

Principl(ed)

VOL. 2 - ISSUE 3 - June 2021

Sharing
Kindness

Guiding
Growth

Connecting
Leaders

A Day in the Life

of a New
Elementary
School
Principal

Brad Kuhn talks
about getting to
know your school
community, and
reflects on one of
life's very special
moments



The Journal of the BC Principals'
& Vice-Principals' Association



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"For some time, I had been the person asking all the questions, so it was quite an experience to support new members of our team, to both mentor them and learn from them. I think over that time, in answering those questions and working through different problems and issues, it became apparent to me that I was ready to seek out that next step."

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"We have asked our allies to walk alongside us in this work and collectively lift up Indigenous Education so it can be sustained and honoured in a good way across the entire district. We gather as family and in good relations 'miyo-wicehtowin' – our way of being together is founded on the 4 R's of Indigenous Philosophy."

Indigenous Education Allies and Leads



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"Our mission and vision were to build, grow, and share kindness in our school, local community, and the broader world. In a time when we were all feeling so far apart, I believed we needed to come together in a new way. This would require us to not only talk about kindness, but to make purposeful and practical actions of kindness the centre of our learning."

Build, Grow, Share Kindness

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"Dr. Hanley-Dafoe defines resiliency in a number of different ways ... The definition that stuck with me long after finishing the book is, 'Resiliency to me means doing the right next thing.'"

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The BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) is a voluntary professional association representing school leaders employed as Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system. The BCPVPA provides its members with the professional services and supports they need to provide exemplary leadership in public education.

We are proud to have more than 2600 members in the province's 60 school districts, and BCPVPA membership is open to any Principal, Vice-Principal or Director of Instruction at the school or district level. All school districts in the province have a local Principal and Vice-Principal association recognized as a Chapter of the BCPVPA.

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My mom lives in Coquitlam, just behind Coquitlam Centre. She moved to this condo about eight years ago, but we lived only a few blocks from there when I was young. Our home was on the other side of Westwood Street, which divides Coquitlam from Port Coquitlam. Mom is in my bubble, and I often spend part of the weekend helping her with chores and errands.

While moving furniture there recently, I found a news clipping behind the couch. The August 2020 article reported on then-Minister of Education Rob Fleming's announcements for the Fall return to school in BC. Without reading the article, I asked my mom if we should recycle it, or if she was keeping it for some reason. She hesitated to tell me ... in fact, she *didn't* tell me.

I asked, "Am I mentioned in the article?" A little sheepishly, she said, "Yes." That was the end of the conversation. It made me smile. Then I went for a run.

I took a circular route, running out to my childhood neighbourhood and back. This path took me along the Coquitlam River, where years ago I spent hours swimming and catching crayfish: memory lane, to say the least. When I got back to the condo, my distance fell short of my target, so I ran around the building to make up the distance. Mom's place is on the fourth floor and overlooks the spot where my run would come to an end. As I approached the end of my run, I looked up to her balcony and the child in me wanted to call up to her, "Mom, mom ... watch me ... can you see me, mom?"

Of course, I didn't call out. But images flooded my mind, images of people – young, old, and in-between – calling out to be seen. These thoughts, and my curious childish reflex, coloured the days ahead. And then, Joshua Whitehead provided a caption and a clarity for my musing.

SO MUCH
SACRED
IN THE
MONTH
OF
JUNE

by

Darren Danyluk

President, BCPVPA



This year's winner of CBC Canada Reads is *Jonny Appleseed* by Joshua Whitehead. Joshua is an Oji-Cree/Nehiyaw, Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer member of the Peguis First Nation (Treaty 1). I picked up my copy on the day the winner was announced. Well into the book, Joshua writes about water and the rivers in his life. Joshua calls the water a 'mentor' and a teacher. In the next lines, his metaphor extends and the water becomes a road, a path ... perhaps a journey or life itself. He writes, "The water is a furious road and the only words we can say to one another are simple: witness me." In the heartbeats that followed my reading of this line, I experienced one of those rare lucid moments when muddy thoughts and puzzles converge into sharp focus and you feel them thrum.

To bear witness means 'to show that something exists or is true.' This need for validation and confirmation is at the core of our existence. And here, in June, we witness a great deal.

Not to diminish Kindergarten Graduation, but the greatest pomp and circumstance is typically reserved for high school. In my experience, high school graduations outshine all other such celebrations,

even post-secondary! And if you happen to be an educator in a small community, you know that the town all but shuts for the grad ceremony. When the guest lists include aunts, uncles, grandparents, and all extended family, that leaves few people available to run the place – the town has to shut down! And gathered together in gymnasiums around the province, witnesses gaze from the bleachers upon hundreds of very young adults, bidding for attention, with nervous smiles that say "Look at me and what I've done! Witness me."

Things weren't made to last forever; they're not supposed to. But we try to fix them in time and keep them alive, these moments. Because they pass too quickly, and are gone before we know it. And this moment of public validation strikes a lasting note that rings for years to come, as I discovered when I resurrected just such a moment after 28 years.

With our daughters nearly ready to leave the nest, our home is larger than needed for just my wife and me. We've begun to think seriously about the next chapter of our lives, perhaps in a much smaller home. Our basement is filled with those items that we can't



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use, don't use, won't use – but cannot throw away. With space to fill, it is easy to avoid the process of weighing the value of things and deciding what is worth keeping. It takes a level of commitment to sort through the history of things, considering each memento, sending some to the landfill. A decision to downsize has forced a ruthless spring cleaning in my home this year.

In my purging process, tucked in behind the wooden bed frame I built in 1979, I found a gift from the Class of '93. While I finally discarded the rustic four-poster waterbed I have been moving and storing for the last 40 years, I put aside the gift for later consideration. The gift is wood, too. It's a homemade clock, embedded in a lacquered plaque, and beneath the lacquer are fifty-five photos of the 1993 graduation class, ironically frozen in time on a clock which hasn't advanced one second for decades. One of the class members created this for me, and I could not part with it.

On a whim, I took a photo of the clock and posted it online with a caption that underscored the remarkable passage of time.

Reactions to my post came swiftly from my former students, each carrying that joyful note of celebration nearly thirty years on. Every June, another day is catalogued for another generation to mark their experience and their achievements. There is no denying the enduring meaning of such witness.

The waterbed went to the landfill; the gift, I think not.

To be sure, the graduates of 2020 and 2021 have experienced unparalleled conclusions to their secondary schooling. More so than ever before, those nervous, smiling faces saying, "Look what I've done!", bidding us to see them, will need this confirmation.

And more than ever before, so will all other players in our system.

In her book, *The Listening Leader*, Shane Safir writes about fostering trust, relationships, and community. She writes about bids for a leader's attention which come from all sides: students sharing successes, teachers unloading a difficult lesson, colleagues seeking support, or parents searching for answers. Safir characterizes these bids as a call for care or attention, a call to be seen and validated. "Even those times that feel shrouded in criticism or negativity: Can you find a bid lurking there?... How [leaders] respond to these offers matters ... a lot."

I would suggest that this is something well understood by the Principals and Vice-Principals in our schools, who have spent the last year acknowledging bids for attention from their communities. More than listening, our school leaders have heard and supported and sustained their communities through one of the most difficult years in recent history. And in the concluding weeks of this school year, one that began with a reimagining of how 'school' will work, our school leaders are conducting a spring cleaning of their own.

As described by Simon Breakspear, a process to capture, cleanse, and weave has been undertaken. What do we keep and refine? What do we discard, and what do we restore? Do we keep the practices



of heightened hygiene? Staggered movements through the halls? What about timetables? Shall we stick with the 'new normal'? Does it better suit students in high school to focus upon fewer courses at a time? Do we keep hybrid models to accommodate learners, some of whom have thrived in this environment? What about collaboration and meetings? Do we continue to take advantage of our new-found technical skills, and continue to meet unimpeded by time and space? We've forged networks more widely flung than before our COVID-19 experience: this must be a good thing, no? Did it come at some cost? Was it worth the price? So many questions, so much listening to be entertained in the busiest and fastest month of the year: AprilMayJune.

I borrowed John Mayer's lyrics, for I believe June's sacred traditions sustain us with the acknowledgement we need to keep moving forward. John Mayer's lyrics go on to say, "By the time I recognize this moment, this moment will be gone." Our school leaders intuitively know this, which is why they moved mountains in June of 2020 to make the Class of '20 feel seen, heard, and witnessed – all the Classes of 2020, regardless of grade. And they will do it again for the Classes of '21.

Before the moments of June 2021 pass, we must bear witness to what our Principals and Vice-Principals have accomplished over the past year because their own bid will be quiet, if not silent. They will never say, "Look at me." Since March 2020, I have endeavoured to bear witness to the dedication, competency, and commitment of our school leaders at every opportunity. As we close the book on this school year, let me end by saying, with genuine awe, "Just look what you have done!"

***Darren Danyluk is the
2020-2022 President
of the BCPVPA.***



connection

"All the topics were perfect! The forum came at a great time, during a very busy and stressful time of the year. It gave me the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on our practices. Most importantly, it re-energized me and I am ready to face the rest of the school year."

(Member Event Feedback)



BCPVPA offers BC Principals and Vice-Principals opportunities to learn, but also to network and collaborate with colleagues from across the province. Those shared experiences bring our 2,600 members closer together and help to strengthen BC's public education system.

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The work and responsibilities of school leaders can vary greatly from elementary to middle to secondary, from region to region, and from school to school.

A Day in the Life offers a snapshot of BCPVPA members in their roles, and shares their thoughts on their path, their practice and why they love what they do.

In our sixth installment of the series, we meet Brad Kuhn, Principal of Ellison Elementary in Kelowna in SD 23, a K-5 school nurturing a population of approximately 200 students.

Brad Kuhn knew on the first day of his practicum that he wanted to be an educator. But leading up to that, he selected a double-degree program at the University of Alberta – a science degree and an education degree. “I knew that the maths and sciences were my areas of strength,” Brad recalls, “I thought that I would like to be a teacher – but I wasn’t 100% sure. With a lot of education programs, you do one degree, and then you go and complete your education component. This program got me into schools in the very first semester. I wanted to find out if this was going to be the right path.”

“From the time that I went into my first middle school, and experienced being there with the kids, I was hooked. And I hadn’t been sure. I was 19 years old, and I needed to decide. In my first practicum, when I was learning alongside kids and experiencing their enthusiasm and excitement, I knew that this would be a happy way to spend my days for 30 or 40 years.”

Brad returned to BC the day he wrote his final test, and started as a TTOC (Teacher Teaching On-Call) before he was hired as a math teacher at his old high school, Vernon Secondary School. In 2010, he met his wife and joined her in Kelowna. He spent some time regaining seniority in his new school district, with opportunities to teach math and some elementary school at the grade five and six level. In 2015,

A Day in the Life

of a
New
Elementary
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Principal

"From the time that I went into my first middle school, and experienced being there with the kids, I was hooked."

- Brad Kuhn



Student Lincoln Spelay with Principal Brad Kuhn

Photo - Graham Johnson

drawn by the complexity and intrigue of the work, Brad was successful in achieving a Vice-Principal role, first at Watson Road Elementary and then at Mount Boucherie Secondary.

"The challenge is really my favourite part of the job. I can plan how I think my day is going to go, and who I'm going to meet with. I don't know if I've ever had a day as a school leader where it went the way I thought it would; there's always something that gets thrown my

way that I get to work through, to fix, to solve and to support. I love the influence that I have in supporting kids; I knew that as a teacher, I really got to make an impact with the kids that were in my room. And when I worked together with colleagues, maybe my influence would go beyond that, to some other rooms, but the opportunity within this role to support people and the impact that it can have for more and more kids is something I really relish. The favorite piece of my role is carving out those times for instructional leadership

where I can learn alongside educators and find ways to support them with their learning. I absolutely love to do that.”

The passion to learn and to have an impact led Brad in an unanticipated direction when he arrived at Mount Boucherie, when he took on the Indigenous Education portfolio at the school. The Vice-Principal who had been engaged with that work had moved on, and there was a new Principal at the school. Brad put his own name forward as he had begun his journey of learning, and had joined the district’s Truth and Reconciliation District Committee.

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and to solve and to support.”*

“My story is really not a clear cut path. Four years ago I had almost no experience with Indigenous Education, the *First Peoples’ Principles of Learning*, or an understanding around Truth and Reconciliation. When I arrived at Mount Boucherie, it was very striking to me that my area of learning needed to be around that piece, and I set up a professional learning goal for myself for the next year, with the idea of learning alongside my colleagues, and learning from them and from the kids in our Academy of Indigenous Studies.”

“Taking the Massive Online Open Course on Truth and Reconciliation through UBC was a huge jumpstart for me, as I started searching out what I

needed to read on my pathway. I went to the library, and our Academy teachers and I started reading all the books that our English First Peoples’ courses were offering. I spent as much time as I could in classrooms in our Academy, learning alongside kids and asking questions. I also tried to attend anything that was happening in the community. I remember that our students held a 24 hour Drum-A-Thon, and I took my family. My little guy was pretty young at the time, and they gave him a drumstick and he joined in with some of the drumming. It was a wonderful experience for our family, and I wanted our community to know that I was going to be as involved as I could be, and be a learner within the community.”

“I was blessed with really great colleagues who welcomed me in, accepted me as a learner, and supported me in my learning journey around Truth and Reconciliation. I was able to set up learning opportunities that strengthened the Academy, where we could work together. My biggest message in this would be that I came in with zero, I made it my learning goal, and at the end of that work, the fact that our Academy and the Indigenous leaders in our school district named me — and I want to be careful with my wording here, because I don’t call myself an ally – but they called me an ally, in that work. It was an honour.”

As Brad’s time at Mount Boucherie drew to an end, he accepted an invitation to lunch. “During my second-to-last week, the Academy teachers and advocates asked me come and have lunch with them. They wanted to congratulate me in moving forward to becoming a Principal. My immediate reaction was that I’m uncomfortable with it being about me, but really excited to get together with the group before I leave.”

“As I walked into the room, they let me know we were going to our little outdoor courtyard – it’s a place where our Academy meets often to be outside and to smudge. I thought okay, that’s really nice, we’re going to do a smudging ceremony together, a cleansing to honour the past and look to the future. And then when I saw the blanket there, and I realized what was



Brad Kuhn with Academy teachers Mary Redfearn (L) & Bailey Nerbus (R)

"... when I saw the blanket there, and I realized what was happening, it was hard to control the emotions."



Brad Kuhn with counselor Karen Gilbert (L) & advocate Nicole Rishaug (R)

"For some time, I had been the person asking all the questions, so it was quite an experience to support new members of our team, to both mentor them and learn from them."

happening, it was hard to control the emotions. They made a statement around the learning that I had done, and the support that I had provided to the Academy within the role. It went around in the circle and we all smudged in, and they honoured me in the ceremony. My wife is a teacher at Mount Boucherie, so they had invited her to come, as well as the counselor that I worked with in team there and the members of the Academy. We had become very close in the work that we were doing. That honour of the blanketing ceremony was a really important moment for me."

Brad's move from Mount Boucherie signaled the next stage of his leadership as he became a Principal in February 2021. The decision to apply for the new role was a natural next step along Brad's path. "When we had a significant turnover in school leadership at Mount Boucherie a couple of years ago, I took on more of a role in honouring the strengths of the teammates that came in, and trying to make sure that I supported them in the great things that they brought to our team. My other two Vice-Principal partners were coming in from teaching roles. So I worked to honour their strengths, and to learn from them because they're amazing leaders, and to answer all of the new questions that come along with being a brand new Vice-Principal.

"For some time, I had been the person asking all the questions, so it was quite an experience to support new members of our team, to both mentor them and

learn from them. I think over that time, in answering those questions and working through different problems and issues, it became apparent to me that I was ready to seek out that next step. I was doing okay, and I was ready. I wasn't willing to mention that to anybody, to be honest, until my mentors came to me and said, okay: the time is now. I thought I was getting close. I'd say the impetus behind my decision was that we had experienced a lot of change, I was feeling more and more comfortable with where I was in my role and how I was supporting staff and students and families, and I was ready for that next challenge."

Brad's connection to his mentors has been a powerful point of navigation in his career. "I heard a piece of advice from our deputy superintendent Terry-Lee Beaudry, who said you should always be in a situation where you're mentoring school leaders and staff, and you should also be in a capacity where you're being mentored. I had that opportunity with some new Vice-Principals and over the last couple of years we've had successful applicants from our staff at Mount Boucherie who've become Vice-Principals, and so it was easy to support them."

"It's important to me that I stay well connected to those folks who have been key to my development. Central Okanagan Public Schools in Kelowna is really good at establishing support networks, and as soon as I became a Principal I automatically become a part of our New Principal Network in the school district. We meet once a month, and that so that's so empowering and critical in our context, and in our role."

"I'm well connected to the Principals that I've worked for as a Vice-Principal, and I have been fortunate to keep them as my mentors. My very first Principal was Sylvain Guignard, and I call him often. He's a very strong elementary school Principal and now, being back in an elementary school, I can give him a shout and make sure that I'm in line with my thinking, and with the elementary school programming and pedagogy. And my first Principal at Mount Boucherie was Raquel Steen, and she was named as one of our new district assistant superintendents in March 2021.

I'm proud to call her my mentor, and we connect all the time."

"I think, in our roles, we need those folks. It's been critical for me coming here, where I'm used to being on a team of four. When we made decisions, we walked into each other's offices, we checked things and we mulled it over, we had a debate. When I'm here, I'm a Principal of a school of 220, and it's just me. You make those networks with staff, but sometimes you need to run things past somebody who's also in a formal school leadership role, so I'll often call Sylvain or Raquel, or Scott Sieben who was my other Principal at Boucherie, and coincidentally was Principal here at Ellison Elementary."

Brad moved into his new role as Principal as the first full year of the global pandemic was about to be marked. With health and safety protocols in effect, the experience of immersion in a new school community was understandably different.

"The first thing is that you get to know the kids and staff as quickly as you can. It's so much harder to get to know the community when every time they see me I'm wearing a mask, and they're not invited into the school right now. I'm doing my best to be out in front of the school every morning and every day after school; even though I'm masked up, I hope they can see my smile. I'm trying to connect as much as I can, and to be as thoughtful as I can with the newsletters I'm sending out. I made a very conscious choice about connection: we have ten divisions here at Ellison, and I'm in every single one of those ten divisions every day, trying to make sure that I connect with every teacher and every one of our classrooms every single day. Sometimes that's a quick check-in, and other times I can stick around and read with the kids or help support in other ways. At the start, it's really building the relationships, and trying to be really thoughtful about that. My role doesn't have any teaching time assigned to it, but my goal is that once I'm more settled in, that I'll be able to team with them and come into classrooms to do some team teaching."

"Ellison Elementary is this tucked-away little hidden gem, a beautiful little learning community that everybody here is so proud of, and it comes with lots of kids who need our support and our help. Our staff is proud to be from Ellison Elementary and proud to work with these great kids that families send us every day. That's what gives me energy, that the staff is just thrilled to be here, wants to show off our great school culture and what we learn here together. They have been excited to showcase that for me, and for our kids and families. The hardest part of COVID-19 at our school has been around the fact that this is such a community school, we have community events and volunteers, and families that really feel comfortable here. I think the community is really reeling from not being in the school, not being able to directly support the kids. My understanding of our building is that we would usually have parent volunteers coming in and reading with kids, and running play days, and doing all those kinds of things. So it's really hard right now, because they're not invited in."

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That's what gives me energy, that the staff is just thrilled to be here, wants to show off our great school culture and what we learn here together."



As Brad moves towards the end of his first year as Principal, he can reflect on what he has learned as a teacher and Vice-Principal, and what has served him well as he continues his leadership journey.

"That day of the blanket ceremony was a moving moment for me. I brought no Indigenous knowledge base to that group. I became a leader who learned alongside, and supported their journey. As I continued my learning, I was able to work with them and support them in continuing theirs: that's the whole beauty of learning alongside one another. It didn't matter that I was the Vice-Principal and they were an advocate, or a teacher, or a student. We all learned together and supported one another. I would say in my career,

being acknowledged as someone who supports learning, supports teachers, supports moving student learning forward, that's something that drives me, and those are probably the proudest moments, when teachers and community, and staff and kiddos would say that.

"Another source of pride for me is that I believe we can really judge how we're doing as a school learning community based on how we support and help the members of our community who need that help the most. I work hard to connect with those kids and families, and find ways of supporting them."

"Part of that connection, particularly for new leaders

"... I believe we can really judge how we're doing as a school learning community based on how we support and help the members of our community who need that help the most. I work hard to connect with those kids and families, and find ways of supporting them."

or those in new roles, is to take the time to get to know everybody, and go slow at the start, so that you can go fast later on. Build the relationships so that everybody can get to know you." Brad smiles. "I'm not necessarily built like that, I like coming in, getting going and doing the things, so if I'm being honest I don't always follow my own advice that well. But the main thing is that you want to support everyone, and build that trust."

"For anyone who is considering moving into a school leadership role, I would recommend that you find a really good mentor who's willing to work with you and to talk to you about the challenges of the job and what the role is really like. It's critical to find someone who will be honest with you about the role. The second thing would be to make sure that the role is going to fit for you, and your life, and your family. That it's a family decision that everyone is together on, and not a solo decision. My wife and I are on the same page, and our goal is to be there each night for dinner with the kids. That's a big goal for us."

"I would also say that what's supported me in this role has been to continue to view myself as a learner. Every year, I have been involved in formal learning as well as the work that I'm doing as a school leader. I've attended courses like BCPVPA's Short Course, the UBC Massive Online Open Course on Truth and Reconciliation, and the Transformative Educational Leadership

Program through UBC last year with Linda (Kaser) and Judy (Halbert). We have a group of school leaders here in Kelowna that are often engaged in taking some of the Harvard courses, and then we get together in networks and talk about our learning. When I'm learning, my staff sees that, and they're excited to ask me, "Well, what are you learning now, what courses are you taking, and how can you possibly fit all that in?" I continue to learn about education; I'll never really call myself an administrator – I don't think that's my job or my role, I don't like that title. You'll hear me use the term school leader all the time, learner. And I'm always learning. And such a big part of that is the networks that we involve ourselves in as well."

"The Principal role is what I expected it to be, but I have to say that the jump from teacher to Vice-Principal – to formal school leadership – was probably much more eye-opening than the transition from Vice-Principal to Principal. I also think that there is more going on for kids and families, more things in schools, than I ever imagined as a teacher. I think the reason why I love my job is because I get to support and help with those things, and really try and make an impact where it's needed the most."



@kuhner15

A Day in the Life of a New Elementary School Principal

6:30 am Check emails during breakfast

6:50 am Leave for school

7:20 am At school, check absences and connect with staff

8:10 am Support supervision outside

8:30 am Ensure that everyone is in the building. Support any students struggling, and help Kindergarten students

8:40 am Announcements

8:45 am Support learning in classrooms

9:30 am Classroom performance appraisal observation

10:30 am Connect with head secretary about any calls, or anything that has come up

11:00 am Supervision for lunch

I generally check emails while eating breakfast in the morning. It gives me a chance before I get to school to see if anything has popped up through the night or that morning. I can think about it on the drive in.

I leave home just before 7:00 am and I'm here by about 7:20am. Once I arrive, I check on our absences for the day, and prepare for any TTOCs that we have, or CEA (Certified Education Assistant) coverage. I'm finishing any tasks that I've got going on, and I'm connecting with staff as they're coming in, getting ready for the day and answering their questions. It's really important to me that the doors open, and that I'm connecting with everyone as they're as they're coming in.

By 8:15 am, I'm outside to help support with supervision for the morning. And then at 8:30am I'm ensuring that everyone has made it into the building, and supporting any students who are struggling and may not want to let their parents go.

Once we're in, I make sure that I'm checking in with our primary classes right away, helping any of our kindergarten kids, and at 8:40 am I make the announcements.

I try to spend as much of my morning as I can in classrooms. I'll deal with anything as it comes up in the office, of course, but it's important to me to get into classrooms as much as I can throughout the morning.

I'll return to the office just before lunch, and make phone calls or deal with anything that's come through in the office, and I can help my head secretary, Tracy, out with anything. And then I'm outside for lunch with the kids from 11:00 am to 12 noon.

At the end of lunch, I'm dealing with anything that may have come up, behaviourally, over lunch. I find that the more that I'm out there, the less I have to do after lunch, and that helps support our team. I eat my lunch after lunch and for the afternoon, I'm working on a variety of tasks, following up with any parents, following up with teachers who've asked questions or need support, and answering my emails. I'm back outside for recess supervision from 1:30 pm to 1:45 pm,

A Day in the Life of a New Elementary School Principal

and then there are the end-of-day announcements at 2:25 pm and supervision after school until 2:45 pm.

Most days, I'll try and schedule meetings at 2:45 pm to help prepare for what may be coming up, or to review something that's occurred, so that could be co-planning something with teachers, prepping for staff meetings, going to network meetings, or doing my own reading and coursework.

I really think it's kind of a team family decision when you decide to enter into a job like this. My family goal in taking on this role, and the agreement that I have, is to do my best to be home for dinner at 5:30 pm. I'm not always successful, but the effort is always there. Once the kids have gone to bed – I have a seven year old and a five year old, so grade one, and my little guy will enter kindergarten next year – I finish off emails. I average an hour of work each night. Sometimes that 5:30 pm doesn't happen: once or twice a week, I have something that will take me well beyond that time.

We have ten divisions, so I'm connecting with all of the teaching staff often. Our Student Support Services team is critical in how we support all ten of those rooms, the kids, and the members of those teams. We have a learning assistance teacher, an advocate, and a counselor, and they all work Tuesdays and Thursdays, so we connect often on those days. Every Tuesday afternoon, we have a school-based team meeting where we make sure that all classrooms are supported, and that the learning needs for all kids are being met.

The head secretary in a school is critical in ensuring that everything's running well. So Tracy Csuka is my teammate there. At a small school like this, there isn't just one person that I'm going to be leaning on. I'm very fortunate to have a staff of ten classroom teachers, seven CEAs, and our clerical staff: on any given day we're in the range of 25 staff, but we go above that with our noon hour supervisors and custodial staff; I feel very fortunate that I get to connect every day with every single member that comes into our school.

12:00 pm	Support any behavioural issues, or first aid requirements, from lunch
12:15 pm	Eat lunch at my desk, checking emails
12:45 pm	Call parents, and write and respond to emails
1:30 pm	Supervision
1:45 pm	Continue to support learning in classrooms
2:25 pm	End of day announcements
2:30 pm	Supervision
2:45 pm	Scheduled meetings, preparation for staff meeting, network meetings, reading and course work
4:30 pm	Connect with mentor
5:00 pm	Leave school to be home for family dinner at 5:30 pm
8:00 pm	Work with unfinished emails from the day

Committees

bcp vpa



CONNECTING LEADERS
Leading for Equity
October 21 - 22, 2021

How does a conference come together?

How does it hit the mark, and feed the need? Like many successful ventures, a great conference flows from the work of a dedicated committee that understands the needs of the attendees, presenters, and keynotes, and has a vision for an event that will stand out in the moment, and be memorable in the weeks and months to follow.

The 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference is hosted by the Metro Region Chapters of the BCPVPA; co-chairs Rosa Fazio (SD 39), Peter Johnston (SD 36) and Andrea McComb (SD 43) talk about the committee experience, and why the 2021 Conference is a hot ticket.

by

Rosa Fazio, Principal, SD 39

Peter Johnston, Principal, SD 36

Andrea McComb, District Principal, SD 43



1. Deciding to Get Involved



Peter

I was part of the Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Advisory Committee, and there was a call in the Spring of 2019 for a Metro Chair for the 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference. Recognizing that it was a monumental task, we thought it would make sense to have Co-Chairs. So, with that in mind, I signed up. I am honoured to be part of this fantastic team, putting together this unique conference. The pandemic has sent us all a curveball, and has forced us to think out of the 'traditional conference' box. Knowing that I am working alongside Andrea and Rosa as Co-Chairs, and Liz, Jess, and Amorie as BCPVPA staff, also makes the work much more enjoyable.



Andrea

The Coquitlam Chapter always plans their conference on the same date as BCPVPA's Connecting Leaders. As a PLD Rep, I was exposed to the excitement when the Island planned the first regional conference in 2018, and I was watching Prince George build momentum for the 2020 conference. By hosting the conferences regionally, it seemed to highlight leadership all across the province. I attended Prince George's online Connecting Leaders Conference in October 2020, and left feeling very proud of my colleagues. I saw participating as a Co-Chair as a way of representing the Coquitlam Chapter in the Metro conference. Being part of growing a conference also builds your leadership network and connections beyond your own district. At the root, to be honest, I love being part of a team that continually learns and grows.



Rosa

The Vancouver district has had a long-standing history of an annual October Whistler conference held at the same time as Connecting Leaders. We thoroughly enjoy connecting with our Chapter members and district staff annually, yet recognize that we are not able to learn from the amazing speakers and provincial colleagues who are attending the BCPVPA conference concurrently. As the PLD Rep for the Vancouver Elementary Chapter for a number of years, I had the opportunity to connect with other Chapter PLD Reps and recognize the privilege that affords. Sharing experiences amongst districts is invaluable. Knowing that the BCPVPA wanted to organize a Metro-hosted 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference provided the perfect opportunity to unite leadership and learning across districts through a common lens. I am delighted that we landed on Leading for Equity. This conference is two years in the making, and it's been an honour and wonderful professional growth opportunity engaging in meaning-making discussions and broadening my perspectives. Co-chairing has been a gift.

2. Defining the Focus

Educational leadership is complex, with many moving parts. As school leaders, it's hard to know where to begin but it's easy to understand that our decisions must always be made in the best interest of all students.

Deciding on the theme – Leading for Equity – came relatively easily to the committee since issues of equity are part of a national conversation and a primary issue faced during the pandemic, thus becoming a priority in schools.

This past year, we have witnessed many racist acts, and many of us have confronted our own blindness and bias. As we learn to become allies, we need to embrace discomfort in order to be better equipped to have courageous conversations for the sake of all learners.

Truth and reconciliation brought us a call to action. Education is an historic tool of oppression, and we must ask ourselves how to create change so that education becomes a tool for equity. We hope Connecting Leaders 2021 will be one such tool for our members.

3. Determining the Speakers

We researched different speakers by combing through YouTube videos, Ted Talks and articles, and brainstorming together about who most inspired us. It was important to us to bring to our members a Canadian perspective, with Canadian presenters. We chose three top-notch Canadian speakers, ensuring representation from the BIPOC and LGBTQ communities, with insights on leadership and listening.

Meet the 2021 Keynotes:



Candy Palmater is a renowned Canadian orator, actor, writer, activist and multiple award-winning TV and radio personality who has executive produced three films on Mi'kmaw culture.



Anna Maria Tremonti is a masterful storyteller who hosted CBC's *The Current* for 17 years. This two-time Gemini Award winner is now producing original podcasts that illuminate, challenge and surprise.



Nouman Ashraf is an Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, within the Organizational Behavior area, and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion initiatives at the Rotman School of Management.

4. Overcoming the Uncertainty of the Times

We want to thank the Prince George CL 2020 Committee for their outstanding work in mounting their virtual conference: we learned a lot from them. We also want to thank the BCPVPA PLD team who have been indispensable as we plan the detailed logistics of producing such a massive event during these uncertain times.

While we had hopes that the global pandemic would be over, and that everyone would be vaccinated by October 2021, we know that the future is unpredictable and that masking-up, social distancing, and small numbers for gathering may

all still be in place this Fall. It is important to us to ensure that BC's Principals and Vice-Principals are continuing to set the standard and ensure compliance with the health and safety protocols. We delayed our decision-making on what the conference will 'look like' until the very last moment, but we believe we have come up with an exciting hybrid model that will serve us well in October and beyond.

5. Delivering the Conference

For 2021, in keeping with health protocols, colleagues can choose to attend as individuals, or to gather safely in small local 'HUBs' to participate in the virtually-accessible Conference.

HUBs are a gathering of multiple participants in a face-to-face large-room setting that is focused around the presentation broadcast through the virtual platform, and utilizes table discussion groups. Individual delegates who are joining on individual computers will participate in the Conference through the virtual platform, and will be part of virtual breakout rooms with other colleagues for discussions.

6. Drawing Upon What We've Experienced

Nothing can ever replace sitting in a conference with your colleagues while you listen to an engaging speaker. However, with the swift advancements in technology for conferencing and the HUB format, we hope our model does offer attendees that same opportunity. With a laptop, projector, and screen, you can sit with your colleagues at your local HUB, listen together to the speaker, and collaborate with your colleagues. Or, you can watch and listen on your laptop and join collaborative breakout groups with colleagues from around the province. We believe that in opening up the conference to a truly BC-wide audience of members and friends, we are combining the best of both worlds.

We are delighted to present BCPVPA Connecting Leaders 2021: Leading for Equity. The speakers will offer insightful perspectives that show what is possible when equity can be achieved. It will be inspiring, and we hope that it brings further unity to the work undertaken by the BCPVPA in support of all learners.

Andrea, Peter and Rosa

Co-Chairs, BCPVPA 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference



CONNECTING LEADERS
Leading for Equity

Thursday October 21, 7 pm
Friday October 22, 9 am

Register
bit.ly/BCPVPA_CL2021

bcpvpa.org



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*“The truth about stories is
that’s all we are”*

– Thomas King

Indigenous Education Allies and Leads (IEAL)

by

Chas Desjarlais

District Principal, Indigenous Education
SD 39

Stories are powerful – they can sustain and provide purpose in our lives. Oyate (2021) contends that stories can be medicine, they can harm, they can heal, they can reveal truth and they can unite people for the greater good. Stories are a form of knowledge and when shared they have the potential to transform peoples' thinking and their lives to change the future. As Oyate states, "It's a known fact that stories can be our greatest teachers – when they're well told, when their lessons remain unstated, when we can ponder their many nuances." (Oyate, 2021, para. 3). I will share a few stories of how the Indigenous Education Allies and Leads (IEAL) came to be, its vision, goals and reimagined possibilities. I have learned from those who tell stories that you will take away what you need in the moment.

Indigenous Education Allies and Leads (IEAL) SD 39

The VSB (Vancouver School Board) Indigenous Education Department considers itself to be a family and it is not unusual for us to meet and share details of our lives and the work we do. We often gather over coffee breaks or lunch to share our stories – it helps us feel connected, provides us with an opportunity to share knowledge through relationships, and validates

the work we do. A common story that has consistently emerged from our gatherings since 2015 is the increased demand for our presence in classrooms and schools to share our gifts, talents, and knowledge in regard to Indigenous Education. It is no coincidence that this increased demand came at a time when the newly-revised BC K-12 curriculum integrated and embedded Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives with the inclusion of the *First Peoples' Principles of Learning*. This inclusion required the department to rethink the way we work, and how we deliver Indigenous Education within the VSB. The relentless demand for our support within schools sparked us to reimagine how our work could be more sustainable. The old model of single classroom and/or school visits by district personnel – and ticking the box – was neither sustainable nor respectful of the knowledges/pedagogies we offer. We understood we needed to develop a collaborative network that helps build capacity, and sustain educators' and students' learning about Indigenous Education. The pathway moving forward is grounded in 'collective responsibility' and building 'good relations' so that everyone benefits from Indigenous Knowledges and Pedagogies, particularly children.

The 'Two-Eyed Seeing' Approach and Indigenous Education Allies and Leads (IEAL)

Etuaptmuk

is the Mi'kmaq word for Two-Eyed Seeing

Elder Albert Marshall often explains Etuaptmuk – 'Two-Eyed Seeing' – by saying it "refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all."

(Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, p. 335)

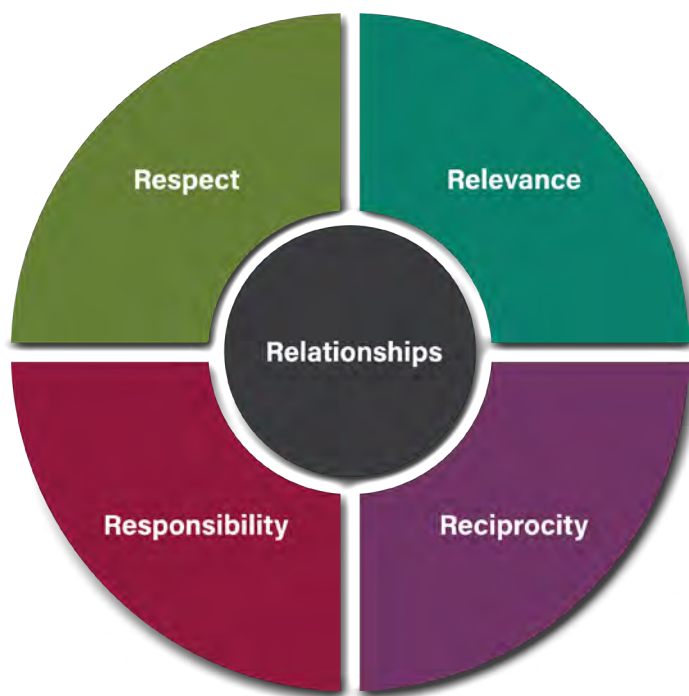


Source: integrativescience.ca

IEAL in School District 39 utilizes the approach of the 'Two-Eyed Seeing' created by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall (2004). IEAL is an expansive and growing network of collaborating educators, administrators and students whose work is grounded in the guiding principle of the concept of a "co-learning journey of different knowledges and cultures working together" (Institute for Integrative Science and Health (IISH), *Bringing Together Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Western Scientific Knowledge*, para. 3) for the betterment of all learners. Marshall's 'Two-Eyed Seeing' approach, when applied to Indigenous Education, allows for brave spaces to have conversations about one's learning where true "collaborative, cross-cultural work, [that] intentionally seeks to avoid the situation of becoming a clash between knowledges, domination of one worldview, or assimilation by one worldview of the knowledge of another" (IISH, Two-Eyed Seeing, para. 22).

IEAL came together for the first time in 2018, and continue to gather informally in person and, now, online. The gatherings are a time to collaborate and engage in brave conversations and share stories, so we may continue to learn and understand each other's histories, while honouring and centring Indigenous stories. As a group we explore how we can transform our relationships, workplaces, and communities through Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Pedagogies. It is through our kinship ties and stories that we connect with the heart of our Indigenous society. It is through a person's position in the kinship system, which establishes their relationship to others and to the universe, and prescribes their responsibilities towards other people, the land, and natural resources. It is the responsibility of all to work as one mind and one heart. As a department, we call in educators, administrators, and students to become a part of our Indigenous families to help do the important work of Indigenous Education.

We have asked our allies to walk alongside us in this work and collectively lift up Indigenous Education so it can be sustained and honoured in a good way across the entire district. We gather as family and in good relations 'miyo-wicehtowin' – our way of being together is founded on the 4 R's of Indigenous



Philosophy (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991) – Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility, and the 5th R: Relationships. The 4 R's, embodied and enacted in collaboration, have guided us to create meaningful, supportive, and sustainable good relations which has allowed the IEAL members to do the following:

- Create a common vision of *né' a?mat ct* - 'we are one' – collective responsibility which all members can embrace and share.
- Collaborate with others to build understanding and strengthen 'miyo-wicehtowin' good relations.
- Become a leader in your community and school to lift up students and families while honouring their journey.
- Witness and share experiences with others.
- Support and guide others to achieve success around the planning of Indigenous Education.
- Create resiliency for all educators while providing appropriate educational resources and experiences for all.
- Champion the innovation of Indigenous peoples.

As a co-learning group, we take a collective approach to leadership and everyone is given the opportunity to share their gifts, talents, and knowledge. Everyone is in the circle, and we do our best to support each other on this learning journey.

To date, we have covered the following areas of interest:

Community Building –
What is an ally? Co-conspirator?

Meaningful Reconciliation
& Land Acknowledgements

Walking Together
& Shared Responsibility

Cultural Appropriation

Sharing Our Work –
Allies & IEAL Team sharing
examples of impactful projects/
programs across the district

Drumming Circle -
Davita Marsden

Cultural Resilience -
Monique Gray Smith

*First Peoples' Principles of Learning
& Indigenous Ways of Knowing
and Being*

Critical Thinking & Indigenous
Pedagogy (2 workshops)

Indigenous Art – Approaches,
Appropriation & Social Justice

Sessions for remainder of the
2021 year include Racism, Lateral
Violence & Micro-Aggressions

Re-imagined Stories from IEAL members

Barbara Parkin

Educator at Dr. A R Lord Elementary

"I feel IEAL supports collective responsibility by being present and active. The monthly meetings keep teachers coming back and wanting to learn more, as well as fostering a community of engagement. As our questions and connections between curriculum and history develop over time, we have a place we can go to share and to learn more. Knowing that there is a meeting 'the next month' makes participation in IEAL feel like a collective that is engaged in an action.

IEAL is creating a foundational presence in the District. Teachers know they have somewhere they can go to listen, learn, and ask questions on an ongoing basis. Years ago, the classroom teacher did not necessarily know where to go, did not know how to begin, and may not have been aware of protocols. Although we were trying to do Indigenous focussed work, it was in isolation, according to what we could find on our own. The framework of support for front-line classroom teachers came with the IEAL. As well, the Indigenous focussed district professional development days were transformational for broadening and deepening the conversation amongst all teaching and support staff. Today, in 2021, even if a teacher is not a part of the IEAL collective, they may be aware of IEAL or know of someone who attends. Such people have become leads in their school settings, and are turned to for helping to enhance the Indigenous education work being done at school sites.

Rose MacKenzie

Principal of xpey' Elementary

As the Principal of an Indigenous Focus Choice School in Vancouver, working with Chas and the Indigenous Education department has been instrumental in moving our school forward in fostering a sense of belonging, mastery and identity in our students. It has been an honour and one I embrace with great humility as I continue my journey in learning more about Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Our district is exploring in great depth the impact of systemic racism in the school system and the impact it has had on students and staff, especially those who identify as BIPOC. As a non-BIPOC member, participating in the numerous sessions hosted by the IEAL has guided me in becoming a more effective ally and advocate. It is some of the most intense work I have done in my career as an educator, but it has been transformative and has reframed my thinking around the educational system and the steps we need to take to decolonize our education system.

It is heartwork!

Amanda White

Indigenous Education Knowledge Keeper

I share with you the wise words of Chief Dan George of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation from his book *My Heart Soars*:

"You and I need the strength and joy that comes from knowing that we are loved. With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others. The only thing that can truly help us is genuine love. You must truly love us, be patient with us and share with us. And we must love you - with genuine love that forgives and forgets . . . a love that forgives the terrible sufferings your culture brought ours when it swept over us like a wave crashing along a beach . . . with a love that forgets and lifts up its heads and sees in your eyes an answering love and acceptance."

This what Indigenous Education Allies and Leads (IEAL) means to me.
We are finally learning how to walk side by side with each other in education.

We must continue to come together as náć aʔmat ct – ‘we are one’ and be in good relations ‘miyo-wicehtowin’ for the good work to continue. The stories shared by both an educator, Principal and knowledge keeper are truths to how collective responsibility, when approached with a common vision and goals, can indeed transform those involved and the schools and students they work with.

We are still in the beginning phase of the ‘Two-Eyed Seeing’ approach envisioned by Mi’kmaw Elder Albert Marshall; mainstream education in BC has only recently embedded *First Peoples’ Principles of Learning* across the K-12 curriculum. The Western eye has not had to share the vision of what education could or should be. The Indigenous eye is just now being given space to see. With this understanding, Elder Albert Marshall (IHS, n.d.) advises that this co-learning journey is going to require that we learn to weave back and forth between the knowledges. As the Two-Eyes begin to see together as one, we may yet get to an aligned and shared vision of education that is truly transformational and benefits all. However, until then, we will continue to share our collective stories.

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Learning

Meetings to plan, organize or inform are important times for colleagues in schools, Chapters, and districts. We all know that no matter the topic, it is important to equitably engage the participants in the process of a meeting, and that finding the right activities is essential to successful facilitation.

Over the last year, as face-to-face gatherings have been restricted, there have been many innovative companies that have created online activities to help engage participants as we all grow weary from the increased screen time. Some of these activities require registration and or payment, while some are at no cost. Some of the online activities require specific technological specifications or platforms, and finding the one that fits your context can be time consuming. Other activities can be readily accessible and fun to use.

No matter the activity you choose, it is important to remember that effective meetings require building trust and collaboration, as well as being focused and productive. In thinking about a meeting, here are five things to remember:

- Have a clear and transparent purpose for meeting, with shared goals
- Establish a culture of trust through protocols, physical features, or online connections
- Support equitable conversation providing opportunity for all to be heard, and to listen to others
- Create comfortable accountability to participation both at the meeting and after the meeting
- Be open to both provide and receive feedback

Creating opportunities for conversation in meetings is a tried-and-true method of engaging purposeful participation. It is often those small group or breakout conversations that are most valuable, memorable, and enjoyable within busy agendas. Many strategies that have been used in face-to-face meetings over the years are simple to convert for online usage should that continue to be necessary in the year ahead.

On the following pages, you will find two strategies from the Professional Learning and Development team that you could use in various settings:

Four Corner Cards

First Word Last Word



Stay tuned for more Tips & Tools strategies in future issues of Princip(ed).

Tips

AND

Tools



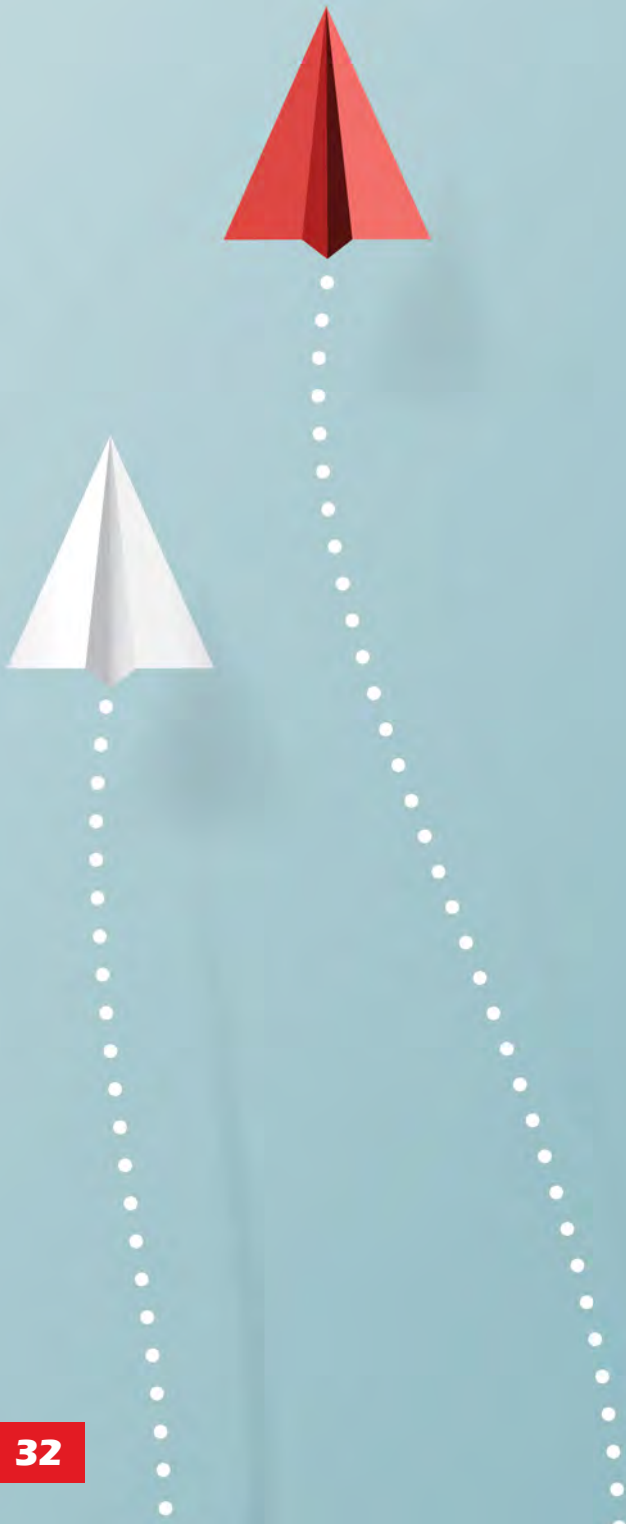
Facilitation Activities for Effective Gatherings of Educators



by
Jessica Antosz & Elizabeth Bell
Directors of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA

Four Corner Cards

Source: Gayle Gregory and Lin Kuzmich
Teacher Teams That Get Results



Four Corner Cards could be used as a conversation starter for staff or Chapter meetings to discuss an idea or issue. It allows people to begin with their knowledge and questions, and allows them to share these in an environment that moves from one-on-one, to small group, to large group.

Audience: Staff Meeting, Chapter Meeting, Workshop

Time Needed: 10 to 20 minutes

Materials:

- index cards (one per person)
- felt pens
- chart paper
- masking tape
- pens

Activity Directions:

1. Decide on a topic and create four discussion questions on the topic.
2. Give participants a card with four sections and four prompts.
3. Each person responds to the prompts in each corner of the card.
4. When all are finished, each participant can find one or two other participants and discuss their responses to the questions.
5. Bring the group back as a whole to the larger group and debrief each of the questions from the smaller groups and record on chart paper.

Example: Related to assessment practices, the card may look like this:

What assessment strategies have you used this week?	Why are assessments important to you for your planning?
How would you explain authentic assessment?	What more would you like to know about assessment?

First Word/Last Word is an adaptation of a traditional acrostic. The strategy surfaces and/or organizes important concepts, principles and understanding about a topic area (e.g. servant leadership, feedback, collaboration, culture, change).

Audience: Staff Meeting, Chapter Meeting, Workshop

Time Needed: 20 to 25 minutes

Materials:

- an article for each participant
- chart paper
- chart stand
- felt pens
- highlighters

Activity Directions:

1. Each participant will be given a short article to read individually on a topic (e.g. feedback, collaboration). Participants will mark up either key words, phrases, or sentences in the article.
2. After reading the article, participants will be placed in groups of two or three.
3. The group will generate full thoughts (phrases or sentences) that begin with each letter in the designated word. The word focuses on the exploration of the topic under consideration.
4. After 8 -12 minutes, each group reports on their ideas, or you may go around the room and create one Topic Sample for the whole group.

Example:

- D** Doesn't require agreement
- I** Inquiry sparks sharing
- A** Attending to the spoken word is key
- L** Listening to others' ideas is important
- O** Openness to alternative perspectives is encouraged
- G** Goes to unexpected places
- U** Understanding emerges through the process
- E** Engages intellect and emotions

First Word Last Word

Source: Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman
Groups at Work



Learning Tour Study Guide

For Leaders
and Learners
Participating in
NOIIE-Sponsored
School Visits

by

Catherine Ludwig

Principal, Westwind Elementary

District Administrator - Fine Arts

SD 38

In a learning community, effective professional development is anchored in the school-based work and inquiry of teachers. Teacher and leader inquiry can lay groundwork for ongoing, evidence-based professional learning. What we do for professional development can also open doors for growth, both personally and professionally.

The extent to which we as leaders promote the conditions for effective professional learning is largely due to our learning cultures. We should be proud that we have rich cultures here in British Columbia that value continuous learning. We consistently encourage our staff to reach for professional learning that is focused on student outcomes, embedded in teacher practice and informed by the best available research on effective learning and teaching. We facilitate collaborative structures and experiences that are rich in reflection and feedback. As leaders, we also support professional development that engages teams to focus on the needs of their students after thoughtful scans and data collection. As school and district leaders, we know how effective professional learning can change outcomes for our learners, especially when it is ongoing, supported, and fully integrated into the culture of our learning environments.

As leaders, we are also well versed at supporting our staff in attending workshops and conferences. We are active in facilitating study groups, book clubs, focused conversations, and structured collaboration to uncover new learning. We source teacher consultants and mentors to come and support our staff. We even encourage our staff to participate in courses to learn specific knowledge and skills.

But how often are we visiting other schools? How often do we leave our sites, and tour and learn from other vibrant school communities? Are we promoting and engaging teachers, leaders, schools and the wider education community in professional conversations beyond the walls of our buildings? When is the last time you had the opportunity to reach beyond your current context, and visit another school in your district? Your province? Or even beyond – nationally or internationally? Might you consider a learning tour in your future professional development plans?

Why Go on a Learning Tour?

Learning tours can be powerful professional learning experiences that are reciprocal in engagement and enrichment for all involved. Learning tours have the potential to be a powerful part of a professional inquiry, network building, and a critical part of school transformation. In professional knowledge creation and sharing, leaders and educators have the time and space to get curious about what they observe and what they receive, both practiced and shared from other communities.

A tour can impact your own inquiry, and once you return to your site you can consider how your learning will impact your learners' engagement and experiences. As a participant, you can also have an increased sense of what's possible and map out what is next in your learning journey – both personally and professionally.

“Visiting Canada was a pivotal moment for me, both in terms of professional development and personal growth. The concept of “Truth before Reconciliation” is so simple, yet the way that it played out in each and every school and echoed in the voices of each student and educator we met, made it so much more than just words... It wasn’t long after returning home that we began to dig deeper into our own context and implement our learning. We have worked with our educators to confront racism and white privilege, create authentic connections between curriculum and Indigenous perspectives and to begin our journey of Reconciliation in earnest.”

Laura Curran, Teacher, Glenmore Park Public School, New South Wales

The Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE) holds sacred the importance of connecting leaders locally and globally. Schools locally have been hosting teams from around the world in highly curated school tours. By matching educators' inquiries with schools who are exploring parallel questions, and with schools who are modelling practices and pedagogies, visitors to host sites are having transformative experiences. NOIIE learning tours are professional learning opportunities for educators around the world who are interested in exploring our approach to collaborative inquiry, or in deepening their practice.

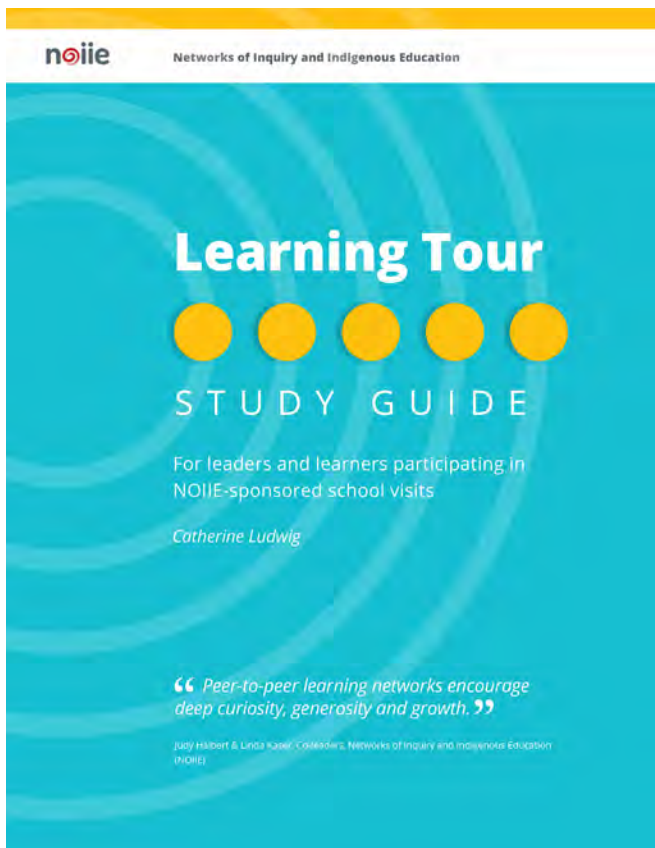
Whether you travel locally or afar, a learning tour could offer you an opportunity to see powerful schools and programs in action, and then bring the learning back to your community. Whether you choose a road tour or a virtual (online) visit, you will connect with people who face the kinds of challenges you face, and who are ready to share their stories.

“...the experience was so recent, alive, deep, transformative and inspiring. In some way, I never came back home, or who really came back was another me... I am very grateful to the principals who welcomed us and allowed us to enter their schools and classrooms and I am deeply grateful to Linda and Judy for helping us and making it possible. The whole experience remains very much alive in me and continually reinforces me towards what really matters.”

Begonya Folch, Cap de Servei d'Èxit Educatiu i Noves Oportunitats, Subdirecció general de Transformació Educativa, Direcció General d'Innovació, Recerca i Cultura Digital, Departament d'Educació, Generalitat de Catalunya

Learning Tour Study Guide

To support school learning tours – both road tours and virtual tours – NOIE dedicated resources to support the creation of a Learning Tour Study Guide for leaders and learners participating in NOIE-sponsored school visits (Catherine Ludwig, 2021).



At the heart of this resource is Dr. Judy Halbert & Linda Kaser's message that "peer-to-peer learning networks encourage deep curiosity, generosity, and growth."

Our hope is that leaders and educators will use this guide to harness their strong desires to know or learn something new, to tap into their sense of wonder in a genuinely interested and non-judgmental way. The guide reminds us to approach tours with an open heart that is present and appreciative of others. As participants who go on learning tours, they will build connectedness and feel part of a larger entity such as a partnership, team, community, or network.

How is this Resource Organized?

The Learning Tour Study Guide will help you before, during, and after your tour.

Each section of the guide includes:

- **tips for engaging** on your tour
- **questions to consider** with space to reflect
- **pointers to resources** you might find helpful
- **connections to our First Peoples' Principles of Learning**
- **quotes** from various important and honoured perspectives



Using this Study Guide

The Learning Tour Study Guide is seated in honouring and acknowledging Indigenous ways of knowing by being rooted in the *First Peoples' Principles of Learning*. The guide keeps in mind that learning is a circular and relational process, not to be rushed; a lifelong process that needs to be nurtured. It focuses on being heart-open to local cultural protocols,

stories, relationships, practices and the nature of knowledge and honouring Indigenous Elders and knowledge-keepers, elements that have a place within the worldviews of First Peoples.

*"I know I am just a tiny voice in the wilderness
– but I will be heard."*

*I always think of these words as we continue
to transform the education system here in
BC. All voices matter and all voices need to
be heard.*

Tsnomot, Brad Baker, Squamish Nation and
North Vancouver School

The guide is organized in five sections meant to support you or your team before, during and after your experience:

● Before Your Tour

OPEN

What are you hoping to learn from the tour? Open your mind, your heart and your will to the possibilities ahead.

Before you attend your school visit, begin by reflecting on your mindset, personal biases, intentions and inquiry focus. Your learning tour will be more useable with the personal context. Be open and curious as you reflect and remember to consider the needs of the community you serve.

● During Your Tour

OBSERVE

What evidence of learning do you observe in each setting? What's going on for the learners — especially the students — but also the teachers, Principals and others?

During your visit you will explore diverse learning environments. This is a time to get curious and practice looking and listening with an unbiased lens. Beware of confirmation bias. Stay open, suspend judgement and explore new perspectives. What is

going on for the learners? How do you know? Take the time to talk to both the learners and the leaders and explore if you can make the unknown, known.

ASK

What do you wonder? Ask focused but open-ended questions.

During your tour aim to build meaningful connections, trust and a shared sense of discovery. Stay curious. During your tour, clarify and co-construct meaning via questioning. Questions matter. They open us to new questions and carry us forward in shared discovery. Ask questions that build belonging and trust.

RECEIVE

What resonates? Receive and reflect on the stories people share. Which stories resonate? Why?

During the tour you will encounter stories. Stories about belonging and learning in the community you are visiting. Story is about meaning — each person evokes their own meaning from story. Oral tradition is used to transmit learning, values, skills and histories. Evoke your sense of wonder and listen for the stories and narratives. Connect the dots between other people's stories and your own experiences. Stories will become pivotal in your learning and offer a powerful narrative to build new understandings and learnings.

● After Your Tour

TRY

What's next for you — personally and professionally? Try new things. Build your adaptive expertise.

After the tour, venture out of your comfort zone, inspired by the possibilities you encountered. Do you envision small, micro-movements in your own practice, or large-scale system shifts? Be wary of simple changes that lead to 'all or nothing' outcomes; they tend to be less durable than an evolutionary approach. You will grow through trial and error and you will find that others around you grow, too.

"Our hope is that leaders and educators will use this guide to harness their strong desires to know or learn something new, to tap into their sense of wonder in a genuinely interested and non-judgmental way. The guide reminds us to approach tours with an open heart that is present and appreciative of others."

Questions to consider

How would you describe your inquiry? What do you want to learn?
What question do you want to unpack?

Are you open to new approaches? How do you know?

What cognitive and cultural biases are you aware of? What might be hidden?

What is your connection to the land and to Indigenous wisdom in your territory?

Who are the people and what are the traditional unceded territories you will visit?

Ideally, a site visit conducted in a spirit of thoughtful learning and sharing creates a mutually beneficial learning experience for both the visiting and host schools.

With willingness to challenge personal beliefs, perceptions, and practices, and an open and receptive attitude toward new ideas, this *Learning Tour Study Guide* will support you and your teams in having a professional, respectful exchange in which it is safe to converse, question, and discover. It aims to keep your heart and mind open to forging new relationships, and it is strength-based in the belief that every individual and school has valuable lessons and stories to impart. Visits to view and get curious about innovative teaching practices might help expand and refine personal pedagogy, build supportive networks, and spark critical and creative approaches. Upon return to your site, the guide supports you with questions to venture out of your comfort zone, inspired by the possibilities you encountered.

Study Guide Now Available

Learning tours can be a powerful part of a professional learning plan and a critical part of a school transformation effort. They can expand your sense of what's possible, and inform the path forward.

Ideally, a learning tour conducted in a spirit of thoughtful learning and sharing creates a mutually beneficial learning experience for both the visiting and host schools. This is the guiding principle for this new *NOIE Learning Tour Study Guide* that we hope will set the tone for a truly collaborative learning experience.



@CathJule

To download the
NOIE Learning Tour Study Guide
or to order print copies,
go to
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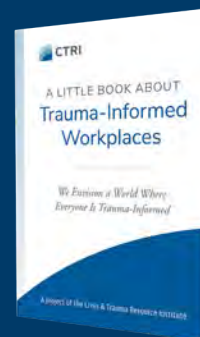
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Guiding Growth & Change

How Two Made-In-BC Protocols Can Help Forge a Path Through Tough Conversations

by

Brooke Douglas

Principal, James Gilmore Elementary, SD 38

Brooke Moore

District Principal, Innovation & Inquiry, SD 37

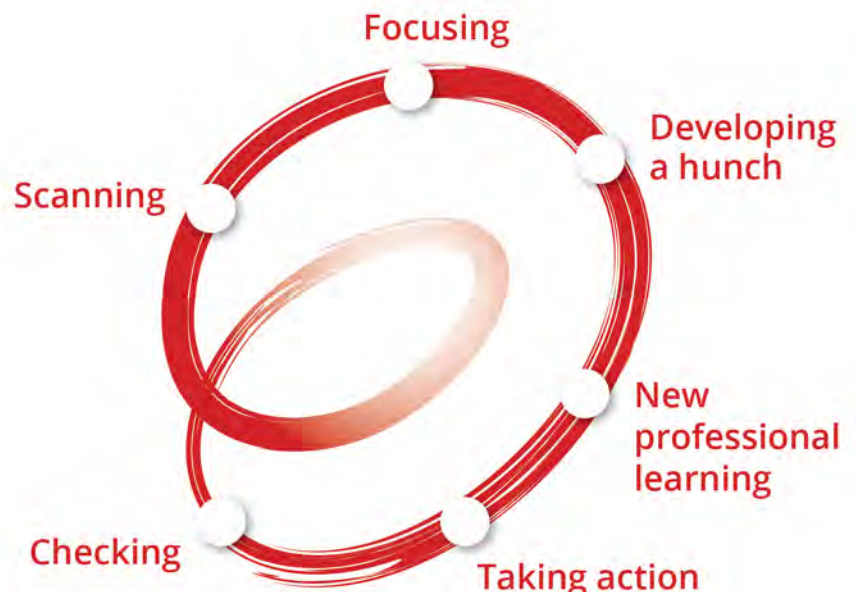
There are two made-in-BC protocols that provide a map for moving through the tough conversations sometimes required to improve educational experiences for learners: the Spiral of Inquiry (Kaser and Halbert, 2017) and the Decision Maker Moves (Failing et al, 2019). Used separately or together, these protocols require participants to get curious and creative, examine bias, hold true to proclaimed values, and work towards a worthy vision.

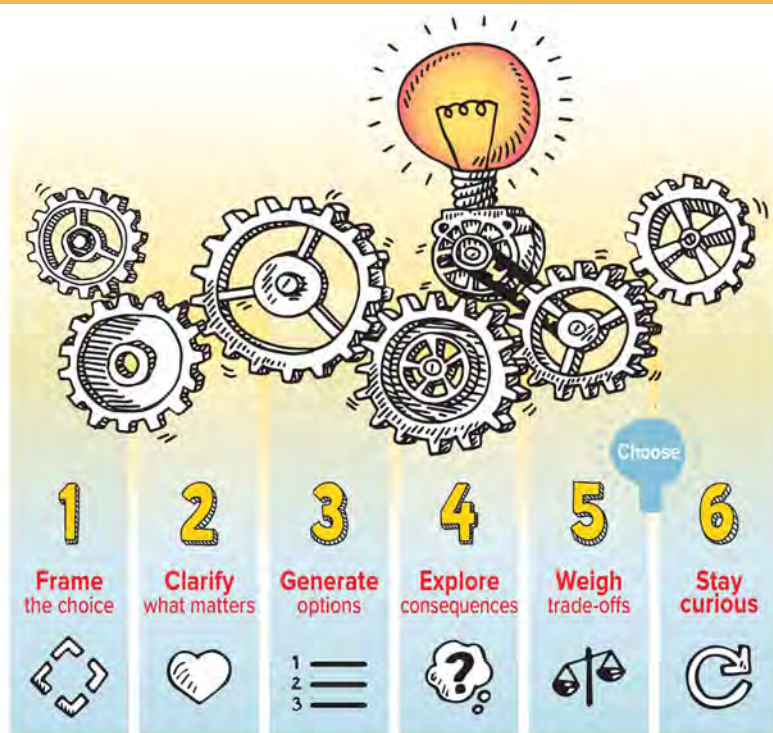
The **Spiral of Inquiry** is a student-focused, iterative, evidence-based model of collaborative inquiry, aimed at changing outcomes for learners in important areas.

There are six phases:

- Scan
- Focus
- Develop a hunch
- Engage in new professional learning
- Take action
- Check for impact

The Spiral Playbook (2017)





The **Decision Maker Moves** helps collaborators to arrive at the best possible decisions for their specific context.

There are six moves:

1. Frame the choice
2. Clarify what matters
3. Generate options
4. Explore consequences
5. Weigh trade-offs
6. Stay curious

The Decision Playbook (2019)

What makes this pairing so powerful is their sensitivity to context. No one can know your school in the way that you can – AND you can't know *all* of your school. In order to move towards any vision of students crossing stages with dignity, purpose, and options, school leaders need to invite the wisdom, perspective, and intelligence of educators in their school community; moving towards a vision requires collaborative inquiry, and collaborative inquiry is a process of decisions.

We show who we choose to be and who we want to become through the decisions we make.

No matter what your role, if you're a leader in any sense, these are vehicles for guiding growth and change, as exemplified by two vignettes from different districts and in different contexts within the K-12 system: elementary, and secondary/whole-district.

Vignette – Elementary: Brooke Douglas – Richmond

Our school story (school plan) is focused on improving students' ability to communicate their thinking and learning. We arrived at this focus by using the Spiral of Inquiry starting with *scanning*: asking students directly

and specifically about their learning. The initial stage was completed prior to COVID-19, and in returning to in-person learning this Fall, it became evident that our school story *focus* was still both accurate and reflective of our learners. This was definitely not the time to abandon that work, but rather to *take action* and look at it slightly differently given the impact of the pandemic on schools and school communities.

One of the impacts, of course, was school organization. We had to organize by cohorts – students and staff – by pairing each non-enrolling staff member with two enrolling divisions which would mean deciding carefully which cohorts would be paired with which non-enrolling staff.

It was critical to approach this decision through a lens that upheld our values and continued the work towards our Spiral, and was also sensitive to students' unique needs in the throes of the pandemic. I also wanted to make sure that we made the decisions in a way that honoured an individual's agency while ensuring we centered what learners needed (rather than, say, an individual teacher's preference to work with a friend).

In the clarification of what matters, the non-enrolling staff and leadership team outlined possible options

and weighed them against what we said we valued, what we said was important. We leaned heavily here on our health and safety guidelines as well as our focus in our school story, in our Spiral.

Some of the trade-offs were really challenging. This meant that not all classes would have access to library, or music, or a learning support teacher, and it was important to look closely at the potential impact of those choices.

We finally landed on a model we thought would serve student learning and keep people as safe as possible, where each individual was able to continue to work to their strengths, at least for most of the time. We also agreed to stay curious and to *check for impact* by revisiting our decision at a later date, to see if any tweaks were needed as we learned and saw more clearly how our decisions were playing out.

As the year has progressed, we have had cause to check for impact and revisit our decision several times. Each time we come back to what guides our decisions, and we measure our choices by our values, in alignment with the vision for learning and growth. Staff show strong support for decisions made in this way, the transparency and neutrality can be leaned on, the direction and focus remain steady and clear.

Vignette – Secondary and Whole-District: Brooke Moore – Delta

Prompted by more flexible reporting requirements and the roll out of MyEd (*I know: we were late to the party on this one*), I sent out a call for committee members to help decide how Delta would move ahead with Secondary reporting procedures. The committee would be tasked with making two decisions:

- (1) Which performance indicators Delta teachers shall have the option to use across grades 8 and 9 next year, and
- (2) What supports would be helpful for teachers who choose to use these performance indicators.

My co-chairs, Janet Thompson and Marne Hopkinson, and I designed two full-day sessions, using the Decision Maker Moves as our guide. Here is a look

at the agenda and a summary of what we did under each item, to illustrate what the meetings felt like. You can see that we organized the meeting by following the Decision Maker Moves in sequence.

Decision Maker Move 1: Framing the Decision

The main focus of our time together would be deciding which performance indicators Delta teachers would have the option to use across grades 8 and 9 next year. In this case, the frame and the committee's mandate are the same. Being clear about this frame as our boundary helped us stay on track later in the discussions.

Move 2: Clarifying What Matters

After reading relevant policy and procedures alongside current and rich research, committee members discussed what matters most for this decision frame. After small and large group discussions and individual reflections, we agreed on the values summarized here: equity, clarity, learning-focused.

Move 3 & 4: Generating Options and Exploring Consequences

The committee did not have the freedom to create options given our policy context, so we spent most of our time exploring the implications of each option, and looking at the pros and cons of each option against each of our values. For example, how does the term 'not yet meeting expectations' gel with our ideas of being learning-focused?

Move 5: Weigh Trade-offs, then Decide

This move had the potential for some pretty tough conversations, so my co-chairs and I set committee members up for success as best we could by introducing two conversation tools. I mention them here because the committee members found them useful in keeping the conversations respectful and productive:

The ladder of inference, a tool that helps us recognize when we are jumping to assumptions or conclusions, and then get curious about what beliefs are influencing us in that jump.

Sentence stems for tough conversations, a collection of things people can say to stay on track in a tough conversation, things like, “What do you mean by that?” or “What would an example of that be?” or “Can you tell us more about that?”

Emboldened by these tools, the committee members gathered in (*or, rather, we zoomed them into*) small groups, and discussed the trade-offs by building a consequence table together. A consequence table asks group members to score how an option measures up to each value. Once the matrix is filled in, a decision might be obvious. If not, more discussion is required to make the sometimes tricky trade-offs. Interestingly, each group came to the same decision even though they took different routes to get there. This consensus amongst the groups — which were intentionally diverse in terms of experience, roles, and disciplines — gave us confidence that we had landed in the right place.

Move 6: Stay Curious

Finally, the group was able to move to our last ‘deliverable’ – to map out supports that would need to be in place for teachers who opt to use the achievement indicators instead of percentages. The plan that resulted from this move clarifies how we will stay curious about the success of the decision. This is not a case of ‘set it and forget it’ – in order to keep learning and be responsive as we move ahead with our assessment for learning Spiral, we will need to take an active stance of curiosity and stay connected to the consequences of this decision.

It’s important to note that this decision around reporting is one point in a larger and on-going Spiral of Inquiry around how best to support teachers in using assessment for learning practices. While we did not include students or parents in this committee, they are involved in our Spiral of Inquiry around the assessment for learning Spiral of Inquiry, and we have plans to engage with them around this particular reporting decision once we hear more from the Ministry of Education about updates to the reporting order (*which, at the time of writing, have not yet been published*).

Conclusion

Within the *Spiral of Inquiry* and the reality of our everyday work, we are constantly being asked to make decisions which will either take us forward in alignment towards our vision or lead us astray. In a fast-moving world, it might seem antithetical to move slowly. However, in his book *Thinking Fast and Thinking Slow*, Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman shows how thinking slowly can help us avoid the many traps of our fast-thinking ways. Because our contexts are unique, there is no ‘one size fits all’ answer to any of the decisions we make in our leadership; thankfully, however, there is a map we can follow. Together, the slow-thinking nature of the Spiral of Inquiry, and the Decision Maker Moves, ensure we stay on a good path as we navigate the complexity of leading learning communities.

If you would like to learn more about these two models, you’ll be happy to know playbooks for both are available at the links below.

Kaser, L. & Halbert, J. (2017). *The Spiral Playbook: Leading with an inquiring mindset in school systems and schools*. C21 Canada. Available to order at www.noii.ca/spiral-of-inquiry

Failing, L., Gregory, R., Long, G. & Moore, B. (2019). *The Decision Playbook: Making thoughtful choices in a complex world*. Vancouver. Available at deltalearns.ca/decisions/the-decision-playbook

If you’d like to think more about the two models as they work together, you can download a paper specifically to this point at the link below.

Moore, B. (2020, June). *Spiral of Inquiry and Decision Maker Moves: A rigorous blend*. Delta, BC. <http://noii.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Spiral-Decisions.pdf>.

Finally, if you’re curious about how the Decision Maker Moves are being used in intermediate and secondary classrooms, please contact Brooke Moore or check out all the classroom resources at www.deltalearns.ca/decisions.



@bmdteach
@bmooreintheloop

"Simple inclusion leaves the structure that produced the inequality and exclusion intact; radical inclusion calls for a transformation of the structure itself." (Chenier, 2020)



Building Inclusive School Communities With Cognitive Tools

by

Gillian Judson

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education
SFU

Radical Inclusion. This is the compelling title of a report describing conditions of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) among female faculty at Simon Fraser University in B.C., Canada (Chenier, 2020). The report's message is clear: when it comes to achieving true inclusion, retrofitting current processes, procedures, and structures to 'include' marginalized people is insufficient. Rather, *radical inclusion*¹ requires transformation of the very structures that perpetuate inequality. While governments have a critical role to play in the creation and regulation of legal support for equality for all, *radical* change is needed; changing the *roots* of inequality is a process that begins on the ground: "Our willingness and capacity to re-imagine and re-invent relationships, institutional cultures, and social governance practices will be central to whether, how, and when inclusive equality emerges" (Sheppard, 2010, pp. 4-5).

This article acknowledges how moving from *what is* to *what if* — understanding, challenging, and reshaping norms and values — involves imagination. With the goal of situating imagination at the heart of leadership practices supporting equity, diversity and inclusion, I offer practical tools leaders can use in their school communities. Specifically, I explore the practical implications of applying Kieran Egan's theory and practice of Imaginative Education (2005, 1997; Egan & Judson, 2015), or IE, to the leadership

context. Currently, IE practices are mostly known in the context of teaching pre-K through graduate school. The application of cognitive tools to the field of leadership studies and leadership education is new (Judson, 2020). This article points at how cognitive tools can enable leaders to engage and grow imagination in schools in the pursuit of equity. In practical ways, leaders may engage imagination with 'cognitive tools' to both re-imagine what *is* and to build *inclusive equality* in their school communities. This is not a 'checklist' for equity; the work is too complex, too contextual, and too personal for that. It is a description of tools that may engage and cultivate imagination among members of communities dedicated to change.

Building With Imagination's Tools

In education, interest in imagination tends to be focused on learning and teaching, not leadership (Judson, 2020). However, many facets of leadership originate in imagination. In terms of the transformative work required to support EDI, we first *imagine* the change we want to see in our school communities. That is, new ways of being and doing find their roots in imagination; it is the *soil* out of which many leadership practices grow (Judson, accepted for publication).

Imaginative Education (IE) offers leaders powerful tools for guiding EDI work. Pedagogically speaking, IE is a practice that puts the engagement of learners first by tapping into unique features of their imaginative lives. At the heart of IE is the idea that effective teaching — teaching that emotionally connects learners with knowledge and supports meaning and memory — is like storytelling. When teachers are *storytellers* they employ certain 'cognitive tools' that engage and cultivate the imaginations

¹ Chenier (2020) attributes the term Radical Inclusion to Wendy Harbour, a guest speaker at an EDI series at Simon Fraser University.

of learners. Examples of cognitive tools include identification of dramatic oppositions, vivid mental imagery, playfulness, evocation of heroic qualities, humanization of meaning, and a sense of agency.

Egan's theory is not only a theory for formal school-based education. It is a conception of how imagination develops and grows in human minds across cultures. So, cognitive tools are tools all human beings use all the time. What is new is consideration of how we can *intentionally* use cognitive tools to support leadership development.

This article looks specifically at how cognitive tools might engage imaginations in schools to cultivate inclusive equality. Using the tools *grows* the imagination (Egan, 1997). These tools can also help to create cultures of 'curiosity' and *humility* needed in the face of this challenging work (Pham, 2020). By using cognitive tools individually and collectively in schools, leaders may support the engagement of community imagination, enable active empathy, encourage solidarity, and create conditions for transformation.

(For more information on cognitive tools, visit [imaginED www.educationthathinspires](http://imaginEDwww.educationthathinspires) "Tips For Imaginative Educators" or the Centre for Imagination in Research, Culture and Education www.circesfu.ca)

Following a brief introduction of key features of *inclusive equality*, specific examples of cognitive tools are provided that might be used to engage imagination in service of leaders' ongoing EDI work.

On Inclusive Equality: Care and Active Empathy

Sheppard (2010) begins her book entitled *Inclusive Equality: The Relational Dimensions of Systemic Discrimination in Canada* with the observation that equality continues to be a goal rather than a reality in Canada and around the world. One need only glance at recent news to see that now, ten years after

When teachers are storytellers
they employ certain 'cognitive
tools' that engage and cultivate
the imaginations of learners.

her book was published, equality has still not been realized. Systemic racism and discrimination persist. Key features of *inclusive equality* involve an ethic and practice of care paired with individual and collective agency in support of solidarity.

An ethic of care involves respect for someone's past, but also a dedication to support someone developing and flourishing. Through care, a leader works to replace inequitable relationships with equitable ones. At the heart of a practice of care is a *responsibility* to listen (Boler, 1997; Safir, 2017). It is through listening that we gain the *particular knowledge* needed to care in a way that respects difference (Boler, 1997; Safir, 2017; Sheppard, 2010). For many people, the act of *understanding the other's story* is where they see imagination playing a role. Imagination is required to *empathize*. As Maxine Greene (1995) famously said: "imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (p. 3). I want to draw attention, however, to what Boler (1997) calls the *risks* of empathy in an attempt to identify how we can better engage imagination for inclusion.

While acknowledging the value of empathy for social change, Boler (1997) warns of its risks. The ultimate risk of empathy, she states, is integrating the other's experience into one's own framework without taking action (Boler, 1997). She describes "passive empathy" as narrow, "flat" in terms of historical knowledge, and lacking action (p. 255). Passive empathy involves an "easy identification" with the other, a subsuming of the other's experience, and an abdication of a sense of responsibility for the inequitable situation (p. 255). Passive empathy is not paired with critical thinking about one's own positionality, power, or privilege, nor does it involve critical reflection of the nature of inequitable relationships in particular contexts. It does not strive for a transformation of consciousness

for both parties. Leaders must understand empathy as an action word.

As educational leaders, we can practice *active* empathy that inspires action and change, and, ultimately, shifts power relations. As listeners and learners, leaders can strive to identify with another person's experience without erasing the difference that might exist and with the intention to understand the needs and experiences of another person "as they define and articulate them" (Sheppard, 2010, p. 108). To practice *active* empathy in support of inclusion, leaders should critically question their responses to others' stories. Leaders must "confront the internal obstacles encountered as one's views are challenged" (Boler, 1997, p. 262). This involves recognizing challenges to practices and principles we may value and that may be firmly part of our worldview. Sitting with possible discomfort is part of the work inclusive equality requires.

Individual and collective *agency* is also required to address systemic constraints to inclusion. In Sheppard's words, we must ask: "How might we utilize our power as individuals or as members of social groups to challenge exclusion and marginalization? What power do we have to contest the inequitable treatment of those around us?" (2010, p. 136). *Solidarity* in this work is essential (Sheppard, 2010). It is not enough to support and act for those whose lives are most like our own. We participate in solidarity work when we engage our agency individually and collectively to work across differences and maintain diversity in pursuit of inclusion for all.

Educational leaders have a profound role to play in working for inclusive equality. They have a responsibility to use their power and privilege to actively "contest and resist exclusion and marginalization, either in [their] own lives or in the lives of those around [them]" (Sheppard, 2010, p. 4). This is the *radical* change — the root changes — that inclusion requires. Up next is consideration of the range of cognitive tools of imagination that leaders can employ to build and maintain radically inclusive communities. What emerges is a sense of how imagination can be actively engaged in the care, agency, and solidarity work required for inclusion.

The Tools

Consider how you might employ these tools in dialogue and reflection to build inclusion in your school communities:

Seeking Understanding: What's The Story Here?

What or whose 'story' dominates here? What or whose is missing? What limitations or constraints make it difficult to share experiences of ex/inclusion here? What are the rhythms or patterns of marginalization here? Be attentive to your emotional responses to the stories and experiences you hear about. How are you personally implicated in this story?

Feeling Comfortable With Discomfort: Body Forth

Listen and learn from all the stakeholders in your school community. Allow yourself to experience discomfort. Avoid the urge to escape this discomfort. What do you notice about your emotional response? How can you channel this emotion into acting to create equitable relationships?

Mental Images: Snapshots of Equity and Inequity

What does equity look like in this organization? What does inequity look like? Examine the similarities and differences of your community members' images of equity/inequity. What is missing? What procedures, processes or relationships are reproducing the inequity? Define measurable steps to address each inequity.

Extreme What If-ing

Engage in some collaborative and *extreme* brainstorming. What is your ideal image of this community? What would it look, sound, feel like? Who or what would be part of the conversation? What would not? Now create as many statements as possible to consider options for moving to action.

Humanize Equity/Diversity/Inclusion Work

What stories and examples of successful social justice work can guide you? What stories of school communities and leadership can you learn from?

Start With Equity and Inclusion

Imagine equity is a reality in your school community. This is your starting point. How different would your school look/feel for all community members if those who have been marginalized took a central position? What would that mean for different groups (get specific)? What procedures, processes or practices would need to change at the level of your school community to make this possible?

Nurture Storytelling

Start from a place of story-listening and story-telling—how is storytelling honoured in your school community? How is listening honoured? At an individual level, how do you listen? How do you honour the difference of the other in the stories you hear? How do you empower others who come with different experiences than your own?

Transcendent Qualities

What transcendent qualities currently define your community/organization and what qualities do you want to see enacted in everyday action? (e.g. loyalty, trust, respect)

Wonder

What is unique and inspiring about your school community? How does diversity enrich your community?

Agency

How is each and every person in your school community not only an ally, but an *accomplice* in the fight for equity, diversity, and inclusion for all? What actions do *accomplices* for inclusive equality take to support this goal in your school everyday?

Enact Care

Deep transformation to support EDI requires relationships based in *care* and the sharing of stories and experiences. Imagine an ethic of care infuses the organization. This is your starting place. What does it mean to work from a place of *care*? How does *care* frame all of the interactions in your school? Think about care as an *action* — what actions of care do you see in your school?

What Does it Mean to be 'Anti'?

In championing EDI, leaders need to be *anti*-racist, *anti*-sexist, *anti*-abelist, etc. Lean into the 'anti' — lean into the *action* implied in this way of being. How does anti-inequity sound, look, feel in your organization?

Metaphors Matter: Not Window Dressing/ Beyond Rhetoric

Genuine inclusion is not *window dressing* (Chenier, 2020, p. 28) — it isn't rhetoric with little change.

What analogy or metaphor describes EDI action in your organization?

It is _____ (*fill in the blank with your goal — your metaphor for genuine change*).

Fill in the blanks: In this organization we _____, we refuse to _____.
What if _____?



Courtesy Kelly Sikkema - unsplash.com

"Imagine equity is a reality
in your school community."

"This is your
starting point."

Conclusion

A premise of this article has been that the roots of inclusive and socially just communities lie in imagination — not only the ability to *understand* the perspective of another person or group but also the ability to take action, and, guided by principles of EDI, build communities that support all people. If we are committed to EDI as leaders, then part of our work will be to put our imaginations to work in support of *new* structures that support equity, diversity and inclusion, rather than attempt to modify or tinker to 'retrofit'. This article has aimed to show how leaders might more routinely use imagination's tools to build inclusive communities.

In *Radical Inclusion*, Chenier (2020) speaks of the intentionality required to achieve inclusive equality: "We do have to cultivate it. We have to centre it, we have to hold ourselves accountable for building and sustaining it, and we have to undertake widespread systems change to enact, support, and sustain it" (p. 47). The same is true for building inclusion in schools. With imagination fueling our work, we may build communities for all. Moreover, if we can acknowledge imagination's role in equity work, we may cultivate cultures in which imagination and talking about imaginative leadership is the norm, rather than the exception.

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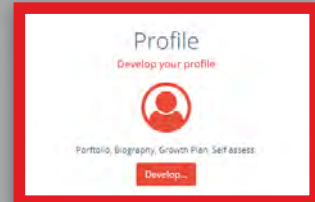


CREATE

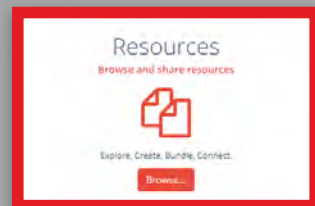
- one-stop access to resources shared by other educators, in your district and province-wide
- share resources directly with students and families: no passwords required
- record Zoom or YouTube instructions, and set meeting times for feedback and check-ins

COLLABORATE

- work with multiple creators in one space
- chat with other educators and explore ideas
- use topics and tags to categorize resources
- create resource bundles
- use easily on all devices, and integrate the platforms you choose



Create a personal profile with your biography, photo and experience



Create, co-edit & share resources, share existing resources using topics & tags



Search, connect and network with other educators, collaborate, explore and discuss



COMMUNICATION in the time of COVID-19

"There were no templates for operating a school during a pandemic, so we all needed to be patient and to navigate slowly."

by

Emily Kirzinger

*Vice-Principal, Ecole Reynolds Secondary School
SD 61*

I have been a teacher for 15 years, and a Vice-Principal in the Greater Victoria School District for more than five years, and in that time I have seen my share of challenges, celebrations and general craziness. I have completed a lot of professional development around trauma-informed learning, school safety, violent threat risk assessment and critical incident response, and felt fairly comfortable adapting and responding to the challenges of a complex secondary school.

But then, March 2020 came along.

We can all think back to what those early weeks were like ... empty schools, full Zoom meetings, questions, fears, concerns. There were no templates for operating a school during a pandemic, so we all needed to be patient and to navigate slowly. Here are some of the things I have learned from my first (and hopefully last) pandemic.

The staff you work with are your team. Besides my household, the staff at my school were the group of people that I was working with the most. I had spent more than four years with this staff, during which time

we experienced loss, triumphs, laughs and tears together. That connection and bond was essential in navigating what was to come.

Communication with staff began with phone calls. It was the most personal connection we could have at the time, but it was a far cry from face-to-face conversations in the hallway, classroom, or staff room. The phone calls revealed the worry, nervousness, and anxiety in peoples' voices as we wondered what was to come. The calls personalized the impact the early pandemic was having on staff as they prepared for remote teaching, and showed us their concern for their health, and the health of their own children and loved ones. While each of those early phone calls was challenging, time consuming and – at times – gut wrenching, reaching out to each staff member was valuable to maintaining our culture and preparing for the work ahead.

Zoom meetings were important for relaying information and school planning, but they are no replacement for seeing faces and hearing voices.

After effective communication with staff, we needed staff to begin communication with students and their families or guardians. This was complex and challenging: our staff excelled at in-person communications with our students within the classroom, but communication during the pandemic provided new and unique opportunities. Staff began by emailing students and families, which presented challenges and obstacles. *Did we have the student/guardian's current email address? Were they checking it? Who would send the email? How often? What if you didn't get a response? How would we track which students we had made contact with?*

Once we began reaching out to students and their parents and guardians, we got a glimpse into what remote teaching would be like: no response, incomplete response, wrong response, delayed response. We did notice how students might respond to emails at all hours through the day and night, indicating that teens' sleep patterns were becoming irregular. While most teachers were working during their regular work hours, if a student was responding overnight, it meant that the flow of communication and information was hampered by long pauses. What could be a very short interaction in a classroom could become an obstacle over several days.

Within a bricks and mortar school, we are accustomed to non-verbal communication with our students. Communication within a classroom can be a look, a wave, or a few minutes of conversation that digressed from the lesson for the day, but was important in establishing and continuing relationships. Remote teaching stripped teachers and EAs of much of their non-verbal communications, forcing them to rely on emails, Google Classroom, and Zoom meetings.

Communication with families has always primarily been 'COVID-friendly', meaning that parents typically do not receive regular communications in person, and should be used to communications through email or phone calls. So, that should mean that the pandemic didn't largely affect communication with families,

right? Of course not – COVID-19 was the pandemic that kept on giving! We noticed that families began to feel inundated with communications from teachers, counsellors, schools, districts, and the Ministry – and that is discounting that many of us already felt 'screened-out' with COVID-19 information through the news and social media, and would welcome screen downtime. We also needed to be mindful that each family was experiencing the pandemic differently, and some families rightfully needed to be more concerned about food insecurity and a paycheque than communicating with the school.

Arguably, effective communication between families/guardians and the school has never been as important. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, in addition to all the regular school start up information, we provided very important information about our COVID-19 health and safety protocols. These protocols were essential for families to understand, and for students to be prepared to follow.

What we had to acknowledge was that while some of us were eagerly keeping up to date with daily case counts, restrictions, and safety guidelines, we

"The staff you work with are your team. Besides my household, the staff at my school were the group of people that I was working with the most."





"While I can't control whether parents and guardians read their emails or answer their phones, I can control how information is presented."

could not assume that all families or students were as knowledgeable or indeed had the technology that would enable them to stay informed. This was a situation I relegated to my "can I control it?" pile (sample musings on the pile: "Can I control the pandemic? No. Can I control my response to it? Yes"). While I can't control whether parents and guardians read their emails or answer their phones, I can control how information is presented.

We improved our communications to homes in several ways. First, we tried to send fewer emails. Fewer, you say? Yes – fewer emails that were more succinct so families and students did not feel overwhelmed. Where possible, we piggybacked with district messaging to avoid multiple emails, or the sense that important information was being lost.

I also learned the value of Google translate in communicating with families, which I will continue to use in my practice. While I have known about Google Translate during my travels (pre-2020, *sigh*), I began to use it as an administrator when I needed to contact homes and knew there was a language barrier. My

Pro-Tip: begin the email by letting the recipient know you are using Google Translate, and include a link so they can respond the same way. It's not perfect, but it's culturally responsive to our diverse population and has, thus far, been successful. Google Translate removes a barrier to understanding, and shows the family you are committed to communicating in the best possible ways.

Wordy emails became clearer and more direct when we created infographics (*Canva is an excellent, easy-to-navigate free online platform*). While we were clear that we were not creating health restrictions or guidelines, we did 'brand' our school so that we would have consistent signage and messaging. While our district also did an excellent job with infographics – and theirs became a source of information for ours – it was helpful to have the information personalized for our building.

We increased and improved our use of social media. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram all become important tools for sharing smaller tidbits of information, such as infographics or notices for families to check their email.

During April 2020, as we were trying to establish the routines of remote learning and support staff and students working from home, it was clear that no number of emails, social media posts or phone calls would replace in-person communications and connections. While parents/guardians were primarily interacting with our Twitter and Facebook accounts, our Instagram account had a high number of student followers. This was great for communicating directly with students about general school information, and it became a way to remind our students that we



were also part of a school community beyond the classroom.

I began using the Instagram 'Stories' feature that posts for only 24 hours. Within IG Stories, you can post questions to your followers and they can privately send a response. I'll admit ... I was initially seeking my own connections with our students, as I desperately missed our informal interactions in hallways and around the property. Once a week until June, I would post a series of about five photos from 'mystery' locations within the school, and ask our followers to identify where the photo had been taken. It could be a piece of artwork from our foyer, an award in a cabinet, or a segment of architecture around the school. From the beginning, I was impressed by the degree of student engagement, so we expanded the games to include things like staff members' photos of *themselves* in high school, with followers prompted to guess their identity. I believe this use of Instagram was helpful in several ways: we were able to leverage followers to read our 'important' posts, but we were also able to maintain non-academic connections to our community and building at a time when students were not allowed to enter a place that should always be their 'safe space'.

As schools reopened in September, we have been fortunate to continue in-person communication – 'face-to-face' is debatable with the necessary use of masks! – but the lessons we learned in the Spring remained: how do we continue to communicate effectively with all our community, and what can we do better?

Signage within our building has been an interesting challenge. While I sincerely hope that all students



"I have opted for the 'less is more' approach, and have tried to pare down health and safety information in hallways to the most essential ..."

read, understand, and follow all the COVID-19 related signage around the school, I must acknowledge that – from time to time – it appears the COVID-19 police have emptied their trunks around our building. If we aren't careful, we find that we have an abundance of signage ranging from May 2020 posters, to current health and safety measures, to outdated flyers, all occupying an exceptional amount of wall space. I have opted for the 'less is more' approach, and have tried to pare down health and safety information in hallways to the most essential: do not enter if you are not feeling well, time to put on your mask, and perhaps the most essential ... *welcome*. Using Google Translate and Canva, I have created signage in our students' most commonly-spoken languages to convey these messages.

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented enough challenges for administrators to work with during already busy and challenging jobs, but after one year, I am grateful for the lessons that it has taught me. When we get back to 'normal', I promise not to complain about students loitering in the hallways ... for at least one week.

"Google Translate removes a barrier to understanding, and shows the family you are committed to communicating in the best possible ways."



@emkirzinger

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Through Kindness and Stories

Many Principals can attest to a love of literature.

Principals embark upon their careers with the ongoing commitment to inquire, read, learn, and improve. Literature is a core part of their lives, from professional development to relaxation time.

Elementary Principal Angelina Gauthier has been surrounded by literature all her life, creating stories since the age of three, when she would recite them out loud, and her Dad would type them on his classic Royal portable typewriter.

“There is a black-and-white photo of me sitting at the typewriter at the age of four, typing one finger at a time. That is my first memory of physically writing. I am certain that I wasn’t forming any words, but was creating my own kind of story,” she says.

Angelina says that her mom furthered her love of words through songs and stories. “She was always singing songs or nursery rhymes. It is a very fond memory I have of my childhood,” she recalls.

Angelina continued to put pen to paper throughout her elementary and high school years and, upon graduation, she decided not to go into teaching like all her friends, but instead entered the field of journalism, as a sports reporter.

Despite the love of writing, photography, and sports, Angelina’s calling as an educator pulled her away from her career as a reporter. She returned to university and received her degree in Elementary Education from the University of British Columbia, in

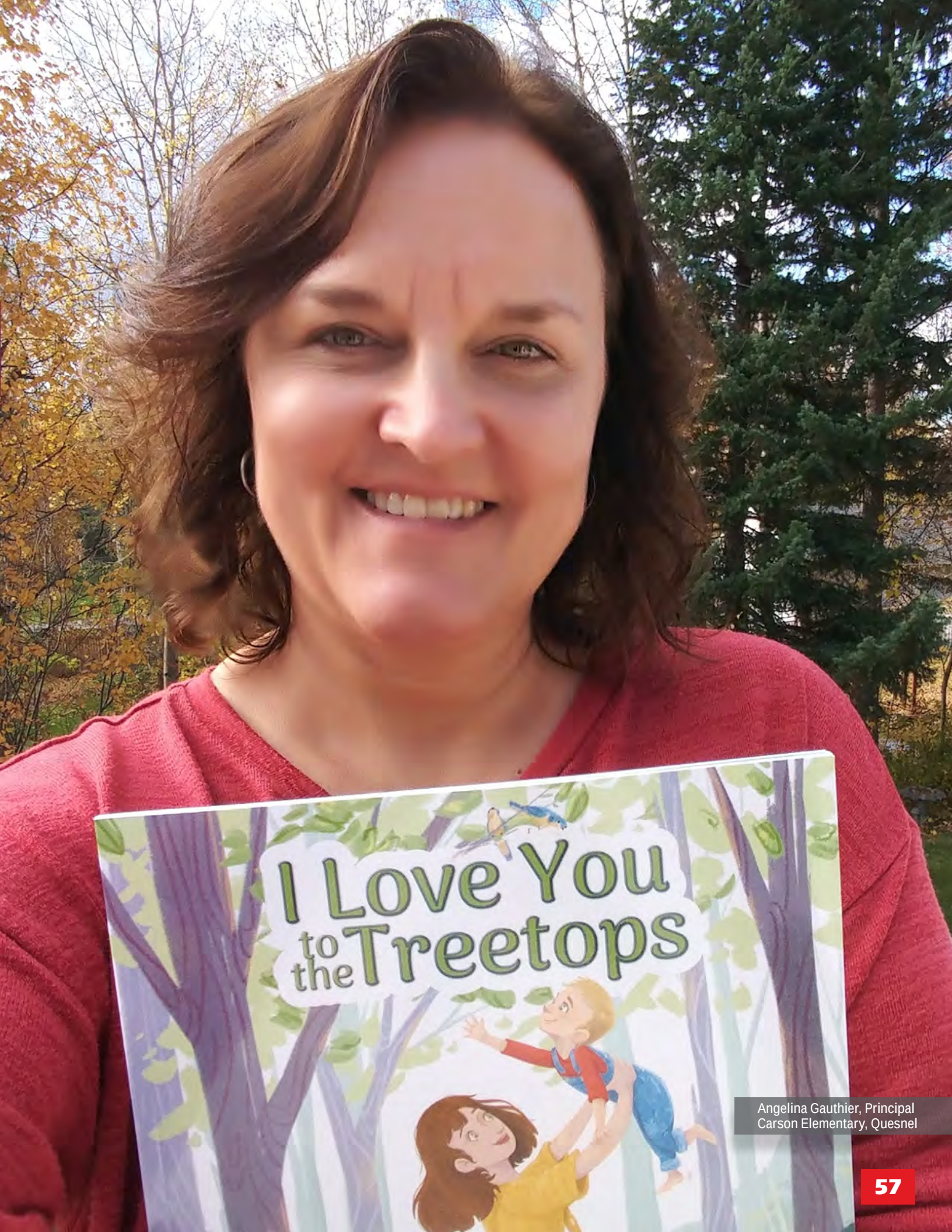
1995, in association with the University College of the Cariboo (now Thompson Rivers University).

“I still continued to write. I wrote articles for college newspapers, and magazines. I created my own fictional books as gifts to family members, but I always had the dream to have a book published,” she reflects.

Through the years, Angelina attempted to get her stories traditionally published, and would mail manuscripts to various children’s publishers, only to receive rejection letters. Then, in 2019, she was reading a picture book and the opportunity to publish presented itself.

“I was reading a children’s book that I had purchased for our school, and saw that the author, Laurie Wright, offered some free resources for the book, so I went to her website. From there I discovered she was Canadian, and that she also offered a course on how to self-publish your own book. I didn’t even know that was possible!” she said.

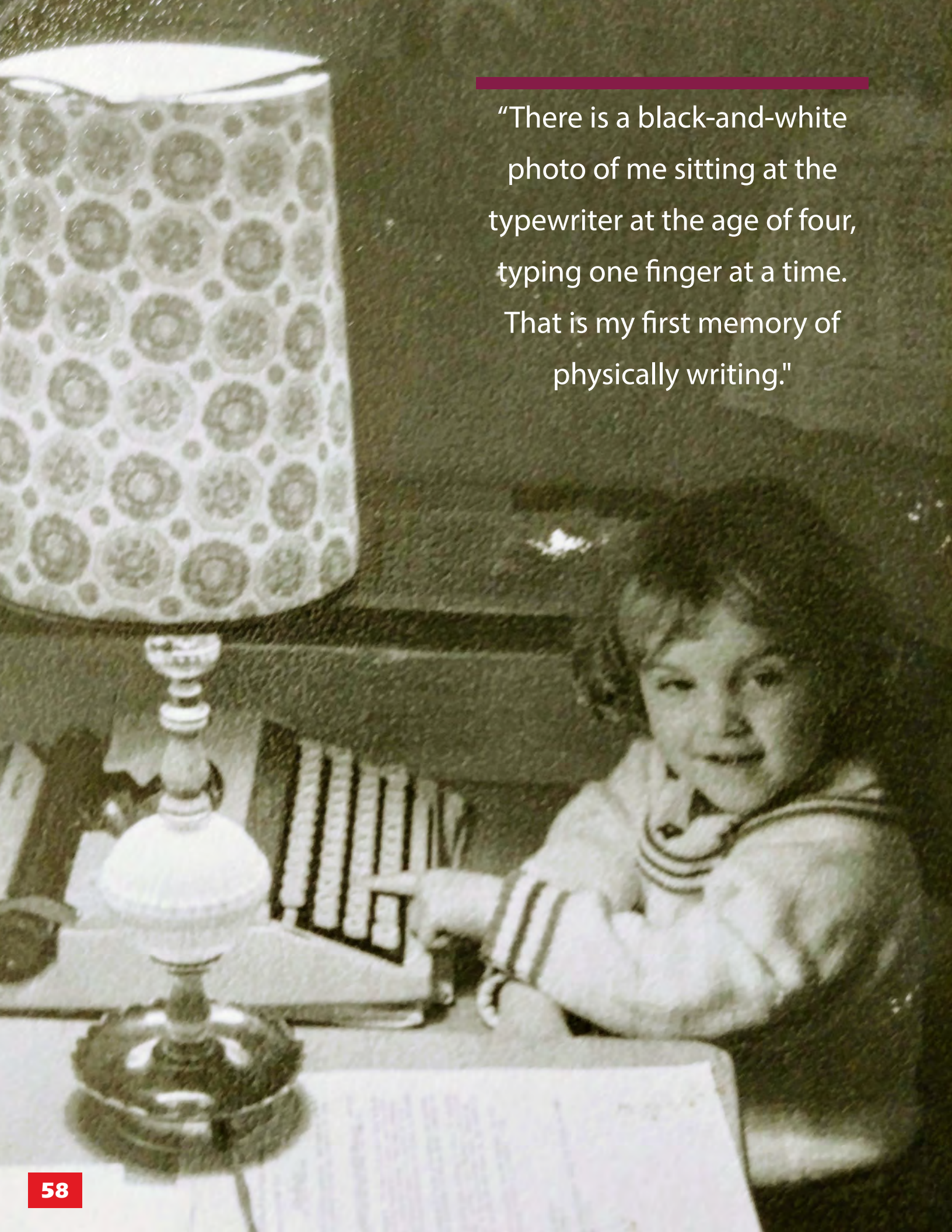
Angelina enrolled and completed the course, determined to finally publish a book on her own. Despite having many stories written on scraps of paper, old floppy discs, tattered foolscap, or her



I Love You to the Treetops



Angelina Gauthier, Principal
Carson Elementary, Quesnel



"There is a black-and-white photo of me sitting at the typewriter at the age of four, typing one finger at a time. That is my first memory of physically writing."

present desktop computer, the first book she set out to publish was a new title that she was inspired to write for her current students at Carson Elementary School in Quesnel, about kindness. What started out as a poem, called “A World of Kindness”, turned into her first manuscript.

“A key character trait that we talk about at our school is kindness,” Angelina states. “It is the foundation for our school goals, the social-emotional learning we teach, and the values we encourage. I had been searching for a new book on kindness, and couldn’t quite find something that had the message I was looking for, so I decided to write it.”

After writing, the next step in the process was editing. Her editor assisted in helping focus on the key theme of the book, and resulted in a title change in to ‘What Kind of World Would It Be?’, since that was the recurring question throughout the book.

Once the manuscript was complete, Angelina had to find an illustrator. The main obstacle in finding an illustrator is expense. A quality illustrator can charge approximately \$5,000 to illustrate a book. Angelina did find a cheaper illustrator on the website Fiverr, but soon realized, after a couple of pages, that the cost for that illustrator reflected the quality. She wanted a book that looked professional, so she continued her search and ended up finding – for a reasonable price – a new, young, keen graphic artist and illustrator, Hayley Moore from North Carolina. The illustration process took five months to complete, starting with storyboards, colour palettes, sketches, and regular daily communication back and forth.

“I am a strong believer that children need to see representation of themselves in the books they read, and provide young people with exposure to diversity through reading to develop a compassionate, kind world,” Angelina states. “When creating this book, I created a storyboard of children I wanted represented, and my illustrator enthusiastically included them. We have children with diverse hair and skin colours, with glasses, in a wheelchair, with a prosthetic leg, wearing a Patka, wearing a hijab, and a child with Down Syndrome.”

In October 2019, Angelina published her first book, “What Kind of World Would It Be?” with Kindle Direct Publishing.

“I still remember the day that my book arrived in the mail,” Angelina says with excitement. “It was like an out-of-body experience, seeing the words I wrote, along with the illustrations by Hayley. I had done it! I was a published author.”

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Shortly after publishing, Gauthier, who is the Principal of Carson Elementary School in Quesnel, had the opportunity to read the book to the whole school at an assembly.

“The response was really positive,” she recalls. “Students were so excited to learn the steps it took to write a book, and one class had me come in as a guest to discuss the publishing process. The nice thing was that I shared the poem with my students in the Spring, and they saw it transform into a book in the Fall.”

Local students and families supported Angelina by purchasing her book at local bookstores, a library

reading, and a local Christmas Farmer's Market, while other readers around the world started to purchase it on Amazon.

The recurring question in "What Kind of World Would It Be?" is, "If everyone acted just like me, what kind of world would it be?" It is a book that encourages kindness, cooperation, generosity, and empathy, and inspires dialogue about how to make the world a little kinder. It challenges children to reflect on their actions and inspires meaningful discussions about how actions and words impact others.

"It shows how simple, daily social interactions such as a kind word, helping hand, or selfless act can have a huge impact on others, and can fill the world with kindness," says Angelina.

Last year, Angelina had the desire to publish again. Her next story, "I Love You to the Treetops", was developed more than 15 years ago as a bedtime routine with her husband and daughters, where they would play a game before bed to say how far they loved each other every night.

"It was very easy to write," Angelina recalls, "As it came from my family's memories, and a place that celebrates our love. It's something that a lot of people can relate to, no matter what your family looks like."

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With this story in particular, Angelina wanted a new look for her illustrations. She discovered some artwork online by Elizabeth Osborn, an illustrator from Arizona, and knew her work was a wonderful match. Angelina also wanted representation and diversity in the illustrations of her book.

"The illustrations had to have a 'wow' impact for the diversity of geography, people, and cultures. I wanted to represent all kinds of families in the illustrations, and I feel she complemented the words beautifully," Angelina commented. "Families are so diverse. We no longer just have the traditional family unit of mom, dad, and kids. I wanted to ensure our illustrations also showed the diversity of the caregivers and families of our children, and I still wish I could have included more."

The illustrations got underway immediately, and "I Love You to the Treetops" was published in September 2020 through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing. This book shares the vast, unconditional love between a parent, grandparent, or caregiver, and child, and compares their love to the distance of treetops, deserts, waterfalls, forests and savannahs.

"The hard copy of this book drew even more emotions, as it was a strong family memory," Angelina shares. "We have a family video of one of my daughters at a young age, reading her Dad his Father's Day card, using many of the phrases from the book. It was a treasured routine in our house."

Since Angelina self-publishes her books, the work doesn't stop after the book is published.

"There's an even bigger process after publishing," she says. "When it's done, a publisher doesn't take over the advertising and marketing; it's all up to me. My marketing plan involves using my social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and my website, www.kindnessandstories.com. I regularly post on my "Kindness and Stories" Instagram and Facebook pages, write on my author blog, have done live video readings, book giveaways, have been featured on book blogs, and approached by the CEO of kindness.org."

This Spring, Angelina did class visits in her school,

and thought it was time to read her book, “What Kind of World Would It Be?” to the primary grades again.

“I had the most heartwarming moment reading the book to our grade 2/3 class in March. When I held up the book, half a dozen hands went up, and students started calling out ‘I have that book!’” Angelina said. “When I started to read, the students joined in and read the book along with me. Once it was done, they all applauded. It made my week!”

Angelina knows that there is a pool of literary talent in the BCPVPA, with potential authors in the ranks. She strongly encourages colleagues who wish to pursue writing a book to take a course in self-publishing to help guide them through the process.

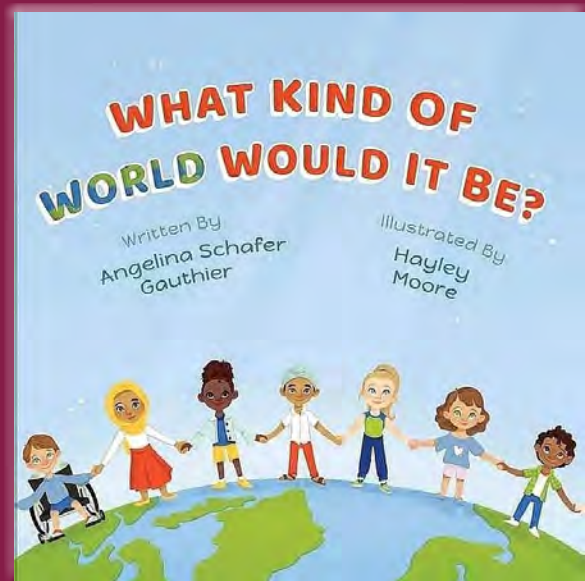
“The self-publishing course was the key to giving me the tools and confidence to take my work from my computer to a bound book,” she said. “There are

many steps involved, but I know so many Principals have valuable stories to tell and, with self-publishing, it is possible.”

Angelina hopes to publish another children’s book next year and is currently working on the manuscript. Her passion is kindness and social-emotional learning, so she feels that she will continue to use them as inspiration for future books.

“Today’s parents and educators are looking for books on character education to help them teach children the important values they need to live in this world, and I believe celebrating kindness and love is the way to do that,” Angelina said. “As an educator, I spend a lot of time encouraging students to be helpful, respectful, kind, and responsible. I hope that my books can help teachers and families build those valuable character traits, and develop our future citizens and leaders through stories.”

“Today’s parents and educators are looking for books on character education to help them teach children the important values they need to live in this world, and I believe celebrating kindness and love is the way to do that.”



@angelinagauthie



Photo courtesy: Karen Ware

by

Cordell JM Ware

Vice-Principal, William Konkin Elementary

SD91

Questions and Dreams

The summer after my first year as a school administrator was different from the summers I had experienced as a teacher. My mind was occupied by the question of how our school and community would thrive in the upcoming school year, especially amidst a pandemic. Many of our students had missed important instructional time and needed social connection. In the background, the question held my attention until early August. Then, one night, I had a very real and clear dream, and that dream was about a focus on kindness, a project that could bring together our school community. I could clearly see students learning and thriving as they sought to be kind in a practical and purposeful way. After reflection, I knew that it had to become more than a dream, but rather a vision of future action.

A Necessary Reminder

In the weeks leading up to the start of school – especially before the start of school in September 2020 – the office phone rings more and more frequently as the first day of school approaches. With everything that needed to be accomplished before that exciting day, I spent my time implementing new guidelines, reorganizing, and having meaningful conversations with students' families who, not surprisingly, had a lot of questions about the start of this unprecedented school year.

Sometime during the juggling of tasks and conversations, I realized that I had already forgotten the dream I had in the summer which was meant to direct my work this year. While sitting in my office, I decided then and there that I would focus on kindness during the next call I received. I would not simply answer the questions posed, but would support the *person* and go beyond the questions.

Soon after I made that decision, I answered a call from a grandparent who is raising their grandchildren who attend our school. They had many questions about COVID-19 and our school guidelines, but I soon realized that these concerns were not the main reason for the phone call. The grandparent told me

"Then, one night, I had a very real and clear dream, and that dream was about a focus on kindness, a project that could bring together our school community."

about their life, both past and present, and shared the hardships they were facing as a family and how they felt that they were failing as a grandparent and guardian. They needed to hear words of kindness and encouragement. They needed to hear the truth: that they are a wonderful grandparent, and that they are the reason their grandchildren come to school ready to learn.

Yet, after our phone conversation, I knew that kind words were not enough. While words can heal the heart for a time, there were needs in that home that words could not meet. That day I stood up from my chair, walked out of my office, drove home and, for what seemed like the first time since becoming a Vice-Principal, truly did my job with a focused vision and full purpose. My wife and I packed up some of her famous freshly-made peach jam and stopped for some groceries to share with the family. Through a practical action of kindness, a new connection and friendship was formed.

This type of intentional and practical kindness is what woke me up in the summer, and it is the type of kindness that our school desperately needs so that we can continue to engage in, teach, and undertake activities as a school community.

The Project

As an educator in BC, the 2020-2021 school year has been one like never before. Our communities – and our minds – are filled with the stressful buzz and zap

"Through a practical action of kindness, a new connection and friendship was formed."

of words: COVID-19 tests, social distancing, mandatory masks, potential exposures, positive cases, daily health checks, and unprecedented times.

As a school leader, I sensed how those words and others like them weighed on staff, students, and families. However, I saw a way of moving forward with another word. That word is kindness, and for William Konkin Elementary School, it has become more than a word.

Our school embarked on a new and exciting project this school year. Our mission and vision were to build, grow, and share kindness in our school, local community, and the broader world. In a time when we were all feeling so far apart, I believed we needed to come together in a new way. This would require us to not only talk about kindness, but to make purposeful and practical actions of kindness the centre of our learning.

Students from grades K-7 are doing that, taking part in this project of kindness during the teacher prep time that I deliver as our school Vice Principal. The project has three phases: build, grow, and share.

BUILD



Photo courtesy: Karen Ware

In the build phase, students learned the skills to build wooden crates. This involved learning how to use a measuring tape, square, handsaw, hammer, sander, electric drill, jigsaw, wood glue, pipe clamps, and brad nailer. When they heard about the project, the Careers Department in our district, along with the local CO-OP, donated the wood materials we needed. We were also given the use of our district's mobile ADST (Applied Design, Skills, and Technology) trailer. Our dedicated students have exceeded the goal to build 70 wooden crates this school year.

GROW

In the grow phase, students are learning how to plant, germinate, and care for garden vegetables. We are able to grow spinach and different types of lettuce using indoor tower gardens that use an aeroponics system and artificial light. In a place that is covered in snow the majority of the school year – and that reaches temperatures of -30 degrees – it truly feels like a miracle to see green leafy life spring up before our students' eyes.



Photo courtesy: Karen Ware



Photo courtesy: Karen Ware

SHARE

In the share phase, students are sharing kindness in two ways. First, we are sharing the mature vegetables we are growing, packaged into our wooden crates, with the local food bank. Food banks rarely have fresh produce donations, and our students were able to practically meet that need for our community. Second, 36 of the wooden crates have been sold to raise money for Biniyam, a grade 2 boy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Our school partnered with **Hope for Korah**, a non-profit organization that works to give hope to a population facing extreme poverty in Ethiopia. The money our school has raised through selling the student-built crates has paid for one full year of schooling for Biniyam. Before Hope for Korah found Biniyam's family, his mother would have to scavenge daily through the Addis Ababa trash dump in order to survive. Their 'home' was built out of materials found in the trash dump, was located within the landfill area, and was too small for Biniyam's mother to fully stretch out when she slept. With education for Biniyam, the cycle of poverty can be broken. Our students are passionately taking on this challenge and sharing kindness.



Kindness: A Reminder

Kindness cannot simply be something we hope takes place in our school community. It is deeply connected to intentional actions and deeds. Kindness is a skill and behaviour, and is something we express through doing. Educators model kindness well everyday with their students, colleagues, and communities. Educators also do a great job of intentionally teaching kindness in classrooms and in schools.

That is important work, and has limitless value for our learners. I wonder, though, what value and power we could gain by flipping that learning experience. Instead of only modeling, teaching, and talking to our students about how to be kind, we can take on real and practical acts of kindness together as a learning community and learn from the actions themselves. Kindness, as an action, becomes a powerful source of learning. It ripples out into our communities and empowers a generation of learners to build, grow, and share kindness.

Photo courtesy: Karen Ware



mentorship

“I have found it valuable to learn from someone
outside my district, in an authentic way.

The real-life experiences of my Mentor
put my theoretical learning into perspective.”

(2020 Mentee)

Mentorship is just one of the professional learning and development
opportunities that the BCPVPA offers to more than 2,600 Principals
and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

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Did You Know?

representation

**What to Expect
as a
BCPVPA Member**



by

Magdalena Kassis & Ellen Roberts
Directors of Member Support Services, BCPVPA

The Member Support Services (MSS) Team is available to BCPVPA members for many services and supports. One of the most common and formal supports offered is that of representing members when they are facing extremely challenging (and often unexpected) situations. When members are faced with serious allegations, the MSS Directors are available to support them, and to act as their 'Representative' through the formal process.

This can include situations such as:

- Harassment and bullying complaints/ investigations
- Complaints filed at the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB)
- Discipline or misconduct investigations
- Terminations
- Challenging meetings/conversations with Senior Management
- Mediations

It is a member's choice to be represented by the BCPVPA and, in the vast majority of cases, members do choose this representation. When an MSS Director represents a member through an investigation or other serious situation, the goal is to ensure that the member is as prepared as possible for the process, that there is fairness of process, and that contractual rights are being followed. MSS can also liaise and communicate with the member's senior management or investigator(s) on their behalf, and advocate for the member as best as possible.

The MSS team has a wealth of experience in school and district-based administration, as well as training in negotiation, investigations, and school law, and the team collaborates closely. When needed, BCPVPA accesses legal counsel for advice and guidance on behalf of members, to ensure that they are as supported as they can be.

When members are faced with allegations or situations that require representation, it can be an extremely difficult and emotional time, both personally and professionally. MSS will ensure that the member is made aware of the counselling supports available

through humanworks and the Early Intervention Program (EIP).

It is important to note that in the rare situation where a member chooses to seek their own legal advice or counsel for a situation, BCPVPA will not be able to participate in representation of the member as it would be considered a conflict of interest.

In a broad sense, having representation means the member has someone speaking or acting on their behalf. When members engage the services of the MSS team, they will be working with someone, in all cases, who will support them through their challenging situation.

MSS Directors maintain confidentiality in their work with members, and they will not act on a member's behalf without their consent.

MSS Directors do not represent members in situations involving criminal investigations. However, MSS may resume representation when the criminal proceeding is resolved, and the situation returns to the realm of the school district and employment relationship.

Investigations

The most formal representation occurs when members face serious situations with their employer, including investigations of harassment or professional misconduct. It is best if MSS Directors are contacted by the member for their involvement as soon as there is notification of an investigation. In these situations, the MSS Directors ask members to formally advise their districts in writing that one of the Directors, on behalf of the BCPVPA, is representing the member in the investigative process. This enables the Directors to directly engage with senior managers or other employees at the district level for the following purposes:

- Arranging logistics, including calls or meeting times /places for the investigation
- Engaging with investigators directly, before or during the process to clarify timelines / procedures
- Seeking clarification and/or particulars related to allegations against the member

- Requesting specific materials members might need to prepare for their investigation
- Addressing procedural questions and ensuring fair and reasonable processes throughout
- Obtaining confidentiality agreements and access to investigation reports
- Attending all interviews and post-investigation meetings with senior staff
- Advocating for a particular course of action or outcome after an investigation

Representation with the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) is very formal. Once the intake office or investigator is informed that a member has representation from the BCPVPA, they will only communicate with the representative; this effectively streamlines communication. Some school districts also operate this way, but many do not. The process of a TRB investigation is also different in that most information is shared with the investigator through written submission, whereas in school district-initiated investigations, information is gathered through interviews. MSS Directors are actively involved in preparing and submitting written responses to the TRB, and following up with investigators throughout the process.

In addition to investigations, members can access MSS representation when meeting with superintendents, other district management or HR personnel. If members are asked to attend a meeting with a superintendent or other senior manager, the MSS Director will attend with the member – in person or virtually. They will represent the member's interests, and will ask questions and advocate for the member.

Mediations

There are situations in which parties agree to engage in a mediation process instead of a formal investigation. This is particularly helpful where the parties work together in the school or district setting, as mediation can help members reach a common understanding and work toward positive working

relationships. MSS Directors support members going through mediation, at times representing them in conversations with facilitators and district staff.

Terminations

Members engage MSS to represent them when they are facing termination from their district. These are very challenging circumstances for members. MSS Directors attend meetings where terminations are discussed. They represent members' interests in ensuring that districts are following fair and reasonable process as outlined in members' employment agreements. They respond to settlement offers by the districts. MSS consults with BCPVPA's legal team to ensure the best possible outcome for members who have been terminated.

MSS Directors also represent members in other investigations, including Human Rights Tribunals and WorkSafe BC investigations.

In addition to formal investigations, members often seek representation when dealing with other matters in their districts or with outside agencies. This may include liaising with senior management regarding contract concerns – salary levels, retirement gratuities, benefits, etc. – and with HR personnel regarding leaves of absence or Graduated Return to Work plans, or responding to case managers at WorkSafe BC or Desjardins (Long Term Disability).

In all situations of representation, the goal of the MSS Director is to achieve the best possible outcome for the member through proactive engagement, allowing the member to focus on the situation or process they face.

Representation of members in these challenging situations is one of many services that are offered to BCPVPA members. Members are encouraged to reach out for any other guidance they may be seeking, including general professional guidance, questions around contracts, retirement, health leaves, performance evaluations, mentorship, or any other topic. The BCPVPA will provide members with the information, or will offer direction to the appropriate contact or resource.

FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CAELUM

(Let Justice be Done Though the Heavens Fall)

A Brief **(Legal)** History of the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

The history of the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association is very colourful, and what follows is really just a high level sketch. I hope to give a flavour of the noble history of the Association, and the passion that those people who founded it brought to bear.

Background

Before January 1, 1988, the British Columbia School Act required Principals and Vice-Principals to be members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF); this legislative requirement had been in effect since November 29, 1973.

by
Allen Soltan
Senior Partner
DLA Piper Canada



On January 1, 1988, the *School Act* was amended and the requirement for compulsory membership in the BCTF was repealed.

Also on January 1, 1988, the *Teaching Profession Act* (Bill 20) came into force. It amended the *School Act*, such that teachers were permitted to join a trade union and engage in collective bargaining. Before the coming into force of this legislation, Principals and Vice-Principals were, by definition, 'teachers' for the purposes of the *School Act*, and by regulation were assigned certain supervisory duties in their schools. One important effect of Bill 20 was to move Principals and Vice-Principals into the ranks of leadership.

Establishment of BCPVPA

The application for incorporation of the Association as a society was dated June 6, 1987. It was signed by Dean Paravantes, Joyce Anderson, Lyle Garraway, George Buckley, Leo Chaland, Kerry Firth, Jim Fishenden, Bob Haskins, Gary Smith, Len Fowles, John Parry and Nick Parker-Jervis.

The Association was incorporated as a society on July 14, 1987. The first President was Dean Paravantes and the first Executive Director was Gordon Moffat. The first Board of Directors meeting was held on July 15, 1987 and was chaired by Dean Paravantes. Among other resolutions that were passed at that meeting, the following officers were appointed: Dean Paravantes, President; George Buckley, 2nd Vice-President; Lyle Garraway, 1st Vice-President; John Parry, Treasurer; and Len Fowles, Secretary.

Expulsion from BCTF

At a special general meeting of the BCTF that was held on October 10, 1987, a resolution was passed amending its bylaws and expelling Principals and Vice-Principals from its membership.

Historically, Principals and Vice-Principals had comprised approximately 10% of the membership of the BCTF but accounted for approximately 20% of its annual income because dues were based on the level of salary. Over the years, the BCTF had accumulated assets in excess of \$20,000,000.00.



Allen Soltan is a Senior Partner of DLA Piper Canada, formerly Davis & Company, and lead counsel to the BCPVPA

BCTF Assets Litigation

By 1988, George Buckley had become the President of the Association. On June 15, 1988, Mr. Buckley – on his own behalf and on behalf of the Association – petitioned under the *Company Act* in the Supreme Court of British Columbia for a winding-up and distribution of the assets of the BCTF or, in the alternative, that the BCTF pay compensation to the Association “on the ground that the affairs of the BCTF are and have been conducted in a manner oppressive and unfairly prejudicial to the [Association]”.

What ensued was complex and novel litigation that ensued over a period of approximately six years, involving numerous appearances in the Supreme Court of British Columbia and the British Columbia Court of Appeal (consuming well over 100 pages in the law reports). To say that this litigation was ‘hard fought’ would be an understatement.

When the Association’s Petition was heard on its merits, the Supreme Court of British Columbia held:

“In my opinion the relationship between the B.C.T.F. and those of its members who were principals was such that the principals had an equitable right as a class not to be deprived of membership without reasonable provision being made for them to form a new association of their own which would provide them with the rights and benefits they would have continued to enjoy if they had remained members of the B.C.T.F. It would not be just or equitable to permit the majority of the members of the organization to appropriate for their sole benefit all the assets of the B.C.T.F. simply because the majority decided it was to their advantage to expel the principals.

Conclusion

There seems to me to be no principled reason on which it could be said that the expulsion without compensation of the principals from the B.C.T.F. was not unfairly prejudicial to them. The history of their membership and participation in the affairs of the B.C.T.F. entitled them to expect

that if they were expelled and, in consequence, had to form a new organization of their own to advance their common interests (as they have done) they would be fairly compensated by their former associates.”

The BCTF initiated an appeal of this decision to the Court of Appeal, but its appeal was dismissed. The decision of the Supreme Court of British Columbia stood; the Association had won! Justice had been done. In the result, the Association obtained \$3,900,000.00 from the BCTF as a result of the courage, vision, commitment, and dedication of its people. These funds have put the Association on a very healthy footing, and allowed the Association to acquire the land where its beautiful building now sits.

Gordon Moffat - First Executive Director

I digress to say a few words about Gordon Moffat, who proudly served as the first Executive Director of the Association between 1988 and 2002, when he retired¹. Gordon’s passion for the Association and his work ethic were legendary. He must have travelled every square inch of our province, in all sorts of weather conditions, getting to know the members of the Association and helping them. Gordon made it clear to everyone that he and the Association would be relentless in making sure that every member was treated fairly – that all the resources of the Association stood behind every member and that no member ever had to stand alone. Gordon was also steadfast in his belief that the Association would make a positive mark on public education in this province.

Right To Fairness

The Association’s belief in justice and the view that its members were entitled to be treated fairly is what led the Association to take on cases like *Rainbow v. Board of School Trustees of School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan)* in 1990 and *Watkins v. Board of School Trustees of School District No. 21 (Armstrong-Spalumcheen)* in 1992. Both cases went all the way to the Court of Appeal; the Association was successful

¹ Sadly, Gordon passed away on October 13, 2020

in establishing the legal principle that members of the Association were entitled to 'due process', and to be treated fairly at the time of dismissal. These were landmark decisions, and established a fundamental legal foundation for all members of the Association.

The 'battle cry' of the Association in those early days was "*Fiat Justitia*" ("Let Justice be Done").

The Present

Since those early days, the Association has continued to be blessed with outstanding human capital and distinguished leadership², who have brought vision and commitment to the affairs of the Association.

The Association has now been involved in almost every aspect of employment relations affecting

² See Appendix below

thousands of its members, including complaints of harassment, employment litigation, human rights, section 21 of the *School Act*, defamation, privacy, statutory duties and responsibilities, ethical issues, and many other important issues.

The significant milestones referenced above were important and formative in creating the exceptional organization that the Association is today. The commitment to service to members, by supporting effective leadership in education through representation, advocacy and leadership development, remain just as important today as when the Association was first established.

As a law firm, we are blessed to have enjoyed such a special relationship with the Association since its inception and are extremely proud to have been part of its incredible history.

BCPVPA Presidents

Dean Paravantes	(1987-1988)
George Buckley	(1988-1990)
Stanley French	(1990-1992) <i>deceased</i>
Nick Parker-Jervis	(1992-1994)
Gord Wallington	(1994-1996)
Bob Mang	(1996-1998)
John Rizzuti	(1998-2000)
Stu Dale	(2000-2002)
Bob Lindsay	(2002-2004)
Tom Hierck	(2004-2006)
Les Dukowski	(2006-2008)
Marilyn Merler	(2008-2010)
Jameel Aziz	(2010-2012)
Shelley Green	(2012-2014)
Gordon Li	(2014-2016)
Kevin Reimer	(2016-2018)
David DeRosa	(2018-2020)
Darren Danyluk	(2020 - present)

BCPVPA Executive Directors

Gordon Moffat
(1988 - 2002) <i>deceased</i>
Sandra Bruneau
(2002)
Stanley French
(2002 - 2007) <i>deceased</i>
Ted Whiteland
(2007 - 2011)
Tom Hierck
(2011)
Jameel Aziz
(2011 - 2012)
Kit Krieger
(2012 - 2018)
Kevin Reimer
(2018 - present)



Harassment

Do you know what you need to know as a leader about harassment? *Take the quiz!*

Match the correct response from **Column B** to each statement posed in **Column A**, and check your answers on the following page.

Column A Statements

1. A complaint filed by a staff member
2. What a person needs to be during an investigation
3. Recordkeeping of incidents or events
4. A legal entitlement to protect employees
5. Process to understand an allegation
6. Governing body who certifies teachers in BC
7. Person who files an allegation
8. Human Rights Tribunal decides if a case has _____
9. An alternative to an investigation
10. Person who has allegations filed against them
11. Contractual process used to deal with issues in the workplace
12. An unwarranted act against another person
13. Discrimination is based on color, religious beliefs and _____
14. _____ retaliation for filing a complaint
15. Possible outcome of an investigation
16. What people hope for after an investigation
17. Article E.2 states that teachers work in a harassment _____ environment
18. All _____ are protected from bullying
19. Respondents are entitled to have a _____ during an investigation
20. A superintendent may appoint a _____ to investigate a complaint

Column B Responses

- A. race
- B. rights
- C. remedy
- D. TRB
- E. grievance
- F. founded
- G. free
- H. designate
- I. mediation
- J. harassment
- K. bullying
- L. investigation
- M. merit
- N. no
- O. respondent
- P. rep
- Q. people
- R. complainant
- S. notes
- T. honest

Harassment

How did you do on the quiz?
Answers & score rating below!

1 – J	6 – D	11 – E	16 – C	SCORE	
2 – T	7 – R	12 – K	17 – G		18 - 20 Experienced
3 – S	8 – M	13 – A	18 – Q		15 - 17 Novice
4 – B	9 – I	14 – N	19 – P		10 - 14 Rookie
5 – L	10 – O	15 – F	20 – H		00 - 10 Beginner

Check out these resources:

Harris and Company – Workplace Law & Advocacy
Check upcoming calendar of events: [Harrisco.com/events](https://harrisco.com/events)

BC Public School Employers' Association
bcpsea.bc.ca/learn-connect/oncore-hr-learning-support/courses-offered/harassment-training

Awareness and Prevention of Harassment Training
www.openschool.bc.ca/info/hat
Available on request

Article E.2: Harassment/Sexual Harassment
bcpsea.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/35-LSB-E2-Harassment-Sexual-Harassment.pdf

Stay on top of your professional health



The BCPVPA is pleased to offer its members
the Early Intervention Program (EIP)
by humanworks

Here to help you gain greater clarity
and control of your professional health

BCPVPA EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The EIP offers an excellent opportunity to be proactive in managing your health and well-being. It is designed to provide you with quick and easily accessible resources and counsel on how to best navigate your health-related concerns so that you can remain at work.

Questions about the EIP?

Visit the FAQ section on the BCPVPA or humanworks websites or contact:

humanworks

EMAIL: admin@humanworks.ca

PHONE: 604-734-4130

www.humanworks.ca

Feature

A Journey of Change

by
Jane Arbuckle

*Principal, Parkside Secondary School
SD82*



Staff, Parkside Secondary School, Terrace

When is the best time to embark on a journey of significant change at a school that is steeped in long standing traditions? What is the best way to convince a staff that the time has come to replace certain approaches with a new mindset? How do you lead students and staff through change so it becomes sustainable and acknowledged as a 'better way'? These are the questions that nagged at my conscience each day when I exited the parking lot of Parkside Secondary School as the school's Principal.

When it comes to my 30-year career in education, I believe that everything has happened for a reason, although the purpose – I must confess – has not always been immediately apparent to me. Looking back, it is as if an invisible hand has been guiding and sometimes even pushing me to embrace change and confront challenges. Two years ago when I had spent a summer learning about trauma informed schools I realized that this was the missing ingredient needed for our students to realize their full potential. Now that I 'knew better' I was compelled to 'do better' as the school leader.

Prior to my summer of online learning, I had previously paved the way to transform our small alternate high school into a trauma sensitive school by focusing on the concept of 'Growth Mindset' as coined by Carol Dweck (2006). I needed the staff to see every student as a capable learner and, more importantly, recognize any unintentional bias on their part stemming from a 'Fixed Mindset'. Higher expectations became linked to the school's motto of "Love, Strength, Courage". I also showed the staff the documentary film *Paper Tigers* (2015) directed by James Redford. Lincoln Alternative High School in Walla Walla, Washington is the focus of this film that strives to answer the questions about what it means to be a trauma informed school, and how teenagers are educated when their childhood experiences have left them with a brain and a body ill-suited for learning. The quiet persistence of love is shown to have a powerful impact.

Now I know eyes can sometimes roll when love is mentioned as an essential component of a school's mission, but research has recognized the importance of rapport between teachers and students for decades. A meta-analysis of 119 studies has linked teacher

"I knew that the adults in the school cared deeply about their students and wanted them to thrive. This would be the starting point for our journey."

empathy and warmth to better student achievement, motivation and behaviour (Cornelius-White, 2007). Promoting positive teacher-student relationships was recently emphasized by Susan Shebby and Tameka Porter (2021) when they stressed the importance of noticing students as individuals and showing them that you care, while challenging and encouraging students to meet the high expectations expressed by their teachers. Helping students connect their effort with success allows them to develop grit, an essential ingredient of academic achievement.

With preliminary steps taken to set the stage for becoming trauma informed, it was time to create a school growth plan that encouraged every staff member to embrace a new approach for helping students reach their goals. I knew that the adults in the school cared deeply about their students and wanted them to thrive. This would be the starting point for our journey. The foundation upon which I wanted to motivate staff to change needed to be built upon educational research that had a proven record of undisputed success.

I recognized that the information I had accumulated during the summer about trauma informed schools needed to be shared with every staff member on an ongoing basis if Parkside was going to be transformed into a trauma informed secondary school. I knew that the flow of wisdom had to be like a water faucet that was continuously dripping into a bucket of knowledge and seeping into the brains of every staff member. Each drip of water represented a new insight gained

about trauma informed strategies and brain-based research.

When school started in September, every staff member was given a 12-month subscription to an internet-based video library that contained an extensive collection of topics for their consideration. I had deliberately given everyone a buffet of potential wisdom and encouragement so that they could sample as many items as they desired. In addition to this online membership, the staff were given the book *Help for Billy* written by Heather Forbes (2012), with an accompanying study guide (2017)

and quick reference guides from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) by Kristin Souers and Pete Hall (2018) (2019), as well as Julie Causton and Katie Macleod (2020), to help support one and all with their learning journey. Together we would be paddling our way through a river of knowledge with everybody taking part in the adventure.

Monthly staff meetings became opportunities for sharing information. Social-emotional learning, the impact of trauma upon the brain and mindfulness activities became agenda items for discussion.



**"Together
we would be
paddling our way
through a river
of knowledge
with everybody
taking part in the
adventure."**

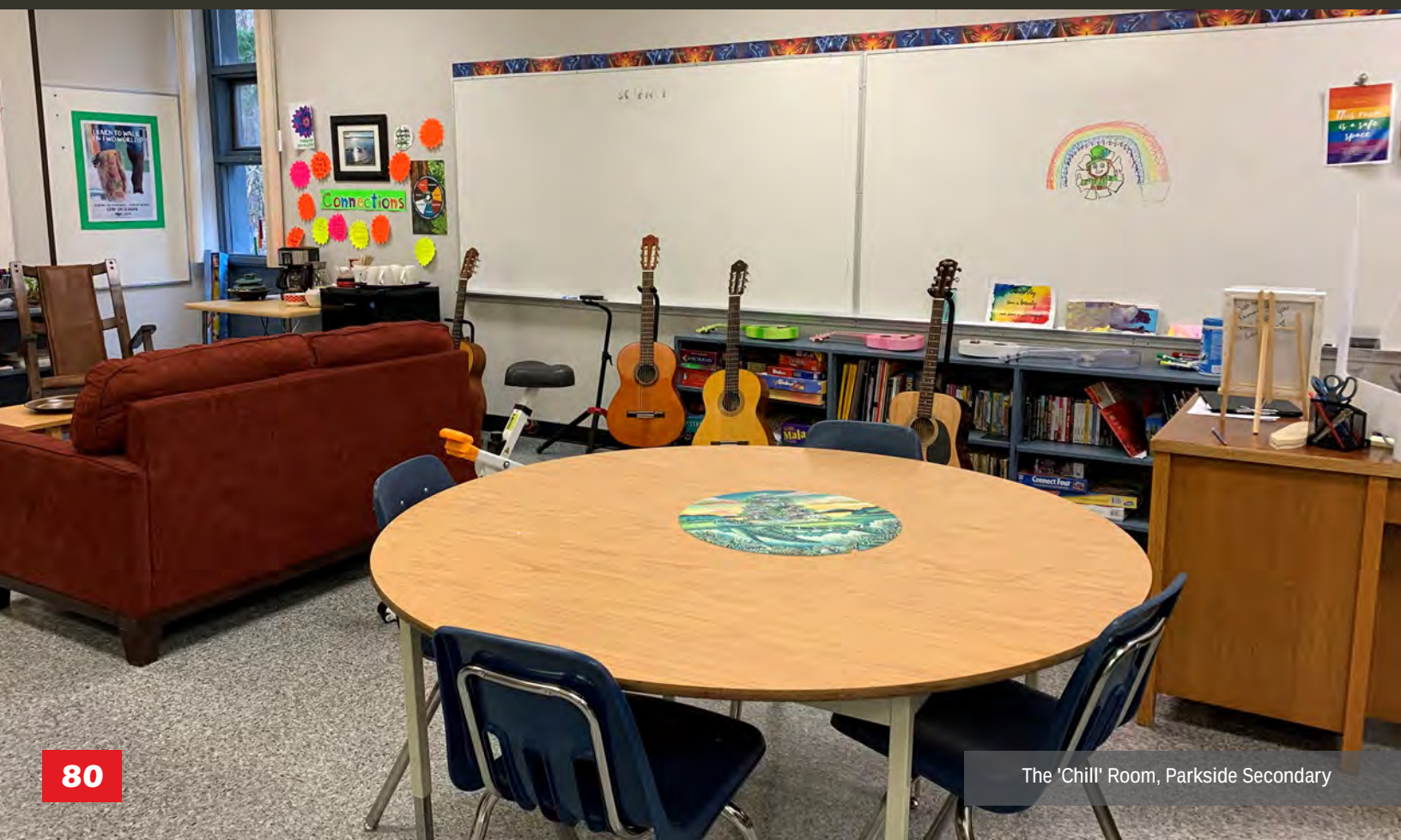
Wellness became a focus for everyone because, as we all know, change can be difficult and stressful so calendar tracking sheets were given to students and staff to assist with personal wellness goals of harm reduction or embracing new healthy habits.

Every student's schedule was changed to allow for three 'checking in' times between the students and their teacher in the morning, after lunch and at the end of the day. The 'checking in' connection times allowed staff to gain an awareness about their students' emotional state so interventions could be intentionally offered to any student who expressed agitation before academic activities were started. The 'checking in' times also allowed for mindfulness activities to be given to students so they could become calm, alert, and ready to participate in their own learning. At the end of each day, an attitude of gratitude was encouraged as students and staff reflected upon what they appreciated while at school.

The creation of a 'Chill Room' for students to access whenever they felt overwhelmed in their classroom setting was a key component to the transformation

of our school being trauma informed. Indigenous support staff embraced the Chill Room as a special place to support students on a daily basis. A fly on the wall would see this special room as a sanctuary where students could feel safe and secure as they worked through their emotions by doing art, playing a musical instrument (guitar / ukulele / electric keyboard with headphones), or simply sitting in a rocking chair eating a snack and chatting with a staff member who wanted to help them. Once the student became calm, the assignment they brought to the Chill Room from their classroom would become the focus. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child or – in the case of Parkside Secondary – it takes an entire staff working together to help students experience success.

Food became a tool to build rapport with students and staff. In my opinion, there is no better way to build a positive relationship with teenagers than by offering them something to eat or drink. With this in mind, I took over the breakfast program at Parkside Secondary School by creating two kiosk-style stations





with donations from the local food bank and coffee shop, as well as financial support from the Breakfast Club of Canada. Any time during the school day, students could access complimentary snacks from the Breakfast areas. As an amateur baker, I view food as a source of comfort that could bring joy and relief to those who needed a caring gesture. My nickname for many years has been the 'Lemon Loaf Lady' as a testament to the most requested item I prepare for folks in my local community of Terrace. At Parkside Secondary, I have a new nickname – the 'Smoothie Lady' – because I prepare fruit smoothies for students and staff at 10 am, and deliver the drinks as I wheel my beverage trolley from classroom to classroom.

You can imagine the surprised look on the faces of newly-registered students when their Principal offers them something refreshing to drink each morning. On Friday mornings, chocolate milk is served as an additional beverage option because who wouldn't want to have a bit of chocolate added to their day? This year, to tackle the stress of living through a pandemic, I have added another layer of nutritional

support by proclaiming the slogan 'Friday is Pie Day' to denote the fact that I offer slices of pie to students and staff in the afternoon as a final note of thanks for being at school.

So what has been the overall impact of this journey of change? Improved student attendance and reduced behavioural concerns were noticed by staff members in the first year as we paddled our figurative canoe down the trauma informed river. We realized that our new approach was having a positive impact upon students. Now, as we enter the second year of our trauma informed journey, we have augmented the initial support strategies of weekly yoga and horseback riding sessions with ergonomic bicycles in classrooms for both students and staff, thanks to grants and financial assistance from local community groups.

Being a trauma informed staff has been advantageous as we constantly navigate the murky waters of a global pandemic. On a daily basis, we are experiencing some sort of trauma or stress stemming from

COVID-19, but we now have tools at our disposal that can mitigate the adverse ripple effects we face. Examining the importance of “Grit” as described by Angela Duckworth has become a focal point for our staff this year as an additional layer of knowledge to help students persevere when confronting obstacles.

This year’s school slogan of “Stronger Together” has been a reminder for everyone that, collectively, students and staff can thrive even during the most hectic days. The key is to remember that we are never alone and that kindness can infuse others

with strength. One day I am certain I will look back and recall with fondness the “Journey of Change” at Parkside Secondary as one of the most worthwhile adventures of my career. Until then, I will continue to paddle my trauma informed canoe down the river of learning and invite others to join me on my adventure because being part of a team is always better than being isolated. As the secretary at Parkside Secondary keeps telling me, “Together you and I will always be smarter than we could ever be alone.” Wise words worthy of remembrance when work becomes overwhelming.

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Jane Arbuckle is the current Principal of Parkside Secondary School in Terrace, British Columbia. As an experienced teacher and administrator working in elementary, junior and senior secondary schools, Jane is passionate about helping students experience success at school. Jane maintains an optimistic 'can do' attitude inspiring others to be creative.

Her hobbies include baking, taking relaxing walks, watching British mystery shows and cheering for her favourite sport teams, the Toronto Maple Leafs. *Go Leafs Go!*

"You can imagine the surprised look on the faces of newly-registered students when their Principal offers them something refreshing to drink each morning."



The 'Smoothie Lady', a.k.a. Jane Arbuckle

A Friend on

How A Professional Partnership



the Journey

Can Enhance & Enrich Your Practice



Like many close friends, they frequently finish each other's sentences and the narrative passes back and forth seamlessly. They laugh – often – and have the ease of colleagues who have a lot of history, and a great deal of mutual respect.

This year, both **Jessica Antosz** – BCPVPA Director, Professional Learning and Development – and **Don Boyd** – BCPVPA Director, Member Support Services – will wrap their final 'school year' after long and vibrant careers as supportive educators.

The bond of trust between colleagues can take years to develop, and is something to be treasured. We asked Jessica and Don about where it all began, and the ways that a professional partnership can guide an educator's practice.

Jessica: "It was 1992, and Don transferred in as the new Principal. I was a teacher at that time, and student services coordinator for grades six and seven. We worked closely with admin and the school-based team – it was a different relationship than being a teacher with only classroom duties."

Don: "We relied heavily upon the student services team because both my Vice-Principal and I were new to that school of 517 bubbling grade 6, 7 and 8 students. Having Jess there was like having another administrator. The year after Jess came back from maternity leave, Steve was appointed Acting Principal at another school. They asked me who I'd like to have as a Vice-Principal, and I chose Jessica."

Jessica: "The Vice-Principal came back the next year, but we were faced with another challenge for our school. Accreditation was introduced, and that set our school on a year-long process where we worked collaboratively with the staff to review all school programs and to create a 3-year plan. Don asked me to be the Co-Chair of the Accreditation process. An external team came in at the end of the year and did a successful review of all the school's committee work, it was quite a process.

It was wonderful, in a sense, because that's where we really started building the school culture together. We established sub-committees within our staff, that

guided us through the accreditation process and built leadership capacity of our staff."

Don: "Every school has potential leaders: they just need the opportunity to lead. Wherever possible, we offered people an opportunity to have leadership, not just in the classroom but for the whole school. Our staff didn't turn over: they wanted to be there, and they were committed to the team. Out of our staff, I believe that at least 7 of 27 went on to be Principals, Vice-Principals or senior staff members."

Jessica: "At the time, we were not aware of any models for staff development and professional learning. I went to the library and found an article from the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward) which had a Staff Development learning academy in the U.S. for educators; there was no equivalent training program in B.C. at the time. Don and I were accepted and took the 2 ½ year program, we were part of study groups, did research on the foundational elements of staff development and acquired new skills. We started to change what our staff meetings looked like. And it just grew from there."

Don: "We had the support of our superintendent, Tom Watson and the Qualicum School District, our staff was ready to go and we had the opportunity to be with leading educators. The idea was to have the staff work collaboratively, to improve their instructional practices which would ultimately improve student achievement. We tracked this in different goal areas, and we had the progress posted in the staffroom.

LEADERSHIP ADVICE NEW LEADERS

Read, read, read, and share your learning
– your articles, your books and your videos
– with your staff, students, parents, and
everyone you work with.

LEADERSHIP ADVICE WORKING IN TEAMS

And we released the staff. We created a timetable so teachers had common prep, but we'd also go into their classrooms and teach their classes so that they had that additional time to collaborate. They loved it."

Jessica: "We went to the two unions and to the district so that we could get permission to do this – at the time, it was ground-breaking."

Don: "We established a sense of team. Some teachers went to do their masters, and talked there about what we were doing in our school, and people were surprised. We took a group of our staff members, and we went to other places to present about the study groups, and how we found the time. This was 2002-2007, way ahead of its time."

Jessica: "One of the main things that we did was we listened. We changed staff meetings from people just coming in and attending the meeting: to being actively engaged in new learning and having staff members present to one another. We structured the meetings and tables to have staff move outside of their comfort zone and to work with other staff members who they usually didn't work or collaborate with. It was interesting to see the interest grow and people looking to see who they would be working with at the meeting."

Don always talked about the importance of consensus and starting off small. You can start to work with a group, and another group will ask why you aren't working with them, too – you can say, 'I didn't know if you were interested', and then you start the process with them. It's that process of scaffolding."

Don: "You look at people's strengths and say, 'How can I maximize that to benefit the rest of the group?' All of the staff were in study groups and we also had our parents in a study group. It was a whole sense of school."

Jessica: "And community. Don and I were also co-chairs of the district PLD committee, and we'd have a professional learning component at our Chapter meetings and share the learning at the district level."

Don: "We had 26 administrators in our district and 13 of them were on the Pro-D committee. We brought

We were involved in the writing of all three BCPVPA Leadership Standards documents, and we learned that one of the major things with working in groups is that if we are to effectively move forward, we need to listen carefully to one another, and ask deep questions to gain clarity, to embrace curiosity and reflection, and to recognize that there is more than one way to do something. Listen, listen, listen first — then creativity and innovation will come.

Clarify what values are important to any group you work with, and make sure your actions demonstrate your values. Make sure that the values that you agree upon by the group are upheld. Responsibility, respect, courage, communication, empathy, gratitude, service, tolerance, trust, loyalty: these values are so important in schools, and will truly lay the foundation for creating collaborative teams, whether it's staff, students, parents, or the community.

in guest speakers from the B.C. and the U.S., many experts. In the past it had been 'administrivia', and it instead became prime time for joint learning in our Association meetings."

Our school was highly successful: teachers weren't leaving, EAs weren't leaving, parents wanted their kids to transfer in. Then, Jessica was transferred to another school. We relied upon the staff, and things

LEADERSHIP ADVICE

CREATE YOUR NETWORK

If you are a single administrator, it's important to have a coach, or a mentor or a network that you can go to. If you are a single administrator, you're there as part of the team, but you are also everything at that school, and you need to develop a way to share and discuss your ideas.

continued the next year. And then I was transferred out, to be Principal of a different school. The team that came into the school had a different vision.

Each time you go to a school, you bring your passion – when we went to our new schools they said 'Oh: you're about staff development. What are you going to bring to us?' And we each said, 'What is it that you need?' How can we help you?' That took away a lot of the angst."

Jessica: "It's important to understand your new staff. I observed the way things were done throughout the first year in the new school as I got to know the staff, built social capital and supported them. We realized that we wanted to improve and enhance our literacy program, so we created a literacy committee that focused on implementing new strategies to improve student learning. The staff started to understand that I was someone coming in to support, and to give them opportunities. It wasn't the same study group model; it was a hybrid of the model. You have to figure out where people are, and seek to understand. I think for both of us the highlight was experiencing the excitement, and seeing people embracing their various roles and being successful. Everyone has a talent and an important role in the school."

As Jessica and Don begin to eye the change ahead,

they are reflective about what they have learned, and what they have been able to share with their staffs and with BCPVPA members.

Jessica: "We think one of the important things about the work we do in PLD is that Liz (Bell) and I can't do the job just ourselves, we have to give opportunities for other people to build their skills, because we're not going to be here forever. You really realize the value of a team, and that the importance of leadership is leading others and supporting others. I love asking people if they can present at a course, or be a facilitator. They may say that they don't feel they can, but we can assure them that we will train and support them. When we develop programs, it's about giving those other people opportunities. It could be running for the Board, participating in training, or writing an article. You open up doors for people to share their gifts."

Don: "I was involved with contracts in our district for 20 years, and with the CAC (BCPVPA Contract Advisory Committee). I was often called upon by colleagues to do mediations between people in our district. When this position was posted, I didn't apply at first, but Jess encouraged me. And similarly for

LEADERSHIP ADVICE

ALLOW OTHERS TO DEVELOP CAPACITY

Allow others to build their leadership capacity. It's important to learn to step aside and let others have the opportunity to take on key roles. Be a guide in collaborative groups. Allow risks and new ways of doing things, even though you may not agree. Learn to let go of your thoughts and work for the good of the group.

LEADERSHIP ADVICE

FOSTER UNDERSTANDING

People need to know how to work with one another. You can be faced with an environment where certain people can't work with certain other people. We brought in a presenter on 'true colors', and people really learned from it: they said, "You're random abstract, and I'm concrete sequential, no wonder you drive me crazy!"

So that's a learning piece for staff, when you're together for a long time, you can do these types of things. Set the norms, so you know how to interact with one another.

Jess, when she applied for her role: you always have that self-doubt – and then all of a sudden people realize that she's applied, and they're saying that's who we want. That's who we need.

It's about creating a sense of team, and trust. It's about recognizing strengths in people, and getting them into positions where they can have the most impact assisting others.

I've got 35 years in a school, and eight with the BCPVPA, and Jessica has 40 years. It's a long time. And we could still do the jobs, but we're looking for another change."

Jessica: "It is time for somebody else to come in and to bring another lens to the position. In looking back on my career, I have been very fortunate to have worked in numerous school districts, with wonderful admin partners, staff, students, parents, communities, colleagues, educators and of course the incredible BCPVPA Board, staff, and members. And not to forget my amazing and creative PLD team partners over the years — Elizabeth Bell and Amorie Kruger. Liz and I each brought different skill sets to



"One of the main things that we did was we listened. We changed staff meetings from people just coming in and attending the meeting: to being actively engaged in new learning and having staff members present to one another."



DON ON JESSICA

"Jess is an 11 on the relational scale, she builds relationships, and people feel comfortable talking to her because she validates them when she asks them to do things, and pays it forward. She was involved with the BCPVPA, she was involved in Pro-D, and was active throughout the province. One of the leaders in our district, when Jessica was leaving to go to the BCPVPA role, said that Jessica needed a bigger playground for her skills. She had done her thing in the district and in schools, but she was bigger than that."

LEADERSHIP ADVICE

LEARN BEYOND THE SCHOOL

We gave teachers and all staff the opportunity to learn outside the school, and to bring new ideas back to the school in order to drive new learning forward. This is the same as at the district level for Principals and Vice-Principals: in order for districts to grow, leaders need to seek new learning experiences outside their district.

the department, we worked together in such harmony and balance to create a new vision and programming for the department with Liz focusing on the high level vision and me focusing on the details. Liz has been a dynamic leader and partner, and working together has been a fun, memorable and incredible leadership learning experience. I can honestly say that the hardest part of my career will be leaving all the people I have met and worked alongside."

Don: "I value that members reach out and ask for support. I value the opportunity to be able to work with them, and provide them some guidance based on my experience at the school level, and in this role."

Whether it's a parent, whether it's a teacher, a student or whomever, the key thing is that people want to be heard and that you understand them. They also want to know that you have a process for making decisions."

Jessica: "I hope I've been able to support people in the work that they do, and I hope that I've been there for them. It's been a fabulous learning experience. It's not like I'm coming to work, it's coming to a role that I've been gifted with."

Don: "Speaking for both of us, if I can, the opportunities that we have been provided to work at the BCPVPA, to support guide and work alongside all the other Principals, Vice-Principals and teachers in the province has been for the both of us, the pinnacle of our careers.

Jessica and I have always acknowledged our great staff teams. The buck stops with us, and we will always support our staff to take risks to push their learning, and to improve instructional practices so students can learn and be engaged at high levels."

Jessica: "It will be sad to leave but the memories I take with me are incredible. I have been lucky to work with dedicated and passionate teams at all levels of education — the importance of being a team player was instilled by my parents. Above all I want to thank all my family members — my husband, daughter, sisters, brothers, in-laws, our mentor Karl Clauset, and friends who have supported me in living out the dream of finishing my career in PLD at the BCPVPA. New adventures await and the time has come to spend more time with family, friends, a new dog, travel and, of course, the beach (laughs). Together is a wonderful place to be."

Don: "I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues who have supported my journey over the years, for without their support and guidance I would not have been able to do this.

And now (laughs), it's time for fishing."

LEADERSHIP ADVICE MODEL THE WAY

With the Study Groups we established, we asked everyone to be part of one. And that meant that we also needed to be part of one. Model the way for others, and work alongside your staff: there is nothing more valuable.



JESSICA ON DON

"Don has a relational attitude, and an openness to listen really carefully to people: when you go to Don, it's not about Don, it's about how he can support you. He's got a really great critical eye, and there's a safety with him. Don keeps his word, what Don says he'll do, he will do as a leader, and his actions tell you that what you see is what you get. His opening line is 'How can I help you?' and he will go to the end. He's a true servant leader. And that's why he's got more gray hairs than anybody I know!"



SCHOOL

LEADERS

To make connections

To achieve reflection

For the love of language

There is no *one* reason

Why our members blog



Some readers may recall what it was like to collect their daily thoughts in a small bound book secured by a tiny gold key. Sometimes prefaced by “Dear Diary ...”, the sessions could be a sharing of that day’s high points, intelligence gathered, or even hopes for the future. But those musings remained tightly under wraps, destined for viewing only by the author and, occasionally, by a trusted friend or a wily sibling. For those who found their expression in writing, the avenues for sharing their thoughts were limited until the internet became a story-telling gamechanger.

According to Wikipedia, the term ‘blog’ did not appear until the late 1990s, but the roots of blogging can be traced to early bulletin board and newsgroup services that offered a forum where anyone could add their thoughts, ideas, and activities. While many expected that the blog might fade away as social media evolved, blogs have held their own and continue to flourish. These ‘weblogs’ have taken many forms as technology has advanced, with niche blogs, video blogs (vlogs) and podcasts now issued by individuals, businesses, charities, politicians, celebrities, influencers and — of course — educators.

Blogs abound in education; they are a candid platform to share experiences and expertise, and to connect beyond the school, the district, and the province. Many Principals like Chris Wejr (SD35, Langley) have launched blogs as the next generation of the traditional school newsletter. “I used to do a professional blog two or three times a month, to share ideas and explore educational issues,” says Chris. “I then took our school newsletter to a digital format as a weekly blog for parents and staff that included pictures and videos. While I don’t blog professionally anymore since the birth of our third child, I find the weekly school blog provides a window into life at our school and helps to connect classrooms both with each other and with the families at home.”

School blogs are effective for sharing the news of the school or district in a very immediate way, enlivened by associated media. Families can find out how the food drive is going, what the grad parade looked like, and how the custodian’s retirement was celebrated – a personal touch that has been particularly critical during the global pandemic. Principals can also use their blogs as a tool to issue reminders, start conversations, do temperature checks, collect feedback, and address issues.

School leaders who maintain personal blogs do it for a variety of reasons. Ian Landy (SD47, Powell

River) produces a ‘Days of Learning’ blog that counts down the school year by expanding on his daily reflections. In February, Ian’s musings ranged from the legitimacy of comic books as a form of writing to Pink Shirt Day, from an account of his presentation to students on the permanence of the digital footprint to school dress codes, from that ‘Tuesday’ feeling after a long weekend to the role of the clockface in human innovation. Ian includes photos (often featuring his fine ties and bowties of the day), attaches presentation files, and sometimes includes sketch notes from learning sessions.

Judi Poole (SD5, Southeast Kootenay) blogs because she enjoys reflecting on her practice. “I feel it’s important to share with others my findings, inspirations and thought provocations in what I’m reading. I want to share those thoughts with others, whether they are leaders, leaders-to-be, or people who are trying to make an impact,” says Judi. While there is not a main focus to her blog, Judi gravitates to topics of an emergent nature. “At the time, an inspiration may be purely serendipitous, or it will land on my proverbial doorstep due to someone else’s sharing, or it may come from my personal lived experience.”

Carrie Froese (SD39, Vancouver) contributes to her own blog as frequently as she can, and is inspired to grow her professional learning community. Carrie



Thank you to the bloggers who contributed to this story

Rob Clark SD75

@rclarksd75

Jeff Dartnell SD33

jdartnell.edublogs.org

Carrie Froese SD39

inquire2empower.ca

Ian Landy SD47

technolandy.wordpress.com

Judi Poole SD5

bit.ly/3bWkhmv

Chris Wejr SD35

shortreed.sd35.bc.ca

finds that writing the blog helps her to clarify her own thinking, and adds that, "It's very rewarding when connections made online are strengthened by meeting in person." While education-focused, Carrie's writing has a very personal vibe and her posts can be drawn from a personal experience supplemented by rich researched background to fill out the story, as when she biked to East Georgia Street with her husband to visit Nora Hendrix's house.

School leaders may also blog so that they can hone their own writing skills. Jeff Dartnell (SD33, Chilliwack) started out by posting on a weekly or monthly basis, but has moved to a regular daily practice. He has a goal of advancing his education by pursuing an EdD or PhD, and the exercise is keeping him writing on a consistent basis. "I belong to Ozan Varol's Inner Circle," says Jeff, "This group has helped me to focus my goals, and provides me with a sounding board for my writing and ideas." *See Jeff's sidebar story on his own writing inspiration on the following page.*

Rob Clark (SD75, Mission) has followed a different path to establish an online presence and to share his thoughts, ideas, and the lessons of the day. For the past three years, Rob has actively posted on social media several times each week using thoughtful and engaging videos and photos. "In my past conversations with a number of Principals, there was a collective concern expressed about posting *anything* on social media. At the time, there had been negative press and stories about schools, staff, and admin teams, and it felt like that was dominating social media sites," says Rob. "When other leaders shared posts, they were met with negativity and they abandoned those efforts quite quickly. Then, it snowed. It snowed a lot. I created my first 'snow day' video, and took a chance by sharing it on social media. It was well received

by the majority of people but there were still some negative comments. So, I made a second video. And a third video. Those videos evolved from fun and silly to serious as I began to tell the story of my school, my experience as a Principal, and my experience as a father. Over the past few years I have received an outpouring of support from my community and other communities around the province as I share the character and values I would like to see in my students. Some posts are celebrations, some are lessons, some are pleas, and some are just for fun."

What keeps a blogger blogging, while carrying a school leader's workload? For Chris, it's clearly about sharing the positives. "The 'Good Things to Talk About' always nudges me to make sure I am in classrooms and sharing the positives that are happening at our school. Each Sunday night is a chance for me to be grateful for the incredible educators at Shortreed. I try to share one thing about each classroom at least every couple of weeks in the blog. Last year, we had student reporters helping me, but with the cohort model we have had to press pause on that for now." Judi notes that the reflection on her practice keeps her engaged. "I enjoy writing, and if others are interested in being an audience to these 'wonders' and 'ponders', I hope that it can inspire and lead them to query the 'why' of what they do." And Rob returns to those threads of connection, and creating conversations. "I continue along this path because of the support I have received. I have been contacted by parents, teachers, administrators, and trustees in different communities in B.C. and in Alberta, thanking me for being honest, transparent, and vulnerable as a school Principal. It has been an honour, and a humbling experience."



Life is about routines. We wake up the same time of the day, we have the same routines at work, we do the same things during our spare time, and so forth. These routines make our lives less complicated and easier to manage, but these routines also inhibit our ability to aspire to new things, to accomplish certain tasks, and to grow as individuals. As more time passes, we look back and wonder "Where has the time gone" and sometimes a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction sets in as some of our goals and aspirations have not been accomplished and might never be met.

The COVID-19 pandemic made our routine-filled lives even more obvious. During the pandemic, many people started filling up their spare time by bingeing Netflix, watching old re-runs, and spending more time with their family (one of the few positives of the pandemic). But during the pandemic, the days turned into weeks and weeks into months. Time seemed to be just passing us by as we waited for the end of the pandemic. For myself, the pandemic revealed how fast time was flying by and how many of my goals, dreams, and aspirations had not been met.

With this realization I sought to make some changes that would create opportunities for change, growth, and inspiration in my life. The first thing I did was join the Inner Circle. This is an online platform where "people come together to network, collaborate, and stress test their big ideas". Ozan Varol, creator of the Inner Circle and author of *Think Like A Rocket Scientist*, defines it as group of people "drawn to those who carve their own path — the misfits, rebels, and troublemakers". There are approximately 250 people who belong to the Inner Circle and you can

contribute as much or as little to the group talks, the weekly monthly online webinar, and various other platform posts, discussions, and learning sessions.

What have I gotten from the Inner Circle? It's a place where I feel "encouraged and supported to take big — sometimes terrifying — leaps forward in my life". How has the Inner Circle impacted myself, my dreams and my aspirations? Some of my long-term goals are writing a book and undertaking a EdD or PhD. The Inner Circle members, who have a wealth of knowledge and life experiences, are supportive and encouraging. They have provided numerous resources, podcasts and more, that are helping me work towards my goals. I have also started to read more scholarly articles and educationally based books. I rejuvenated my blog and have been writing more using a 15-Minute Ninja Writing format. This format was proposed by a member of the Inner Circle to help me establish a daily writing routine. I have also started to learn to play the ukulele. I have been practicing for about an hour a night for about two months now. I am no Jake Shimabkuro but I am getting better and I haven't quit. *If you don't know who Jake Shimabkuro is, Google him – amazing!!!*

The changes I have made in my life have allowed me to free myself from my routine-filled existence. I am now more focussed and I am working towards a number of different goals every day. Joining the Inner Circle has also allowed me the opportunity to become part of something bigger than myself. The Inner Circle has become "my new group of misfits, rebels, and troublemakers" that are working together to "carve their own path" in this crazy world.

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With the end to one of the most challenging school years in BC public education's history in sight, we begin to contemplate our own needs and Summer plans. Many administrators have endured more stress and work demands than ever before. Here are three tips for wrapping up the school year, setting your intention for the Summer holiday and embracing your 'Summer Plan.'

Draft It

Be Prepared

For more experienced administrators this might be 'old hat', but for less experienced administrators, this will be an important process. Wrapping up the school year in a way that clears the decks for the Summer holiday and best prepares oneself for the Fall start-up remains critical for many administrators to truly enjoy a break from work. Create a checklist of 'must do' activities and deadline dates to ensure you get to the important tasks you need to have completed to enjoy your Summer more freely.

Dream It

Set Intention

Many of us have begun to daydream from time to time about what our Summer holiday might look like if we got it 'right.' If you haven't done so, take some time one evening or weekend to devote your thoughts and energy to really defining what you need over the Summer break in order to reclaim greater health and wellness. Seek to determine what intention(s) will drive your Summer rejuvenation plan. Develop a priority list and establish clear overarching wellness goals.

Do It

Go With Your Flow

Once you have set your intention(s) and established your Summer wellness goals, set up weekly reminders. This will ensure the Summer doesn't slip away without you making your wellness needs a priority. Obviously, creating space and a mindset for spontaneity is important, given how much of our work year in our schools is governed by structure and timetables. Enjoy the simple pleasures of being, relaxing at your own leisure and engaging socially as you wish.



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by

Jack MacNeill

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President, humanworks*

Summer



"RE-CREATION"

*Re-balancing & Re-grounding
to better Re-create ...*

by
Dan Kenkel
Principal (Medical Leave)
SD 57

If you are reading this, then you are nearing the end of the most challenging year of your career. Quite a statement after last year, which also ended under very trying circumstances.

But you already know this, because you have lived it. You led people through it. You were the captain of a ship in rough waters and very stormy seas. You were also the anchor, the rudder, and the sails. You were not the only one keeping the ship afloat, but you were the one that everyone expected would know all the answers, solve all the problems, and answer the bell to all concerns and tasks.

You were the voice of the Ministry and the district to your school community on some days, but also the voice of your school when the message needed to 'go upstairs'. The role of school leader is the pinch point in education. It has always been a challenging profession. COVID-19 has just increased the wind speed to gale force.

As for me, I have been on the Principal sidelines since January of 2020. Pre-COVID. Yes, timing is everything. But my years as a Principal mean that

I can appreciate what you have experienced, while being sheltered from the storm myself.

The ReFresh series published by the BCPVPA has offered many helpful ideas for maintaining balance and personal health through these challenging times. My intent is to augment and revisit those ideas by offering a few concrete suggestions to consider as you head into Summer and some well-needed rest:

- ⦿ Rest that takes you away from the burdens of leading through a pandemic.
- ⦿ Rest for your nervous system so that you can lower your stress and cortisol-based state.
- ⦿ Rest so you can rebalance your family relationships, friendship connections and personal care.
- ⦿ Rest so you can re-ground in your non-work life and your 'other' world.
- ⦿ Rest so you can recreate... and 're-create' your sense of self order and personal peace.
- ⦿ Rest that will allow you to focus on creating conditions for holistic healing.

Rest ...



*so you can re-ground your non-work
life and your 'other' world*

Here are some intention-based thoughts to consider.

1. START now. If you haven't already, start building in activities and actions that prepare your mind and body for an upcoming vacation. I know that is not easy to do. As a colleague reminds me, our school year never 'winds down'. The end of the school year is more like the end of a ski ramp. We launch into Summer at full speed and altitude. As many of you can attest, our first weeks of Summer are often spent with a cold, and are characterized by efforts to just wind down and settle. But with intention, we can try to start that personal wind down now. Even in a chaotic month. Even this year.

So, go for a daily walk at lunch time. Book a tee time or go for a hike as a mid-week, after-school get away. Get in the garden and put your hands in the soil. Prepare the boat. Wear shorts and sandals to work. Catch some rays in the back yard with a good book. Play a Summer playlist of your favourite tracks. Go away camping for the weekend. Fire up the barbeque. Whatever activities you choose, make them a product of intentional choice. Ramp up your Summer activities now. Let your body feel the stimuli of Summer activities and allow it to transition in the last weeks of June. Then, when you hit July, you can start your holidays relaxed and ready to really take a deep dive into vacation mode. You need it.

2. TAKE INVENTORY of your diet and drinking patterns. This school year may have led to times where you reached for the cheap carbs to get you through. You may have also leaned on the bottle a bit more than you know is healthy. Summer is the time to dial that back and reassess the balance between short term relief and long-term problems. Talk to colleagues and family for feedback. Steer clear of shame and blame. Just move toward a healthier diet, exercise, sleep, and fluids... more water, less wine!

3. CONNECT to the present moment. Mindfulness is another way you can prepare for the Summer right now. We can turn inward. We can focus on our breath. We can meditate and try to stay present. If that seems too challenging in a busy school, we can try a guided meditation. Find one on



YouTube that works for you, or make your own. Our nervous systems are designed to interpret incoming stimuli, but that stimuli can come from sensing our surroundings, or from our imagination. Our nervous system cannot actually tell the difference. So, if we close our office door, and put on some ocean wave sounds, we can transport ourselves into our imagined reality, and reap the benefits that being there would achieve...without the sunburn! Make that date with yourself with intention. Plan to take that microvacation at a scheduled time. Follow through *on* yourself, *FOR* yourself.

4. RESET your nervous system. When a deer escapes from a predator in the wild, it will lie down in the grass afterward and shake quite violently. This instinctual response is necessary for the deer to shed the energy it had built up in the chase, and to reset its nervous system and hormone response. The 'threat state' was appropriate for the emergency, but staying in that state long term can cause the deer to see a predator behind every tree and perceive everything as a threat, even members of its own herd. The rise in adrenaline and cortisol also becomes unhealthy for

the deer, and the constantly triggered deer ultimately begins to put the whole herd into alarm. Not good. So, what do they do? They literally shake it off. They have a neurological / hormonal reboot. They release the pent-up energy...and they ground. Literally.

We are wired the exact same way. And yet we almost never reset.

How many times this year did you feel like a deer in the headlights? How often did you feel the wolves at the door? How many times did you have to make decisions in your job from a neurological state of Fight, Flight, Freeze or Fawn? How often have you felt stuck in threat mode? High stress? Fear? Avoidance? How many times have you lashed out at a friend? Loved one? Colleague? And how many times did you just want to hide?

I think we can all admit to being in this state too often. I also know personally that it will negatively impact your health, because it has impacted mine.

Here is the punchline. We need to recognize that this year was a long-enduring trauma. It had its moments of joy and satisfaction, but it was traumatic. Since we store trauma in our bodies, we need to release

it through physical movement and activity. So, get out there. Hike it out. Bike it out. Run. Lift. Paddle. Stretch. Golf. Do it with intention. Dig into the work on yourself. Reset your state from 'threat' mode to 'safe and social' mode. The payoff is getting to spend the whole Summer in a healthier neural state, one that expands creativity, resets our holistic health, and allows for deep social connections with family and friends.

5. EMBRACE nature. A "ReFresh" article referenced the practice of Forest Bathing. But other forms of contact and activity in the natural world can have the same effect. Swim in a cool mountain lake, or fly fish in a cold flowing river. Embark on a berry-picking adventure, or a quiet paddle across a lake. Embrace the calming effect of a forest, the quiet punctuated by the sounds of wind and trees. Birds gliding and water flowing. The forest scents are earthy. Rich. Calming. The light is muted by the shadows of trees and mountains. The mossy forest floor softens beneath your feet. Go there. You do not need a destination or a timeline. You do not need an activity or a contrived purpose. Just go. Just be. You only need the freedom to wander and the desire to experience the richness of nature.

*Experience the
richness of nature*





Love is the only thing that accumulates faster than you can spend it. It always comes back in abundance.

6. MAKE a switch. For many of us, it is not necessarily relaxing to spend the whole Summer unwinding. We may seek to switch from our career activities to our passions and our artistic expression. They say a change is as good as a rest. While the research may not bear that out entirely, I do believe that creative and passion-based activities that induce a state of flow are healthy and richly rewarding. Crafters and musicians, artists, and builders, this is for you. Do your thing.

7. PRACTICE your faith if you have one. If you are a person of faith, and you have felt disconnected to God and your faith due to the pandemic, or just the crazy school year, this may be time to reconnect. If you are not religious, this may be time to explore your spiritual awakening and connection. Do it with intention. Make it a priority.

8. LOVE your people. Love is the only thing that accumulates faster than you can spend it. It always

comes back in abundance. So, let it flow. If you are a dad like me, reconnect with your kids. Play. Invest in them. If you are a mom, be a mom with love and intention. Feel the joy and love of family connection. If you have a partner, check in on them and re-engage. If you are single, build your connections to friends and family. Put yourself out there. If you have lost a friend or feel like you have hurt someone, reach out and unhurt them. Anticipate the new freedoms of a post-COVID life, and open your heart to the love that exists in the world. You need it. It needs you.

9. PRACTICE gratitude. Studies show that one of the best ways to improve your happiness is to express and show gratitude for all you have. It is a mindful and intentional act. Work that gratitude muscle every day. If you say grace at a meal, build from that. If you can wake up and reflect on your gratitude for ten things before you reach for your phone, it will increase your happiness. And it will spill over onto others in your life.

I wish you all the peace and calm you need after a very challenging year. Know that your efforts, successes, mistakes, struggles, victories, and resilience all contributed to the collective good of our society. They made a difference. They were sacrifices that mattered. Now, however, the time is ripe for you to care for you, to reboot, recharge and re-create who you were before. Maybe a you that is better than before. More humble. More aware. More compassionate. More resilient. More loving. More understanding. More determined. More mindful.

There has never been a journey that has not changed the traveler. Calluses on the feet, battle scars between the armour plates, and a heaviness on the heart are the souvenirs of the journey. Now is time to lower your burden and rest.

I am proud to call you all my colleagues. I wish you the Summer you need, and the vacation you deserve.

BE well!



REFERENCES

Chair Yoga - Katie Marren, SD 57

bit.ly/KM_ChairYoga1

bit.ly/KM_ChairYoga2

BCPVPA ReFresh Series

bcpvpa.org/resources/health/refresh

BCPVPA ReCharge Series

bcpvpa.org/resources/health/recharge

BCPVPA The Learning Brain Series

bcpvpa.org/resources/health/the-learning-brain

BCPVPA Health Links

<https://www.bcpvpa.org/resources/health/links>

learning

“Time to meet, talk and debrief in our groups has been valuable. My 'table family' will be a group to connect with moving forward. (Our facilitator) guides the conversation, offers thoughts and ideas, but his best attribute is that with simple questions, he is able to force us to dig just a little deeper in our thinking.”

(2019 BCPVPA Short Course I Attendee)

The BCPVPA offers a continued journey of learning, and the chance to collaborate with colleagues, to more than 2,600 Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

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LEGACY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

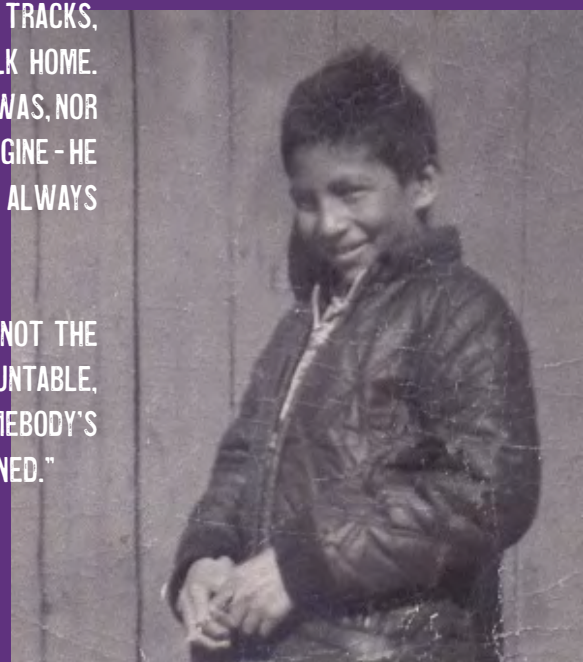
An Interview with **Sarah Midanik & Lisa Prinn**
from the *Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund*

"CHANIE WAS A YOUNG BOY WHO DIED ON OCTOBER 22, 1966, WALKING THE RAILROAD TRACKS, TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE CECILIA JEFFREY INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL TO WALK HOME. CHANIE'S HOME WAS 400 MILES AWAY. HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE IT WAS, NOR KNOW HOW TO FIND IT, BUT, LIKE SO MANY KIDS - MORE THAN ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO IMAGINE - HE TRIED. I NEVER KNEW CHANIE, THE CHILD HIS TEACHERS MISNAMED CHARLIE, BUT I WILL ALWAYS LOVE HIM.

CHANIE HAUNTS ME. HIS STORY IS CANADA'S STORY. THIS IS ABOUT CANADA. WE ARE NOT THE COUNTRY WE THOUGHT WE WERE. HISTORY WILL BE RE-WRITTEN. WE ARE ALL ACCOUNTABLE, BUT THIS BEGINS IN THE LATE 1800S AND GOES TO 1996. "WHITE" CANADA KNEW - ON SOMEBODY'S PURPOSE - NOTHING ABOUT THIS. WE WEREN'T TAUGHT IT; IT WAS HARDLY EVER MENTIONED."

- GORD DOWNIE

*Canadian rock singer-songwriter, musician,
writer and activist (1964 – 2017)*



The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) was birthed from the inspiration both of Chanie's story and of Gord's call in his last years to build a better Canada. The DWF aims to build cultural understanding and create a path toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. In order to build upon Gord's vision for reconciliation, the DWF knew that investing in school communities and educators was critical. The Legacy Schools Program, a free, nation-wide initiative, was developed to engage, empower, and connect students and educators to further reconciliation

through awareness, education and action. Legacy Schools are now quickly growing and spreading to all corners of our nation.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Sarah Midanik, DWF'S President and CEO, and Lisa Prinn, Manager of Education and Activation, about the purpose of this renowned program as they shared stories of hope from Legacy Schools in BC, and emphasized the critical role that educators play in reconciliation.

by

Paige Jung

Communications Assistant, BCPVPA

WHY AND HOW WAS THE LEGACY SCHOOLS PROGRAM CREATED? WHAT WAS GORD DOWNIE'S VISION FOR SCHOOLS?

SARAH: Going to the very beginning, Gord Downie first learned about Chanie's story from Mike Downie, Gord's brother and co-founder of DWF. Mike had read about it in a Maclean's article and showed it to Gord, to which Gord replied, "I didn't learn this in school". Since there was a focus of work being done around reconciliation in Canada at that time, it was becoming widely recognized that an education gap around reconciliation still largely existed.

After learning of Chanie's story, Gord started *The Secret Path*, a project to share the story of Chanie. *The Secret Path* started with just a collection of ten poems written by Gord, which went on to become an album, a graphic novel, an animated film, a three-city concert series, and finally two documentaries. There was this whole suite of storytelling happening – both about residential school experiences, and also about Gord's experience learning Chanie's story and sharing that with the nation.

DWF really grew organically from that momentum, and it was supported by two things that were happening at the same time: the completion of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* and the 94 Calls to Action, and Gord's terminal diagnosis. At a time when people were focused on Gord for the *Tragically Hip*'s final tour, he wanted to redirect that spotlight to the true history of Indigenous people in

Canada, the residential school experience, and ways to move forward on the path towards reconciliation.

The Legacy Schools Program was really created to better support educators in their ability to teach about the history and legacy of residential schools and the true history of Indigenous people, outside of what was being offered through the formal curriculum.

Legacy Schools receive a toolkit of resources that provide a starting place for educators to feel comfortable enough to teach Indigenous history in their classroom.

A main aspect of the Legacy Schools Program is the concept of **reconciliACTION**: translating one's learning of Indigenous history into positive acts of reconciliation to implement positive, constructive social change. Along with the Legacy Schools toolkit a ReconciliACTION Guidebook is provided which offers suggestions and examples of how educators can create reconciliACTIONS within their schools or community learning models. It isn't meant to be a one-size-fits-all remedy, rather it's meant to provide a starting place to take that next step beyond the learning.

**"RECONCILIATION: TRANSLATING ONE'S
LEARNING OF INDIGENOUS HISTORY INTO POSITIVE
ACTS OF RECONCILIATION TO IMPLEMENT
POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL CHANGE."**

We have Legacy Schools in every province and territory across the country, and we've had tremendous growth within the program. We're in more than 2,000 schools across the country in just three years, and in BC, we have 296 unique Legacy Schools right now. Educators are always saying to us, 'that sounds exactly like the kind of support that we need'.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW RECONCILIATIONS HAVE BEEN EMBRACED IN LEGACY SCHOOLS IN BC?

LISA: There are a ton of great reconciliACTIONS happening, especially throughout BC. What's really unique about the Legacy Schools Program is that we





get educators to focus on local Indigenous cultures, specific to their area, which creates an awareness of the vast variety of Indigenous cultures throughout Canada. We really try to promote ongoing learning and have a community focus, as we're aware that approaches to learning can vary throughout Canada.

ReconciliACTIONS can look really different depending on the school and what they've been learning. For example, the Comox Valley School District – the first district in Canada to sign up all of their schools as Legacy Schools – participates in the **Walk for Wenjack** annually. The Walk for Wenjack is a challenge to collectively walk the 600 kilometres that Chanie needed to get home. They've also set up the route so students go along the abandoned railroad tracks and learn about the residential school system at different stations.

One school in Comox Valley has done peer-to-peer learning, where the senior grades teach the elementary grades about the residential schools and their impact. Another school got their students to paint stones with different messages of hope and spread them out as they did the Walk for Wenjack.

ReconciliACTIONS and the ideas that the students and educators come up with are all very unique to each school, which is why we don't want to give a 'cookie cutter' guide or tell schools exactly what they 'should' do. We want people to get educated and think of their own ideas so that they can inspire themselves and others in their own way.

WHAT'S IN THE LEGACY SCHOOL TOOLKIT, AND WHAT WAS IT DESIGNED TO DO?

SARAH: The toolkits change slightly every year because we constantly update the information in them to make sure the language is still relevant. Along with classroom mementos such as pencils and pins, calendars with Indigenous days of significance and the 94 Calls to Action, the toolkit contains a guide that educators can quickly reference for activity and lesson ideas. For example, one of the suggested ideas is to have your class write letters to the Wenjack or Downie families about their experiences in the Legacy



Schools Program. There's a consortium of resources from K to 12 that educators can access for educational supports such as lesson plans, worksheets, teaching tools – you name it.

LISA: We're trying to break the online resources down further and further, for instance by region, grade level, language, and specific topics like allyship or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. We want educators to be able to easily access different resources, wherever their conversations may lead.

HOW IS *THE SECRET PATH* WEEK INTEGRATED WITH THE LEGACY SCHOOLS PROGRAM?

SARAH: *The Secret Path* week occurs every year from October 17 to 22, which commemorates when Gord and Chanie passed on to the Spirit World, respectively. During that time, we call on all our Legacy Schools and champions to engage in acts of reconciliation or reconciliACTIONS. We have a few flagship events, one being the Walk for Wenjack.

In the past, we've had big concerts or community-based events which bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together during that time. Obviously, last year everything moved to being virtual, so we did a re-screening of our 2019 event which was an incredible concert that brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. There's so many different events that occurred during *The Secret Path* week. Last year, we had more than fifty different events happening nationally during just that one week.

HOW HAVE COMMUNITIES BEEN IMPACTED BY THE LEGACY SCHOOLS PROGRAM?

LISA: I often think about the Comox Valley School District. What was interesting about them is that they actually engaged not only their teachers in the Professional Development sessions, but their caretakers, office staff, directors, and trustees as well. Everybody came together to really engage in what reconciliation meant to them – their whole community was involved.

Bruce Carlos, District Principal of Indigenous Education in Comox, has worked hard to ensure educators embraced the program in ways unique to each school. Champions like Bruce make sure that the program remains strong year after year.

SARAH: I keep thinking about the North Vancouver School District. They were already so far along in terms of starting to do this work, but after engaging with DWF, they were able to use us as a tool to get schools and educators within their district excited. They encouraged and pushed each other to really think through what reconciliation means within *their* school, and how they can advance their journey.

I remember this SD44 Principal had told me that he had never met the parents of one of their Indigenous students before, but after their school became a Legacy School, he saw them coming and participating in all the different events. It just made me want to cry and have goosebumps all at the same time. I mean, that's the whole point, right? The engagement from the Principal affects the teachers and students, who then go home and engage with their families – you can really see the difference.



“WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE ISN'T JUST A PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS TO PARTICIPATE IN. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN SYSTEMIC CHANGE, AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT EVERYONE CAN BE EXCITED ABOUT AND PROUD TO BE A PART OF.”



If it makes a difference in the life of one kid, that's going to have a critical mass effect on the next generation of young Canadians. That generation can then grow up differently and have a greater appreciation and respect for Indigenous peoples, history, and cultures, which will ultimately improve the lives of Indigenous people in Canada for generations to come. What we're talking about here isn't just a program for schools to participate in. We're talking about participating in systemic change, and that's something that everyone can be excited about and proud to be a part of.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR EDUCATORS WANTING TO 'DO SOMETHING' AND ENGAGE THEIR SCHOOL IN MORE RECONCILIATIONS?

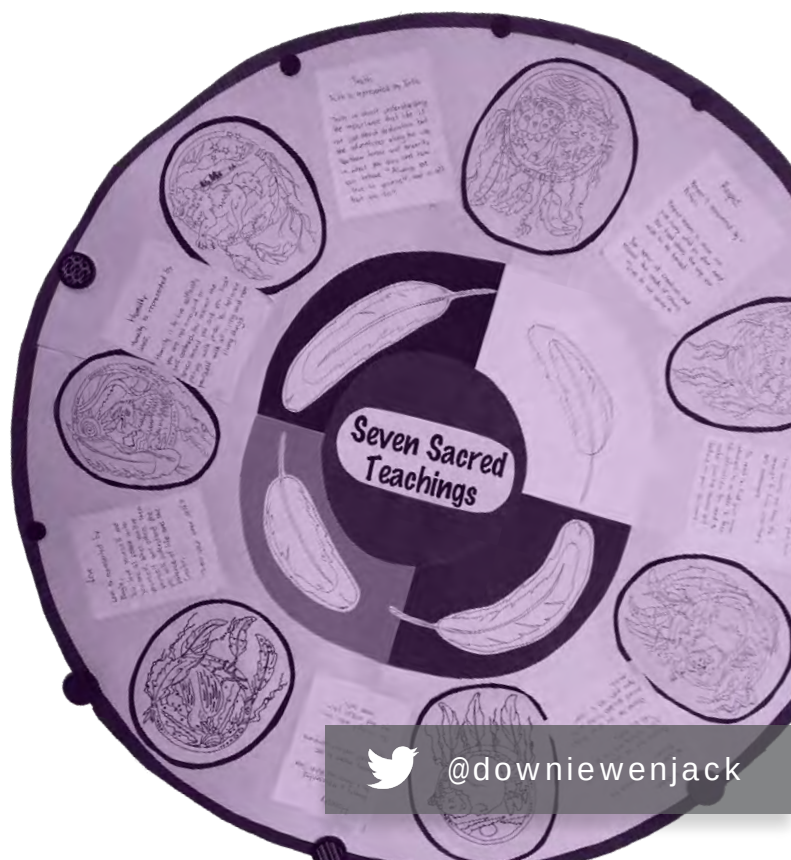
LISA: It's common for many educators to feel intimidated but there are so many available resources to utilize and there are Indigenous leaders in their schools that can support and guide them. Start small – you don't have to make big changes quickly – and then grow, learn, and keep going from there. Don't be afraid to include Indigenous perspectives in any aspect, or all of your curriculum. We provide educational resources to teachers and educators so that they can help include Indigenous perspectives in their classes – no matter what curriculum that they're teaching. It doesn't need to be just in art classes or social sciences – there's Indigenous history in *everything*.

SARAH: I would say the biggest thing is taking the first step. I think our biggest barrier is the fear of doing something wrong, or the fear of not teaching the subject in the right way, or perhaps the risk of offending a student or a family. You can become paralyzed by that fear of doing it wrong. There's no one way to engage in this work, and there is no one

way to participate in reconciliation. Participation is the most important piece.

Being able to lean into those hard conversations and those hard parts of our history to say, 'I didn't know' or 'I don't know how to do this' is critical. Don't be afraid to stick your hand up to ask for help or to seek resources and support from those who might have a better idea and are willing to share that knowledge with you as an educator.

So many of our Legacy School educators have been brave – they've stepped forward and they've acted as a champion within their school. For many, what started with just one teacher has grown to the entire school – and possibly the entire district – getting involved. That's bravery. That willingness to be uncomfortable has resulted in such positive change and has helped grow the community. It's helped educators guide not only their classroom, but their school and community on the path towards reconciliation.



“The Legacy Schools Program in the North Vancouver School District has had a significant impact on the Three Pathways of Indigenous Education. Students, educators, and parents have been able to learn the story of Chanie together through the words and images of *The Secret Path*. The Legacy Schools Program is a great entry point for a school or school district to continue the pathway of understanding *Truth and Reconciliation*.”

Brad Baker

SD44 District Principal

Indigenous Education and Safe Schools



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LEGACYSCHOOLS.CA**



Calm Within the Storm: A Pathway to Everyday Resiliency by Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

Margaret Paxton
SD 39

A friend gave me a t-shirt. Printed on the shirt are the words, "Being a principal is easy. It's like riding a bike. Except the bike is on fire. You're on fire. Everything is on fire." Funny, right? Except some days, especially

in the last year, it does feel like everything is on fire. All the time. *Calm Within the Storm: A Pathway to Everyday Resiliency* is a new book by Canadian researcher and psychologist Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe. It could not have been published at a better time.

Dr. Hanley-Dafoe defines resiliency in a number of different ways. It is the ability to bounce back or to take something that is broken and make something new. It is a sense of "being okay, no matter what." It is not something you do or do not have, she writes. And it is not reserved for "the mentally tough, the strong or the fearless." The definition that stuck with me long after finishing the book is, "Resiliency to me means doing the right next thing."

In Part I, Dr. Hanley-Dafoe tells us her own story of resiliency. As a troubled teen, the school she attended failed her. She was expelled and spent time in a psychiatric unit. She survived a horrific car accident. Somehow, there were conditions in place that allowed her to rise, to finish school and go on to become a successful academic. *What went right?*

A few years ago, during BCPVPA Short Course II in Kelowna, we listened to David Weiss declare that we live in a VUCA world. VUCA stands for volatile, uncertain, chaotic and ambiguous. Part II of *Calm Within the Storm* is about three things that come from living in a VUCA world: stress, fear and stigma, and how they prevent us from moving through our discomfort to a better place. An antidote to stress is altruism. A cure for fear is stoicism: rationalizing the irrational (*read about the Fear-Setting strategy*). And the medicine for stigma is owning your story. "When you own your own story, no one can use it against you." Rather than denying stress, fear and stigma, Dr. Hanley-Dafoe suggests accepting and, in that acceptance, to take back your power. "Acceptance," she writes, "is a small quiet room."



Photo Courtesy Flash Adams

Along with acceptance, belonging, perspective, hope and humour make up the Five Pillars of Resiliency. Drawing on the work of other researchers, poets and philosophers, Dr. Hanley-Dafoe describes how intentionally choosing to nurture these dispositions in oneself can arm us against adversity. She tells many anecdotes about members of the Canadian Armed Forces. One soldier tells her that after several tours in the Middle East, he believes he should have PTSD, but does not. This troubles him. Is he just hard-hearted and cold? After more conversation, he comes to the realization that after every tragic thing he witnessed or was part of, he *chose* to learn something, to grow and be grateful. Hope, too, is a choice.

As I read *Calm Within the Storm* I thought a lot about what our staff members and students have been through over the last year. How can we use Dr. Hanley-Dafoe's Resiliency Trajectory Model to support folks who have been traumatized by the pandemic or who have experienced ongoing fear, loss, uncertainty, sadness, loneliness and fatigue? Certainly, modelling our own vulnerability and resiliency can lend some calm to others. The many helpful suggestions and examples in this book will help light your path. In a career where it is common to feel that we are never doing enough, can we pause and reflect on the fact that we can be lighthouses in the storm? Having the courage to name our fears and attest to the fact that we are enough as we are, will give us the confidence to "do the right next thing."

Dr. Hanley-Dafoe ends with a quote from Buckminster Fuller, that I know will resonate with Principals and Vice-Principals. He asks,

"What is my job on the planet? What is it that needs doing that I know something about, that probably won't happen unless I take responsibility for it?"

Instead of letting that responsibility weigh heavily on us, let's support each other to reframe it as an opportunity. This pandemic is a perfect opportunity. A former superintendent I worked with used to like to say, "Never waste a crisis."



Margaret Paxton, Principal, SD 39

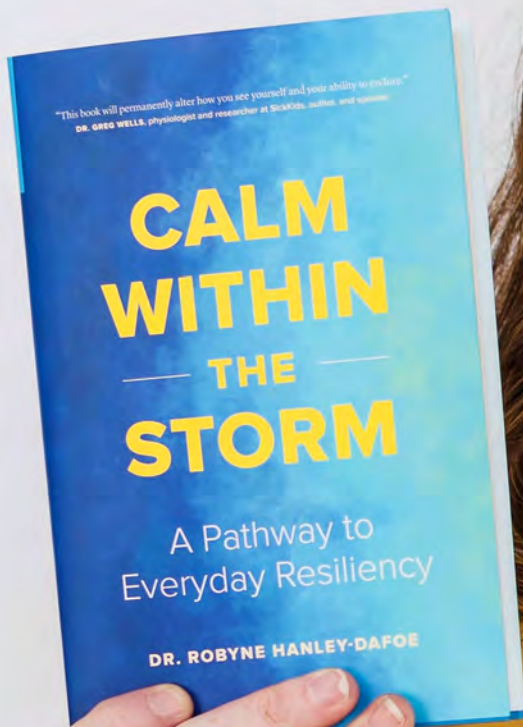
*Having the courage to
name our fears and attest
to the fact that that we are
enough as we are, will give
us the confidence to
"do the right next thing."*

I've thought a lot about those words this past year. How can we use the opportunities the pandemic has brought us as a way to strengthen belonging, perspective, and hope in our schools, to find the hidden moments of humour and enjoy the peace that acceptance brings? I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to hugs and handshakes, calmer seas and sunnier skies ahead.

Margaret Paxton is an elementary school Principal in Vancouver. She is the mom of two resilient adults, an avid trail runner and a dedicated reader.



@paxtonmargaret



@RHanleyDafoe

I am an introvert.

That may be difficult to believe, but I can tell you that a conversation about my feelings invariably results in me looking awkwardly at my shoes while I struggle to mumble some type of response. As introverts go, we are often reluctant to share personal struggles, as we do not wish to bother others with our issues. With that in mind, I can tell you that writing this column was not easy for me, but I hope that it helps a few others.

So, here goes. Christmas Day 2020 was spent with my wife and kids in our small apartment in Vancouver. It had been many years since just the four of us had spent Christmas Day together, and we spent the day together eating, playing games, and enjoying each other's company. On Boxing Day morning, I awoke early feeling refreshed and prepared to go for a long morning walk while the rest of my family slept. Twenty minutes later, I had a heart attack.

I was only a few blocks from my home when I experienced a strong but dull throbbing in my right shoulder and neck. It seemed unusual, but nothing extreme and I was prepared to keep walking. What really stopped me in my tracks and caused me to reconsider was the intense feeling of anxiety and dread that accompanied the pain. I turned around and walked back home, woke up my wife, took some low dose aspirin (which I didn't realize had expired), and was in the emergency ward at the UBC Hospital within 15 minutes.



@Optimus_Rime

With the COVID-19 protocols in place, my wife could not come into the hospital. I was admitted, tagged, and hooked up to an IV, as well as an EKG to monitor my heart. My initial blood test did not reveal any issues with my heart but, a few hours later, a follow-up blood test revealed that I had experienced a moderate heart attack. My cardiologist would later describe the event as, "...a rather good rodgering" of my heart – you may, or may not, want to look that up. That afternoon, I was transferred to the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit of VGH where I met the medical team that would care for me over the next few days. When initially introduced to my cardiologist, he handed me his business card and ironically informed me that the card was actually for my lawyer. My sense of humour tends to skew to the darker side, and upon receiving the card I immediately thought that my cardiologist and I were going to get along famously. The rest of the story is difficult to put into words, so as a film buff I have chosen to illustrate the sequence as if it were written as a montage in a movie script.

**INT: CARDIAC INTENSIVE CARE
UNIT – MONTAGE OF IMAGES**

The patient KEVIN is seen in multiple images... resting in his hospital bed... lying on the catheter surgical table nervously awaiting his angioplasty surgery... having nurses check his IV... sleeping upright in his bed... looking forlornly into the distance... delicately putting on his street clothes... wearing a mask as he says goodbye to the ICU STAFF with his wife KAREN by his side.

Prior to my little 'wake-up call' I believed that I was already doing many things right. Like most of you, I thought about chronic illness, particularly as I aged, but heart disease was not something that I worried

about. I ate well, was a non-smoker, drank little, and exercised intensely many times per week as a CrossFit enthusiast. And though I was doing most of the right things, I have now begun to do *more* of the right things, particularly when it comes to nutrition and stress. While I have always understood the health benefits of meditation and vegetarianism, I did not think those things were necessarily for me. However, I now meditate regularly, and my diet is largely vegan.

Like many of you, sense-making is important to me, and I have spent the last few months with my medical team searching for the answers regarding my heart event. There is no real history of heart disease in my family, and I led a healthy lifestyle, so what could have been the cause? I have come to the conclusion that my heart event was likely a result of the cumulative effect of decades of work-related stress as a Principal and Vice-Principal. And I am certainly not alone in this. More and more of our members are succumbing to stress-induced illnesses, sometimes with tragic outcomes.

Chapter visits are the best part of being BCPVPA President as they are always inspiring. You learn so much about the leadership context of our members when you visit them and breathe their air. As President a few years ago, I visited a small Chapter. We were a small enough group to occupy a large table at a restaurant where they held their meeting. I informally shared my BCPVPA report, enjoying the intimate setting of the evening, and the Chapter moved on to their regular meeting business. At the end of the business portion of their meeting, and without any prompting, they all raised their glasses to toast one of their colleagues who had passed away from a heart attack. The toast to their beloved colleague caught me by surprise, and the introvert in me struggled to offer any type of meaningful response. I felt my own emotions rise as I realized that this touching tribute was an important Chapter ritual. Each time they gathered, they held the space to remember their colleague and his impact on their lives. I have since learned that this small Chapter has included four members who have had heart attacks, two of them with tragic consequences. The story of their loss has

played out in other Chapters, and the issue is likely to continue alongside the increased complexity and intensity of the work of school leaders.

For my entire school leadership career, I lived, worked, and raised my family with my wife in a small community. Living in a small town is like living in a large family. You are seen and known by many, and when faced with a personal or professional challenge, the community often rallies to offer support. With 2,600 members across the province, if the BCPVPA were a small town we would be about the size of Princeton. And as small communities are often known for taking care of those around them, I want to thank a few members of our BCPVPA small town who have been so helpful and supportive as I continue to recover.

Katie Marren, Vice-Principal in Prince George, who has become a tremendous support and guide. Katie sends me yoga suggestions and her own personally recorded guided meditations which I listen to regularly.

Jack MacNeill of humanworks. Jack is a close personal friend, and I cannot overstate my appreciation for Jack's friendship and skilled support. If you ever wonder if there is a person in this world who has figured out life, it is Jack.

BCPVPA Past-President **David DeRosa**, whose work on compassionate systems leadership gave us all permission to speak openly about our wellbeing. And while I heard David's message many times over the years, I clearly was not listening. *Molte grazi, amico mio.*

For all my adult life, I have been a self-taught advanced beginner/intermediate guitar player. As an introvert, I rarely play in front of others apart from my family who have grown accustomed to listening to my discordant practice as I attempt to learn a new piece. I know very little about music theory, but what I have come to believe is that my outlook on life has been characterized by the upbeat and easy optimism of a musical Major Key. Understandably, my heart event has caused a temporary shift in my outlook that is personified by a more melancholic and somber tone of a Minor Key. I know that this only temporary, and that in time I will come to see the guitar's fretboard as I used to see it. As I continue to move my hands along the fretboard, I will stumble upon the elements of the right scale that will lead me back from a Minor Key to my natural Major Key.

In a way, I am attempting to learn a new piece that requires me to be patient, intentional and forever grateful that I have this opportunity to learn. And when I eventually reclaim that natural Major Key outlook, I will have my small community to thank for it. I know that there have been times when you have had to either rely on your own communities for support, or you have provided the support that others have needed. Be confident that the compassion you show to the people you serve, and the colleagues you work with, does not go unnoticed. In fact, our system thrives because of it.

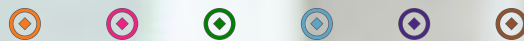
Shawn Lockhart, Boundary Principal, whose endless optimism and hilarious text messages have confirmed for me that Shawn is the human equivalent of the feel-good movie of the year.

Paul Hembling, Kamloops Principal, who upon learning of my heart attack gave me some great vegan book suggestions, along with his equally appreciated cider recommendations. *(Sorry Paul, but I only have one glass of red wine per week these days)*

BCPVPA President **Darren Danyluk**, Executive Assistant **Sharon North**, and my wife **Karen**, who formed a trio to ensure that I continue to recover. It is interesting to me that their names all rhyme, and this clearly begs for a witty superheroish nickname which, to this point, has escaped me. I am open to suggestions.

Transparent Social Passionate Proactive
Loyal Empathetic Listeners Ethical
Flexible Motivated Creative
Disciplined Authentic Responsible Resourceful
Confident Intuitive Consistent Curious Fun
Strategic Accountable Smart Focused
Courageous Decisive Compassionate Patient
Honest Respectful Learners Understanding
Bold Engaged Competent Organized Teachers
Energized Fair
Joyful Inspired

LEADERS



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