

Principl(ed)

VOL. 4 - ISSUE 3 - June 2023

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

Confronting
Racism

Building Your
Team

Decolonizing
Assessment

A Day in the Life

of an
Elementary School
Principal

Iram Khan on helping families
navigate the system, the
critical role of kindergarten,
and how lived experience
impacts leadership



bcp
vpa

Inside



6

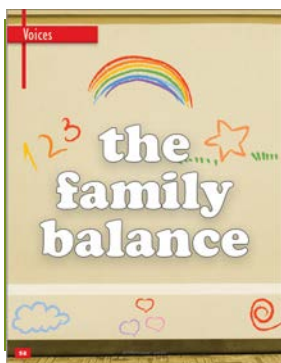
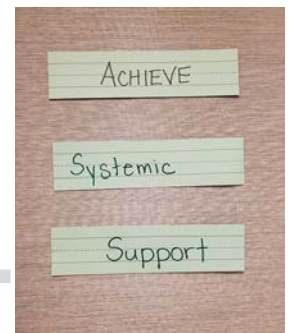
"It was the time to connect with all of these people, but to also look inwardly at why we do what we do, and what keeps us going. It reinvigorated me."

A Day in the Life of an Elementary School Principal

30

"Anti-racism work is hard work because it is the heart work. When we become more equitable, we change hearts and minds. Engaging in this learning and unlearning requires courage and will lead to discomfort."

Confronting Racism and Building a Foundation for Change



54

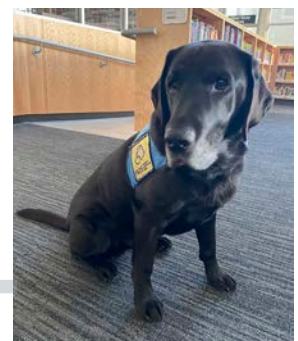
"There are times that I think I am not being the best mom I can be, and other times that I think I'm not being the best Principal I can be."

The Family Balance

72

"My interactions in the community were no longer a simple nod or smile as we passed in the hallways. Students would frequently stop to pet Liege or give him a hug, and that would open the door for a longer conversation about their day, their family, or other aspects of their life."

PADS Dogs in Schools



4 Perspective

June: The End... or the Beginning?

by Brian Leonard

6 People

A Day in the Life of an Elementary Principal: Iram Khan, SD36 (Surrey)

20 Partners

Building Equity for Métis Learners and Staff in BC Schools

by Lauren Petersen & Carol Kerfoot

30 Committees

Confronting Racism and Building a Foundation for Change

by Carmen Eberle & Andrea McComb

38 Learning

38 Leadership is the Answer

by Peter Johnston

42 2023 Connecting Leaders Conference: *Cultivating Learning*

44 Talking with Numbers

by Read Jorgensen

48 Support

48 Building Your Admin Team

by Ellen Roberts

54 Voices

54 The Family Balance

featuring the voices of:

Andreas Clesle, Scott Holt, Andrew Lee, Stina Morissette Martinez, Jen Nixon, Wendy Yu

72 PADS Dogs in Schools

by Anthony Ciolfitto

76 Feature

76 Decolonizing Assessment

by Carolyn Roberts

79 Wellness

79 Take 3

by Jack MacNeill

80 Taking a Pass on Passive Aggressive Behaviour

by Rochelle Morandini

88 Community

Connecting to the Outdoors: Spirit North

95 Books

95 Review: *Leading Through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality*

by Judy Halbert & Linda Kaser

reviewed by Jim Laird & Angela Stott

98 Review: *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education*

by Jo Chrona

reviewed by Sue Boucher

106 The Last Word

Equity for Great Service

by Mike Roberts

Principl(ed)

Principl(ed) is published
by the BC Principals' &
Vice-Principals' Association

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3

JUNE 2023

ISSN: 1201-4214

Spring • Summer • Fall

Designed and edited

by Sandra Murphy

Proofreader

David A. Serpa

The BCPVPA welcomes
editorial contributions

Sandra Murphy

Director, Communications

sandra@bcvpva.bc.ca

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 2700 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.

Principl(ed) is a proud
member of

Magazine 
association of

bcvpva.org



Cover Photo - courtesy Zain Horner

Perspective

by
Brian Leonard
2022-2024 President
BCPVPA

June: The end ... or the beginning?

Unless the world of K-12 education directly touches your life, June arrives as just another month, and a calling card for the beginning of summer. However, for students, their parents and family members, teaching and support staff, Principals, Vice-Principals, and district leaders, June is a Big Deal. It is hard to explain *how* big a deal – and the amount of work involved – to people not connected to schools. In business parlance, operating a school is the equivalent of starting a business, and then winding up that business, every ten months.

For most of us in K-12 education, June is about endings: the end of kindergarten, the end of each grade, the end of elementary school, school leaving, and the big one – graduation. June is when Principals and Vice-Principals tend to be consumed by year-end management tasks and activities that include staffing and timetables, interviewing and hiring, class building, and end-of-year accounting. We are writing year-end reports, generating data or information for the FESL (Framework for Enhancing Student Learning), our school's Growth Plan, our school's contribution to the district's Strategic Plan, or even our own *personal* Growth Plans. Much of the work is reflective of the past year as the weeks count down.



June is also a time when people end temporary assignments, others end current positions to move to a new school or district, and others embrace the grand work finale of retirement. No matter the circumstances, we tend to regard these milestones as endings. At year-end celebrations for colleagues, we celebrate and summarize their accomplishments

2022-2023 BCPVPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Leonard, SD43 – President
Darren Danyluk, SD6 – Past-President

Dr. Shannon Behan, SD47
Jacqueline Borosa, SD92
David DeRosa, SD20

Heidi Grant, SD91
Sid Jawanda, SD57
Sanj Johal, SD44

Paul Marsden, SD36
Navshina Savory, SD38
Tara Zielinski, SD45
Sally Zryd, SD73

and contributions. As Winston Churchill left office in July 1945, he wrote under his name in the visitors' book at Chequers (the weekend home of British Prime Ministers), "*Finis.*"

For many staff, students, and parents, these 'endings' can prompt anxiety and trepidation. We are leaving familiar people and settings – a teacher, a colleague, a classroom, school, or district – for the unknown. Like Captain James T. Kirk or early world explorers, we are about to chart unknown territory.

I tend to view these 'endings' as a prelude to a new beginning.

As educators, we are privileged to witness our students maturing and developing socially, emotionally, and academically day-by-day. We don't always consciously acknowledge the impact that each of us has on the success and growth of the students in our care. We also know that, like a book, each grade is not an ending but rather a chapter in the educational life of a student. And graduation, while a notable accomplishment, is today akin to the last page of a book in a multi-volume series, like *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*. Students will move through untold stages of education and often multiple careers once they bid farewell to high school.

For our colleagues, leaving school through retirement is a big decision. How often have we bumped into a former colleague, only to be struck by how relaxed and rested they look as they navigate retirement and the next chapter of their life? While retirement could have signaled the 'end' of a career in the past, in today's world of work and in the current climate of workforce shortages, educators can choose to 'retire' from full-time employment, and return at a time of their choosing for a myriad of temporary assignments. For those later in their careers, with other projects and passions they may wish to pursue, it can be a scenario worth considering: reaping the continued joy of supporting students, but without the long-term tasks and commitments.

As your school year draws to a close this month, and whether you will stay in the same assignment, experience a change, or retire, I will paraphrase the sage advice of Winston Churchill:

This is not the end. This is not the beginning of the end, but instead it is the end of the beginning.

Congratulations, and best wishes on your next chapter.

Have a great summer!



@bcpvpapresident

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 twelfth installment of the series, we meet Iram Khan, Principal of David Branklin Elementary School in Surrey, School District No. 36.

From an early age, Iram Khan knew she would be an educator. Her journey has unfolded in some unexpected ways, and she has now been an educator for 26 years, 15 of those in administration. Iram grew up in Kamloops and Logan Lake, and that was home; while her practicum was in Surrey, her intent was to make her way back to the interior as soon as she had completed her education. But finding a role in a small town, rather than in an urban environment, was challenging at that time. “I eventually found a job up north in Dease Lake, teaching all of the kindergarten and grade one students in the community,” says Iram. “It was a great start to my career because I was jumping in with both feet, not knowing anybody, and moving so far away. Back then, there was nothing; this was before online shopping, and my mom needed to mail food, teaching supplies, and clothes to me, because the town store didn’t have everything I needed, and what they did have was expensive. But my husband came with me, and we loved it. We got to know everybody, and that was important – you had no choice; you had to get to know all the families, and kids would be knocking at your door all day and all night. Unfortunately, it was a maternity leave position, and there were no other jobs at the school when the time came to leave.”

Iram returned to Kamloops, and worked with an adult literacy organization that taught adults on Employment Insurance (EI) and income assistance to boost their skills so they could get into college and access other programs. “That was a really good experience for two years. I was in charge of teaching grade six to nine math and English language arts to adults from all walks of life, people recovering from addictions or those who had recently been laid off and had undeveloped skills. We would boost their skills so that they could get out into the workforce again. That experience for me,

A Day in the Life of an Elementary School Principal



Photo courtesy Zain Horner

as an elementary school person working with adults right at the beginning of my career, really opened my eyes about the importance of education. People are sometimes held hostage without education. If organizations are not there to help, and people don't know how to access the services, they can be stuck. It can hurt and literally kill people; I feel like lives are saved through programs like that."

After two years with the organization, Iram was missing the 'little ones'; she heard from a friend that Surrey needed teachers, and she again jumped in with both feet and moved to Surrey in 2000. "I haven't looked back. I love working in Surrey, I love the diversity and the immensity of it. It was comfortable to start my career in a small town with family nearby, but here I am exposed to diversity every day. In the small towns,

"I love working in Surrey. I love the diversity and the immensity of it."

I didn't see many people like myself. Here, there are so many people who come from backgrounds like my own, and who have the same story of being second generation immigrants. There is a connection there, but I also saw a way to support people who were just beginning their journey in Canada."

Like many second generation Canadian children, Iram experienced the pull of family expectations as she began to think about the future. "I have always loved school: it's been my comfort place, especially the coziness of the library. My family valued education; that's why they came here, they wanted a better life for their kids, and learning was important. But school felt like a second home to me. In elementary school, I used to hang out by the staff room; every time the door opened, I would hear the laughter, the stories, the sharing, and the support. Even the smell of coffee every time that door opened woke me up, and I just wanted to be in that room. I think that was my first sense of community, and it made me safe and comfortable; I knew that I needed to be in a job that valued that. For my own personality and emotional well-being, I needed to be in a community."

"My parents hoped that I would be a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer, so they were hesitant when I raised teaching as a profession. They said, no – you can do better; but I pushed and pushed and said, this is it. My family didn't understand the idea of having a passion for your vocation. I was not good at finance, or math, and they attributed that to not trying hard enough or not studying hard enough. It's the way they were raised, and reflects that they wanted the best for their kids. I think it really hit my parents when I got my master's degree, and they attended my graduation: I could see how proud they were. My mother was in the audience asking my dad to stop, but he was

telling everyone that I am his daughter. And now, anytime he introduces me, he says, 'my daughter is the Principal'. I think that before, they had a different perception of what being 'successful' means. I can really understand that from the immigrant perspective when kids are coming into *my* school, and the pressure they may get from their parents. I can help kids and families to understand that there are pathways to success beyond being a doctor, lawyer, or engineer."

From Iram's own perspective, that early family pressure of expectation was not a driver for pursuing school leadership. "I wanted to be a teacher, and that was it. That was my goal. I thought that if I became a Principal or Vice-Principal, that I wouldn't get to work with kids or be in the classroom. I was a kindergarten teacher, fully knee-deep in that world. Without knowing it, I became a leader in the kindergarten world.

"People don't understand the role of kindergarten in schools. Sometimes there are people in your communities who have never been to school; you're accepting families who are brand new both to Canada and to navigating the school system. You are helping families navigate our medical systems and therapy supports right at the beginning. You can be teaching parents about discipline, and bedtime routines. There is so much going on in kindergarten. I don't think that kindergarten teachers give themselves credit as really important leaders in a school. They take on things that no one knows about, like kindergarten orientation, and kindergarten interviews. That takes leadership and learning, and that's why the kindergarten world is a community in itself. We have kindergarten conferences and kindergarten networks, and that's something special that you don't see in any other grade. I was drawn to that, and I loved it."

While Iram did not see herself as a leader, others did. Her Principal and Vice-Principal at the time asked her to be a teacher in charge, and she agreed. When the Principal needed to take time away in the wake of a family tragedy, Iram was asked to be an Acting Vice-Principal. "I was working on my master's degree, and had no plan to go into administration;

What's in a Name?

I moved to Logan Lake when I was in grade three, and that is where I grew up. The teachers told my parents that my name would be really hard to say. So, they changed it to Irem, pronounced 'Eye-reem'. On the registration forms, it was all Irem. My parents wanted their children to succeed, and to fit in. Throughout my whole elementary and secondary life, I was Irem, and then when I went to college, it was a fresh break. I went by Iram, but no one could say it properly. So, I went with how everyone was saying it – "Ee-rum"; it wasn't until last year that I started to think really consciously about how my name is *really* said, with a rolled 'r'. I don't mind still also being called "Ee-rum", because that's now part of me as well.

I've run into people from my past, online and at conferences, and they'll greet me with my name as it was then, and I'll say that's not me anymore. But I understand, there needs to be grace and patience. We had a talk about this with our whole staff one day at school as an opening exercise: where did you get your name from, and how do we say it? The stories that came up were wonderful. There was one teacher who described how her name has been said, and then how it is *really* said. Our school counsellor asked the teacher if they gave us 'permission to practice', and we all liked that. We are going to get it wrong a few times, but eventually we'll get it right.

in fact, my master's was on the history of education, with a focus on immigration, multiculturalism, and parent involvement in education. I wanted to go into academia, to do research, and to write papers. But I appreciated that trust, and I worked in that role as the Principal needed time to heal and recover. The Vice-Principal then encouraged me to apply for an ongoing role; the support and encouragement that he and the Principal gave me changed my life, my whole direction." Iram laughs, "They also said, don't worry, just apply, you'll never get it; no one gets it on their first try. So, there I was: six months pregnant when I was offered a Vice-Principal position while I was graduating with my master's. It was a lot."

When Iram returned following maternity leave, with a year-old baby at home, she felt unanchored. Beaver Creek Elementary had been her life, where she knew all of the kindergarten students and families. Now, everything was new. "It was one of the hardest years

I've had, and I'm so thankful that my husband, James, recognized that, and decided to work from home. He eventually quit his job, and he's a stay-at home-dad. I am grateful for that, because he knew this was important to me. Despite the struggles, I loved the access to that bigger community in the school, and being able to lead and have an influence on how that community runs."

"The most difficult part is that I am not in the classroom as much as I would like to be. We have a lot of 'failed-to-fills' and I love the days when I can put myself in the classroom. It's exhausting, and I come out of it wondering how teachers do it! But I try to help out and to reconnect myself. All the kids love it: when I walk into the classroom, and they know the Principal is going to be their teacher for the day, they are on their best behaviour. They are so helpful, and they rise up to show me what they know."

Being with the kids is a tremendous motivator for Iram. “My Vice-Principal and I have talked about this. He’s in the classroom 80% of the time, and a Vice-Principal 20% of the time, so he’s seeing his kids in the classroom every day. There are some days when I am stuck in my office all day. So, I have scheduled intentional times throughout my day to greet kids at the door, or go outside for recess – there is no hidden agenda, I’m not out there looking for kids that are getting into trouble. I just love being around kids, and they energize me with their questions, their stories, their passion to be at school. That goes as well for those kids who are struggling, and who don’t want to be in school. They energize me because I want to help make it better for them. My concern is always about how to make this a happy place, and then that makes me happy. That includes doing fun things at my school, like dressing up as a gingerbread man, running around laughing, creating stories, jumping into classrooms, and encouraging that happiness within everyone.”

Iram’s joy of supporting others through leadership also extends to her peers, and to those just starting out in the profession. In 2022, Iram volunteered as a facilitator at BCPVPA’s Foundations for New School Leaders program, formerly known as Short Course. “I had never participated in the program myself, because Surrey is huge, and we have a lot of internal training. When I saw a call-out for Foundations facilitators last year, I thought it would be nice to mentor some new administrators in this role. It was a fleeting thought, but (BCPVPA Director of the Board) Paul Marsden talked to me about what a good experience it is, and that pushed me to do it. I didn’t expect to be selected, but I got the call. Unfortunately – and this is how life happens – shortly after that was confirmed, my 15-year-old son Zain ended up getting very sick. He started losing weight drastically, and became really emaciated despite all of our efforts. His heart rate was dangerously high and if he did not gain weight quickly his organs would start failing. Driving home one day from work, I got the call from the doctor saying that Zain needed to go to the hospital right away. That was early May, a busy time with hiring and all the year-end activities. My son went into the hospital, and he

“All the kids love it: when I walk into the classroom, and they know the Principal is going to be their teacher for the day, they are on their best behaviour.

They are so helpful, and they rise up to show me what they know.”

didn’t come out for a month. I want to add here how grateful I am for my husband. My first reaction was that I had to take a leave: I was so worried, I couldn’t carry on in my role. My husband encouraged me to continue working to the end of the year, that he would be there with Zain in hospital, and would support our 12-year-old daughter Zoey as she went to school. He was adamant that we could make it work, so I tried it for a week, but I knew I needed to be at the hospital. My Assistant Superintendent, my Vice-Principal, and my school community were so wonderful. I was able to say I wouldn’t come back for the rest of the year, and they took over. Zain ended up at BC Children’s Hospital, and we eventually found out that he has Crohn’s disease. Once diagnosed, he’s been doing so well with the medications.”

Through this time, Iram was receiving communications about the upcoming Foundations program. When Zain was released from hospital in June, Iram made a decision. “Okay. I’m going to do Foundations. I’m going to be away from home for a week, but I’m going to do this. I was nervous, and scared; I thought about dropping out. But knew that I needed this for myself, to be able to get back into work mode. I don’t think I could have had two months of leave, then summer, and then return full force in September. I loved every minute of Foundations. I loved connecting



Iram at the 2022 Foundations for New School Leaders program, with Scott Hughes, Suzanne Chisolm, Kelsie Pickens, Miriah Donnelly, Monica Padgham, Jessica Johnson, Suman Lali

with educators, and not just in my own group; the passion that everyone had in that room revived me. It reminded me of why I do this job, and why I love this job so much. Having a family emergency like mine puts you at risk of resenting work, because being at the hospital can make you reflect on all the time that you missed with your child. Could I have spent more time with him? Could I have been there more for my family? Should I go back to teaching, so that I can be there for my kids? I needed Foundations – more than my group, I think – because it was like therapy for me. My group pushed me into answering really deep questions, and it made me spend time reflecting about why I do this work. It was the time to connect with all of these people, but to also look inwardly at why we do what we do, and what keeps us going. It reinvigorated me.”

“It’s important for people to know that life impacts this work, and that we need to be conscious of that. We can’t push it aside. I’m glad I took that leave, and I hadn’t ever been in that position before. I tried to do both, and I just couldn’t. I think it’s important for

administrators to know that it’s okay to not be able to do it.”

Iram has also been involved in committee work both in the Surrey School District, and with the BCPVPA. She was part of the committee – comprised of CUPE members, teaching staff, parents, administrators, superintendents, and assistant superintendents – that reviewed Surrey’s Equity Scan report, getting to the heart of the accomplishments, and identifying the areas where work needed to be done. The Director of Instruction of Surrey’s new Racial Equity department, JB Mahli, will use the results from the report and the committee’s recommendations to further the district’s goals for racial equity. The committee experience for Iram was full of deep learning. “It exposed me not only to the stories of administrators in regard to racial equity, but to the stories of so many other people. I learned how much of this work involves listening to stories. I see it as ending that idea of, ‘this is a problem, we need to solve it’, because the solution isn’t going to come quickly. It’s going to take time, and we need to take time to really listen and look



Iram with Lara Robinson

Photo courtesy Iram Khan

into ourselves. I was really proud of our work, and how we came together from such a wide variety of experiences to come up with these goals.”

Shortly after concluding her work with the committee in Surrey, Iram had an opportunity to bring her experience to a newly-formed BCPVPA table, the Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee. “I have a passion for this work; I have grown personally, and reflected upon my experiences both as a *child* going through the education system, and an *adult* working in the education system. I want to be a part of this committee because I know that the BCPVPA has influence in the sector. It’s an exciting opportunity to look at how we navigate racial equity, and how we support our learners and our staff. We’re not just focusing on administrators, but on our students and families, and to help them navigate this education system that was created to cut them out. It’s not only about being an administrator, how to cope with racism, and how to encourage diverse leaders. It’s also about learning, and about the students.”

Iram has found that advocacy for students and their families is woven deeply into her role as a school leader. “I am most proud of the work I’ve done with our underserved families, particularly those who are new to Canada, those who come in with special needs, and parents who don’t have the experience of navigating the system. I can advocate for these families, find resources for them, and teach them about the education system. I know from my own experience that you need somebody in the school system to take an interest in this advocacy. We’re the first responders for these families; we’re the ones that they see every day. I’ve worked with some really good teams who have literally saved the lives of mothers experiencing domestic abuse who are looking for shelter, escape, and therapy, and supported families that are new to Canada, and who have been placed in a home that is full of mould and need another place to live. We are connecting families and creating a community within the school. We can help cushion their landing, get them going, and help them to succeed.

“One of the most challenging things in this role is

“I have a passion for this work; I have grown personally, and reflected upon my experiences both as a child going through the education system, and an adult working in the education system.”

navigating the systems. There are a lot of supports out there but, as we know, there are huge wait lists everywhere and barriers with locations and funding. I can support students and families to a limit, and our staff go above and beyond for our schools. But there comes a point where we hit a wall, and where it is beyond us. Children are on waitlists for two months or two years to see a pediatrician, a therapist, or a counselor. In the meantime, we don’t have the skills to support the child, and we’re in a holding pattern until they can get those external agencies. It’s encouraged me to rise up in learning. When I see a course or workshop that helps me better understand how to approach the complexities of these students’ needs, I take it so I can offer some sort of bridge until the student can get the professional help. I think as administrators, we could use some more support with those skills in providing that bridge. When a family is dealing with trauma, sometimes we’re just trying to provide safety and building relationships, but it’s outside of our expertise. We didn’t go to school for this, and we don’t want to do it wrong.”

When Iram reflects on the role of Vice-Principals and Principals, she realizes how much her early impressions differ from the work that she does each day. “I didn’t realize how much administrators are involved in the lives of families, and how much work I would still be doing with students. People always say they want to stay in the classroom so that they can continue to work with students, but being in the

Intensive Intervention Support Program

We have a really good team of very knowledgeable experts who work with children who have multiple disabilities and extremely complex medical/health and behaviour needs. That can be self-injurious behaviour, or behaviour that's harming other students and staff in schools. We take on the students from other schools in our district, and because we are known for this program and are experts in this area, many parents bring their children to our school. I am proud of the work that our school does for students who can't find a home anywhere else.

In my typical day, I am often pulled aside to help with dysregulated children, and you never know when it's going to happen. I deal with calming students down, keeping staff safe, and keeping other students safe. That can mean a couple of hours where I am sitting with a child who has ended up in a state where the only way they can

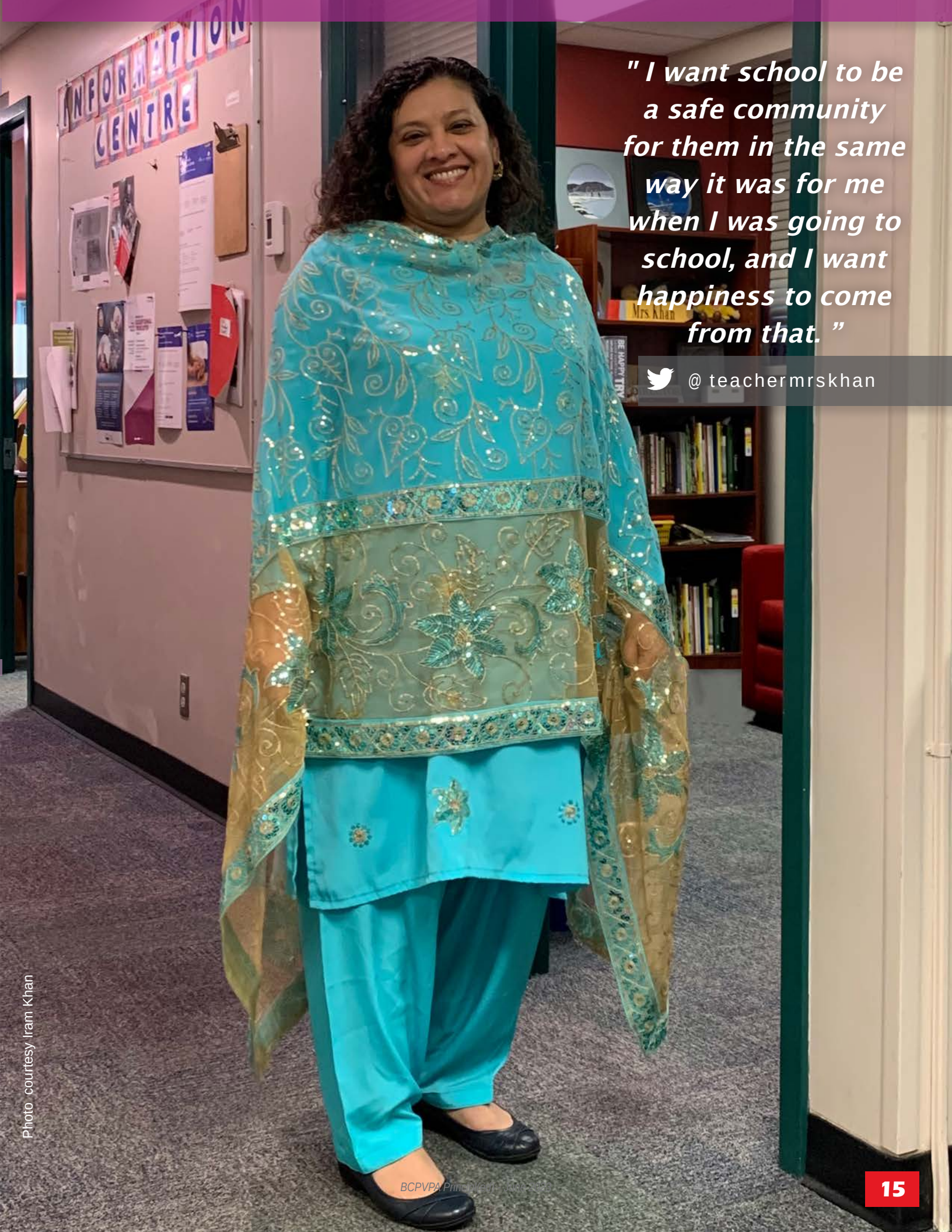
communicate their needs is to hit, kick, yell, and/or swear. Our team is fantastic. We go in there together, and we support each other, the whole team is called upon to support that child.

While my day can be derailed because of dysregulated children, I value how important we are in that moment for that child. We could instead observe what is happening, and could call the parents to come and pick up their child. But what that child is experiencing is the reality in that moment. That is the moment where we can use the strategies we've learned to create calm, to help students learn strategies to communicate their needs in less harmful ways, and to eventually become successful learners in our school community. In a nutshell, this is what our Intensive Intervention Support Program is all about.

classroom is not the only way or necessarily the best way to support every student." Iram recognizes that teachers may be looking for engaging work beyond their classrooms, and are often unsure if the role of a school leader is a next step they are ready to consider. "My advice to someone aspiring to the role is that you can't look at it as 'work-life balance'. I think some people try to promote that there are boundaries, but it's really more of a work-life *integration*. Sometimes work is going to take a lot out of you, and you are going to have to put the time in. And, sometimes, you can spend more time with your family and on yourself. But you have to recognize that there are times that this job is going to take a lot out of you. You need to understand as well that it's not a 'boss' job, or a 'manager' job. You are a facilitator and a communicator, you are a mentor and a community builder, and you see the strengths in everybody. If

you enjoy doing work like that, and you like the 'big picture' view, then this is the job for you."

Ultimately, for Iram, the work comes down to the students and what they experience in the school. She hearkens back to her own love of school as an elementary student, and her hopes for students are simple. "I hope our kids are happy. I hope they realize school is a safe place for them. I hope they realize that there are many adults beyond their families that care about them. I want school to be a safe community for them in the same way it was for me when I was going to school, and I want happiness to come from that. I hope kids go home feeling like they were heard, that they were taken care of, that they were valued, that they have people that they trust, that they have friends. I hope that they realize that the school is a community that they can enjoy and be part of."

A woman with dark curly hair is smiling and standing in a school hallway. She is wearing a teal and gold embroidered outfit consisting of a long-sleeved top with a wide gold border, a matching skirt, and teal trousers. She is also wearing black flat shoes. In the background, there is a bulletin board with various papers and a bookshelf.

"I want school to be a safe community for them in the same way it was for me when I was going to school, and I want happiness to come from that."



@ teachermrskhan

A Day in the Life of an Elementary School Principal: Iram Khan

I value my sleep. I love looking back on previous *Principled* profiles, as I have struggled with the 'typical day' because I am not an early riser. I am not going to do CrossFit in the morning. I am not going to do yoga or meditate. I am embarrassed to say that I wake up as late as I possibly can! I wake up at 6:30 am, and while I am eating breakfast, I check my emails and the 'failed-to-fills' to see what I need to anticipate. I respond to emails, I check Twitter to see what's going on in the world, and I connect with colleagues from all over about things that are going on in their schools. I leave at 7:30 am and my drive to school is about 40 minutes, depending upon traffic. As I'm driving, I'm thinking about the 'failed-to-fills', who is here, who's not here – that is my mindset every single morning. I am so grateful that I have a great Vice-Principal and secretary team that get to the school before I do. They are opening the gates, opening the doors, and turning on the lights.

We have a very busy school: that's part of the reason why I need to value my sleep, because I need to make decisions with a clear head and be well rested. We all put our time in where it's needed. The Vice-Principal and secretaries are working before I arrive, and I'm getting updates as we're trying to negotiate who to move, who will fill each of the roles. When students are not going to have their regular Education Assistant (EA) support, we need to address that and make sure there are fill-ins for those EAs. We also have an Intensive Intervention Support Program at our school, and that is a class of students – often with multiple disabilities and extremely complex medical/health and behaviour needs. It's a treatment

program that has a very skilled team of EAs, ABAs (Applied Behaviour Analysts), and a teacher, and I will often check in with them because they are our most sensitive learners in our school. They need that routine and structure.

When I arrive at school, I hit the ground running. Teachers are coming to ask me questions, and we're letting all the teachers know about the 'failed-to-fills', and preparing the morning announcements. We welcome *all* of our teachers, so sometimes that can be a list of 14 substitutes, from EAs to teachers. I'm touching base with teachers as I'm walking around, making sure that they had a good rest, asking how things are going in their classrooms. I then try my hardest to stand at an entrance. We have five entrances, and I greet the students who come in that way, and I change entrances every day. I welcome the kids to school, greet the staff, and make note of those kids who may be coming in a little sad and dysregulated so that we are prepared to support them if things go sideways. I then go to our Intensive Intervention Support wing to make sure that all those students are arriving happy and safe. I check in with the teacher there to make sure that she doesn't have any questions or any parents that I need to phone. After that, I rush upstairs and do the morning announcements and highlight the important things that are happening in the day.

After that, I have time to just sigh. I check with my secretary team, and we sit together as they are processing the 'lates'; it's quiet now, and I can give them an idea of what the day is going to hold. They raise questions about families who have phoned, and give me a list of people to call back. After that I'm on the phone with parents, and that may lead me to track down some students and try to solve problems. Then we are at recess! I try to go for at least one walk around before I come back in as this is an important time for teachers to touch base with me. I meet the kids coming back in to make sure that everybody's okay, and then deal with any playground issues that occurred at recess. Between recess and lunch, I continue dealing with playground issues and do some administrative tasks like responding to emails,

planning for events, and planning for future staff meetings. Before lunch, I meet with our five lunchtime supervisors, and make sure that there are no 'failed-to-fills' for them. I let them know about the kids who are high on my list, those kids who are grumpy or needing some extra support, and those kids who have had some consequences and may need some extra care at lunchtime. I also make sure to check in about their lives, and what's going on with them. We do a 'play first, eat later' lunch, so kids will be outside playing, and I get a lot of teachers coming in and asking questions. We also have meetings at lunch – lunch and learns, and committee meetings – and I try to attend all of those.

In the afternoon, I debrief with the lunchtime supervisors, deal with playground issues and problem-solving conversations, do more administrative tasks, and touch base with the secretaries. After school, I go out again, say hello to parents, make sure that the buses have arrived. We have multiple buses that come in for our special needs students; because we have the Intensive Intervention Program, we have students taking buses at all different times so it's important to stay on top of that. Then I can sigh again!

After the kids have gone, and I've touched base with my secretaries, it's a really good time for staff to come to talk to me. I have an open door policy: I love having discussions with staff. Staff often don't come to me during the day, they use that after school time, and we can have those deep conversations that they sometimes need when they're struggling with their work. It's also an opportunity to check in with them personally. That leads me to about 4:00 pm, and that's when I get really immersed in planning for staff meetings, writing the newsletter, and reading memos. I'm often at work until about 6:00 pm because I get so fully drawn in every day!

At the end of the day, I do my own self care. I watch Netflix, I chill out. I like to hang out with my family. We play video games together, and we try to eat dinner together every day. That is my important touch base with my family. I will usually check email right before I go to bed, 9:30 or 10:00 pm, to see if there are any 'failed-to-fills'. I need to pull myself away from that, my husband has asked me what difference it makes, as I can't do anything about it until the morning. I think a lot of us do that, though, because we're wired that way and we need to know.



Partners





If you attended school in BC, the odds are that you spent a week or two in elementary school learning about the fur trade. You would have been regaled with stories of brave explorers traversing the wilderness and a new frontier. In high school, you may have also learned about Métis leader Louis Riel. Depending on who was teaching the lesson, Riel would be portrayed as hero or traitor. Ultimately, your understanding of who the Métis are will have been shaped by whoever was telling the story. **What happens when the person sharing these stories doesn't have the tools to tell them properly? Many knowledge**

gaps exist. Who, then, are the Métis? And why is it important to learn this within your roles as education leaders?

To understand that, we need to take a deeper look at the education system and the role it continues to play in the exclusion of Métis ways of knowing and being. In doing this, we will better understand how education leaders can walk alongside Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) to create inclusive, transformative, and equitable communities of learning.

Building Equity for Métis Learners and Staff in BC Schools

Lauren Petersen
K-12 Education Manager

by

Carol Kerfoot
Acting Director of Education

Métis Nation British Columbia

Settler Colonialism

When we discuss education in Canada, it is important to understand the role settler colonialism has played in shaping that system. Settler colonialism is characterized by distinct ways of examining concepts of self-location, such as heritage, belonging, race, privilege, and power. Canada is unique in that it does not have overseas territories; instead, it directs its exploitation and extraction inwardly at Indigenous peoples, leaving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities marginalized. It has created systems and structures within Canadian society – such as the education, health care, and justice systems – that continue to uphold privileges for non-Indigenous peoples.

Settler colonialism has also created a climate wherein Indigenous peoples are forced to compete for opportunities, creating artificial social hierarchies and lateral tension. The education system continues to play a role in maintaining this inequitable distribution of power, influence, and access to data. **However, systems bend to the will of the people, and as leaders in education we all have a role to play in disrupting the status quo.**

The Birth of a Nation

Métis culture and nationhood are rooted in the intermarriages of European and First Nations people that occurred during the early North American fur trade period. Beginning in the 17th century, fur traders from France, Scotland, England, and other parts of Europe married First Nations women in what historians have referred to as ‘country marriages’ (or ‘*a la façon du pays*’). These marriages were recognized by the laws of the land. The children of these couples may have been mixed Indigenous people, but they were not yet Métis. Over time, these individuals chose to marry other mixed Indigenous individuals, resulting in the creation of distinct Métis kinship networks, communities, and cultural norms. Gradually, a distinct culture and Nation solidified over generations. Historic Métis communities emerged in

British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories, as well as in Montana, North Dakota, and Idaho. **Contrary to what many have been taught, the term Métis does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indigenous and European heritage. Rather, it refers to a distinctive people who developed their own worldview, customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity that is separate from their First Nations or European forebears.**

"Settler colonialism has also created a climate wherein Indigenous peoples are forced to compete for opportunities, creating artificial social hierarchies and lateral tension."

The Canadian government designed a system of institutionalized racial segregation in which First Nations and settlers were designated different lands, schools, and hospitals, leaving Métis families in a jurisdictional grey zone that continues to create barriers. It was not until 1982 that Métis gained recognition under Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act 1982 as one of the three rights-bearing Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, along with First Nations and Inuit. Despite Métis inclusion in the Act, the courts had still not defined who the Métis were, and neglected to specify how Métis rights would be recognized by the federal and provincial governments. Realizing the disadvantages in ambiguity, Métis governments came together in 2002 to put forward the following definition:

"Métis means a person who self – identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples, is of historic Métis Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation."

(Metis National Council, 2002)

Métis identity is self-determined rather than dictated; contemporary as well as historical. Why does this matter to you? As participation in Indigenous-focused programs and data collection occurring at a school level is rooted in self-identification, **education leaders have a responsibility to walk alongside Métis communities to ensure that schools are culturally safe and inclusive environments for the social and intellectual development of our children, as well as our citizens who work there.**

School Communities as Sites of Decolonialization

Schools are important sites of social-emotional, academic, and wellness related learning for children and adult educators. Schools are a place where an appreciation for life-long learning is instilled, where young minds begin to build self-identities and locate themselves within a larger society. Historically, schools have not always been safe or inclusive spaces for Métis families. The legacy of education systems as sites for assimilation and exclusion continues to influence how Métis people navigate Canada's K-12 and post-secondary education systems, as well as the labour market today.

Much like with First Nations and Inuit, the federal government sought to assimilate Métis people into Canada's settler society by forcibly removing Métis children from their communities through the residential and day school systems. Métis experiences within these institutions vary greatly, community to community. Métis continue to be left out of federal compensation programs and are often left out of the narrative entirely. It is important that schools take a distinctions-based approach and are inclusive of Métis experiences when teaching about the residential and day school systems.

In addition to this, many Métis children came from road allowance communities¹. Following the mass dispossession of their homelands through the scrip

"Just as schools have played a role in upholding colonial attitudes, they have an even more important role to play in the decolonizing of Canadian society."

system², Métis found themselves forced into the geographic and economic margins of Canadian society. From the late 1800s until the mid-to-late 1900s, Métis peoples used the road allowances as new home communities. These parcels of land were typically found on the border of a larger municipality, a First Nations Reserve, or in distant rural areas where the Métis could safely build their homes. Those who lived on the road allowance did not contribute to municipal property taxes, and thus were denied access to municipal services such as schools and hospitals. Not surprisingly, this outright exclusion has led to generations of Métis people being raised with a general distrust of formal education systems, and lower labour market outcomes in absence of generational wealth accumulation. In this way, Canada's education systems have continued to play an important role in the destruction of Métis culture, language, values, social structures, and economic viability. **It is important to be mindful of the intergenerational trauma many Métis families carry as they navigate modern education systems.**

Just as schools have played a role in upholding colonial attitudes, they have an even more important role to play in the decolonizing of Canadian society. True decolonization is a collective process. If Métis children are to achieve successful educational and developmental outcomes, changes need to occur, for Métis learners need to see themselves reflected respectfully and meaningfully in the education system.

¹ www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-road-allowance-communities

² www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-scrip-in-canada

bcpvpa

TELL A FRIEND!

BCPVPA Members: do you have a colleague who has not yet joined our Association? Help them to be part of our community of leaders, and to get access to employment relationship support, professional learning and development, committee opportunities, and much more.

bcpvpa.org/membership/application



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

bcpvpa

humanworks





For a minute there,
I lost myself

"For generations the tree cache was a symbol of honesty and respect."
"Kajjaash goochi laartr kawmaekit ki oozchi kaawapinkad oo tapichkeet
kwayesh aen lootamik pi miina chi kichihita jnook."

cache as a message centre

laartr ki apochraewuk chi

This cannot be achieved by Métis people alone, nor can it be accomplished through the delivery of euro-centric or pan-Indigenous programs and supports. Indigenous cultures are not homogenous; each Nation has very diverse and beautiful ontological and epistemological systems, and ignoring this can cause harm to Métis children and their families.

The 2021 Canadian Census reveals that the self-identified Métis population ages 5-19 is significantly larger than the self-identified Métis student population as reported by provincial education authorities across the Métis homeland. If Métis parents and guardians felt that self-identification in the public school system brought advantages, they would be more willing to self-identify and self-identification rates would be significantly higher than the ones reported.

To achieve educational success, Métis learners need to see themselves reflected in the education system. This is as much our responsibility to our citizens, as it is yours in a position of leadership. We share a duty of care to protect Métis children and nurture their identities. **We do this together by promoting authenticity and visibility, and facilitating community connections.**

Walking Together, Centering our Children

Access to dedicated, distinctions-based programming provides Métis children invaluable opportunities to learn traditional ways of knowing and being, and ensures cultural continuity resulting in better health and wellness outcomes.

In 2018, MNBC embarked on a survey project to identify barriers to health and wellness experienced by Métis youth, aged 15 to 30. The survey found that 20% of Métis youth reported having engaged in traditional or cultural activities in the past year. Those who participated in cultural activities were more likely to feel connected to their community and were more likely to have volunteered regularly¹. Métis youth who engage in cultural activities are more likely

to experience a sense of belonging and contribute meaningfully to society. **It is our shared responsibility to facilitate these connections, so how do we accomplish that? We start at the beginning.**

Metis Early Years

On March 6, 2019, the government of Canada and the Métis Nation entered into a ten-year Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Accord with the goal of implementing the Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework. The overarching goal of the Métis Nation ELCC Framework is to create and enhance early learning programs and supports for Métis children and their families, that are anchored in Métis culture and responsive to the unique needs of Métis children and families.

The Métis Nation has a vision for ELCC in which Métis children and families throughout the Homeland are provided with culturally-relevant, self-empowering ELCC programming and services that focus on the development and maintenance of strong Métis families and communities across their lifespan, beginning at birth. MNBC will promote the healthy growth and development of children and families through experiences grounded in Métis culture and community ways, while Métis-specific wraparound services, programs, and policies will support their ongoing well-being.

One of the most effective ways to ensure that Métis learners, families, and communities are reflected in educational institutions is by connecting Métis Chartered Communities with their school districts and post-secondary institutions. The strongest relationships are those built in the community.

"We share a duty of care to protect Métis children and nurture their identities."

¹ McCreary Centre Society, 2018, p. 47

Early Years Programs

It is more important than ever to understand the impact early learning can have in setting up Métis learners and families for lifelong success. Culturally relevant programming sets our learners up for success in transitioning into and beyond the K-12 education system. MNBC offers many programs to support the development of Métis children. Education leaders can support Métis children by connecting them to the following programs:

Métis Family Connections – Early Years

is for families with Métis children birth to 8 years. Métis Family Connections – Early Years is focused on helping families build a network of support that provides children with opportunities for early learning and childhood development.

Métis Family Connections – Middle Years

is for families with Métis children aged 9 to 12 years. Métis Family Connections – Middle Years is focused on connecting families with culture and providing opportunities to access the Métis Child Care Benefit program.

The Métis Child Care Benefit (MCCB) Program

is a service offered by the Métis Child Care Navigation and Support Program, for families with Métis children birth to 12 years. Through the Métis Child Care Benefit Program, eligible families may be able to access funding that is additional to that provided by the Provincial Affordable Child Care Benefit to support the cost of childcare.

The Métis Winter and Spring Break Supplement helps Métis families with the cost of childcare during school breaks – exclusively winter and spring break.

The Miyoopimatishihk (Wellbeing) Program was developed by MNBC for families with Métis children birth to 8 years. Métis families can apply for – and access – services funded directly by MNBC.

The Imagination Library is a literacy program for children birth to 4 years. Métis children that are registered in the program receive a free, age-appropriate book each month.

To learn more about these important programs, and how you can connect your Metis students and families, please visit: www.mnbc.ca/education

To extend your knowledge on Métis history, culture, and identity, MNBC's learning resource *Kaa-Wiichihitoyahk* provides Métis perspectives on cultural wellness. This resource can be purchased Métis Trading Post: metistradingpost.shop



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 2,700 members closer together and help to strengthen BC's K-12 public education system.

bcpvpa.org

Committees

Confronting Racism and Building a Foundation for Change

The BCPVPA's Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee is Ready to Encourage Action-Oriented Change



L to R: David Johnson (SD23), Carla Rourke (SD52), Iram Khan (SD36), BCPVPA Director Sanj Johal (SD44), Tu Loan Trieu (SD40), BCPVPA President Brian Leonard, BCPVPA Director Sid Jawanda (SD57), BCPVPA Director Darren Danyluk (SD6), Kenneth Headley (SD40), Wayne Chow (SD42)



by

Carmen Eberle and Andrea McComb

Staff Directors

BCPVPA

Being an anti-racist association involves taking a series of steps to actively challenge and deconstruct racism both within the association and in society at large. Principals and Vice-Principals play a key role in both combatting racism and teaching acceptance, which are critical components in creating these societal changes. As one works towards becoming anti-racist, education is important. Your journey can start with learning about the history and impact of racism, and its various forms: read books, attend workshops, and engage in discussions with experts and members of racialized communities. Being anti-racist and engaging in anti-racism is an action-oriented stance, committing the anti-racist to actively participate in activities that prevent, address, reduce, and eliminate racism in their environments.

Late in 2022, several members acted when they put their names forward to be a lead member of the BCPVPA Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee. This committee was established in response to our commitment as an Association to build a more inclusive community of educators. The Committee – which held its first meeting in January 2023, and is

Wayne Chow

Vice-Principal

District Vice-Principal of Racial
Inclusivity and Equity

*on the shared, traditional, and unceded
territories of the Katzie First Nation and
Kwantlen First Nation
SD 42 (Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows)*

Wayne has been an educator and administrator in British Columbia for more than 20 years, starting in the Mission School District and, at present, in the school district of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Wayne was an English Language Learners teacher and transitioned into the administration role, working at both the middle school and secondary school level. Currently, he is focused on supporting his school district with their antiracism goals and framework for learning that supports all learners.



" As an anti-racist educator, I believe in the value of a shared commitment to address systemic oppression, whether that be in the classroom, school community, or curriculum. More importantly, I believe in highlighting hope, joy, and racial brilliance as much as possible in all our schools. I am looking forward to being a part of this committee to help and support all BCPVPA members in their journey towards being an anti-racist educator."

"As one works towards becoming anti-racist, education is important."



comprised of six BCPVPA members, two BCPVPA Directors, and the BCPVPA President – encourages discussions about racism, power, accountability, and involvement at all levels.

The role of the Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee is to:

- Advise the Board with respect to the ways in which the Board can support effective school leadership for racial equity and anti-racism

Kenneth Headley

District Vice-Principal for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism

*on the traditional and unceded territory of the qiqéyt (Qayqayt) First Nation and other Coast Salish Peoples
SD 40 (New Westminster)*

Kenneth has been an advocate for marginalized students, and their families and communities during his 15 years in K-12 education. In collaboration with Beth Applewhite (SD 41) and James Morton (SD 43), Kenneth has focused on providing meaningful learning opportunities to discuss issues of inequity and racial discrimination with educators and community organizations throughout the Province.



“Anti-racism work is hard work because it is the heart work. When we become more equitable, we change hearts and minds. Engaging in this learning and unlearning requires courage and will lead to discomfort. With a community of Critical Friends, we are able to walk with grace, love, humility, and community accountability. Most of all, we can walk together with HOPE and JOY!

When we work together to remove barriers and create spaces where we allow students, staff, and families to show up as their true, vibrant, and authentic selves, we can reimagine community and humanity.”

David Johnson

Vice-Principal

Watson Road Elementary

on the traditional and unceded territory

of the Okanagan (Syilx) People.

SD 23 (Central Okanagan)

David has been an educator for 20 years, 11 as a teacher and nine as an administrator, and is currently the Vice-Principal of a large elementary school in the central zone of Kelowna. David has had the fortune of experiencing a variety of school settings and getting to serve students and families in each of these settings. He has also had the opportunity to work with students and families from a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. For the past two years, David has been part of leading an equity team at his school where they engage staff and parents in the important work of inclusion, diversity, and anti-racism.



"I wanted to put my name forward for the BCPVPA Anti-Racism Committee to contribute to this important work and learn with colleagues from around the province to help shape the work that is happening in my district and school. The stories I have had the opportunity to hear from students and families where racism is at the core have inspired and motivated me to become an advocate, ally, and voice for this critically important movement towards equity. I am very excited to join this committee with such an amazing group of individuals to drive change in our schools."

- Advise the Board to assist in the Association's liaison with the Ministry of Education and education partner groups to promote anti-racism education
- Advise the Board to assist in the Association's liaison with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and education partner groups, to support implementation of the Ministry's K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan
- Support members on how to best deal with issues of racism in their schools



Iram Khan

Principal

David Brankin Elementary
SD 36 (Surrey)

Member of Surrey's Racial
Equity Advisory Committee

*Iram works, learns, and plays on the
shared traditional territory of the Katzie,
Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, and other
Coast Salish Peoples.*

Iram has been an educator for 25 years
and an administrator for 15 years.
She has worked in Surrey for most of
her career, but was also a teacher in
Kamloops and Dease Lake.

Iram enjoys spending time with her
husband and two children exploring
nature and playing video games. Iram
also enjoys reading and has a 'waiting to
be read' pile of books that threatens to
fall on her while she sleeps.

"My experiences as a person of colour learning in the BC education system and an educator in one of the most diverse communities in BC has made me committed to supporting staff and students through equity and inclusion. I put my name forward to serve on this committee because I am passionate about racial equity and supporting diverse education leaders and learners. I believe that the BCPVPA has the potential to play a great role in creating anti-racist schools and encouraging more diverse leaders to become school leaders. I look forward to the work ahead."



"Being anti-racist and engaging in anti-racism
is an action-oriented stance..."

The Committee will also offer recommendations to the Board on creating better working environments for IBPOC (Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour) members, and ways to grow diversity in the membership of the Association.

Members of the Committee are dedicated to supporting the BCPVPA and its members in addressing racism in BC schools, while helping to create an understanding of the links between oppression and the barriers that are presented. BCPVPA is accountable to our members, and we acknowledge the need to identify and address systemic racism that affects all facets of society. The Association values diverse perspectives, and wants to afford all members equal opportunities to engage. With the support of the Committee, we strive to empower all members through distributed

Carla Rourke

Principal
Charles Hays Secondary
SD 52 (Prince Rupert)

Carla has lived and worked as a guest on the traditional and unceded territory of the Ts'msyen and Sm'algyax speaking peoples for the past 16 years.

She has been blessed to be in a leadership role for the last nine years as part of a diverse high school community with wonderful staff, students, and families. Carla is also grateful to be a part of a collaborative administrative team of critical and supportive colleagues and friends.



"Last year, our district reflected on the results of our Equity Scan. It was powerful and honest work, and from this process we have identified areas that require growth. One of our goals is to declare that all 'learners are confident and have a profound sense of belonging', and we are not there yet. We know that racism exists, and that a profound sense of belonging isn't possible until we are an anti-racist school. Anti-racism has to be the foundation for systemic change. I am new to this work and I am learning and unlearning every day. I put my name forward for this committee to be active in this important work and to bring the experiences and perspectives of a smaller Northern district to the conversation."

Tu Loan Trieu

Vice-Principal

Ecole Glenbrook Middle School

on the traditional and unceded territory of the
q̓iq̓éyt (Qayqayt) First Nation and other

Coast Salish Peoples

SD 40 (New Westminster)

Tu Loan is in her 24th year of teaching. Prior to becoming a VP, Tu Loan was a middle school teacher-librarian and wore many hats as Athletic Director, Resource/ELL Teacher, and classroom teacher. She has participated actively in professional development committees at every school she's been with, and has given workshops at the school, district, and provincial levels.

In addition to being an active member of her chapter's PD committee, she also chairs the Social Committee for the NWPVPA because she enjoys organizing events that bring people together. When not at school, Tu Loan enjoys being unplugged and reading, climbing mountains, and running.



"In our line of work, it is so important to not only address racist acts at school, but to also actively work to engage students and staff to be anti-racist. Having experienced racism growing up and as an adult, the term 'anti-racism' really transformed my thinking about how to deal with racism. I have been learning with colleagues and engaging in personal professional development around anti-racism and believe that I can contribute positively to this committee."

leadership, shared decision-making, co-construction of strategic plans, and authentic opportunities to provide input into how BCPVPA services are provided.

Anti-racism is an ongoing process that requires continuous education, self-reflection, and action. As we strengthen the anti-racist voice within the Association and our membership, we continue to foster a culture of inclusiveness that encourages open and honest discussions about race. Becoming anti-racist takes time, effort, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. We believe that together, we can make the change necessary to create a culture of anti-racism within the Association, and to bolster efforts to make this change throughout the public education system in BC.

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.

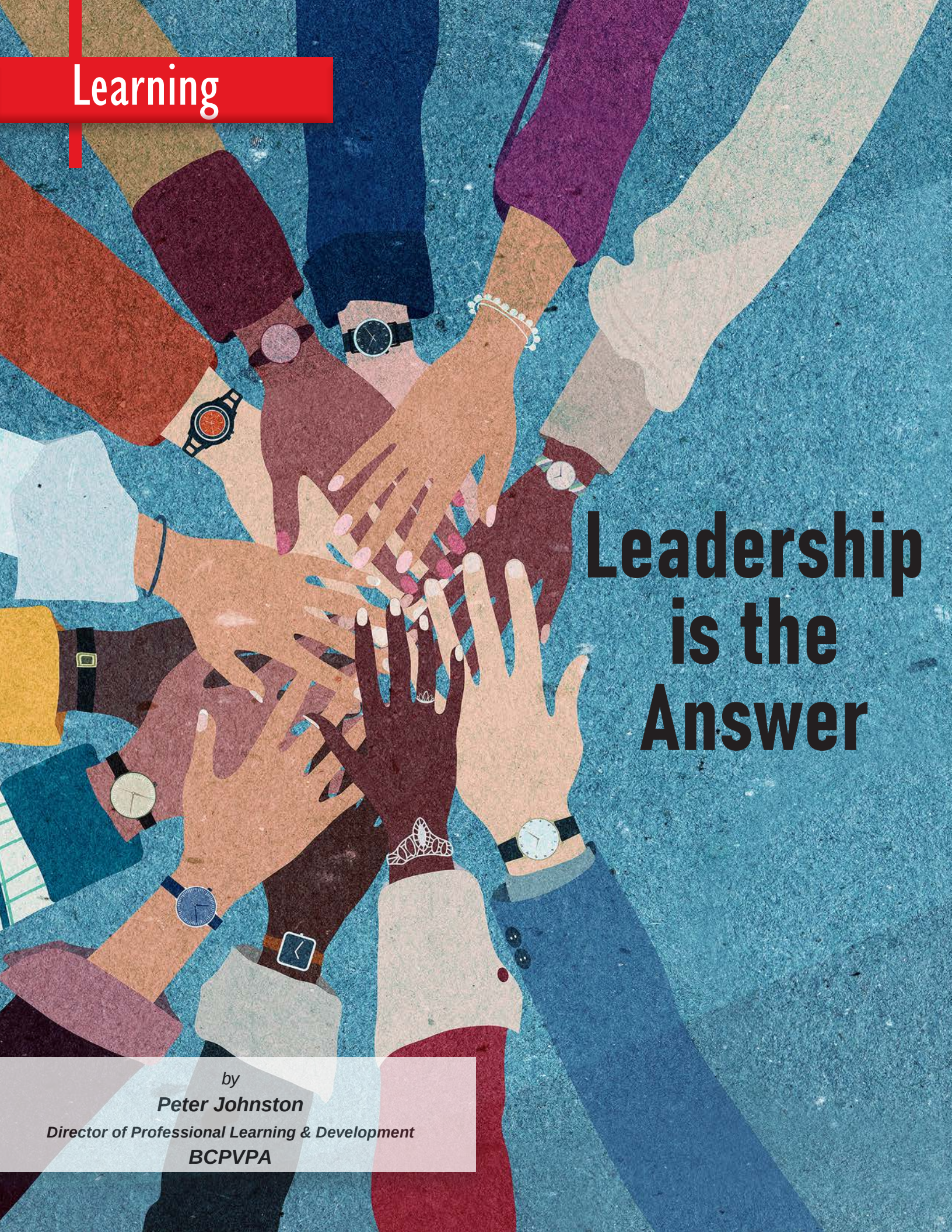
(Our facilitator) guides the conversation,
offers thoughts and ideas,
but his best attribute is that
with simple questions,
he is able to force us to dig
just a little deeper in our thinking.”

(BCPVPA Program Attendee)

The BCPVPA offers support and advocacy to more than 2,700 Principals
and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

bcpvpa.org

bcp  vpa



Learning

Leadership is the Answer

by

Peter Johnston

Director of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA

I have had the great pleasure of travelling around the province this past year, facilitating learning sessions that require self-reflection and action plans.

Dedicated school leaders are developing their leadership capacity and learning best practices for establishing trust in their schools. In each learning session, we agreed that if you have developed your leadership capacity, you will have the capacity to establish trust within our schools. In doing so, you will be working in a learning culture that is less stressful and generates wellness for yourself and staff members.

In these learning sessions, I emphasize how leadership, organizational trust, and wellness are interdependent and can significantly impact a school's learning culture.

Leadership plays the most critical role in establishing trust within an organization. School leaders who are transparent, honest, and consistent in their actions and decisions help to build trust in the school community.

When staff, students and parents trust their school leaders, they are more likely to be engaged, committed, and productive. On the other hand, school leaders who are perceived as untrustworthy can create a culture of fear, uncertainty, and low morale.

Trust is also crucial for personal and staff wellness. When staff feel trusted, they are more likely to feel a sense of autonomy, control, and support in their school environment. This can reduce stress, improve mental health, and increase job satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of trust can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and burnout.

Leadership also plays a critical role in promoting employee wellness. School leaders prioritizing staff and student well-being by providing resources, support, and a positive learning culture can improve overall health outcomes, reduce absenteeism, and increase well-being. On the other hand, leaders who

do not prioritize well-being can create a culture of overwork, stress, and burnout.

Strong leadership is essential for building trust within a school and promoting staff and student wellness. Leadership, organizational trust, and wellness are interdependent and should be prioritized to create a healthy school learning culture.

I am constantly weaving in examples of how leadership, trust, and wellness are woven together using the leadership principles espoused by Jocko Willink and Dr. Stephen Covey. The BCPVPA has an exclusive agreement with FranklinCovey to use their world-class leadership content, and Jocko Willink's Echelon Front offers outstanding practical, timeless leadership principles. Both sets of leadership principles give the school leader the strategies and tools to create a healthy school learning culture.

The principles expressed in Extreme Ownership™ and the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People® emphasize how great school leaders prioritize excellent personal health and wellness.

Developing trust in schools is essential to creating a positive and productive learning environment. When teachers, school leaders, and staff members demonstrate trust and respect toward one another, students feel safe and supported and are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally.

One of the critical principles of Jocko Willink's leadership philosophy is Extreme Ownership™. This principle is about taking responsibility for one's actions and decisions, no matter the circumstances. In our schools, extreme ownership means school leaders and teachers should take ownership of their students' successes and failures. When school leaders and teachers take responsibility for their students' learning, they create an environment of trust and accountability. extreme ownership for student learning sets a positive example for students as they start taking ownership of their own learning, and it helps school leaders and teachers to build better relationships with their students.



"Developing trust in schools is essential to creating a positive and productive learning environment. When teachers, school leaders, and staff members demonstrate trust and respect toward one another, students feel safe and supported and are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally."

Another principle that can be applied to developing trust in our schools is Dr. Stephen Covey's 7th Habit. This principle emphasizes the importance of caring for oneself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Wellness is crucial for school leaders, who often work long hours and face many daily challenges. When school leaders prioritize their own personal health and wellness, they're better equipped to handle the demands of their job and create a positive learning environment for their staff and students.

So: how do school leaders put these leadership principles into action to develop trust in their schools?

Creating a Learning Culture of Extreme Ownership

One must start with school leadership to create an Extreme Ownership™ learning culture. Principals, Vice-Principals, and other school leaders must model extreme ownership in their actions and decision-making, setting the tone for the rest of the school community. An extreme ownership learning culture means taking responsibility for everything that happens in the school, even if it's not directly related to one's own area of responsibility. School leaders must also be transparent about their goals and expectations, and ensure all staff members

understand their own impact on the learning culture being created.

For example, if a student is not succeeding in a particular class, it's easy to blame the student or their parents for not doing enough. However, a leader practicing Extreme Ownership™ would look at the situation and identify what they could have done differently to support that student. Did the school leader provide enough resources and support for the student? Did the school leader identify the student's unique needs and challenges? Did the school leader communicate effectively with other staff, students, and their parents?

In turn, other school leaders and teachers must also take ownership of their students' learning. This means instructing and assessing in a way that helps students develop the skills and mindsets needed to succeed in school and the modern world. It also means being transparent about goals and expectations, and creating a safe and supportive learning culture where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. When school leaders take ownership of their students' learning, they create a sense of accountability and trust between themselves, the teaching staff, and their students. This trust is essential for creating a positive and productive learning environment.

Prioritizing Personal Health and Wellness

School leadership can be exhausting if not supported by a wellness plan. The 7th Habit – Sharpen the Saw – emphasizes the importance of caring for oneself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. These four dimensions of wellness are essential for Principals and Vice-Principals, who often work long hours and face many daily challenges. When school leaders prioritize their personal health and wellness, they are better equipped to handle the demands of their day and continue creating a positive learning environment for their students.

Ask Yourself:

"Ever been too busy to fill your car with gas or plug in for a charge?"

"Why do Airlines ask you to put your mask on first, then your child's mask?"

You must be there for your staff and students as a school leader. If you do not have enough gas or air, how can you help them?

What does it look like to prioritize personal health and wellness as a school leader? It could mean practicing self-care by getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, and engaging in physical activity. It could also mean seeking out professional development opportunities that equip you with the tools and give you the reflective time to take ownership of your school's learning culture and your wellness.

Strong leaders seem to find strategies to improve their leadership skills, thereby enhancing their wellness. BCPVPA members can check out the PLD Tile in My BCPVPA (bcpvpa.org) to request professional learning that meets the needs of you and your colleagues. Leadership is the answer: own your learning and wellness.



**BE INSPIRED
INSPIRE OTHERS**

Great leaders ignite learning, inspire staff and students alike, and transform the landscape where we all work and learn.

Subscribe to receive the latest leadership careers opportunities in BC schools.
makeafuture.ca/subscribe

Make a Future
CAREERS IN BC EDUCATION

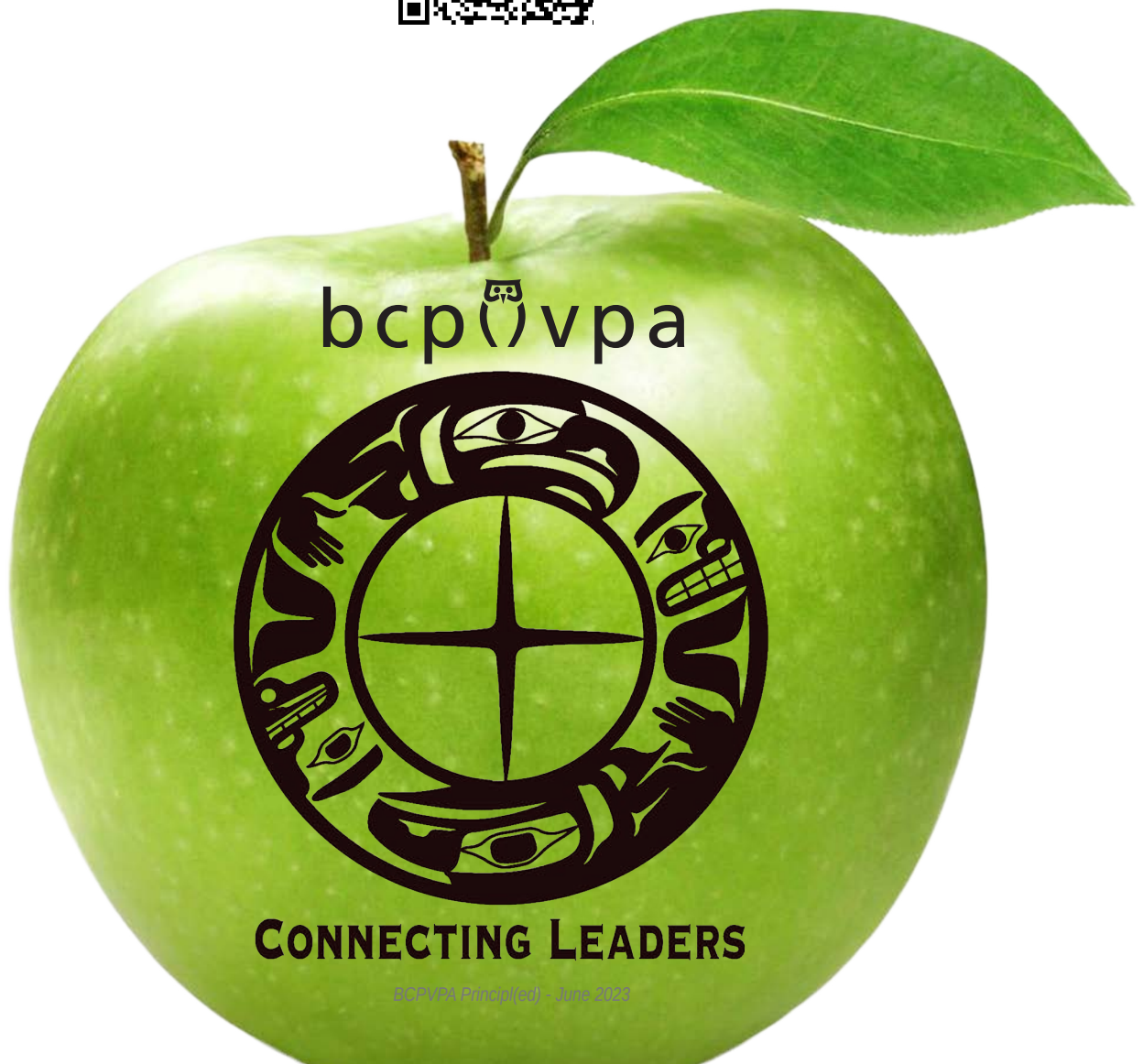
Cultivating Learning

INTERACT *CONNECT* *REFLECT*

The 2023 BCPVPA Connecting Leaders Conference takes a fresh approach to conference learning with engaging facilitated sessions by exceptional educational leaders

OCTOBER 19, 20, & 21, 2023

CANYON FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL, KELOWNA, BC



CONNECTING LEADERS

INTERACT

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19, 7:00 PM

SIP - SOCIAL - SUDS

CONNECT

FRIDAY OCTOBER 20, 7:30 AM

FACILITATED LEARNING SESSIONS WITH

CHRISTINA BENTY • JO CHRONA • ROSA FAZIO • GEOFF GREEN

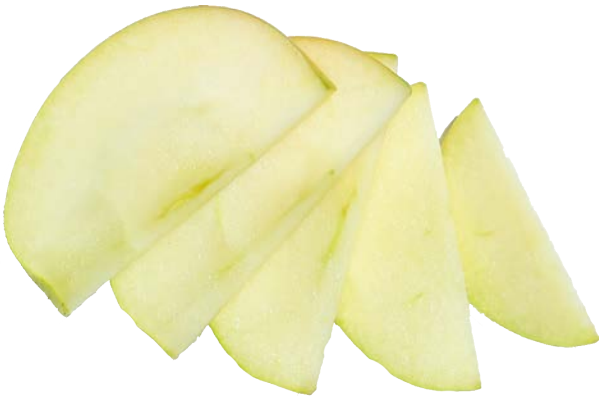
JOANNA MACINTOSH • BROOKE MOORE • LAURA TAIT

REFLECT

SATURDAY OCTOBER 21, 8:30 AM

LEARNING SUMMARY

JUDY HALBERT • LINDA KASER



attendance options

Register to join us in person in beautiful Kelowna, and engage in these sessions in the state-of-the-art learning spaces of Canyon Falls Middle School.

Register to join us remotely as a participant in your local host site, where we share the learning online, one to many, with dedicated online facilitation and the benefit of learning right in your community alongside your school and Chapter colleagues.

Find the registration
link on our website:



The background is a dark blue field filled with numerous light blue and white numbers of various sizes, scattered randomly. Three overlapping speech bubbles are positioned in the center. The top bubble is dark blue and contains the word 'Talking'. The middle bubble is a medium blue and contains the word 'NUMBERS'. The bottom bubble is a lighter blue and contains the word 'with'.

with

Talking

NUMBERS

by
Read Jorgensen
SD 61 (Victoria)
Retired

I met an investment broker a few weeks ago; we chatted, and I asked him about his work. “We’re a small boutique firm, in business for 21 years, with 17 employees. We have 2.3 billion dollars under management and care for around 1,200 high net worth investors.” His answer was short, but full of relevant numbers so I easily got the picture. Businesspeople have a different way of talking. Their work is often described using numbers and ratios, like ‘total capital’, ‘revenue’, ‘rates of return’, or ‘units sold’. In education, we usually tell people-driven stories, but I think we are missing out. Numbers have a hard veracity that can create powerful pictures, and we can use them to help monitor our efforts and bring clarity to the challenging work of in-school administrators.

Here are some suggestions for using numbers that you could find in any school.

Rather than say, ‘I am a Principal of an elementary school,’ you could say, ‘I am the Principal of a K-8 school with 342 students, a staff of 49 full and part-time employees, and an annual payroll of just over \$2.1 million. We serve 231 families in a middle to low socio-economic neighbourhood.’

If you, like many administrators, have challenges around ‘fail to fill’, don’t just complain that you are always missing staff. Be more impactful, and let the numbers speak. ‘In our school of 342 students we lost just over 100 instructional and supervision hours last week due to non-replacements, and we are fast approaching 370 lost educational hours this month alone.’

Here are some other ideas:

Working long hours

At 53 hours a week you are working ‘132% of a normal work week.’

Long district meetings

Our three hour administrators’ meeting with 52 employees cost around \$14,000 in salary¹ and upwards of \$4,500 in TTOC (Teacher Teaching on Call) costs every month.’

Too many emails

‘I receive close to 80 emails a day and one in five do not pertain to me at all.’

Busy day

‘Yesterday, according to my iPhone, I walked 5.7 kilometers just inside my school.’

Parents shifting responsibility to the school

‘Students spend more than 75% of their waking hours per year outside of the school.’

Absence notification

‘Brett has 15 absences, which equates to missing one out of every five school days.’

1 Need some fun at your next meeting?
Try the Harvard Business Review
Meeting Cost Calculator:



“In education, we usually tell people-driven stories, but I think we are missing out.”

"If you, like many administrators, have challenges around 'fail to fill', **don't just complain that you** are always missing staff. Be more impactful, and let the numbers speak."

Numbers and ratios help you manage your school by de-personalizing concerns. At one school, we were burning through our copy budget at an alarming rate, so I crunched the numbers from the photocopier. The average teacher used fewer than two copies per day for each student, with an eyewatering 15.1 copies per day per student for the heaviest user. I created a report, respectfully removed teachers' names and divisions, and distributed the findings at the staff meeting. Once everyone had an accurate picture of the issue, we were able to bring the copy budget back in-line.

In another example, we calculated the salary cost to provide the Reading Recovery™ program – a highly regarded intervention at the time – at nearly \$4,600 for a single student. A good discussion ensued, as we investigated more cost-effective interventions that could support greater numbers of struggling readers, without the teacher feeling targeted or slighted.

In schools, we readily talk about our work, but our stories often lack a point of reference. Talking with numbers and ratios helps create meaning by generating vivid pictures of what you do, how hard you work, and what it really means to do the work of a in-school administrator.

Speaking of struggling readers, I highly recommend this article, "At A Loss for Words":

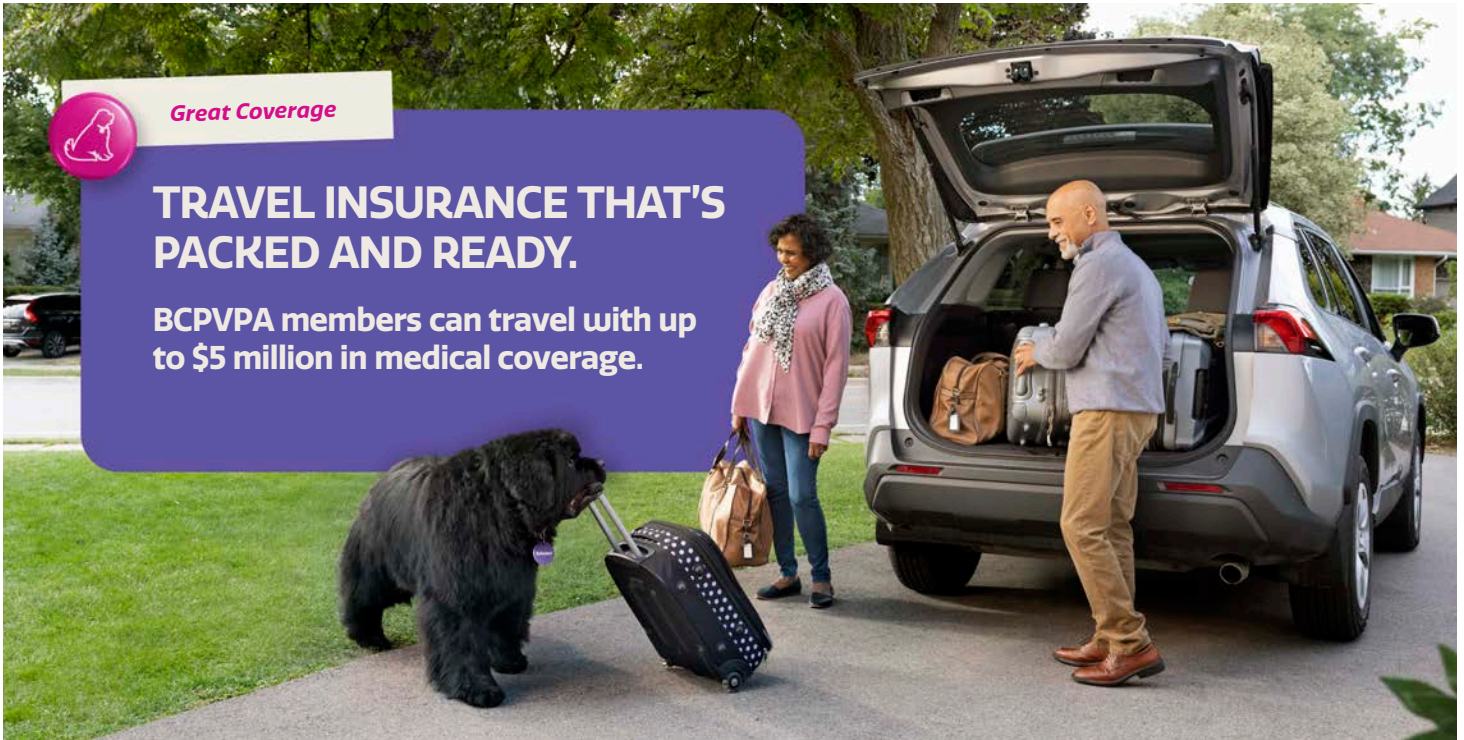


And this one, about rethinking our approach to teaching reading:



Have you harnessed the power of numbers to illustrate the complexity of your work, celebrate your team's efforts, or illuminate a challenge?

 Tweet about it, and tag @bcpvpa @MrJVictoria



Great Coverage

TRAVEL INSURANCE THAT'S PACKED AND READY.

BCPVPA members can travel with up
to \$5 million in medical coverage.

MEDOC® Travel Insurance is an annual insurance plan. For often less than the cost of purchasing insurance for multiple trips separately¹, you can enjoy an unlimited number of trips² during the policy year. MEDOC also includes these benefits:

- Coverage for COVID-19 related medical emergencies.
- Trip cancellation, interruption, and delay coverage³ is available if you are unable to travel or have to interrupt your trip due to you or your travel companion contracting COVID-19.
- An additional 5% savings on home insurance⁴



Give Johnson a call at

1.855.473.8029

or visit

Johnson.ca/MEDOC
to get a quote and finalize your coverage.

bcp  vpa

JOHNSON 
INSURANCE

Johnson Insurance is a tradename of Johnson Inc. ("Johnson" or "JI"), a licensed insurance intermediary, and operates as Johnson Insurance Services in British Columbia and Johnson Inc. in Manitoba. MEDOC® is a Registered Trademark of JI. MEDOC® Travel Insurance is underwritten by Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Company of Canada ("RSA") and administered by JI. Valid provincial or territorial health plan coverage required. Travel Assistance provided by Global Excel Management Inc. The eligibility requirements, terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions which apply to the described coverage are as set out in the policy. Policy wordings prevail. ¹Based on a comparison of MEDOC's 17-day Plan and 35-day Base Plan against single trip plans with similar benefits. ²Maximum duration of 17 or 35 consecutive days applies to each trip outside of Canada, depending on your plan selection. ³Coverage for Trip Cancellation begins the day of booking your trip provided your insurance is in effect. If a trip is booked prior to Trip Cancellation insurance being in effect, coverage for that trip will begin the day that the insurance premium is paid and the policy is issued. Trip Cancellation, Interruption & Delay Insurance benefits apply only to travel arrangements booked prior to departure. ⁴Home policies underwritten and claims handled by RSA in Quebec and underwritten exclusively, and claims handled, by Unifund Assurance Company ("UAC") in the rest of Canada. Home insurance not available in NU. Discounts on home insurance applicable to principal residence only and only on home policies underwritten by RSA in Quebec and UAC in the rest of Canada. Described coverage and benefits applicable to policies underwritten by UAC or RSA. JI, RSA and UAC share common ownership. Eligibility requirements, limitations, exclusions, additional costs and/or restrictions may apply and/or vary based on province/territory. Call 1.855.290.3584 for details.

HAVE YOU JUST BEEN
INFORMED YOU ARE MOVING
SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER?



ARE YOU A NEW VICE-
PRINCIPAL BEING ASSIGNED
TO A NEW SCHOOL?



IS A NEW VICE-PRINCIPAL
JOINING YOUR ADMIN TEAM?

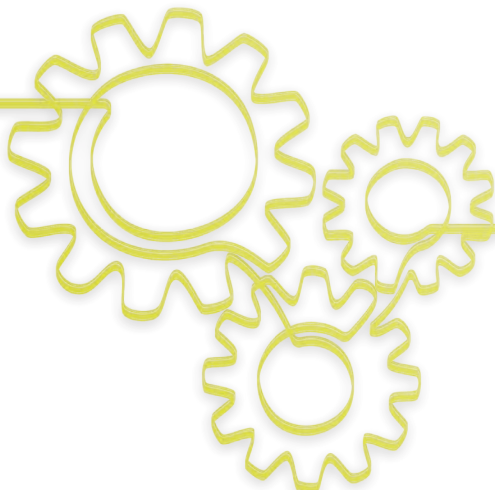


AFTER BEING IN A 'SINGLE-
ADMINISTRATOR' SCHOOL, WILL
YOU BE PART OF A 'TEAM' FOR
THE FIRST TIME?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, on top of planning for the usual smooth opening of your school in September, you will be thinking about how you and your admin partner(s) will work together to support your school community. What are your strengths? What are your philosophies on leadership, communication, and student discipline? Will you get along? Who will do what? There are many things to consider, so invest some time in advance of the school year – if you have that luxury! – to formulate a plan. When you hit the ground running in September, you will have worked out some of the kinks of your new leadership relationship, and determined together your norms of collaboration.

There will never be enough hours in the day for you to operate as a true 'team' on all aspects of school leadership. But, knowing that, there are ways to ensure that you maintain a 'team' approach to your work, and that includes staying apprised of what you each do day to day to support the staff and students in your school, and having clarity on your roles, responsibilities, and communication strategies with each other.

Leaders in single-administrator schools are aware that they are the 'go-to' for everyone: staff and students, parents, district leaders, and members of the community. When a single administrator gains an admin team member, some of those responsibilities can and should be shared.



Building Your Admin Team



by

Ellen Roberts

Director of Member Support Services (Retired)

BCPVPA

● **Key principles to keep in mind as you build your effective admin team include:**

1. **SETTING NEW PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS UP FOR SUCCESS**

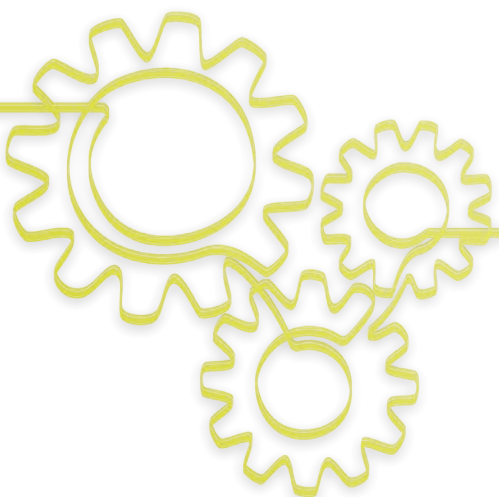
A new Vice-Principal will be learning the managerial / administrative and educational leadership components of the role on the job. The transition from a teaching position to a Vice-Principal role is a huge change and presents a steep learning curve. A new Vice-Principal needs time to learn, opportunities to ask questions, time to forge relationships with staff and students in a new work setting, and also time to get to know the Principal and their leadership style. A new Principal will already have a good understanding of the role of the admin team and the shape of the school year, but will no longer have a Principal to whom they can defer when making challenging decisions or taking ultimate responsibility at the school. Intentionality in understanding your teammate's administrative journey and needs is important to establishing a working relationship. This takes time and effort, but it is worth it.

2. **FAIR AND EQUITABLE ASSIGNMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES**

What are the different areas of responsibility? How will you divide them to ensure they can all be managed efficiently, while offering both challenge and opportunity for growth? What strengths does each person bring to their role? While the specific duties of administrators vary across districts, there are certain portfolios that exist at every school. Think about how you can take advantage of the strengths on your team, while building on the 'stretches'. For the sake of the school community, you will want to ensure that roles are assigned in a way that support both a smooth operation and everyone's success. At the same time, it will be important – especially for Vice-Principals – to have an opportunity over time to gain knowledge and experience in all areas of the job so that they have the scope for when they wish to apply for a Principalship. This is a delicate dance, but one that is important to consider.

3. **THOUGHTFUL ASSIGNMENT OF ADMIN TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES**

If administrators have teaching components in their roles, consider what will best support the school, but also – if possible – allow the teaching administrator some flexibility to carry out their administration duties. Giving your first year Vice-Principal an unmanageable teaching load will hinder their progress as an administrator, and will make your job as Principal more challenging. Having a Vice-Principal teaching a subject that is new to them can be beneficial, as it can help their overall understanding of curricular instruction and leadership and ultimately prepare them for a Principal role over time. Ideally, it is a collaborative conversation among the team about what is best for the school and for the individual. There are times, however, where there are limited options available due to factors such as the size of school and existing staffing, and this is where flexibility and resilience are critical.



"Think about how you can take advantage
of the strengths on your team, while
building on the 'stretches'."

4. CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT DELINEATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES TO STAFF

It helps staff to know early on who is responsible for the various portfolios in the school. Who is in charge of Health and Safety? Who works with the school's support staff and arranges their schedules? How did you apportion the student population for disciplinary purposes? Being clear about staff roles and responsibilities diminishes the chance of a delayed response, and helps alleviate frustration and confusion.

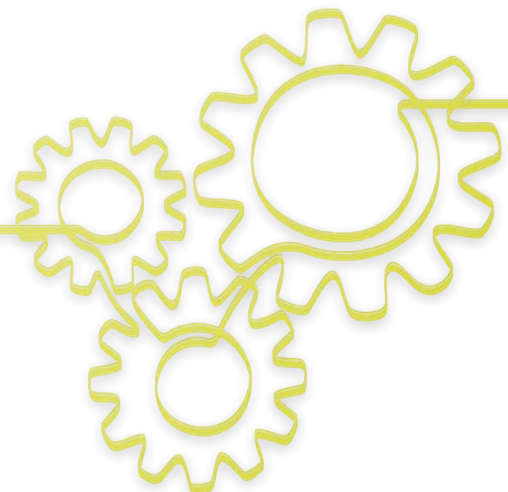
5. ENSURING A 'UNITED FRONT' ON DECISIONS AND MESSAGING TO STAFF, PARENTS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Ensuring that you have a united front is important, as it sets the tone for the whole school. It takes time to know each others' perspectives, as you may not agree on how situations are best managed. However, no matter what, you need to come together and support each other's decisions publicly. If you disagree with your admin partner's approach, discuss your differences privately, but understand that there will be times you will support your partner even though your personal opinion may differ. Your school community needs to see that the team is moving the school in the same direction. Differences of opinion, when shared respectfully and professionally in private, can be a rich learning experience for the admin team, and an opportunity to consider different viewpoints and factors. Ultimately, you want to ensure that you are supporting each other as a team. The Principal will be the final decision-maker at the school, after reflecting on different viewpoints and considerations. A Vice-Principal who disagrees with their Principal's approach can use that as an opportunity to gain insight about their own leadership style and philosophy.

6. SCHEDULED OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEBRIEFS / DISCUSSIONS

Meeting times can be difficult to schedule in your busy school, but it is important. After any school meeting – staff, staff committee, School Based Teams, Parent Advisory Council, assembly – debrief about how the event went, and what you might do differently next time. Don't wait, as the items on your schedule will continue to fill in! In addition, taking a few minutes following lunch-hour supervision, when students are back in class, can be a good time to briefly touch base. Often, we wait until the end of the day; while this is fine, catching your breath in the middle of the day over a bite of lunch forces you to stop and share, even for a few minutes. Intentional conversations can provide rich learning for all members of the team, and a good mentorship opportunity from the Principal to the Vice-Principal.

"Ensuring that you have a united front
is important, as it sets the tone
for the whole school."



7. ESTABLISHED PROCESSES FOR ONGOING COMMUNICATION

If you send out weekly newsletters to staff or your community, establish who is responsible for each part of the message, and set deadlines so you can be confident that the work will be done. If you have a new Vice-Principal on your team, set aside time for coaching/mentoring meetings where the Vice-Principal can talk openly about their experiences and ask questions.

8. COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO SETTING MEETING AGENDAS / PLANNING SCHOOL-WIDE EVENTS

Some school leadership work is immediate, and other pieces – like assemblies or planning for school-wide events – offer a longer lead time. Block off time for discussion as planned events or projects progress to ensure you are on the same page with your planning. Respect each others' deadlines and timeframes, as this will help create a strong and collaborative team.

9. A TRUSTING AND HONEST RELATIONSHIP

This is integral to building an effective and successful team. You do not have to be friends and associate with each other outside of school to be effective as a team, but establishing a relationship built on trust – where you know your admin partner has your back – is critical to the success of your team. Often, conflict can arise between admin partners due to miscommunication, not taking the time to understand different perspectives, or feeling unsupported. This can be avoided when teams are open and honest with each other.

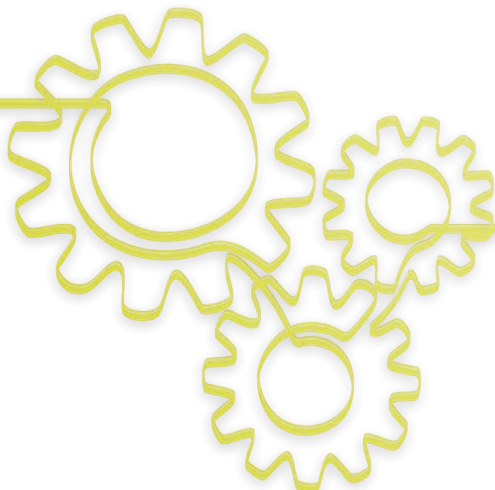
Sometimes there is a temptation to keep something from our admin partner because we worry that the message we are delivering might be hurtful. It is best to be open and honest, even with difficult conversations.

Speak respectfully about your admin partner with your colleagues. You may find yourself wanting to ask experienced colleagues for guidance on effective communication strategies, but remember to do so in a way that is considerate of your admin partner.

10. MODELLING A RESPECTFUL AND PROFESSIONAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP FOR STAFF

Sometimes, team members work well together and develop a casual working relationship. While this is great, it is important to remember that your interactions can be seen and heard by others on staff, and you need to keep your comments thoughtful and professional in order to avoid misunderstandings.

"Respect each others' deadlines and timeframes, as this will help create a strong and collaborative team."



- **When things feel tricky, and you need help or guidance:**

There might be times when you need assistance as an admin team to flesh out a communication strategy that will work effectively. At these times, reach out to the BCPVPA Member Support Services team – we will point you in the right direction, and provide some strategies and resources. You may also wish to reach out to your district staff to request support.

Being part of an effective and strong administrative team can be a rich and rewarding professional experience. Working with a colleague who has a different style can be an opportunity to understand different viewpoints, and can ultimately help to mould you into a stronger and more effective leader. We wish you all the best on your leadership journey, and we are here to support!

Contact BCPVPA Member Support Services

604.689.3399

Toll-Free in BC 800.663.0432

mssinfo@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Find Resources

bcpvpa.org

- Member Support Services

- My BCPVPA





the family balance



BCPVPA members are educators and leaders, and many add 'parent' to that profile. In years past, school leaders often moved into their administrative roles when their kids were older. We now have many leaders in the system who have not yet started families, or who have younger children when they take on their Vice-Principal or Principal role. Their busy and complex work lives just became even busier with the addition of family time, childcare, pick ups, drop offs, playdates, activities, and scheduling, scheduling, scheduling!

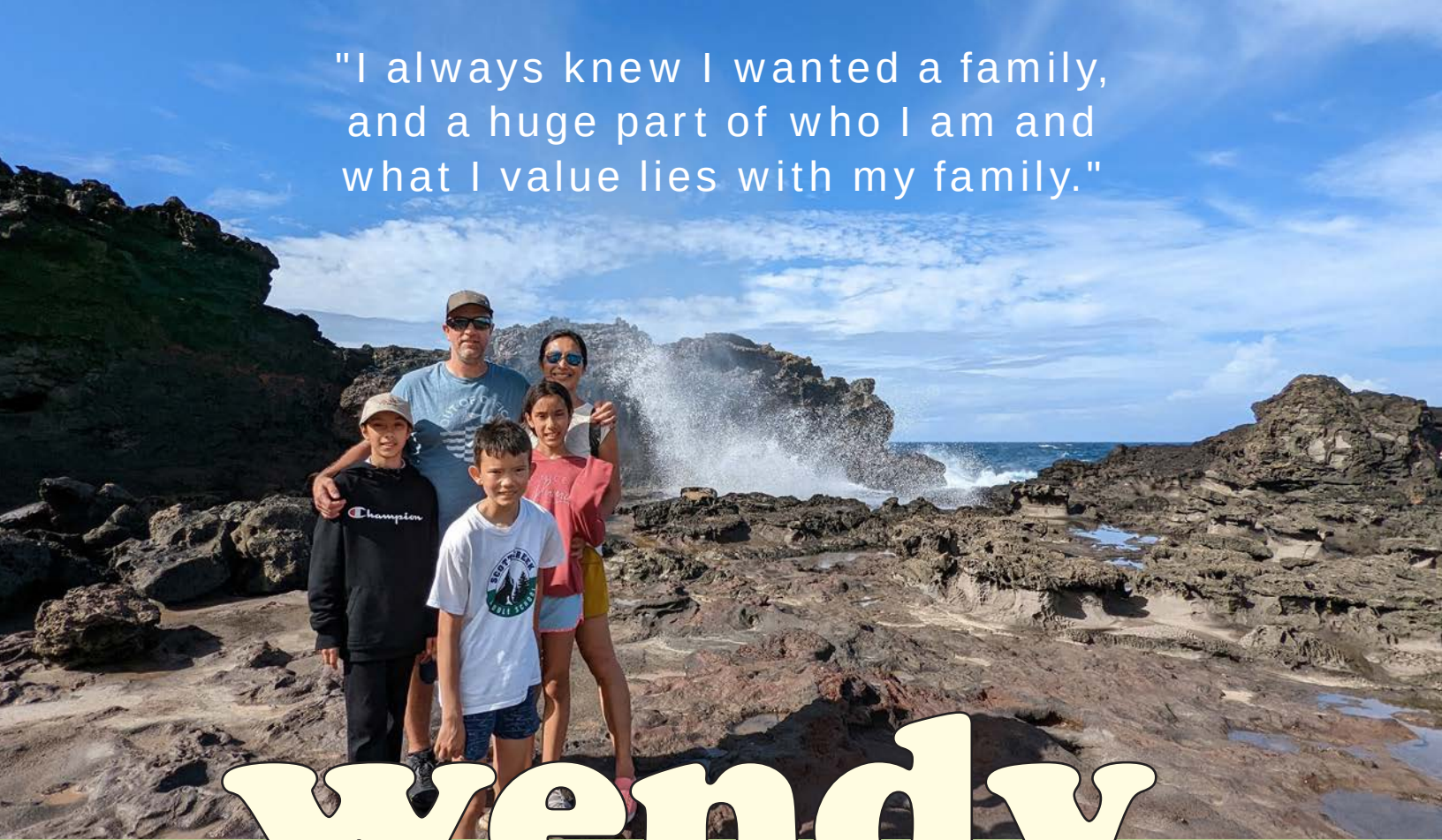
In this second installment of the **Leader Life Stories** series, we hear from six BCPVPA members from across the province, from Vancouver Island to Metro Vancouver, and northern and southeastern BC. The family circumstances, roles, and schools are all very different; some of our authors with children who are now older reflect on the experience and the learning, and those with younger children relate their process and how they are making it all work.

There are some common threads in their experiences and strategies. There is acknowledgement that work-life balance is slippery, and may need a rebrand. There is a recognition of the experiences that may be missed, and how to make that whole for families. There is a realization of the value of the common experience of parenting with the teachers and families at the school. And, there is an appreciation that family and community can play a pivotal role in achieving the delicate symmetry of a family plan.

Our heartfelt thanks to the members who shared their family lives with us, and who gave such deep consideration to the intricate architecture of what they are living each day.

We want to hear from our members and friends about what resonated with you in this article, and the ideas that you can add to the conversation. Tweet your comments and tag @bcvpva!

"I always knew I wanted a family,
and a huge part of who I am and
what I value lies with my family."



wendy

Wendy Yu is the Principal of Gleneagle Secondary School
SD43 (Coquitlam)



Leaving this job at the end of the day, and going to my *other* job of being a mom, can be exhausting.

I always knew I wanted a family, and a huge part of who I am and what I value lies with my family. I have a supportive husband, a son in Grade 7, and twin daughters in Grade 5. As you can imagine, our household is a busy one. We have activities almost every night of the week, and I remember days when the only 'alone' time I had was when I was in the shower.

I didn't have my first child until I was already a Principal. Shifting gears at work became a necessity. Instead of staying at work as late as I wanted, I had to rush off to pick my son up from daycare, take a day when he was sick, and do whatever else came up. Thankfully, I had my parents in Vancouver and in-laws on Vancouver Island, and they were all more than willing to help and support us. Two years later, we had twin girls and decided to get a nanny. She became so much more than a childcare provider: she helped prepare meals, did the laundry and ironing, tidied the house, and so much more. She really was more of a nanny to me and my husband than to our children!

Even with help, some days hurt. Mama guilt is a real thing. I don't like it when my kids say, "Oh, do you have to work late again?" There are times that I think I am not being the best mom I can be, and other times that I think I'm not being the best Principal I can be – I can never win. But these four tips help me through on most days (and, there are still some days that I can't win, no matter what!)

1. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I had my parents, my in-laws, my nanny, and even my neighbours at times. It truly 'takes a village', and I'm so grateful that I have so many people in my life. I even had my kids come to hang out at the school when my husband was out of town, or couldn't find help. Everyone at school is always welcoming of them!

2. Have a supportive partner. At the beginning of each week, we go through our calendar for the week ahead and plan our parenting schedule. His schedule is often busier than mine, so it takes some juggling, but he is so amazing and supportive.

3. Realize that there is no such thing as 'balance'. In Sheryl Sandberg's book, *Lean In*, she talks about how there is no such thing as balance. There's work. There's life. You need to learn how to prioritize and decide what's important at the time. You make choices, and then deal with the consequences of those choices.

4. Be okay with walking away. Use the Eisenhower Decision Matrix to get things done. Deal with what's important and urgent. The rest can be done later, delegated, or deleted.

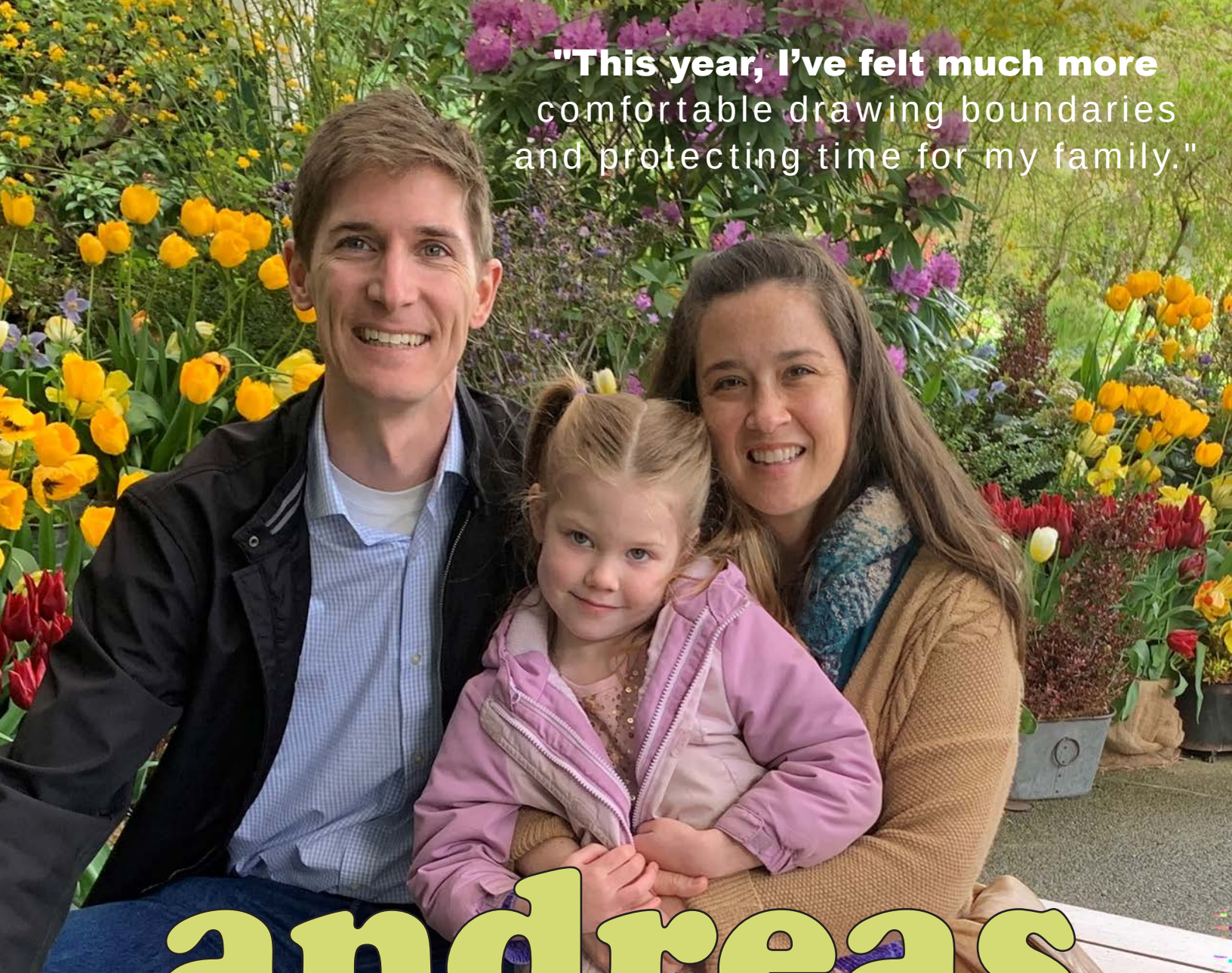
The Eisenhower Decision Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do <i>Do it now.</i>	Decide <i>Schedule a time to do it.</i>
Not Important	Delegate <i>Who can do it for you?</i>	Delete <i>Eliminate it.</i>

At the end of the day, I have a career that is purposeful and fulfilling and I have a family that is my legacy and true joy. I feel a tug from each at different times but it's worth it and I would do it all again with no hesitation! Now...to figure out what to make for dinner!



"This year, I've felt much more comfortable drawing boundaries and protecting time for my family."



andreas

Andreas Clesle is the Vice-Principal of Sidney Elementary School SD63 (Saanich)



"I think you should apply."

"Are we sure? Is this the right time for our family?"

"Yes! You'll do great. You just have to promise me one thing."

"Sure, what is it?"

"If you get the job, we are hiring someone to help clean our house every two weeks."

"Deal."

This was how the conversation went between myself and my wife, Tracy, when I learned my district was opening applications for an elementary Vice-Principal position.

It was the spring of 2021, and we had a lot going on. We were still in the 'yo-yo' stage of pandemic restrictions. We had our hands full with our strong-willed daughter who was almost four years old. We were still establishing our roots here in Victoria, BC, having only moved here in 2018. We had recently figured out it was unlikely we would have another biological child, and we were thinking about becoming foster parents. To top it off, I felt sick all the time from watching my beloved Maple Leafs once again flame out of the playoffs.

Though I had my eye on entering administration for several years, when the opportunity came it wasn't an automatic assumption that I would apply. While the role would be extremely rewarding and challenging for me, it also meant reorganizing the carefully assembled division of responsibilities my wife and I had worked so hard to develop.

Sure enough, the first few months were a tough adjustment. But, over time, we got into a groove as a family. We began using a family schedule with extreme precision to keep track of our planned activities, and the days I would be coming home later than usual. I began a meticulous Sunday ritual of meal planning and grocery shopping for the week, and my wife and I established a system of taking turns to make dinner and drop off and pick up my daughter from pre-school.

Looking back, I recognize that the biggest challenges in navigating my new role came from my attempts to satisfy the idea many of us have, of a Principal being the first one at school and the last one to leave. I couldn't deliver my daughter to pre-school before 7:30 am, and needed to pick her up by 5:00 pm, and this severely limited my ability to live up to this ideal of 'first in, last out'. I am lucky to have an incredible admin partner who immediately let me know how important it is to find good work-life balance, and how to prioritize aspects of the job. Over time, I felt less and less pressure to meet this self-imposed ideal, but it can still be difficult to shake.

I remember last spring when I would take my daughter to swim lessons on Wednesdays. On the first Wednesday, I said to my admin partner:

"While being an administrator with a young family can be a challenge, for me it is overshadowed by the benefits."

"I'm so sorry, I have to leave at 3:30pm to get to swimming on time."

And she responded:

"Why are you apologizing?"

Good point, Jen! It's funny now, the idea of apologizing for only staying 40 minutes after the bell, but it's a good example of the pressures we place on ourselves. This year, I've felt much more comfortable drawing boundaries and protecting time for my family. For the most part, I try to leave school by 4:30 pm, and this gives me several hours of quality time with my family. After my daughter goes to bed, and my wife and I are on the couch re-watching *Game of Thrones*, I'll often pull out my work laptop for a short session to get caught up and organized for the next day.

While being an administrator with a young family can be a challenge, for me it is overshadowed by the benefits. Having a child who is starting kindergarten this year has really opened my eyes, and allowed me to empathize and connect with my school's families in a significant way. It has been extremely powerful to experience the same challenges that many of our staff with young children are navigating. Plus, nothing is cuter than a five-year-old showing off to kids at the playground by proudly exclaiming, "WELL, MY DAD IS A VICE-PRINCIPAL!"

Reflecting after two years as an administrator, my family and I have found a great balance. My daughter is still as strong-willed as ever, my wife and I have found a good rhythm with our jobs, family, and friends, we've begun fostering, and I've come to accept the fact that, despite a stellar season, the Leafs will disappoint me once again.



stina

Stina Morissette Martinez is the Vice-Principal of Westcot Elementary School
SD45 (West Vancouver)

"I appreciate the common language and shared experience of school that I can share with my family."

My days are incredibly full, and I wouldn't have it any other way. When people ask me why I choose to have a complex and busy career, in addition to a complex and busy family life, my answer is always that I love the work I do at school and at home. Every single day is a different adventure, and I am a creature of change and challenge.

Since I was 10 years old, I have dreamt of becoming a Vice-Principal of an elementary school. The pursuit of my dream began early in my teaching career when I completed a diploma during my first maternity leave that, two years later, bridged to my Master's in Educational Practice degree. After five years with the Richmond School District, I began my career with West Vancouver Schools and was appointed Head Teacher. The leadership opportunities that accompanied the Head Teacher role were diverse and rewarding. Upon the arrival of my second son, I decided to take a step back from my leadership goals and focus on more time with family, which resulted in a job share position followed by a third maternity leave. Stepping back from leadership during this period of my life was, without a doubt, the right thing for me at that time; however, the interest and motivation to continue my path as an educational leader never dwindled.

In 2022, after several years of refocusing on my career goals, I began my position on Halloween day in West Vancouver School District as Vice-Principal at Westcot Elementary School. I teach Grade 2 four days a week, and have one day a week of admin time. The other hat I wear is as a mom to three busy boys ages three, five, and 11. My eldest lives part-time with his father, and part-time with my husband and me. My husband currently works remotely from home, and manages a great deal of the before-school and after-school logistics and activities. This has been a

huge part of my successful transition into my new role, and may present an increased challenge should his current work context change.

Managing the schedules of our family of five can be an intricate puzzle. Sunday mornings are typically the time that my husband and I sit down with a cup of coffee and our calendars to plan for the week ahead. I am fortunate to also have the support of my mom, who often steps in to drive one of the boys to their multitude of sports and afterschool programs. On days where I have an early morning meeting, in addition to an after-school meeting, we often require support from colleague and friends whose children attend the same daycare, and who can drop off or pick up my youngest. My Principal is very supportive of both my career and my family. She mentors me daily on strategies to find balance both at work and at home, and is understanding of the complexities that I face daily. I am incredibly appreciative of the community of people that make up my support network, and I strive to reciprocate in many ways.

At times when I haven't been able to organize coverage for my work, it has felt challenging to miss the experiences that happen within the school day at my children's school. When my five-year-old asks me to attend field trips, and I cannot, it does break my heart to see his disappointment. When my 11-year-old is playing his final basketball game, and I have a meeting, I ask friends to send me photos and then we look at them and debrief his games over dinner. I appreciate the common language and shared experience of school that I can share with my family. I remind myself and my family that I am so incredibly fortunate to spend all school holidays and summer breaks with my children. I also make an effort to attend evening PAC meetings at my children's school, and evening events like the Back to School BBQ.

Generally, the most difficult part of balancing my career and personal life is finding moments for myself. I began getting up at 5:00 am last year, and I am now in the routine of waking up early with a hot cup of tea or coffee, exercising for at least 30 minutes, and going over my emails and the shape of the day before

my family wakes up. Because I do not live in my school community, I commute 30-60 minutes both to and from work. I often use this commute time to catch up on the phone with friends, colleagues, and family, listen to professional podcasts or books for work, and – when my toddler requests – we rock out to Ed Sheeran or Encanto.

West Vancouver School District is a small and community-oriented district that values family. Having opportunities to blend family and work helps to create a sense of balance. My children love coming to my school on weekends to help me prepare for the week ahead, or for a special event. My mom volunteers at my school, and my husband often helps out on

evenings or weekends when we have an upcoming special event. Our district considers and includes our families in events which build and extend our work community, such as the Beach Clean-Ups, the Holiday Admin Family Movie, and the West Van Run.

The balancing act is real, and there are days it can feel overwhelming, yet it is always worth it. I have had the privilege of working with many talented mentors over the last 16 years of my teaching career, and have learned a variety of work-life strategies from each of them. I am continuing to learn every day, and I am full of gratitude for the network of support I have received – and continue to receive – both for myself as a professional and for my family.



"As often happens,
sometimes
opportunity sneaks
up on us, and other
times it bombards."



scott



Scott Holt is the Principal of Amy Woodland Elementary School
SD05 (Southeast Kootenay)

Early in my career, my family relocated to Cranbrook from Prince George, where I had been a full-time teacher. We were expecting our second child, and had a toddler in tow. I became a Teacher Teaching On Call (TTOC) and my wife started her own forestry company working throughout BC and Alberta, which took her away from home for weeks at a time. I decided to pursue a distance master's degree in Special Education, something that would open up employment opportunities and allow me to study over the summer months and in the evenings after the kids went to bed. I spent many nights reading and typing frantically, before the next day of single-parenting my

way through TTOC and part-time work, preschool, and half-day kindergarten.

As often happens, sometimes opportunity sneaks up on us, and other times it bombards. Our experience was the latter when, one week apart, I was awarded a Vice-Principal role and my wife was awarded both a high level management role – Provincial Entomologist with the Ministry of Forests – and an historic Mountain Pine Beetle management contract in northern BC that would eat up most of the next three or four years of her time working away from home. It was impossible to pursue all three paths, so

we faced a very difficult decision for our young family. After much debate and sacrifice on my wife's part, we chose to stay in the Kootenays, accept the Vice-Principal appointment, and turn down the Ministry job. My wife returned to her consulting role around the province, and we had two young children, a new stressful and time-demanding administration role, a taxing master's program, significant travel for my wife, and everything else that life brings.

My appointment was announced to school staff the next day and not everyone was pleased. Teachers knew our family situation, and some doubted my ability to manage the demands of my new role. They were not alone; doubts crept into my head as well. Could I manage the demands of this new role, and the responsibilities of home, and still maintain a healthy life balance?

Fast forward 17 years: I have been a Vice-Principal at all levels, and a Principal for more than a decade at middle and elementary levels. I have found my niche, I love my job, my children are flourishing in post-secondary, and I am still happily married to the same amazing person! It has been an interesting journey with lots of learning along the way, mostly through difficult situations where the lessons that came along were often deeply personal and challenging. One night I could sleep for seven hours thinking I had it all figured out, only to find myself the next night sitting in a snowbank at 3:00 am wondering where everything went wrong. The demands of our schools are not just hard work: the complexities and judgement that we face on a day-to-day basis can eat right into the core of our being. That damage is what we bring home to our loved ones every day. I remember being so upset with myself because I realized that I had spent all of my energy being kind and patient with my students – other people's children – only to return home irritable and impatient with my own. Cellphones, smart watches, and school Facebook group notifications only provided unlimited and unfettered access to my family time, taking away my children's father and my wife's husband even more. These things create a life imbalance that steals from your ability to be your best in either your school or family role.

It took a fair bit of reflection to realize what strategies fell into place to allow my journey to continue. In writing this article, I have been able to pinpoint a few things that I think made all the difference:

1. An accountability partner. By far the most important and integral piece of a balanced lifestyle is an accountability partner to keep you on your game. If I'm eating dinner by myself and my cellphone rings or an email chimes, I pick up the phone. If I'm eating dinner with my wife and my cellphone rings, one look from her is all I need to remind me that life will be much better if I let the call go to voicemail! It takes partnership to maintain a healthy time to come home from work, and to keep our family life and relationships paramount on weekends and in the evenings.

2. Improve efficiency. A great strategy in running our schools is also wise for our home life. Time is one of the most important things you can give your loved ones, so we found activities that we could all enjoy doing together. We discovered that a family season's pass to the local ski hill costs about the same amount as for one of our children to play minor hockey; instead of one person having fun, and three being cold in the stands, we all reap the benefits. We got our family into horses, bought a hot tub, and enjoy boating and camping in the outdoors. These are things we do together as a family – and being out of cell service range helps too!

3. Know your body. I've learned through the years that my body has been giving me warning signals when I need to rediscover balance. That annoying eye twitch, increasing anxieties, the inability to sleep, the craving for a nice cold hoppy IPA the moment I arrive home, the heartbeat that decides to create its own rhythm—these are all signals I've learned to recognize. The latest one makes me laugh the most: I've noticed that when my toenails get long, it's a sign that I have neglected some of the most basic things in my life. Time to rebalance.

4. Create boundaries. Establish a set of guidelines that works for both school and home lives. Keep in mind that emergencies arise, and there are good

reasons to be flexible. Set a time to leave for home each day. No cellphones at the dinner table, NEVER check your email right before bed (avoid checking emails when doing dishes as well), and turn off the notifications on your smartwatch when you get home. Set a time to talk to your partner about your day to allow yourself to decompress, but keep limits. Carve out time in your schedule that is strictly for your kids.

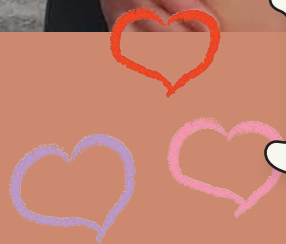
5. Letting go of guilt. If we permit it to happen, your school community and your professional conscience will take everything you have. As a young administrator, I was shamed by staff if I left the parking lot while

other cars were still present. If I had an early morning meeting at the board office and arrived at the school late, I received dirty looks and raised eyebrows, and felt the need to defend what looked like an obvious lack of dedication and professionalism on my part. I've learned not to reply to emails at night unless it's an emergency. Expectations that are not sustainable include not taking a personal day for a family event, and not taking a sick day when you feel horrible, but could probably suffer through day if you really tried. Let go of the guilt – you know your own leadership values, and the guilt is not deserved.





jien



Jen Nixon is the Principal of Spencer Middle School
SD62 (Sooke)

There's a saying that I love. It speaks to my heart and aligns with my beliefs:

It takes a village to raise a child.

This statement can feel clichéd, perhaps overused, but at the centre is the notion of **community**. Raising, educating, and inspiring youth is a herculean task. As an educational leader, I know huge tasks are less daunting with the support of an amazing team or community. Individually, we can do many things, but together with like-minded people we can achieve

greatness. The power of community is a mantra for me, both as an educational leader and as a parent.

This is what stands out for me the most when I reflect on what it has been like to be an educational leader for the past eight years, while also being a mother to two children. My interconnected and supportive community has been a central post in my life, and provides me with the strength and enthusiasm to do what I love most – be a mom to Logan, age 13, and Mila, age 10, and be the Principal at Spencer Middle School in Sooke School District.

"The power of community is a mantra for me, both as an educational leader and as a parent."

I first became a Vice-Principal in 2015 when my kids were young. My daughter, Mila, was an independent, active, and strong-minded three-year-old. The traits she had then – and still has now – bode well for her as a young adult, but sometimes make the journey challenging. My son, Logan, was five at the time and only a few months into kindergarten; he was proud to go to school every day, just like his mom. My kids quickly adjusted to me regularly rushing in or out of the door, working on my laptop after dinner or – I'm embarrassed to admit – frequently checking my phone to deal with the many emails received throughout the day.

I find the concept of a work-life balance one that causes undue angst, so instead I strive for harmony in my life. Over the years, there have been days where I have both failed and succeeded in maintaining harmony as a parent, as partner to my husband, and as an educational leader. One strategy I have used is exercise - and of course, I am drawn to activities where community is present. When my children were young and I was fuelled only by adrenaline and coffee, I found a community of Cross Fitters who braved 5:00 am alarm clocks to jump into a hardcore fitness workout. These early morning workouts helped keep me mentally and physically healthy when my children were young. Since the pandemic, and now that my kids are a little older, I have taken a slightly less intense, gentler approach to health and wellness, and embark on activities at the local yoga studio, power walks with my husband on weekends, or an occasional ride with my 'Shred Moms' mountain biking crew.

My husband and family have been a huge part of the community that has supported me to be both a Principal and a mom. I am fortunate that my children have two sets of grandparents in town, and another

that comes to the west coast for several months every year. There have been countless times when they have stepped up to look after a virus-ridden child, transport another to an activity, or even bring a pot of soup and fresh bread when I had nothing planned for dinner and things felt unmanageable. I am lucky to have found an incredible partner in my husband, who shares the load of household and childcare duties with me. He knows how important my community and my health are to me, so he has always encouraged me to attend conferences or professional development getaways with my work community, and to go on summer adventures and family vacations. I surround myself with a community of wonderful women – some I know through work, others I have known for decades, and some I have met more recently through my children. We take vacations together, go on walks and hikes or do yoga, sign our kids up for activities together, have multi-family gatherings, and take each other's kids with no explanations required.

While years of sleepless nights and stressful days have left foggy details in their wake, the key for finding harmony in life as a mom and educational leader has been the people I surround myself with, and the memories and moments I share with these interconnected communities. While I have missed some things, such as afterschool playdates, or helping with hot lunches for my own kids, my experiences as a parent and a Principal have been rich and forced me to take care of myself, enjoy time with my community of family and friends, and play hard when I'm not working hard.

In my first year as a Vice-Principal, I took the BCPVPA's Leading a Culture of Learning Level 1 course where I was asked to name what I valued most in life, and to write it on a tennis ball. The idea was that when you falter or have a tough day, you can throw the tennis ball against a wall and your core value comes back. It is no surprise that the word I wrote then was COMMUNITY. My strong and grounding community helps support me as both a parent and a Principal today. It is my village that enables me to raise my own children, and support the development and education of others.

"Being a parent of young children is
the most challenging yet rewarding
experience of my life."



andrew

Andrew Lee is currently the Vice-Principal of College Heights Secondary School
SD57 (Prince George)
Fall 2023, Andrew will be the Vice-Principal, Ballenas Secondary School
SD69 (Qualicum)

My wife and I are both in the education field, and we moved to Prince George from Thunder Bay, Ontario, in 2012. I started as a Vice-Principal at a medium-sized elementary school of 400 students in 2018 before we had any children. At that time, my wife and I had been married for four years and while we had always talked about starting a family, both of our careers were blossoming in Prince George, and we simply did not make it a priority. After a year and a half of working as a Vice-Principal, we decided that it was time to dive into family life. Fast forward to 2023, and we have two beautiful children – Avery who is four, and Autumn who is two – and we have just endured some of the most challenging social times in recent history during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the limitations on gatherings, and the absence of in-person events that are so important for young people and young families, we have been able to make things work, but have still experienced the mental and physical strain that comes with working full time, having sleepless nights that sometimes (or often) come with young children at home, and the exceptional effort that goes into balancing the priorities of both work and home life.

Living in the northern half of the province comes with its own set of unique challenges, in addition to those that may be more universal for working parents across the province. One of these challenges is enduring the extended time that young children are required to stay indoors when the winter weather stays between -20 and -40 for weeks at a time, or when the wildfire smoke of recent summers is so thick that it is unsafe to go outdoors for a long period of time.

One of the more universal challenges experienced by working parents has been childcare. While not isolated to the northern part of the province, nor an issue that is specific to the roles of educators, finding, securing, and managing the day-to-day responsibilities of having two children in two different daycares has been exceptionally difficult at times.

With my wife planning her return to work at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, we did some pre-work early in 2022 to get daycare organized for our youngest. Through online and social media searches, we found a place with an opening for August 2022.

We interviewed, and were the successful candidates to secure the spot. We paid our deposit in March. *Perfect!* Or, so we thought... Fast forward to mid-May when I received a message that there was no longer a spot for our youngest, and that our deposit would be returned. We were lucky to find another location for our child, but not without many sleepless nights wondering what we would do if we couldn't find a spot. With no family in British Columbia to potentially lean on, we were feeling the pressures and the impending challenges of a work-life balance.

On a more personal level, one of the difficulties I find is achieving that sense of grounding at home when, during the workday, emotions can run high and energy levels can run low. After a challenging day of leading the learning, and setting and maintaining high standards for students, any constraints and expectations waiting at home are front and centre as soon as you leave the school. When you have young children who do not yet have a lot of independence, it can be difficult to feel the pull of those many needs when you arrive at home with your energy and patience already exhausted. Prioritizing your own wellness and finding balance becomes a challenge when combined with the ever-increasing demands of being a school leader, educator, and father.

Balance for me comes from the integration of domains for holistic wellness and from *Ishi: Simple Tips from a Solid Friend* by Akiko Yabuki (2016), while considering qualities that resilient people often possess.

Physical

"When I feel bottled up, I move my body. Run, swim, climb a tree!"

Intellectual

"When I feel like a failure, I remind myself that every experience makes me grow"

Spiritual

"When nothing makes me feel better, I go outside. Nature has magic"

Social Emotional

"When I feel lost, I lean on my friends"

Rather than a specific strategy or set of strategies to create a sense of balance between work and family, I like to consider the opportunities for integration between the two. There are so many parallels between being a parent and being an educator, and I feel that if you can integrate the roles, there is more allowance for seeking a sense of balance. The ability to create innovative opportunities for integration is a characteristic of resilient people.

Resilient people possess three unique characteristics that allow them to navigate difficult situations:

1. They coolly accept the realities in front of them
2. They find meaning in difficult times
3. They have an uncanny ability to improvise, making do with whatever's at hand

I believe that these three characteristics embody qualities that both parents and educators need. An example of integration was when, at the end of the semester, I needed to review and sign the student learning reports. I brought my son to school with

me for some special 'daddy time', where we got a 10-pack of Timbits®, and he played with some modeling clay and coloured in my office while I read and reviewed the reports. My son felt great about this special excursion, and I completed my required tasks while integrating the social emotional needs of both myself and my child.

Being a parent of young children is the most challenging yet rewarding experience of my life. Taking the good with the bad, and managing expectations of myself, are constant opportunities for creating a sense of balance between work and family life. It has also given me so much more respect, empathy, and understanding towards the parents of the children that we serve. I believe that I am a better educator and leader because of my experiences as a parent of young children.

Our family will face a new challenge this summer as we transition between communities. We will make the move to Vancouver Island and although we moved across the country in 2012, we sense that our reference points will be very different when we make this next move with young children onboard. *Stay tuned!*

Leader Life Stories

Every leader has a story: what's yours?

The Leader Life Stories series in *Princip(ed)* magazine brings together member voices from across the province on a variety of topics.

We want to hear from you!

Do you have an idea for a theme for an upcoming article?

Contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Read the November 2022 Leader Life Story
"Diverse Women in Leadership"



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.”

(BCPVPA Mentee)

Mentorship is just one of the professional learning and development opportunities that the BCPVPA offers to more than 2,700 Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

bcpvpa.org

bcp  vpa

BCPVPA Princip(ed) - June 2023

A

D

P

S

dogs
in
schools



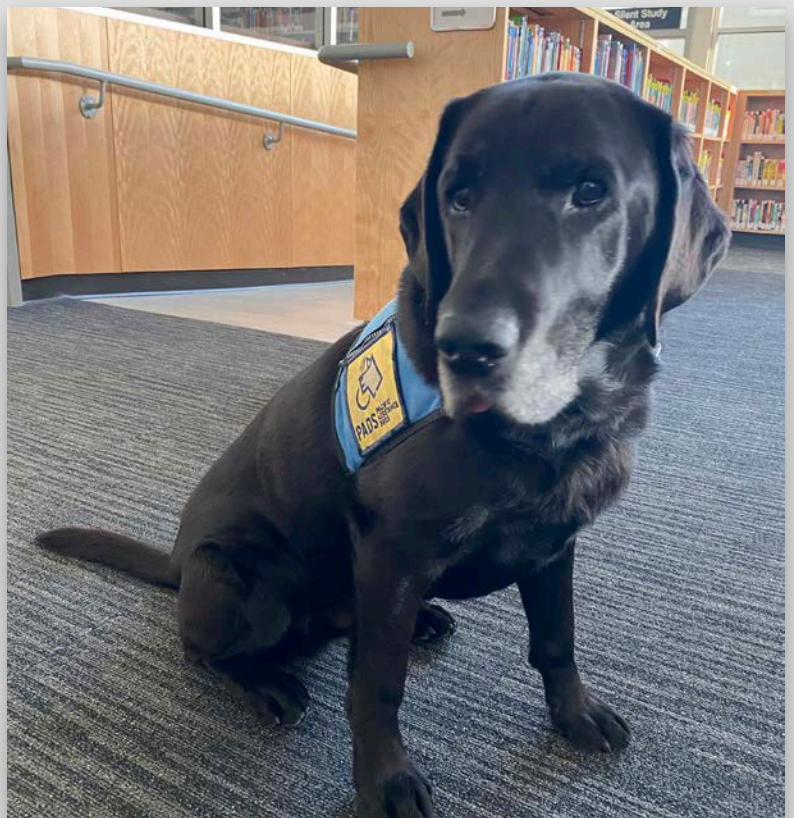
by
Anthony Ciolfitto
SD 43 (Coquitlam)

In 2014, I was working as a Principal at Riverside Secondary School in Coquitlam. Our school community had experienced the loss of four students and a staff member in a very short period of time. I could feel the community struggling with this grief as they tried to make sense of these tragedies. There was a shifting energy in the building that hovered over us like a cloud. Supporting staff, students, and parents while grieving myself was challenging, and I could feel the weight of this on my shoulders. I was exhausted, physically and emotionally.

Later that school year, I was attending a workshop and met a counsellor who had a PADS service dog. As a person who loves dogs, I couldn't help but make my way over to ask questions about her canine partner. She allowed me to spend some time with her service dog. For that brief moment, I could feel my energy shift to calmness, and I was grateful for the way this dog allowed me into his space. I went home that evening and realized that a PADS dog would be a great asset for our school, particularly in light of what our community had been enduring.

Soon after, I applied to PADS for an Accredited Facilities Dog (AFD). In October 2015, I was partnered up with Liege, a black Labrador Retriever. Liege and I worked together for three years at Riverside, and another three-and-a-half years at Centennial Secondary, before he retired. PADS dogs typically work until they are about nine or ten years old, and Liege was nine-and-a-half.

AFDs like Liege are used for service in places such as schools, victim services, and counseling clinics. Some may see them as therapy dogs, but they are so much more than that. In my role as a Principal, Liege helped me in supporting grieving staff and students, providing playtime for students to decompress after an emotionally heavy psychology class, de-escalating students, comforting students (and occasionally staff) experiencing personal or socio-emotional challenges, helping students overcome their fear of dogs, greeting students at the start of their day, reducing anxiety before a test or during a class, and escorting students with diverse abilities out of the building during fire drills.



"Having Liege as a canine partner helped facilitate greater and deeper relationships with students. He reminded me about the importance of my role in making students and staff the priority."

Having Liege as a canine partner helped facilitate greater and deeper relationships with students. He reminded me about the importance of my role in making students and staff the priority. He forced me to step out of my office much more, and be around the people that I was called to serve. My interactions in the community were no longer a simple nod or smile as we passed in the hallways. Students would frequently stop to pet Liege or give him a hug, and that would open the door for a longer conversation about their day, their family, or other aspects of their life. Students started to seek out Liege in my office, and would often share some of the struggles they were experiencing. Liege helped us create a more open culture in the school where students felt safe to talk about issues around the building, and he often relaxed students so that they would open up about themselves.

When Liege retired in 2022, I felt the void of not having him in the building. I missed having a partner, and students missed having their furry companion at school. I soon applied for another PADS service dog and was partnered up with Benji, a Golden Retriever.

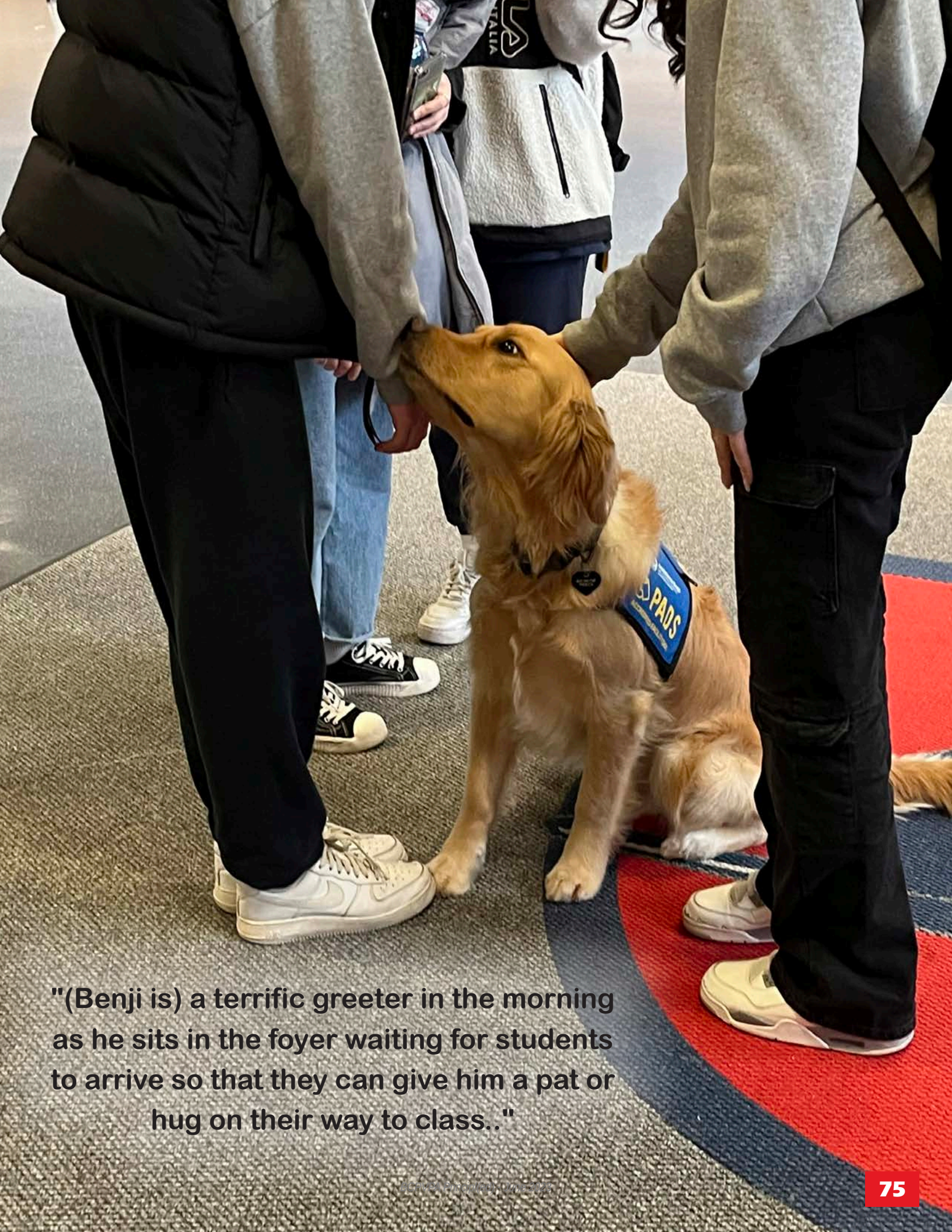
Benji started working at Centennial on January 16, 2023. He loves people and enjoys greeting students in the hallways and classrooms. He easily handles the energy of a large school, the noisiness of a gym, and busy hallways. He has his regular routines, including his morning greet with the office staff, daily training practice, and lunch time supervision. He's a terrific greeter in the morning as he sits in the foyer waiting for students to arrive so that they can give him a pat or hug on their way to class. He brings smiles to their faces better than any staff member in this building. He's patient, gentle, and nonjudgmental. He can be playful one minute and shift to a calm, working dog the next. He has quickly made his connections, and his impact on our students has been palpable.

Sometimes it's difficult to know the impact we have on children. Sometimes they thank us, or return after they graduate to tell us about how we made a difference in their lives. I didn't really understand the full impact that a service dog may have on students until I saw Liege working with a student who often came to school dysregulated. This young man loved dogs and he especially loved Liege; they saw each other every school day. The student started to realize that he felt better having Liege around when he was at school, and he asked to have Liege beside him in class when he was feeling anxious and overwhelmed. He began to recognize that Liege could help him feel settled so that he was able to continue learning and make it through his classes without getting into any conflict or having any outbursts. Over time, this boy started to experience more success in his classes. His confidence increased, as did his sense of belonging. When Liege was with him, so was a crowd of other students, and this made him feel more connected to his peers. When this young man graduated, he wrote Liege a letter, and talked about how Liege saved his life and helped him get through school. He was proud to graduate, to find a love in composing music, and to have a friend in Liege: the only friend who accepted him for who he was, never rejected him, and never judged him. This is the power of having a service dog in school.

I'm incredibly grateful to work with a canine partner at school. Benji and I continue to grow together, learning new ways of interacting with students, and continuing our work to build a safe, healthy, and inclusive community.



@Aciolfitto



"(Benji is) a terrific greeter in the morning as he sits in the foyer waiting for students to arrive so that they can give him a pat or hug on their way to class.."

Decolonizing Assessment



by

Carolyn Roberts

Faculty Lecturer and

Indigenous Pedagogies Teaching Fellow

SFU Department of Education

BCPVPA Principi(er) – June 2023



This past year, I have been working alongside educators all over BC in decolonizing teacher practice, and one of the most common questions I am asked is, 'how can we decolonize assessment?' This is a complicated question, because the conversation about assessment practices is a much larger one. In this reflection, I will explore some of the connections I am making with my own personal teaching practice, and include some of my recent conversations with educators.

Before we get started, I will remind you that colonized education is established on the structure of power. This hierarchy of power is based on the western colonial education model, which was made by white settlers, for white settlers. The history of education in BC is rooted in both assimilation and colonization. Edgar Ryerson was known as the 'Father of the Public Education System'; he created BC's and Canada's public education systems, and was also the man who created the residential school system. The Canadian government used the residential school system as a tool of assimilation for all Indigenous children. Knowing that the two systems were created and built by the same person helps us put into perspective our own education, and what was purposefully left out of our learning. It also gives us an outlook on our role as educators, if we hope to change how things have always been done.

It has been well documented that the current education system is problematic for non-white students. As we learn to understand the inequities within our system, the key for change will be relationships. Relationships are at the core of decolonized teacher practice; decolonizing the system will require building relationships with students, families, and the school community. Connecting to students – and understanding who they are and how they learn – will support your understanding of how you can assess their learning in a process of learning together. Relationships will help support this as you co-create the assessment process with students. This is a process-orientated practice that will take time and constant reflection, but will support students in finding their own voice and their own strengths. It allows for students to express themselves in their work, and this can include their culture, history, and world view – it can also include their anger, frustration, and joy.

The purpose of decolonizing the assessment process is to invite students into the role as a collaborator in assessment and learning. Including them in the process allows the students to think about how they best express themselves. It can also challenge the students to hold themselves accountable in the work they choose to do when they are now playing an active role in their own success. Co-creating assessment takes away the colonial hierarchy of power that the current system is built upon. The colonial process of the teacher deciding what, how, and when a student learns leaves out the most important component of the learning process: who is the student, and how do they learn? When the role of the learning process is shared, students are asked to acknowledge that they have a part to play in their own success. Collaboration is a huge factor in a decolonized teaching practice, as we learn and grow more together. Self-reflection and goal setting are built right into the BC curriculum, and this accentuates the importance of this work in the classroom.

I am thinking at this point that you were hoping that I would give you a checklist for how to decolonize assessment. I am sorry to let you down, but I won't be doing that. Each student and each assessment looks different because we are all different in the ways we approach learning and teaching. What I *can* do is offer some ideas on how you can personally approach the work of decolonizing assessment.

Begin by taking some time to think about what it is you are teaching, then create ways in which you can invite students into being co-creators of the learning process. In what ways can your students show you their learning? How are you asking students to show up in their own work? How are you giving students the opportunity to see themselves in their work? Are you offering options for how they show you their learning – not just written output, but oral projects, videos, podcasts, and/or artwork? There are many ways students can share with you their process and their learning from the work you do together. As teachers, we all know that there will be times when students will learn more than what was intended within a lesson or project, so be mindful of the ways you acknowledge or

identify this unexpected learning and the connections created within the process of assessment. This holds the space for you as the educator to be responsive to the students' needs within their own learning. Part of our work as educators is observing, noticing, and responding to the evolving learning that is happening for the student. Allowing students to have choice and voice gives students agency over their learning and the learning process.

To summarize, there is neither a checklist nor a one-size-fits-all guide for this work. It is a co-creation with your students, and the work that you are designing together supports the learning in your classroom. Decolonizing teacher practice is an ongoing practice that everyone can do every day in education. We will all get better at this work when we hold ourselves accountable, and commit to continual reflection. Think about the questions you might ask yourselves: 'What did I do today that was decolonizing my classroom practice?', and 'In what ways did I disrupt the colonial narrative, rather than perpetuating it?'

Stop, pause, reflect, repeat...



**"Co-creating assessment
takes away the colonial
hierarchy of power
that the current system
is built upon."**

TAKE 3

With another challenging school year drawing to an end, it is easy to start daydreaming about summer activities and adventures. For many, it takes a week or two of downtime to disconnect from work, and to reclaim a bit more balance – mentally and physically – from the demands of your leadership roles. Tidy up work responsibilities efficiently and effectively, then set your intention towards meeting your wellness and relational needs.

by

Jack MacNeill

*MEd (Coun.Psych.), RCC, CVRP, RRP
President, humanworks*

Wrap

Close Off the School Year

A critical step in wrapping up the school year is developing a school closure check list. Develop this list, and check in with your colleagues to ensure you are not missing anything. Write out the list and place it where it is easy to review daily through the last few weeks of the year. Prioritize your wrap-up duties and delegate where you can. Prepare a 2023-2024 start-up list of items to reference when you return to your building in August. This helps you to mentally put aside work, and to remember important details of the current year that may guide you to an easier and more robust start to the next school year.

Reserve

Be

Your busy professional lives require many of you to be at the beck and call of many, many others. Your currency is often measured by your capacity to 'do' – and, to 'do' a lot at any given time. I've found over the years the best remedy to overcome my 'doing self' is to immediately take time away from 'doing' once I'm cut loose from the school year. Historically, that has meant either a silent retreat, a two to three day trip into the wilderness, or a quiet couples retreat with my partner. I must say, I try to build a silent component in to the first days of my summer plans, as a means to just be! It's amazing how super charged and clear we can become when we give the gift of ourselves without distractions or interference.

Revitalize

Prioritize You!

Once you have recalibrated yourself to 'life after the school year', set your intention to propel your recovery from the rigors of the school year and shift into 'me' time. 'Me' time for many includes time in nature, socializing and spending time with friends and loved ones, travel, and focused time on wellbeing and emotional health. It is critical to reclaim the importance and prioritization of *you!* This is the time to be self-focused and clear on your boundaries around the commitments you make, and how they fit into your revitalization plan. We can be self-caring without being *selfish*. Make yourself a priority this summer.





Taking a PASS

on Passive-
Aggressive
Behaviour

by

Rochelle Morandini

Director, Member Health and Well-being, BCPVPA

Principals and Vice-Principals – along with their wide variety of regular connections – exhibit a vast buffet of personality traits and behaviours. One of the most troubling behaviours, whether modeled by a leader or by someone on their team, is passiveness. It can be even more concerning when that individual is passive-aggressive. These ineffectual coping styles are learned behaviour patterns that often begin in childhood. When left unaddressed, passive and passive-aggressive behaviours can:

- Have a negative impact on relationships at work and at home
- Result in a deterioration of the passive individual's mental health
- Be time-consuming and impactful on a leader's ability to lead staff or any specific individual
- Significantly impact the success and effective functioning of a school team

Being Passive

Passive behaviours put the needs of someone else before your own. In the role of a Principal or Vice-Principal, there will be times when you need to put someone else first. For example, you will put your needs aside – even if you are exhausted – to ensure that a student is receiving the proper duty of care. However, regular passive behaviour is not hero behaviour but rather a refusal to care for your own needs.

Passive behaviour is often designed to avoid conflict. Unlike someone who is passive-aggressive, someone who is passive does not attempt to convince or coerce someone to give them what they want. Individuals who are passive may have social anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor confidence. They may live in their disappointment, which can lead to unmet needs and make the person feel more anxious and even more passive. This is a cycle that, over time, can have a significant impact on their mental health; it can be extremely hard to break, resulting in the need

for professional intervention. Examples of passive behaviour could include:

- Staying quiet when someone criticizes you unjustly
- Not speaking up when someone leaves you out of a conversation or a meeting invitation
- Letting others take credit for your work

Are you passive? You may be, if your own answer aligns with the bracketed responses below:

- Do you stand up for yourself as often as you should? (*No*)
- Do you often find yourself saying "yes" to things, when you really wanted to say "no" (*Yes*)
- Do you feel people often take advantage of your kindness and generosity? (*Yes*)
- If someone takes advantage of you, do you confront them about it? (*No*)
- Do you worry about what other people think of you? (*Yes*)
- Do you avoid confrontation or conflict? (*Yes*)
- Are you concerned about hurting someone's feelings? (*Yes*)

Take this quiz to find out your degree of passiveness:



Being Passive and the Impact on your Mental Health

Being passive becomes a concern when this behaviour is your regular 'go to'.

Although passive people may not always agree or be satisfied with the decisions made by others, they can find it easier to go along with these decisions to 'keep

the peace' rather than cause a commotion. However, over time, passive people may start to resent the fact that their needs are always overlooked. This trend may result in low self-esteem, depression, anger, and other emotional or physical complaints. Additionally, people who are very passive can be exploited, and may lose the respect of others when they fail to stand up for their rights. Passive people may feel:

- Annoyed that the needs of others are being met, while their needs go unnoticed
- Frustrated for not speaking up and allowing themselves to be in an undesirable position
- Worried that if they make a request, someone else's needs will not be met, and they will appear selfish
- Unappreciated, as they do not get the recognition they deserve
- Used and manipulated by others
- Guilty, if they think that they have not been nice or considerate enough
- Stressed, for taking on more than they can handle, and for having to put up with bad behaviour

Passive-Aggressive

Being passive does not always mean that someone is passive-aggressive, but it may foreshadow passive-aggressive behaviour. When someone is passive, they are unable to confront a situation directly. They may avoid telling others how they feel so that they can avoid conflict. Over time, this hurt, anger, and frustration may lead to passive-aggressive tendencies that need to be addressed.

When someone on your team demonstrates passive-aggressive behaviour, you may notice a disconnect between what they say and what they do. While the behaviour may not always be conscious or intentional, it can be confusing and challenging to manage as a leader.

The one main difference between someone who is passive and an individual who is passive-aggressive is that a passive person keeps their negative feelings inside (not healthy!), where the passive-aggressive person expresses their negative feelings indirectly. This can be manifested in their attempts to control or coerce situations or people through a variety of tactics. Consider these scenarios:

"Being passive does not always mean that someone is passive-aggressive, but it may foreshadow passive-aggressive behaviour."



- The Principal chooses the idea of one teacher for a school event. The other teacher, whose idea was not selected, spends the entire day of the event complaining about the idea and the activities.
- A parent is frustrated when they haven't received a response to their email, so they send multiple follow-up emails asking if their first message was received.
- A staff member is upset, so they punish the Principal by delaying responses or not tending to important requests in a timely manner.

Other passive-aggressive behaviour examples include:

- Gossiping or speaking poorly about people in their absence or openly criticizing someone in a circumstance where their name can be overheard by others
- Intentionally doing a task poorly
- Withholding opinions and information
- Ignoring notes from coworkers
- Missing deadlines
- Abusing policies
- Procrastination

We can see how these behaviours are concerning for leaders, as these actions from passive-aggressive individuals can cause serious performance problems and relationship damage within your team, including a breakdown in trust.

Being Assertive

A more effective and healthier approach to relationships and leadership is to be assertive. Using assertive communication:

- Involves standing up for your rights in a way that does not violate another person's rights

- Is achieved through strong self-esteem and confidence
- Involves advocating for yourself and your own interests, without apologizing

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate opinions, thoughts, needs, and feelings in a direct, honest, and appropriate manner. When you are assertive, you have more control over your life, and you are less likely to allow others to take advantage of you.

Assertive people care about other people's feelings, and phrase their requests or complaints in a polite, firm, professional manner. They have a sense of 'give and take', and are co-operative in times of conflict.

Assertive people assess each situation and decide which action is most appropriate. They can bend and yield if necessary; for example, they may be more flexible in situations where they believe the staff member is unwell, but may be more firm when the situation requires the leader to stand up for their own rights. Assertive people try to choose the most appropriate behaviour for the situation, have control over their behaviour, and have respect for themselves and others.

Assertive behaviour is something you can learn and practice until it becomes second nature. Here are some tips for communicating in assertive ways, without falling back on passive-aggressive behaviour:

- State your needs clearly and directly
- Express your feelings in appropriate ways
- Show respect for other people
- Use 'I' statements
- Listen to others without interrupting
- Speak calmly and clearly

- Let people know when they hurt you
- Stand up for yourself
- Do not allow others to manipulate or harm you
- Accept that others are free to make their own decisions

Here are tips to consider as you start to become more assertive:

- Only set barriers that you are willing and able to defend. If you make threats that you do not intend to keep ("I'll quit this job!"), people will not take seriously your attempts to be assertive.
- Don't start to get assertive when you are strained to the limit. Remember that the relationship will get tougher for a while. Pick a time when you have the strength to handle the pressure.
- Don't back down. When you set the barrier and the other person begins to push against it, be prepared to protect your set boundary. Otherwise, the person will push harder the next time.

Don't get assertive with everyone in your life all at once. Pick one issue at a time.

Being assertive and knowing the ins and outs of assertive communication is easier said than done. This is especially true if you have been passive your whole life, and assertiveness doesn't come naturally to you. You may be passive due to entrenched beliefs

and practiced behaviours that stem from:

- Your caregiver's parenting style when you were a child
- A fear of rejection or a fear of conflict
- A need to maintain control
- Difficulty expressing emotions

Assertiveness is a skill that can be learned, so seek out the help of a coach or counsellor who can help you through this process. Being assertive will feel uncomfortable at first, but with guidance and practice, an assertive communication style can become your regular approach.

Moving Forward

As a leader, you are expected to manage your team and address behaviours that are causing concern or impacting the school culture. Learning to be assertive will help you to frame your thoughts and concerns whether you are meeting with individuals on your staff, identifying unproductive behaviour, or discussing expectations. If these discussions come to a standstill, and the behaviours continue, reach out to Human Resources for their guidance and support.

For further reading on how to be assertive in the workplace, check out this article:



Sources

medium.com/the-post-grad-survival-guide/dont-be-passive-it-is-bad-for-you-301109456f89

www.applauz.me/resources/passive-aggression-at-work

www.verywellmind.com/what-is-passive-communication-3024630

www.betterhelp.com/advice/behavior/what-to-do-when-you-recognize-passive-behavior-in-yourself-or-others/

www.fingerprintforsuccess.com/blog/how-to-stop-being-passive-aggressive

www.healthyplace.com/blogs/anxiety-schmanxiety/2020/7/does-anxiety-make-you-too-passive-stop-being-a-doormat

www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-handle-passive-aggressive-co-workers-andrew-seaman/

Assertiveness handout provided by Maryam Mills, MA
RCC: <https://www.millscounselling.ca/>

How to Manage a Passive-aggressive team member



Detecting passive-aggressiveness may be challenging but – left unchecked – it can be poisonous to the work environment. Leaders need to act: while dealing with a passive-aggressive team member can be frustrating and uncomfortable, ignoring the problem will not improve the situation. Do not take it personally, take an empathetic approach, and address the challenge head on.

It is important to confront passive-aggressive people directly face-to-face, rather than through indirect forms of communication such as email, as you can get your message across more clearly in person.

Here are some excellent tips from MindTools.com for managing passive-aggressive people at work:

1) Identify the Behaviour

The first step in addressing passive aggression is to recognize it, which can be challenging due to the often subtle nature of indirect actions.

Deal with passive-aggressive behaviour straight away, so that it doesn't escalate. Make notes on situations as they occur, so that you have specific examples of what your team member has done to provide clarity and context to your discussion.

2) Create a Safe Environment

Let the person know that it's safe for them to raise concerns and discuss issues with you openly, rather than in covert ways. Make it clear to them that, as their leader, you would rather they come to you with their problems, and that you are open to this dialogue, rather than allowing issues to bubble under the surface.

You need to act in a way that aligns with this promise by encouraging, praising, and supporting people who bring matters to your attention.

3) Use Language Carefully

Give accurate feedback and be careful with the language you use. For instance, instead of complaining that someone is 'always' late, specify their exact arrival times for the past week and give them an opportunity for explanation. Remind them of the agreed working hours, and ask them to arrive on time in future. If there are barriers presented, provide them with an appropriate level of support and understanding to find solutions.

Although it's important to be direct and to address the issue head on, try to avoid 'you' statements. This will prevent the other person feeling attacked, and moving to a defensive posture. Instead, use first-person pronouns, such as 'I', 'we', and 'our', and explain the effect of the behaviours on you, their teammates, and even on school operations. For instance, you might say, "I noticed that the report was two days late," instead of, "You failed to meet the deadline."

4) Stay Calm

You may make the situation worse if you react emotionally to your team member. They may feel threatened, withdraw further, and become even more entrenched in their negative behaviours.

Speak to the person in a measured, even tone, and remain composed. They might not even realize they are being passive-aggressive, so use an empathic approach to defuse any anxiety or anger. However, if the behaviour continues, you may need to circle back to the conversation and work toward collaborative solutions. If you feel this is becoming a case of workplace conduct, seek guidance from Human Resources.

5) Identify the Cause

If passive-aggressive people claim that they are 'fine' when their behaviour suggests otherwise, probe more deeply by asking questions to identify the root of the problem. Give them the opportunity to explain themselves, and don't let them pass the blame.

For instance, someone may be responding negatively to a disappointing work decision, such as being passed over for promotion. Ask them if their behaviour stems from this, and explain that you want to understand how they feel. Let them know that you will work with them to explore other ways that they might handle the situation more constructively such as improving a particular skill so that they have a better chance of promotion the next time.

6) Provide Training

Consider providing or arranging for some one-to-one coaching or formal mediation to help your team member learn how to communicate assertively.

7) Set Clear Standards and Consequences

Establish clear standards, and regularly restate what you want from team members so that you can hold them to account. It is important to explain that negative behaviour will not be tolerated in the work culture, and to set out the consequences for persistent behaviours.

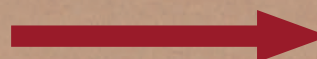
Confirm in writing any discussions that you have about deadlines and actions by sending follow-up emails after meetings. That way, your team member will have clarity as to what you expect from them, and the documentation will be important should the situation escalate.

8) Open Channels of Communication

Passive-aggressive people often lack good communication skills because they struggle to express their emotions openly. They may prefer to send emails, rather than address issues face-to-face. When this is the case, encourage them to develop the skills and confidence to speak to others directly.

If your team members know that you welcome their insights and opinions, they are more likely to talk openly about issues. Be a good role model and communicate regularly with them. Be visible and available to your team, develop strong relationships, build trust, and identify problems before they escalate.

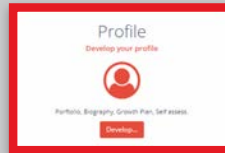
Find out more from
[Mindtools.com](https://www.mindtools.com)





bcpvpaconnects.com

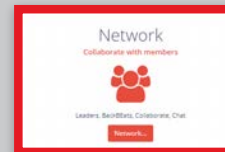
Powered by BetterEducate.com



Create a personal profile with your biography, photo, and experience



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



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



BCPVPA Members can find member news, information on member services and professional learning, contacts, resources, and so much more through My BCPVPA



Visit bcpvpa.org
and select My BCPVPA
Follow the instructions in
eNews to set up your account

Community

CONNECTING



Photo Courtesy Spirit North

TO THE OUTDOORS

Spirit North has its roots in BC's neighbouring province, and was originally part of the provincial sports organization Cross-Country Ski Alberta. Olympic gold medallist Beckie Scott, founder and current CEO of Spirit North, was the ambassador for the program which began in just five Métis and First Nation communities in Alberta. When Beckie first visited those communities, she was struck by the disparities between the opportunities provided to youth living in these communities in comparison to what was available to youth in other communities, and she was inspired to develop a program that speaks directly to bridging that gap.

In order to maintain that purposeful focus, Beckie launched Spirit North from that program. Spirit North now works in more than 63 communities, and impacts more than 6,000 youth every year through their programming that includes land-based programs and other opportunities for schoolchildren across Canada to access the land.

Laura Filipow, Program Director for Spirit North, emphasizes that the relationship with schools has been key to the organization's success. "We do a process called co-creation," says Laura. "We consider communities that have been identified for programming because they are close to an existing program, or communities that have reached out to us directly. We take a lot of time to consider each community in a meaningful way, as we want to make sure our program is long term and sustainable.

"We visit the school for a co-creation session where we develop the program in collaboration with the school and – ideally – with people from the community, because our programs are meant to speak to the whole community and be available for the whole community. In many places, the program has expanded beyond the school.

"In this session, we talk to them about what they want. What are their goals? What are they looking for in a program? What kind of sports already exist, so that we are not duplicating work? We have a guided questionnaire, and we dream big; and then, we look to those things that we can do. Our goal for

Spirit North is a national charitable organization that uses land-based activities to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous youth, empowering them to become unstoppable in sport, school, and life.

Working in partnership with schools and communities, Spirit North's active, participation-based programs are designed to make Indigenous youth feel unstoppable, helping them develop skills that improve their performance in the classroom and deepen their connection to their communities.

Spirit North programs take place across all seasons, and include cross-country skiing, mountain biking, cross-country running, canoeing, and land-based games and activities.



Photo Courtesy Spirit North

"Spirit North was founded on the belief that sport holds the power to change lives, transform communities, inspire individuals, heal and teach."

Olympic gold medallist Beckie Scott
Founder and CEO, Spirit North



Photo Courtesy Spirit North

"It is so much more than just getting kids out skiing, it's really working in a holistic way with the people in schools, the kids, and other community members to make it as easy as possible."

the meeting is to conclude with a list of things that we can start more immediately."

Spirit North hires a leader who will be part of the program-building and relationship-building processes, and who will work on the actionable items, which include developing the program with the community, and getting the kids out accessing the land. "We see a big gap with the knowledge and the confidence that people need to get kids out and participating in the sports that we focus on. We work hard to develop that, so that in the event that the leader implementing the program cannot stay for the long term, we can still see development in the communities.

"It is so much more than just getting kids out skiing; it's working in a holistic way with the people in schools, the kids, and other community members to make it as easy as possible. There are many details to work on, from equipment storage, to locations, to developing the programming – even trail building where needed – and, of course, in the consultation process with the community. All those tiny little pieces go into making the programs successful."

While young people are learning skills through the program, that is definitely not the whole story. "I believe it's about the connection to the outdoors: it's an outdoor education program, without explicitly

"We can really see the ripple effects in BC communities. We ran a sign translation project in Penticton, with the Syilx Nation. The Nickel Plate Nordic Centre that services Penticton is on the traditional hunting grounds of the Syilx Nation, and the band members never felt very comfortable or welcome there.

"Since it is a Nordic Centre, you have to pay trail usage fees, and if you don't have equipment, you can't use the trail. All the signs were in English, and a conversation opened about language reclamation and translation. The Nordic Centre was very open to it: we accessed a grant to pay for remaking the signs, and had an Elder and a language keeper translate the signs together.

"Now when you go to Nickel Plate, Nordic Centre, you will see every single sign in both English and the Syilx Nation language. We have heard from the elders there that it just feels so much more welcoming. We now have ski equipment that we're able to store there, that any community member can use. And a lot more community members are using this equipment because it is available to them without any barriers.

"These kinds of successes come about from relationship building. We built that relationship with the language keepers in the community, and with the Nordic Centre, and tied those pieces together. It's very patient work, but the payoff is amazing."



Photo Courtesy Spirit North

being that. We support the curriculum where teachers see parallels — especially in Language, PE, or Culture classes — in bringing the opportunity to get comfortable being outside, so that kids can better understand how they can move and develop their basic physical literacy.”

The Spirit North programs offer a gradual introduction for kids to learn that they can be outside. It can help them to learn about themselves, their friends, and to discover what they can do. Local educators, knowledge keepers, and Elders come out and join the programs, and can make their own connections with youth as they are interacting comfortably and learning in the space.

“We get so many kids saying, ‘I like to be outside with my friends, I like to learn new things,’ or, ‘I couldn’t go up the big hill at first, but by the end of the day, I

got it!’ For us, it is about these little victories for the kids. It is a great way to develop overall resiliency, to develop a capacity that can stick with them as they move through their lives. They try things that might seem a bit intimidating at first, but they realize that it’s okay, that they are going to fall but they are going to get back up. In the long run, it’s these little steps that develop you to be a better, bigger person. That is really our long-term goal.

“Teachers tell us that after an outdoor session, the kids are more settled in the class. They have fun out there, explore on their own. When they come back into the classroom, they are better able to focus.”

“We have had kids that have participated in our programs, and who want to take part in a local ski race, bike race, or running race, but they’ve never felt welcomed in those settings. Before COVID, we

"For us, it is about these little victories for the kids. It is a great way to develop overall resiliency, to develop a capacity that can stick with them as they move through their lives."





put together little race simulations for kids who were interested. We ran them exactly like a race would be run, and kids have that full experience – medal ceremony included! And, we've had kids who have gone out to the wider community, competing in the BC Winter Games and other big events. They've developed this confidence to participate in so many different things."

Local schools can play an integral part in the programs, and are welcomed to be part of the co-creation process. "If school leaders reach out to us, and we can support the program, then it's great to have them as part of the process from the beginning. When they are involved, they can better understand what we do. There are other programs for schools that come with a set agenda, or ones that plug into existing programs. Our program is more fluid, and we are focused on establishing the relationship, and developing mutual understanding of what that community needs."

Some of Spirit North's programs are developed so that they can be accessed right out of the school doors, but sometimes that is not possible depending on the sport and the location. Transportation to Nordic centres can be an issue all across Canada. "In Penticton, for example, there is no snow, so kids have to drive 45 minutes up Apex Mountain for snow sports. However, if we are mountain biking, that's right from their doors. We collaborated with the Principal in that community to figure out the access to transportation, and ways to bring people in to do some trail-cutting. It was a great collaboration and a huge opportunity! The programs where Principals and Vice-Principals have participated are the most successful. School leaders understand the unique nature of their communities."

Laura acknowledges that teachers and school leaders can be stretched thin with the demands of their roles. "It is very important for us to develop these programs without being a burden to the existing school

structures, which is why we hire people externally. We need the involvement from the community, but we do all of the planning. We also work closely with schools and communities to try to access different funding for the programs, to purchase equipment, and to cover transportation. We also have private donors and corporate sponsors, and we always consult with the communities in advance to ensure that our funding efforts are respectful to them, but supportive of the program. If Principals are aware of any funding opportunities for equipment or for transportation, we are always interested in learning more!"

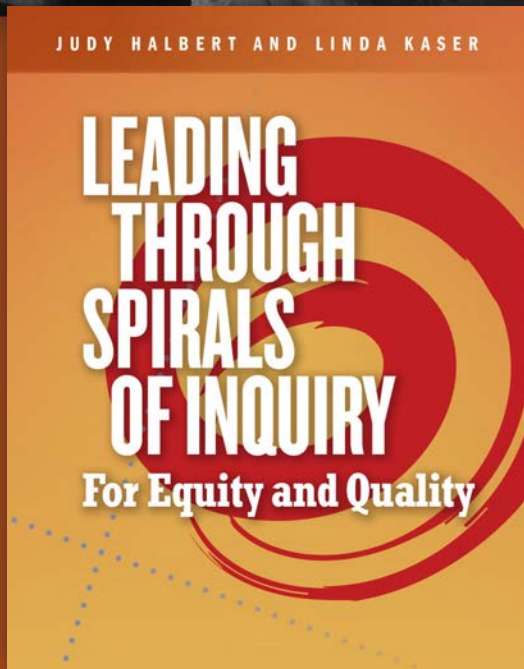
The ultimate objective in Spirit North's programming is to get kids outside, learning and exploring. "We hope that they come away with a sense of joy, and a sense of freedom. Sports in general brings resiliency, along with a connection to the land. We find that a lot of kids haven't really experienced that, for so many different reasons. It's not about learning how to ski correctly; it's not about learning the best technique for any of the sports we do. It's really about the joy of movement, being able to easily access what is right outside your door, and getting as much as you can out of it."

"The programs where Principals and Vice-Principals have participated are the most successful. School leaders understand the unique nature of their communities."



Photo Courtesy Spirit North

Books



Leading Through Spirals of Inquiry

by

Judy Halbert & Linda Kaser

Portage & Main Press, 2022

Reviewed by

Jim Laird

Principal

George Elliott Secondary

SD 23 (Central Okanagan)

&

Angela Stott

District Principal of Pedagogy

SD 74 (Gold Trail)

Any time Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser embark on something new, we get excited.

We often find ourselves saying, “yes!”, whether it’s Angela’s participation with NOIIE (The Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education) at ICSEI (International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement) conferences, and learning alongside world-class academics from around the world; or Jim’s fortune in being blown away by the draft copy of *Leading through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* when he received an invitation to review the book prior to publication.

Judy and Linda are masters at offering up opportunities that will push us forward and continue to support us in developing our craft. For Jim, in leading professional inquiry in his school – and sometimes feeling stuck, stale, and lost in the weeds – *Leading Through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* was the *exact book that he needed*. It was as if Judy and Linda could read his mind. For Jim, since taking UBC TELP (Transformative Educational Leadership Program) in the same cohort as Ang several years ago, and for Angela,

"Judy and Linda are masters at offering up opportunities that will push us forward and continue to support us in developing our craft."

since the first weeks of teaching in Pemberton (more years ago), Judy and Linda have been there to nudge us when we needed it most, and this new book rocked our world. Jim sums it up in one heartfelt sentence: we love these ladies.

When we approach our leadership through the Spirals of Inquiry framework, we get curious about our students and ourselves, we make time to learn, we take intentional action, and we check that we've 'moved the needle'. It has been ten years since Judy and Linda published their first Spirals resource, and their brilliant new book, *Leading Through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* both synthesizes the past decade of cumulative learning from leaders in schools, and grounds their system-improvement framework with practices and case studies from the field. No matter how experienced a leader you may be, this is why you need to have a tattered, highlighted, and annotated copy of *Leading Through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* on your desk: it leads to fostering better learning outcomes and creating better learning experiences for the students we serve. Angela likens inquiry work to the infinite game, James P. Carse's work that was popularized by Simon Sinek in his own book, aptly titled *The Infinite Game*. No worries if this is coming at you from left field; we simply wanted to add an interesting reference to another book you may want to read, because we are both *fairly* certain that Linda has it on her own 'recommended reads' list!

Leading Through the Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality provides a foundational understanding in the first chapter, and then dives into the six stages of the framework. Embedded in each of these chapters is an explanation of the stage, followed by stories

from the field that provide contextual examples that address challenges leaders face when they are working to transform systems. The examples provide a strong case for curiosity, teamwork, and working towards what matters most for learners. For school leaders and book club fans alike, the end of each chapter includes clear summaries, questions for leading learning conversations, and leadership actions that lead to more intentionality while leading impact through Spirals. It's a powerful resource that provokes, provides clarity, and pushes leaders and learners to new depths of understanding.

You can imagine that when the two of us took on the important work of designing and co-chairing the 2023 BCPVPA Connecting Leaders Conference in Kelowna this October, the first people we connected with were Judy and Linda. *This is no exaggeration.* We believe that when we are inquiry focused, we can continue to build a strong system rooted in educational leadership, and we believe that leaders need connection through networks, through shared purpose, and through deep learning. We were certain that Judy and Linda would help us to maintain our end goal because they are insatiably curious, want to work with and for world-class education systems, and strive to have all children cross the stage with dignity, purpose, and options. The Spiral of Inquiry will get us there. For those of you able to join us at Connecting Leaders this fall, we can network and do this hard work together.

This book is a thing of beauty, like sipping a great cup of coffee, listening to a perfect album, or biting into a crisp Okanagan apple at Connecting Leaders (spoiler alert).

Get this book. We don't know how else to say it. It really is *that* impressive, and – dare we say – transformative.

Linda and Judy will join Angela, Jim, and many other learning facilitators at the 2023 Connecting Leaders Conference. Find out more!



support

The BCPVPA is all about people, and making sure that our members are successful and supported in the important work they do.

Our Member Support Services team is here for members who have questions about their employment relationships, their contracts, their pensions and retirement plans, and their health and well-being.

The BCPVPA offers support and advocacy to more than 2,700 Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

bcpvpa.org

bcp  vpa



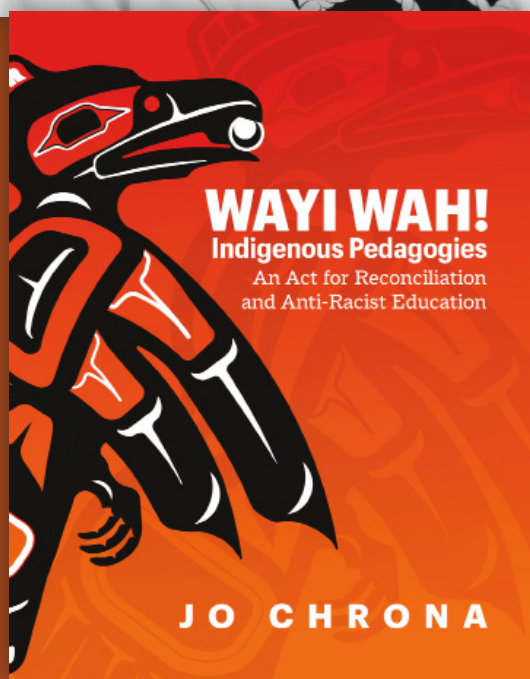
Reviewed by

Sue Boucher

Producer

Professional Learning & Development

BCPVPA



Wayi Wah!
Indigenous Pedagogies
An Act for Reconciliation and
Anti-Racist Education

by
Jo Chrona

Portage & Main Press, 2022

I'm driving towards the southern tip of Vancouver Island, and I have to pull over. The glow of the sun rising over the ocean in Oak Bay is stunning. A small lighthouse stands bravely on the rocks as waves pound in and fresh cool ocean air hits my face. These lands of the Lkwungen Peoples, specifically the Esquimalt and Songhee Nations, are stunning. I am on my way to speak with educator and author Jo Chrona in her home. Her book, *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education*, was released last September and has already had a resounding impact on the education system.

A Walk with a Critical Friend Towards Reconciliation and Transformation



The release of this book is timely, as the province formally adopted the internationally recognized standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on November 28, 2019. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) was supported by the Declaration Action Plan on March 30, 2022. In this plan, the province committed to a five-year strategy to enact all legal stipulations. Not only does the Act put into place mandatory course credits related to First Peoples as part of graduation requirements, but it also highlights key priorities such as graduation

statistics, Indigenous students' level of success in K-12, and the legal enshrined rights of local First Nation students and community.

In the book's first chapter, Jo Chrona states that she is writing specifically for, "non-Indigenous educators who are seeking to continue to learn about Indigenous pedagogies, Reconciliation through education or creating Indigenous-specific anti-racist education environments." The book strategically guides the reader, beginning with the situation of self, building knowledge of true history, exploring

racist colonial narratives, through to establishing Indigenous practice using First People's Principles, and concludes with outlining future work transforming a system. *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies* has something for every person in the education system, no matter where they are on the reconciliation journey. It is also a vital resource and guide for the education system in making significant changes to comply with the five-year Declaration Action Plan.

I climb the steep steps to Jo's front door, and she greets me with a smile and a laugh that is deep and warm. I pull off my boots and head into the living room to set up my camera.

"Cameras make me nervous", Jo says with a tentative smile. "Well," I respond, "that makes two of us: *you* make *me* nervous!" She laughs at that, her face showing clearly that she doesn't believe me. I don't think she understands that her work changed how I saw myself, and how I saw my own actions as an educator; she made me believe this system could change.

She begins. "My name is Jo. I am a member of the Kitsumkalum First Nation, Tsimshian community on the Northwest Coast of the province (Terrace, BC), a member of the house of K'oom." Jo pauses, then continues. "I have been thinking more recently about the ways we situate ourselves. One of the ways we situate ourselves is through understanding whose traditional territories we are on, and understanding the connection that, specifically in British Columbia, First Nations have had with these lands. But situating ourselves is also about each learning more about each other. As that relationship develops, it supports the work we are doing."

We both begin to relax, the camera momentarily forgotten.

In *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies*, Jo suggests that the power of words lies not only in what is written or spoken, but in how the words are taken in, turned over, and assessed for authenticity. "If we know each other better, we are more willing to listen to, and

"Every single day, we ask our students to be uncomfortable learning something new. If we were to model that discomfort and growth, think of the impact!"

really hear each other." Jo leans forward slightly on the couch, emphasizing her point. "Once someone shares a part of who they are through story, that piece leaves them, and that meaning is then made by whoever receives it. It is important for us to think about how we receive each other's words. Strong communication between people happens when we understand that communication is about giving and receiving from each other."

I ask Jo about the book's statement that, "as educators we know that not knowing something is not a problem; it is not wanting to learn that is a barrier." How does this relate not only to students, but to ourselves as leaders and educators in the system? Without a pause, Jo jumps into her answer. "Every single day, we ask our students to be uncomfortable learning something new. If we were to model that discomfort and growth, think of the impact!" Jo's hands clap together as she exclaims, "We as leaders and educators need to let others see that we don't have all the answers! Asking a question is a place for everyone to start learning, not just students. She expands, "I think that many educators feel that there are so many agendas we need to respond to, and we sometimes create this armour around ourselves that signals that we not only know what we are doing, but that we are masters of it. That armour shuts down the potential for our own learning. I always wonder, if we are not engaged in learning in a place where we are supposed to be helping others to learn, then what does that do?"

I respond to Jo that in her book, the bravery is not only in making your learning visible, but in recognizing that some of your actions have reflected colonial narratives and can be labelled as racist, making this an incredibly vulnerable place to go.

Jo pauses to glance out the window, the soft sound of waves brushing the momentary silence. She then turns to the camera, and her voice is direct as she speaks to all educators. “One of the things we need to do if we are serious about reconciliation through education, if we want to figure out how to move this country forward, is to talk about racism. It is to talk about Indigenous-specific racism, and to understand the complexities of racism and how it is embedded in education. We could talk about interpersonal racism, systemic racism, epistemic racism, but we also need to talk about how racism manifests in our schools and classrooms. We need to talk about how the colonial narratives are so embedded in our educational systems that they are invisible to most non-Indigenous members. We live in a world that continues to centre and privilege non-Indigenous voices.”

Jo sits back with a questioning look and adds, “One reason this still happens is because people may have a perception that Indigenous learners cannot learn and achieve, thrive, and be as successful as anyone else. The roots of this thinking are firmly embedded in the colonial narratives we have inherited, and that persist. More recently, the racism of low expectations has been brought about by well-intended educators. When non-Indigenous educators come to understand

the legacy and true history of this country, and the intergenerational trauma that has been caused, there is a tendency by some to not expect as much from Indigenous learners. If we follow that line of thinking, what we create is a situation where less is expected from Indigenous learners, and where the learners start to internalize that expectation.”

When reading this part of Jo’s book, I had been struck when I recognized myself. I was one of those well-intentioned educators who focused on creating relevancy, having Indigenous students attend each day, and building relationships. Although this was positive, I had not focused on ensuring expectations of academic rigour were high, and that the choices and options for Indigenous students were the same as they were for all students.

Jo explains where I lost track. “Let’s think about having a high expectations relationship with Indigenous learners, understanding that Indigenous learners – like any other group of learners – will need a diversity of supports in order to achieve in life. So, expect that Indigenous learners can achieve – and when I talk about achievement, it’s not only academic achievement, but also social and emotional wellbeing, physical health, and spiritual wellbeing – and that we



“We need to talk about how the colonial narratives are so embedded in our educational systems that they are invisible to most non-Indigenous members. We live in a world that continues to centre and privilege non-Indigenous voices.”



can create learning environments that *expect* learners to achieve, and that provide the supports and types of learning environments where they *can* achieve.”

Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies tells Jo’s own experience of the racism of low expectations, and she is reflective as she shares. “The racism of low expectations can be a complex process; even the most well-intentioned educators can engage in actions that limit learners. I think about this in my own history as an educator in the system, and as a First Nations person, but also as someone who bought into the idea that we move students along as quickly as possible. I often think about what I have learned from students. They have been my greatest teacher.

“One student who really helped me to recognize my blindness was someone I refer to in my book as ‘Jeremy’ (not his real name). I was teaching English 12 and Communications 12, and had a student in my English 12 class who was an amazing young guy with a smile that would light up the world. He was quiet and soft spoken. He came into my class with significantly low written communication skills, and not too far into the class it became evident that it would be challenging for him to pass the provincial exam. At the time, the exams were worth anywhere between 20% to 40% of the course mark. I talked with the school counsellor, and we thought it would be best to have Jeremy switch into my Communications 12 class which had a provincial exam but was a much less academically rigorous course. Students could take Communications 12 and receive their Dogwood Diploma, but they could not move into a post-secondary program. We thought we were doing what was best for Jeremy. He said no. He liked the English 12 class. I was surprised that he was not going to take the ‘easier route’. But there was so much about him that I didn’t know, didn’t understand, or come to understand until I had spent more time with him. He had an expectation that he could achieve, and he didn’t put a timeline around what he was able to do. His plan was to persist until he was successful at English 12. He didn’t pass that semester. He came back into my class the following semester. If this was a quick wrap to the story, Jeremy would have passed

the second time... he didn’t. But his skills improved. He came back and took the course with me a third time. He passed the course, and he passed the provincial exam.”

I ask Jo what she felt the result might have been if Jeremy had instead agreed to her adapted plan. “I often think about how my advice would have limited him. He had enough awareness of who he was, and what he wanted out of life, that he wasn’t going to take the easier route. How many times in our lives as educators have we made decisions that we thought might have been helping learners, but might have been made for other reasons? For the ease of teaching a course, for administrative purposes, or because the numbers look great if we have more Indigenous students graduating – but not graduating with the same options. What are we doing?”

I let Jo’s words sink in, and remark that in my work as an educator, I always thought I was acting in the best interest of the student. But that I could now see how, as a non-Indigenous educator, I had more perspectives to gather because I was focused on only one side of the story.

“We are really great at telling the good stories about what we do,” Jo responds. “We are really good at sharing about how great our education system has been, and it has been an amazing system for *some* learners. It has been a *decent* system for other learners, it has *not* been a good system for other groups of our learners. We have the capacity to make a powerful responsive system for *all* of our learners, but in order to do that we need to balance out the good stories with the dark corners. What is happening and what is *not* happening to support the achievement and holistic well-being of every child and youth in K-12? We have a group of learners leaving a system without the skills, ability, and well-being to move on once they graduate grade 12. We have to ask ourselves why we think that is okay. Educators will often ask how they can get learner X, Y, and Z to actually come to school. We might want to reframe that question. *How do we create a learning environment that makes children and youth want to be there?* Let’s

"We have the capacity to make a powerful responsive system for *all* of our learners, but in order to do that we need to balance out the good stories with the dark corners. What is happening and what is *not* happening to support the achievement and holistic well-being of every child and youth in K-12?"

focus on how we create those learning environments that invite learners in and make that 15-year-old want to be *there* as opposed to somewhere else. Let's focus on ensuring that we are creating schools and classrooms that are relevant to the diversity of the learners we ultimately serve."

I ask Jo about the ultimate vision: what is our own North Star? Jo leans forward slightly. "We start with the recognition that the K-12 systems that we have come from have been flawed. There is value in parts of them, we are not talking about completely turning them upside down. We are recognizing the aspects of the past K-12 systems that were good for learners, but we are also recognizing that we need to continue to transform our education system. If we keep the North Star in mind, we will aim towards creating learning environments that are committed to learners achieving and thriving in ways that honour who they are and where they come from."

Jo smiles, her hands in front of her marking an invisible line forward. "That's when we know we are on the right path, when we have learning environments where learners feel valued. When we cultivate a culture of learning for everyone in our education system, not just for children and youth in the classrooms. Where the culture of learning is also part of how we operate as adults, in whatever roles we have connected to the K-12 system. Where we are curious. Where we are OK with the discomfort that comes with challenging

learning situations. When we are committed to reflection, we engage in experiences, and we learn from them. We figure out how we can do this differently, or better. Are we having the intended outcomes? Are we listening to what learners need? Are we responding to the priorities of First Nations, as opposed to engaging in a saviour complex where non-Indigenous educators decide they know what is best for Indigenous learners? Once we get to those places, we will turn the corner of transformation."

As Jo unspools her questions, I recognize that this is not about blame, or the failure of a system. It is about recognizing the education system for its successes, but about seeing where work needs to be done.

Jo invites reflection. "I like to consider what all of us here right now might think about when we look back in twenty years. What do you think your role will be in creating this powerful responsive education system? What are the stories we tell about who our Indigenous learners are, and about their capacity to achieve and to thrive? What stories do we tell about Indigenous families and communities? Are they stories that are strength-based, or deficit-based? Do you see a system that needs to continue to evolve and transform? Remind yourself, we *are* the education system. We have the ability to create a better society and system through our collective decisions."

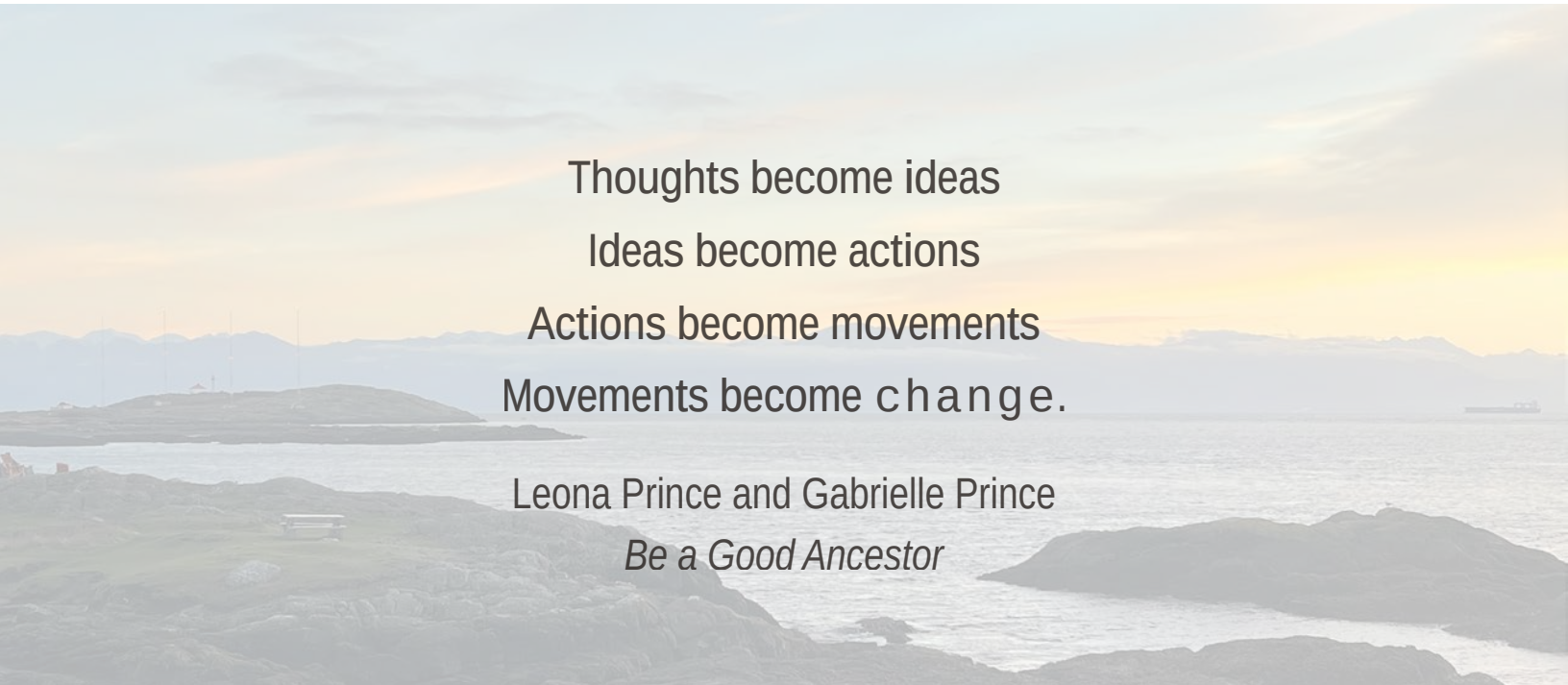
Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies has changed how I see the educational system, and my own role within it. In this perspective, I am not alone. Janet Thompson, Adolescent Learning Coordinator for Social Studies and English teachers in Delta School district, is using Jo's book as a guide for two learning groups of teachers and leaders. One group meets monthly to discuss systemic change through the lens of the book, while the second group meets to use the book as a guide for teaching practice and foundational knowledge. Janet talks of the rich vulnerable conversations where teachers acknowledge the need to evaluate their own bias, and do better. Janet asserts that in using Jo's book as a guide, the 25 to 30 teachers and educational leaders have, "built stronger relationships with all of their students, not

just Indigenous students, and they are just enjoying teaching more.” Janet, after explaining the incredible work that the teachers and leaders are engaged in, is emotional as she declares, “I have been teaching since 1994, and I actually truly believe that this book can have the power to change the system.”

As I wrap up my conversation with Jo, I apologize for going well beyond our scheduled time. It is easy to be transported and impacted by her perspective, her knowledge and experience, and the resounding hope for change. *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies* is a gift. A gift to our education system, a gift to its

leaders and teachers, a gift to all children, and – most of all – a gift to Indigenous students who are entitled to an education that honours who they are and where they come from.

I encourage all educators to read this book, and to go further in your own journey towards reconciliation and Indigenous ways of knowing. It is a deep and reflective experience with the power to change the system and improve the experience of your students. Most importantly, it is a book that will change you, and how you move through the world.



Thoughts become ideas
Ideas become actions
Actions become movements
Movements become change.

Leona Prince and Gabrielle Prince
Be a Good Ancestor

Is there a book that you can't stop thinking about,
one that has driven change in your thoughts,
your practice, or your habits?

Tell us more in a *Principl(ed)* book review.

Contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca to find out more.

A black and white photograph of a woman with glasses and her hair in a bun, sitting in a large, upholstered armchair. She is holding a tablet computer in her left hand and a glass of water in her right hand. She is wearing a patterned cardigan over a light-colored top and patterned leggings. To her left is a wood-burning stove with a fire inside. The room has a cozy atmosphere with a patterned rug and a fur rug on the floor.

*CATCH UP ON PREVIOUS ISSUES OF
PRINCIPL(ED) MAGAZINE AT
BCPVPA.ORG
RESOURCES / PUBLICATIONS*

Principl(ed)

The Last Word

Thank you for another great year, and all that you do for the children, youth, families, and staff that you serve so well.

As the 2022-2023 school year comes to a close, I would like to recognize the outstanding work of Principals and Vice-Principals around the province as you have continued to provide excellent leadership in your schools and school districts. Although this past school year was more 'normal' than the past three years, you still took on a range of challenges and opportunities with professionalism, grace, dedication, and selflessness.

Be proud of what you have accomplished this past year, and go into the summer knowing you have earned a break. Looking back over the last ten months, I also invite you to consider whether you feel you have been compensated equitably for your efforts and successes.

Principals and Vice-Principals are a key part of the management team in each school district. Your roles are separate and distinct from those of the unionized staff you lead. You have committed to implementing and operationalizing the direction set by your superintendent, and the goals set by your board of education, while providing oversight and leadership to both staff and students. Yours is a unique role in education, and perhaps the one that has the greatest impact on overall student success at the school and school district levels.

Mike Roberts
*Interim Executive Director
of the BCPVPA*

I am happy to say that the Minister of Education and Child Care, Deputy Minister, and Ministry staff recognize the importance of your role. They speak knowledgeably and proudly about the fine work being done by BC's Principals and Vice-Principals. Certainly, there is recognition of the exemplary work that was done over the past three years in keeping schools open and functioning during one of the most challenging times in the history of this province. Likewise, the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) have gone out of their way this past year to express appreciation for the work of Principals and Vice-Principals. A positive and productive working relationship between these groups and the BCPVPA has been established, and is growing through increased opportunities for cooperation and consultation.

For the most part, this is also happening at the school district level across the province. Boards of education and superintendents are taking the time needed to continue building positive and constructive relationships with their Principals and Vice-Principals. The input of school and district based administrators is sought, valued, and acted upon on a regular basis in most school districts. Principals and Vice-Principals are seen as key members of the district management team, and are treated as such.

If all of this is true, the following question should be easy to answer. ***Are Principals and Vice-Principals in your school district compensated equitably – through equitable wages, benefits, leave provisions, and contract processes – when compared to your unionized and senior exempt staff?***

Equity for Great Service

BCPVPA recognizes and supports the designation of Principals and Vice-Principals as exempt staff. We also recognize and support the role of individual boards of education as the employer, along with the appropriateness and importance of differences in the terms of employment, both in comparison to unionized staff and between school districts. That being said, we strongly believe that all Principals and Vice-Principals should have terms of employment with their school district that are – at a minimum – equitable to those of the staff they oversee.

Toward this end, BCPVPA will encourage all boards of education to endorse and adhere to the following

guiding principles when establishing or updating the terms of employment for their Principals and Vice-Principals:

1. The overall terms of employment for all Principals and Vice-Principals should be superior to those of the unionized staff they supervise, and include a minimum of equity in the provision of employee benefits.
2. Boards of education, in consultation with their senior leadership team, should strive to provide their school district's Principals and Vice-



Principals with overall terms of employment that are equitable with those of other school districts in their region (within the limitations and guidelines provided by PSEC (Public Sector Employers' Council) and BCPSEA).

3. Annual improvements to total compensation for unionized employees should generally be provided to all Principals and Vice-Principals at the same time (subject to corresponding clearly-articulated reviews of individual performance).

4. Improvements to the unionized employee benefit programs should be provided to all Principals and Vice-Principals.

5. No Principal and Vice-Principal should be disadvantaged in terms of receiving improvements to their total compensation and/or benefits simply by virtue of having moved school districts, schools, or work location (as per unionized staff contracts).

6. There should be no changes to the terms of employment (e.g. contract or employment agreement) of any Principal and Vice-Principal (individual or group) without prior notice and meaningful consultation with their local administrators' association.

7. School districts should endeavour to standardize the terms of employment (e.g. the contract or employment agreement) for all Principals and Vice-Principals employed by them. Where 'red circling' or phased implementation is appropriate, transparency should always be ensured in its application.

8. All Principals and Vice-Principals must have access to short-term disability coverage (or corresponding sick leave provisions), maternity leave provisions, and religious holiday leave provisions on an equitable basis to their school district's unionized employees.

**"...we strongly believe that all
Principals and Vice-Principals
should have terms of employment
with their school district that are –
at a minimum – equitable to those
of the staff they oversee."**

It is important to recognize that the above eight points are not intended to limit variations in contract between school districts. The unique local context of every school district is an important consideration for both Principals and Vice-Principals and the boards they serve. As long as the terms of employment offered to Principals and Vice-Principals in any school district respect these guiding principles, BCPVPA respects the right of the local parties to arrive at agreements that reflect local priorities.

BCPVPA will continue to advocate on behalf of our members for the adoption of these guiding principles by all sixty school districts. The good news is that most school districts and provincial management partner groups already support this perspective. Hopefully, we will see all school districts operate by these general principles through the year ahead.

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize BCPVPA's former Executive Director and past president Kevin Reimer for his exemplary work over the past six years in support of equitable terms of employment for all Principals and Vice-Principals. Kevin retired from the BCPVPA on March 31, 2023, and through his tenure he provided outstanding leadership to the Association and the K-12 sector in this regard. I hope you will join me in thanking Kevin for his tremendous work on behalf of all BCPVPA members and wishing him all the best in his retirement.

Have a great summer.



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

LEADERS



bcp  vpa

Community safety starts at the school crosswalk



Concerned about traffic volume in your school zone?

BCAA's School Safety Patrol program can help! We offer the program FREE for qualified* elementary schools in BC with everything you need to start a patrol, resulting in a safer travel route for students and less traffic congestion around the school crosswalk.

Already running the program? Remember to renew for 2023/24.

bcaa.com/schoolsafetypatrol



**School Safety
Patrol**