked to advocate for safe, equitable, quality education; to increase grants to locals; and to create member engagement on issues that affect us all, including safety, funding, equity, and inclusion.

From a small northern town, a teacher in a large urban local, both Métis and first-generation Canadian—I have many perspectives. In our diverse union, when we listen to each other, we find common ground.

The challenges ahead are to improve our working conditions (including our Health & Safety) and better meet students' needs. We need to hold government to their commitments for funding and improvements in public education.

At this AGM, we will consider by-law changes to make our structures even more inclusive and reflective of our membership. I'm proud to be part of crafting these proposals.

I bring a passion for teaching, respect for teachers, an ability to anticipate and solve problems, strong listening skills, and balance to the Executive. I look forward to continuing this work for you.

Facebook: Rae Figursky for BCTF Member-at-Large  
Twitter: @RaeFigursky  
Website: [www.raecandoit.com](http://www.raecandoit.com)

## EXPERIENCE

**Provincial:** Member-at-Large; Liaison: North Island, Okanagan, South Island, Aboriginal Educators, WLC/Bargaining, & TIOCAC; Grievance Appeals; LR; AGM delegate

**Local:** President; bargaining team; executive & committees (Burnaby)

**Teaching:** Grade 8–12 students (math, English, learning support)



FOR MEMBER-  
AT-LARGE  
**Jessica  
Hill**  
Cariboo  
Chilcotin

**I AM VERY PROUD** to put my name forward as a candidate for Member-at-Large again this year. For me, being an active participant on my local Executive Committee for the past five years has been about two things: advocacy and service. When the members of my local elected me, they were putting their trust in me. They expect me to defend their rights, support them when they struggle, and uphold our collective agreement. These are expectations I take very seriously, and they will shape the way I contribute to the work of the BCTF Executive Committee.

I am a thoughtful person by nature, and I engage in active listening with my students and the members I serve. Being an informed participant of any decision-making body requires both of these qualities, especially in a member-driven union such as ours. I used these qualities as a member of our local bargaining team, and I continue to rely on them as we navigate the stress and uncertainty of working through a global pandemic.

The role of Member-at-Large is simple: ensuring that members' voices reach the table and help guide the development of diverse strategies to support and advocate for teachers in our province.

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/JessicaHillMAL](https://www.facebook.com/JessicaHillMAL)  
Twitter: @JessicaHillMAL

## EXPERIENCE

**Provincial:** TIE-BC Publication Chair, Women in Negotiations, RA Agenda Committee

**Local:** Communications Chair, Local Representative, Vice-President, Bargaining Committee, LSA President

**Teaching:** LST, Middle School Humanities, Alternate

**Education:** BA, BEd, MEd (Special Education)



FOR MEMBER-  
AT-LARGE  
**Jody  
Polukoshko**  
Vancouver  
Elementary

**THIS CHALLENGING YEAR** has demonstrated the necessity of a nimble union that reflects the changing realities of members and students as the global pandemic evolves. I believe the way forward is based on a "Just Recovery," a concept embraced by our labour and social justice allies. This prioritizes health, wellness and working conditions for members, Aboriginal and racial justice, and structural and environmental sustainability—all necessary for a strong and accessible public education system.

We must learn from this crisis and pivot in directions that reflect our learning—highlighting member connections to locals and the BCTF, resisting centralization, and rejecting austerity—ensuring our union can withstand future crises and recover from this one stronger, more democratic, and more representative than before.

I ask for your support to continue pursuing these goals—through member engagement and participation, strong bargaining, solid policy decisions, advocacy, and action. Fairness and equity must be central in our recovery, and organizing needs to be consistent with the communities we serve. This crisis requires us to marshal our resources and solidarity, always grounded in the values that unite us. I hope to continue working with you toward a just recovery for all our members and students.

Website: [www.jodypolukoshko.com](https://www.jodypolukoshko.com)

## EXPERIENCE

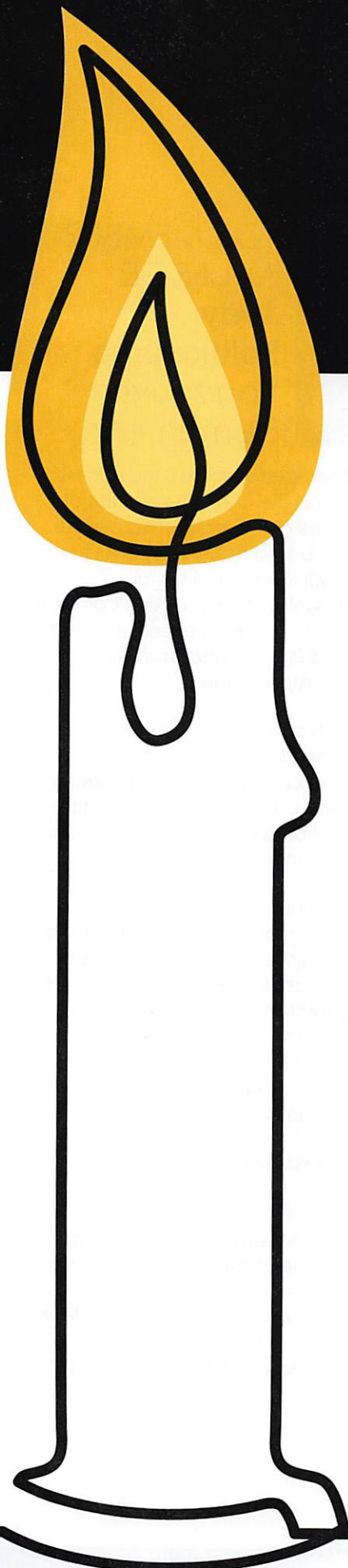
**Provincial:** BCTF EC Member-At-Large, Provincial Bargaining Team, WLC/BAC, Women in Negotiations, CASJ, Assistance Society

**Local:** Vice-President, Grievance Officer, Bargaining Team, Adult Ed Bargaining Team, Local Rep, Pride Co-Chair

**Teaching:** K-7 classroom, resource, Antihomophobia DRT

# April 28

## The National Day of Mourning: An important commemoration



By **John Decaire**, teacher and BC Labour Heritage Centre member, Surrey

**IN CANADA TODAY**, close to a thousand workers die each year of work-related injury and illness. In BC alone, we average close to 150 work-related deaths each year. These numbers, tragic enough in themselves, become even more tragic when one discovers that, among the most developed countries of the world, Canada ranks near the bottom of the OECD ranking of member countries for workplace injury and illness.

In 1991 Parliament passed the *Workers Mourning Day Act*, and with this law, April 28 officially became the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the job. This national commemoration came about after years of lobbying and pressure from CUPE and the labour community. The Day of Mourning recognizes the grievous loss of so many people who have died just trying to provide for themselves and their families; it is also an important touchstone that can act to remind our society of the importance of workplace safety. Yet, despite the Day of Mourning's importance, many people have never even heard of this commemoration.

For seven years now, The BC Labour Heritage Centre (BCLHC), has been trying to change this, by creating teaching materials that can be used in BC secondary schools on and around the Day of Mourning. In partnership with the BCTF, the BC Federation of Labour, WorkSafe BC, CUPE, the BC Principals' and

Vice Principals' Association, and the BC School Trustees Association, the BCLHC has created an entire program, complete with a variety of free teaching materials, that allows secondary teachers to bring a Day of Mourning commemoration to their school or classroom.

Why bring the Day of Mourning to BC schools? To not only remember lost workers, but to prepare the next generation of workers. Our materials are centred around the concept of teaching young people their legal workplace rights. It is our belief that knowing these rights can help keep them safe in their future workplaces. Something that is all the more important when one knows that young workers, like your students with part-time jobs, are about 33% more likely to get injured while on the job. It is for this reason that we believe bringing the Day of Mourning to schools is so important—to keep our students safe.

This year, Wednesday, April 28 is the National Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job. If you are interested in bringing the Day of Mourning to your school, please visit the Day of Mourning BC Schools Project site, [www.domschools.ca](http://www.domschools.ca), for all of our free, downloadable materials. Some of the materials include PA announcement scripts, lesson activities, videos, and more, all adaptable to your school's needs and level of participation. 9

# Resource reviews

## Challenging the cycle of violence

Review by Tammy Le, teacher-librarian, Surrey

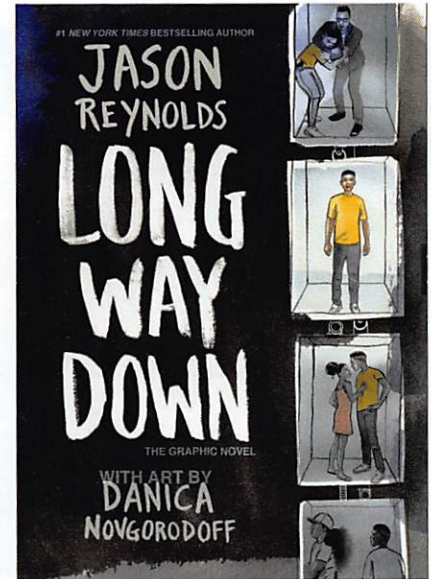
*Long Way Down*, published by Atheneum/Caitlyn Diouhy Books, 2020

**LONG WAY DOWN** by Jason Reynolds is a novel written in verse about the choice a 15-year-old boy must make after his brother is shot dead in his neighbourhood. The rules are simple: you don't cry, you don't snitch, you get revenge. In his world, there is no other option than to take his brother's gun and go after the murderer. As he enters the elevator to accomplish this task, ghosts from his past appear at every level to debate whether this is the best course of action.

While this novel is written in verse using few words, the imagery and content are rich. It is a highly accessible and beautifully written book that is engaging for reluctant and savvy readers. It leaves

the reader wondering what the protagonist's next steps will be and what can be done. The themes of poverty, violence, family, responsibility, and loyalty spark interest among students.

*Long Way Down* is used in English 10 classes at my school and has been approved by Focused Education Resources, which is a not-for-profit organization that reviews resources for classroom use in BC. This is a book that will speak to a diverse audience and fill the class with thought-provoking discussions about social justice issues. This novel was one of the nominees of Surrey School District's high school book award program called Surrey Teens Read in the 2018–19 school year. 9



## Indigenous resources for kids and adults

Review by Suzanne Munroe, teacher, Vancouver

*Warrior Kids Podcast* produced by Dr. Pam Palmater

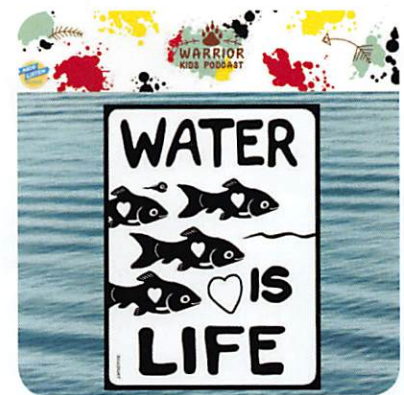
**WARRIOR KIDS PODCAST** was created by Dr. Pam Palmater to inspire kids to be warriors for social and earth justice. Dr. Palmater is a lawyer, professor, activist, and citizen of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Using a clear and kid-friendly tone, the podcast explores a variety of social justice topics including Orange Shirt Day, reconciliation, and cultural appropriation. You can expect to hear legends, listen to interviews with Indigenous leaders, and learn some Mi'kmaq words.

Since Indigenous perspectives are woven throughout the curriculum, I find that this podcast is a great resource for various subjects. For instance, in the episode "Water is Life" (which connects with the Grade 2 science curriculum), Palmater explains how people depend on water to survive, that Indigenous people are

water protectors, and that some Indigenous communities do not have access to clean drinking water. She encourages kids to draw pictures of water sources and write letters to the Prime Minister asking to provide clean water to Indigenous communities.

*Warrior Kids* has been a hit with my Grade 2 students and they always want to hear more. You can listen to the podcast for free at [www.warriorkidspodcast.com](http://www.warriorkidspodcast.com). It is best suited to children aged five to eight years old.

Since the BC curriculum was updated in 2016 to include Indigenous perspectives, I have realized how little I know about this topic. I started seeking out content from Indigenous sources to broaden my understanding. Luckily, Dr. Palmater has created resources for



adults as well, including her podcast *Warrior Life* and a reconciliation book club on her YouTube channel. Palmater has also written three books for adults: *Indigenous Nationhood*; *Empowering Grassroots Citizens*; *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*, and *Warrior Life: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*. Thanks to educators like Dr. Palmater, we can not only teach the curriculum; we can also become allies. 9



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## Professional Development Calendar

Visit the BCTF's PD Calendar for PD opportunities:  
[bcff.ca/PDCalendar](http://bcff.ca/PDCalendar)



## CLASSIFIEDS

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***"I can't believe I get to do this for a living!"***

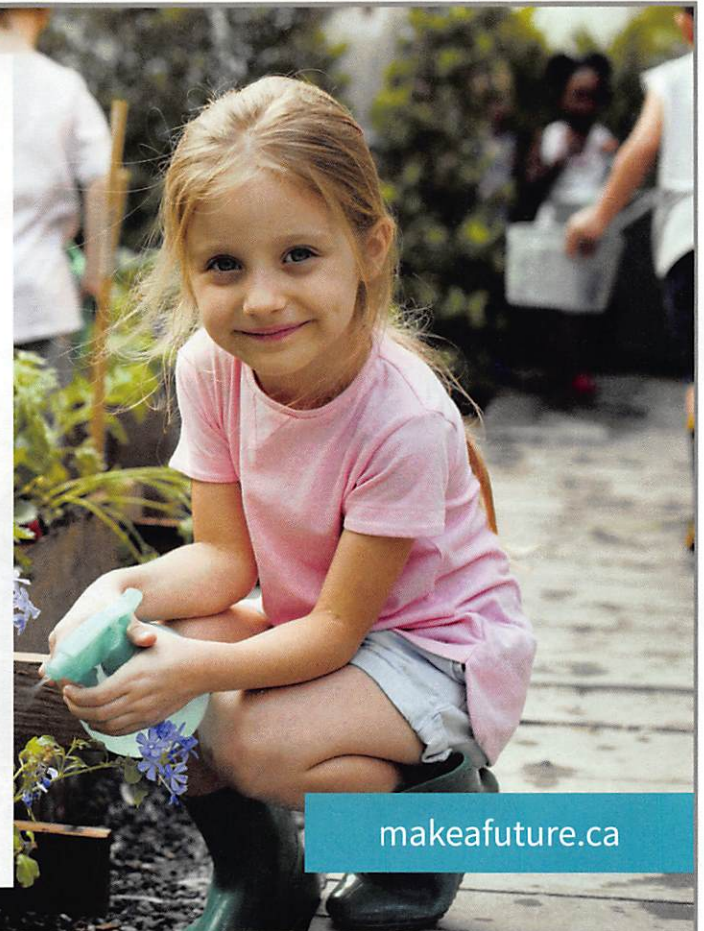
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Referrals can be made online at [confidentparents.ca](http://confidentparents.ca)

[www.sd42.ca](http://www.sd42.ca)



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**Above:** Grade 3 student Jordan Gerow won the primary category of the Burnaby Teachers' Association's student poster competition. Hundreds of Burnaby students submitted posters to help create a culture of mask wearing in schools.

Send photos of your students' work to [teachermag@bctf.ca](mailto:teachermag@bctf.ca) for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue.