

Principl(ed)

VOL. 3 - ISSUE 2 - March 2022

Leading
for Equity

Leading
for Change

Leading
through COVID-19

A Day in the Life

of a
Elementary
School
Principal

Lucinda Wolters on being
curious, finding balance,
and working to unify
learning communities



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



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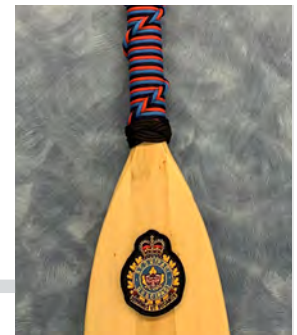
"When student voice is part of the learning, there is a much more personalized lens. And kids really responded to it. I was able to use those assessment strategies and differentiate successfully. It was very motivating."

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"Our work as leaders in education provides us with a front-row seat to how inclusion works in the education system, yet we don't often have a window on how our work influences programs in the community."

Weaving Together: School Leadership in the Community



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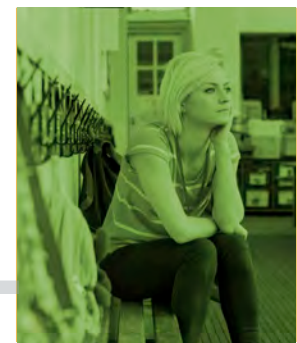
"My exploration and understanding of the philosophy of Restorative Justice began through challenging my own values, and reprogramming my own 'hard drive', a process that shaped the man I am today."

Where the Healing Begins

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"Our objective is simple: strengthening the ability of Principals and Vice-Principals to thrive. The question is, 'How?' and the answer is two-fold: with strategies for the individual, and strategies for the system."

Thriving in Education - Part 2



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

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

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Perspective

In the fall of 2014, we drove our eldest daughter from our Kootenay home to a student residence at The University of Victoria (UVIC). It was an eventful day, full of new experiences, including the convenience of a pop-up Bed, Bath, and Beyond. As we walked along with the campus tour, I kept noting how wonderful it would be to spend my days attending lectures, reading books, and writing papers. I was giddy with envy for my daughter's upcoming life: living where she worked, literally rolling out of bed and into classes, no responsibility, no heavy lifting, seven cafeterias, and a *huge* library! Bliss.

All my daughter kept saying was that she didn't know how to make friends; she hadn't had to do that since kindergarten. She was less excited for her future than I was. Maybe I was so enamoured with the vision of student life that was presented for us on 'move-in day' at UVIC because my own undergrad experience was far in the past. Reflecting on it, I must confront that my *own* undergrad was not a journey blissfully detached from the real world. In truth, I couldn't wait for it to end.

From the first day at Simon Fraser University, I felt like a person out of place, and I was eager for it to be over. I arrived with a plan: I wanted to be a teacher. But I didn't arrive with much confidence. It didn't help that on the morning of my first lesson, I couldn't find the largest lecture hall in the institution. Somehow, 399 other first year students managed it, while I awkwardly haunted the hallways and walking paths of the athletic facility, trying desperately to look like I was in this space on purpose. I didn't even like PE! How could this be the only classroom I could find!

Obviously, I missed my first lecture – an auspicious start.

Then, there was parking. It might have helped if I had done just a bit of research to understand how the

parking worked. Without a pass, and not wanting to be ticketed or towed, I parked in the 'mud lot' located half-way back down the mountain. This meant a trek up to the quadrangle for class. Thinking I was being conscientious, I brought all my texts and books with me in a hockey bag (borrowed, as I had never played hockey) so that I could take advantage of the hours between scheduled classes to study. First year biology texts are very heavy.

I parked in the mud lot for a week before I figured out the routine, bought a parking pass, and retired the hockey bag for a backpack. A win of sorts, but it did not do much to bolster my confidence or sense of belonging. English 101 was no help, either. The assigned reading was typical first year material, and the other students seemed so into it! I'd heard of Fitzgerald and Salinger but was more interested in King. What was I doing here? These weren't my people. I didn't speak their language and, at any moment, someone was going

DRIVIN'

by
Darren Danyluk
President, BCPVPA

to discover that a fraud had sneaked past the gates. Then came a dark moment as I neared the end of my first year: calculating needed credits and projecting into the future, I realized I would be at school for one year longer than originally planned. Had I not been working the counter of a record store when I did the math, I would have slumped to the floor sobbing. At least it was a quiet Thursday night at Valley Fair Mall, and there were few customers to hear my muffled whimpering over the extra year of my life poised on the back burner.

When we cannot wait for a journey to end, it is hard to be present in the moment. When our eyes are set on the horizon, ever anticipating the approach of our destination, paying attention to what is immediately before us can seem a distraction. Even if the journey is not unpleasant, it can be easy to fix upon that distant point on the horizon, allowing it to eclipse all else.

In the summer of 2016, a yellow highlighter traced a path on a map laid flat on a table. The line started at my address in Invermere and extended clear across the country, ending at a coastal town in Nova Scotia. It was August 1, and I had exactly two weeks to travel this winding yellow line and drive aboard the ferry.

That point on the map was the horizon on which I was keenly focused.

We made this trip as a family, crammed into Norman. Norman was a 1989 Dodge Islander camper van; we were a family of four, committed to living in each other's pockets for the next several weeks. We found the van in Port Alberni and, on the day we drove him home, our eldest christened him 'Norman' for reasons unknown. With Norman, we would finally make the cross-country road trip¹ we had been planning for years.

I had meticulously worked the schedule, reverse-engineering the time and distance we needed to cover each day in order to arrive on time. My wife had a schedule of her own to keep, with time and distance of her own engineering. Inspired by Terry Fox, and out of love for family and friends battling cancer, my wife Brenda intended to run the equivalent of a full marathon in each province as we moved across the country – it was a detail shared with me mere days before we departed. The first of these personal marathons was scheduled for day one of our journey: the Continental Divide in Kootenay Park to Banff,

1

Meet Norman at bit.ly/StormNormCda

***When we cannot wait for a journey to end,
it is hard to be present in the moment...***

Alberta. Forty-two kilometres through the beautiful Rocky Mountains, basking in the August sun, and dodging the odd grizzly bear.

Day after day, as we worked our way east, my wife rose each morning with a clear objective for the day. In each province, my daughters also ran alongside Brenda for ten kilometres. I did not run: I was the pit crew, leapfrogging five kilometres down the highway to wait for the running figures to appear in the rear view. Depending upon the arc of the sun, I might have prepared a 'mug up'² for my girls. Sometimes they just needed dry towels and a few moments to warm up, seated at Norman's dining table.

The days began to take on a rhythm: wake up, runners head off, pack up Norman, drive a little while, check-in with runners, drive a little further, runners take a break, drive some more, runners catch up... and so it went. All in all, with breaks and snacks and changing shoes, it took about six hours for me and the crew to travel forty-two kilometres closer to that distant ferry on my horizon. My calculations required that Norman cover more than 500 kilometres each travel day. With a top speed of ninety kilometres an hour, this meant

that following each day's run, Norman and I had many hours to go before sleep. Many run days were back-to-back and spent in this pattern, with Norman's parking brake finally engaged and my head hitting the pillow at midnight.

And without my noticing, I'd fallen into a pattern of my own, driven by the driving. My wife was differently driven. She was galvanized by loved ones who had lost their battles, and loved ones still fighting them. She was inspired with each step, taking in the countryside passing by, breathing in the air. She couldn't help but feel the moment. On the other hand, I was watching the road, but not seeing anything. My mind was well ahead at the next community, the next gas station, the next campsite, the next province... calculating minimum kilometres per day, allowing for meal breaks – short ones – contemplating what-ifs, like "What if Ontario never ends?!" And it was on a rest day in Ontario, with no pressing distance to travel, that Brenda asked me if I was ever going to join them on this journey across Canada.

The world has now passed the two-year anniversary of its initial lockdown, with an enduring hope of containing and ending this pandemic. Dr. Bonnie Henry assured British Columbia that this was

2

If you are a 'come from away' - bit.ly/Def_MugUp

Even if the journey is not unpleasant, it can be easy to fix upon that distant point...



not forever, but it was for now. We have been travelling down this road for twenty-four months, eyes to the horizon, straining to see the end of this marathon. We have learned we can do hard things, but enough already. For the last two years, we have been collectively holding our breath, waiting for life to come off the back burner. Living life perpetually braced for impact will take a toll; when each day is a step in a countdown, the days wished away cannot be recovered. It is important to find the means to be present in this life as it is, tapping into strategies that may help us adjust the view³, and be *in* the world now as we move through it. Doctor Henry was probably right, in that this struggle won't be forever. But it will be with us... until it isn't.

Halfway across Ontario, Brenda reminded me that the journey is the destination. That point on the horizon will remain: I can take my eyes off it, and I can see the forest. It will still be there if I want to glance up and check, now and again, and it's likely to be a bit closer than before but perhaps hard to tell by how much. And soon after, in living colour, I walked through a cathedral filled with jazz music and thousands of vinyl records for sale in Old Quebec City, I marvelled at the depths of a rocky gorge and ate amazing poutine in New Brunswick, I watched my daughters dance on the red sand of Cavendish Beach in Prince Edward Island, and I felt the ocean spray and heard the foghorn blast at the lighthouse on Cape Anguille in Newfoundland.

Then, right on time, we boarded the ferry in Nova Scotia – but not until we had breakfast with an absurd pair of campground chickens, and my amazing runner traced forty-two kilometres in a downpour of rain... laughing and smiling in this marathon, number eight.

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Visit bcpvpa.org, Resources/Health to find out more about our ReCharge and ReFresh health series



@bcpvpapresident

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

connection

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

(Member Event Feedback)



BCPVPA offers BC Principals and Vice-Principals opportunities to learn, but also to network and collaborate with colleagues from across the province. Those shared experiences bring our 2,600 members closer together and help to strengthen BC's K-12 public education system.

bcpvpa.org



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 eighth installment of the series, we meet Lucinda Wolters, Principal of Arden Elementary School.

Lucinda Wolters has been an educator since 1997, and a school administrator since 2010. She taught for five years in Coquitlam at Mountain View Elementary and Minnekhada Middle School, and moved back to Vancouver Island shortly before the birth of her second daughter. With two daughters now in university, Lucinda and her husband are adjusting, and enjoying the transition to empty-nesters. But as much as education has been at the centre of Lucinda's life, teaching and school leadership was not in her early plans.

"It's quite a story," says Lucinda. "When I graduated from high school, I vowed to my parents that I was never going to be a teacher. They still encouraged it a bit, they thought teaching would be a fitting career for me and they were very passionate about education. My mom was also a kindergarten teacher who loved it. But I needed to forge my own path. To this day, my mom laughs and reminds me about it; but, she's proud of me. My dad passed away in 1999, just after I became a teacher, but I know he would have been proud of how my path has unfolded."

As Lucinda began to think about her future, there were three careers that she was considering. "I was interested in being a naturopathic doctor, or an actress because I was very involved in theater arts in high school. The third area was psychology: I was interested in child development, and that was the path most related to education. I have three brothers, and that interest in child development was prompted by the experiences of my oldest brother. When I was six, and he was eleven, he was on a

A Day in the Life

of an
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School
Principal



Lucinda with husband Michael and daughters Emiko and Elska

class trip to a farm; the kids were playing in the barn loft, and he suffered a head injury when he fell. This event completely changed the trajectory of his life. He was in a coma for three weeks, and when he eventually returned to school, it was as a very different learner. At that time, of course, more traditional approaches prevailed: it was very difficult for him to be part of the regular classroom, and he had to come to terms with his new limitations. It still pains me to this day, thinking about how he was treated due to misunderstanding his needs. But that has become fuel for me and my leadership.”

That tragic experience ignited Lucinda’s lifelong interest in child development, and how to support kids with special needs. At the time, she wasn’t thinking about being

an educator, and instead completed a psychology degree before traveling with a friend through Europe for five months. “I ended up in Japan teaching English: while it was about being able to get a job while I was there, it became more about experiencing a culture that I was fascinated by, and didn’t know much about. It was eye-opening, as my parents were Dutch immigrants and I’d had somewhat of an insular upbringing. My second brother kept telling me about his friend in Victoria, who was Japanese-Canadian. And when I came back, I met my brother’s friend and – as it turns out – I married him!”

When Lucinda was getting to know her future husband, she learned about his family, and how his

parents met in the internment camps in the Interior. "I knew nothing about that; I was so shocked. It was at a time in my life where I was really reflecting on my values and my experiences in Japan, and then I returned to Canada and met Mike, and learned about what his family and so many other families had endured. As I continue to reflect upon this over the years, the understanding I have gained surrounding their story has helped me to begin to understand aspects of Truth and Reconciliation.

"There is a piece of personal family history that has also influenced my thinking, where my father and his first family hid a Jewish family of four in their tiny attic room during the Second World War. I grew up hearing about his past, and it had a huge impact on me. My dad was a role model in many ways. He stuck with his principles, even when it meant risking his life."

"For me, it's been how critical the 'Truth' part is, when you look squarely at what has happened in our country, the way cultural communities have been treated. Although absolutely terrible, I see the internment of Japanese citizens being different from the magnitude of the loss experienced by Indigenous Peoples, because of the intent to eradicate Indigenous Peoples and their cultures. Yet learning about the Japanese Internment camps contributed to my personal understanding and awareness of what it meant to be Canadian and further has helped me reflect on the significance of what has happened to Indigenous Peoples. I'm finishing my doctorate through the University of Kansas, and I'm focusing on leadership identity. In digging into the research, I'm thinking about my own leadership identity, and what that means to me such as my values and beliefs about diversity and remaining courageous and true to what I believe."

Lucinda was a supervisor for a group home, and then became an alternate program worker for Vancouver schools, doing urgent intervention contracts all over the district. She was constantly in different schools, seeing what was happening in classrooms and supporting kids to ensure they were included. "And that was when it finally struck me: I really want to

"For me, it's been how critical the 'Truth' part is, when you look squarely at what has happened in our country, the way cultural communities have been treated."

do this. I was feeling increasingly restless about the limitations of my role and wanted to get in there. So that's when I did the Professional Development Program (PDP)."

"When I reflect on my development to considering myself as a more 'formal' leader, I initially had more of a traditional view of leadership which has unraveled as I focused on being a learner. The more I wanted to learn and to develop my skills in the classroom, the more opportunities would come up. Gradually, I was more involved in leadership with other teachers in schools. The Network was a significant influence on my developing leadership, at the time the Network of Performance Based Schools, and now The Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE). At the time the focus was on understanding assessment for learning practices. I started to hone my skill set and noticed the influence on students and their level of engagement."

Lucinda found that students responded when she could clarify the assessment for learning strategies, communicate clear learning intentions, outline criteria for success, and provide specific descriptive feedback for kids that reflected both where they were, and where they would go next. "When student voice is part of the learning, there is a much more personalized lens. And kids really responded to it. I was able to use those assessment strategies and differentiate successfully. It was very motivating." Lucinda then chose to pursue her masters, with research focused on the impact of the Network on classroom practice. "It was awesome, just hearing other educators talk about the influence and understanding of assessment for learning

Small Fires

strategies and being part of the teams and a larger network. There was a clear collaborative cycle to guide teacher practice which was rich and meaningful.”

Lucinda’s first Vice-Principalship was as a solo leader in a small rural school. Lucinda recalls that with her own relative inexperience, and the complexities of the community, it was a very difficult point in her career. “I was two years in, and I thought, I don’t think this is for me. Pretty devastating to get to a point where I was so full of self-doubt, and wondering, what am I doing here? What am I going to do? At the time, (BCPVPA Executive Director) Kevin Reimer was a Principal and the chair for our local association. I remember feeling so distraught and asking him, can I really do this? And he said, yes. Such a lifeline when he was so supportive. I also connected with Harold Krische, at the time at BCPVPA’s Member Support Services, and I was so impressed with his listening skills; I didn’t feel judged. Each time I spoke with him, he would listen and reframe the conversation from a leadership lens. I’m so glad now for that experience, and that I was able to recommit to the work. But it did lead me to Adaptive Schools. I was really soul searching and wondering, what is the missing piece? What is it that I need to help me in my leadership, and how do I enact it?”

When attending a formative assessment professional development session one summer, Lucinda was impressed by the skill of the facilitator in creating community and a depth of conversation in a room full of strangers. In a later conversation, the facilitator recommended Adaptive Schools: Lucinda looked it up. “It was through this organization called Thinking Collaborative. There are different branches: there’s Adaptive Schools, which is about developing groups, Habits of Mind, which is developing thinking in classrooms, and Cognitive Coaching, which is a one-to-one

“I definitely see that the Adaptive Schools work, altering those patterns of communication, informs and influences the educational transformation at a school level: I’m pretty energized about that.

A couple of years ago, I started a podcast, Small Fires, around the work of Adaptive Schools, and how that can influence educational transformation.

I’ve been a bit busy with my doctorate, so I don’t have many episodes yet. But I love exploring conversations with other educational leaders through it.”

smallfires.ca

" When I reflect on my development to considering myself as a more 'formal' leader, I initially had more of a traditional view of leadership which has unravelled as I focused on being a learner."

coaching piece. The learning has dramatically influenced my lenses around how I see my role, who I am as a leader, and has given me many strategies and approaches to facilitate learning in schools with the teachers."

The shift of thinking significantly changed Lucinda's approach to her practice. "A book that has had an impact on me is Michael Fullan's *The Principal: Three Keys for Maximizing Impact*. He talks about Principals creating a culture of collective efficacy and labels them as being leaders for learning. What struck me was how he saw the Principal role as facilitating teacher learning, and "using the group to change the group." To expand on that, if I would notice staff always sitting with the same people, talking with the same people during staff meetings, and the same people being more vocal, or being quiet, I see this as lost energy, lost leverage points. Adaptive Schools has increased my awareness around complex systems and what that means in the way I facilitate meetings to maximize the energy and expertise in the room."

"I think, in the past, we've looked at education systems as complicated, where we have relied on step-by-step expertise: you follow the way things have been done, and you'll be okay. Well, those are not the kind of systems we work in. Our schools are increasingly complex compared to the schools of the past. The ways that we engage with each other and maximize networks within a school, is paramount to actually moving things forward to meet the demands of student needs today.

Understanding complexity informs how I facilitate staff meetings. My intentions are to elevate patterns of communication to be healthy and balanced, so everyone's voice is heard. With all those voices, there's a lot of expertise in the room and we can then more effectively "use the group to change the group." Creating psychological safety and using structures to facilitate those conversations can have a huge impact on the decisions that are made as a result. A key takeaway for me from the Adaptive Schools training was truly understanding how the quality of the adult conversations directly influences the quality of the work that gets done for kids as well as influences the collective commitment to the decisions made."

Lucinda is in her second year as Principal of Arden Elementary for Comox Valley Schools and is gratified by the staff's ongoing commitment to students and to collaboration. The school uses the Response to Instruction (RTI) model to support students' learning needs. "One of my early-career experiences was attending BCPVPA's Short Course, and listening to Dr. Janet Mort facilitating a session on the vulnerability of early learners – the data was so compelling. When I returned to school, and shared the data with the kindergarten teachers, they agreed, based on their observations of kids beginning school. This led to engaging in some work around implementing RTI; which has continued. We're also in the process of acquiring a different lens on self-regulation through a course through the Mehrit Centre, and the teachers are open to learning. The Self-Reg course for Leaders is helping me see kids with challenging behaviours differently, and how to reframe behaviors so that we can give them supports to minimize their stressors. The Self-Reg course has aided my recognition of adult stress responses as well. Each of us have different stressors and, given our pandemic reality, our collective consciousness about how we are managing has become a school priority as we strive to support ourselves and each other. We are developing our understanding that when we are regulated, we are better able to influence student regulation."

"I'm proud of the shared ownership and the collective



Photo: courtesy Lucinda Wolters

leadership that I've helped support at our school, around everyone having a voice and contributing, and having those collective decisions. It's something I really value, and when it starts to have an impact on how people engage in the school to specifically address what kids need, it's very satisfying. People are willing to say what they think and how they feel. Things happen here: people constantly step up to do things. It's a definite team approach. I cannot say enough about this school. They are all in."

While Lucinda would love to spend more time in the classroom, she is now a solo leader at Arden and misses the support and collaboration that a Vice-Principal can offer. "Last year, we had a Vice-Principal, Debra Fullerton, and I cannot speak more highly of her, we were a dynamic team and shared such a trust. But with declining enrollments, and another school that needed her, Debra has moved

" Things happen here: people constantly step up to do things. It's a definite team approach. I cannot say enough about this school. They are all in."

on. It is a different experience this year, not having a Vice-Principal. At the beginning of the year, I told the teachers I'd like to come in and teach a lesson, so they could just sign up. Some teachers did, but some later came to me and said, "Lucinda, what are you thinking? You don't have time for that!" And while it was a goal to be in classrooms more, with the complexity of the school, it has been difficult. I try to get in as much as I can to connect with kids and staff, but I don't formally teach. I hope I can get there at some point, because I do really miss it."

The Arden Way

“We have something called the ‘Arden Way’, which was initiated by Kevin Reimer when he was Principal here – it’s a wonderful thing that our community has embraced, and we have built so much of our culture around it.

It’s a code of conduct, and it’s about being a learner and celebrating each learner. We refer to ‘successful learner traits’ that we emphasize in all areas: being creative, industrious, compassionate, risk-taking, confident, strategic, thoughtful and enthusiastic.

These traits originate from Susan Bannister’s work to support the core competencies.”

bit.ly/SLTraits

Being a solo leader in a school has been a change for Lucinda in a number of ways. “You have trust to be able to bounce ideas off each other, you get together and make a game plan around what needs to be done – that’s helpful. The number of meetings here is significant, with collaboration meetings, school-based team meetings, parent meetings, health and safety: having a Vice-Principal to support those is really helpful. They could attend a meeting, or we could both be there and have our own perspective on what was happening if a situation was a little contentious.”

The diverse needs of a school and the intensity of the work can create challenges for school leaders. For Lucinda, it has been finding the balance between the managerial aspects of the work and the instructional leadership that she loves. “There is limited time, and there’s always so much to do. I have to make sure that I am doing those management pieces, because the school won’t run without those.”

“For our school community, there are definitely unique needs, and there’s a real love for Arden. Sometimes it comes back through the grapevine, people on Facebook are wondering where to live in the Comox Valley; they’re thinking about schools, and Arden gets mentioned. There is a sense of commitment that people have here, and the fact that kids love to come to school is influential.”

Is the role of Principal what Lucinda expected? “In a sense, I knew what it would be like. But to actually experiencing it is intense; I have definitely increased my awareness around my own self-care. I would suggest that someone considering a school leader role connect with others – connect with Principals – to really get a sense. Talk to a few people, because everyone has a different style and approach, and have different areas they focus on. Really consider who you are, your leadership identity and your beliefs and values. Consider if you are able to invest the energy and the commitment: it’s a demanding job, it’s not for everybody. And even though it can be really hard at the beginning – because I *know!* – having the support can make a difference. When I moved to the second



Lucinda meets with Katie Arsenault

school as VP, where I worked with Geoff Manning as the Principal, it was a completely different experience for me.”

Despite the demands of the role, Lucinda has continued her quest for learning. “For me, curiosity is key. When I was considering pursuing a doctorate, I chose to go into it with a focus on Adaptive Schools, and seeing what the research says about complex systems and leadership identity, in connection to the changing role of the principalship. But when you’re passionate about the topic, and living it, the energy is there for pursuing it.”

“It’s empowering learning at multiple levels. It’s the professional empowerment, it’s the individual student’s empowerment, and creating this collective

unified approach to learning as educators as well. I really see my purpose as unifying communities in meaningful learning. And that unity piece is so critical. There are all these individual pieces, and different ages engaging, but that collective piece – where we’re going in the same direction and seeing that fulfillment and joy in learning – that’s very satisfying.”

“And for the students, I really hope that they know how cherished they are, and how they belong here: that this is their school. I want them to feel at home here, and hope that they feel a joy in learning, that they can really show who they are and that they’re thriving physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in all areas.”



@LucindaWolters

A Day in the Life of a Elementary School Principal

5:45 am	Wake up and greet the day.
6:15 am	Check email for any urgent matters.
7:00 am	Arrive at the school, get organized, and plan priorities.
7:30 am	Open up the school and make my rounds. Connect with teachers as they arrive. Set up the parking lot.
8:20 am	Greet students outside arriving on the buses.
8:45 am	Do announcements and the school mindfulness program.
9:00 am	Make a loop around the school and connect with students and staff in classrooms.
9:30 am	Respond to emails and address any issues that have come up.
10:00 am	Support recess supervision.
10:30 am	Meet with students to help problem-solve an issue.

"I arrive at about 7:00 am, and it's pretty quiet. I take the first half hour of the day to organize myself and prioritize what's essential. After that, I open the school and make my rounds. Some teachers are starting to show up, and I'll connect with them – there is a *lot* of connection, it's a great time of the day to have conversations with staff, and to follow up on something that happened the day before, or something that is coming up. Then I set up the parking lot, with cones and signs since it can get quite crowded. Before the day starts, I'll continue connecting with teachers, and then I get outside before the first bell, usually near the parking lot or the bus loop, just to make sure everybody's safe and we can greet students as they arrive.

I do the announcements once the bell has gone, beginning with the Arden Way prompts and then Inner Explorer, which is a mindfulness program. After the announcements, I'll continue responding to emails, and then I do a loop around the school and connect into classrooms as much as I can. Then it might be more meetings or emails with parents. I check in regularly with our support staff; we have some significant student needs, so that can take a lot of my time when things come up.

There are certain people in the school that I am regularly in contact with, and one is our Learning Support Teacher, Debora Krueger. We're always connecting about what our next step will be around needs. I also connect every day with our Indigenous Support Worker, Sandi Phye. Approximately one-third of our population is Indigenous, and Sandi does so much. We're in constant contact about the projects she's working on, students she is working with, and

A Day in the Life of a Elementary School Principal

how I can support them. Then I'm on supervision at recess and lunchtime, which are great times to connect with kids.

Regarding the things that can take my day 'off course', I've had to reframe the way I see that. I always have my plan. But the plan isn't necessarily the work. Whatever shows up is the work. Reframing that helps me to say, okay: I'm putting this to the side. So much of what I'm doing is being a careful and thoughtful listener. If staff need to talk something through, I'm there; if I'm helping kids solve a problem, it's about listening and reframing. Things arise that are related to staff or students, and I need to be present, to help problem solve and to support. And that's the work.

There are often team meetings, or I'll be following up with teachers about something that has happened or connecting with parents, especially after school. But towards the end of the day, when it's quieter and most staff have left for the day, I'm getting as much done as I can in connection to the managerial parts of my role.

I'm usually home between 5:00 pm and 5:30 pm: I try to have some good boundaries, and to work when I'm most productive. It's a long day, but the day does zip by!

Recently I have incorporated a short meditation that I do as soon as I get home. It's a guided Wim Hof Method breathing meditation. It is the quickest, most impactful meditation I have come across that helps me to de-stress: bit.ly/GdWimHof."

11:00 am	Visit grade one class to hear about their project.
11:30 am	Respond to emails or update school blog.
11:45 am	Support lunchtime supervision.
12:30 pm	Meet with groups of students as needed.
1:00 pm	Eat my lunch.
1:20 pm	Work on school project promoting active school travel.
2:00 pm	Meet with Indigenous Support Worker.
2:30 pm	Say goodbye to students as they leave for the day.
2:45 pm	Facilitate team or staff meeting.
4:00 pm	Return to emails and respond to phone messages.
4:30 pm	Prepare for tomorrow morning's Health & Safety meeting.
5:00 pm	Head home for the day.

by

Christine Johnson and Celina Mau

BC Retired Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

**WHAT'S
YOUR PLAN
FOR
RETIREMENT?**



At the time of retirement, I found out about an association which would keep me in the area of education, and allow me to meet like-minded people. After almost thirty-seven years — more than the age of many of my staff members — I was used to the everyday life of school. Although already assigned as a volunteer at various animal organizations, I went along to a General Meeting of the BC Retired Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association and it has been a wonderful discovery. Having worked closely with the BCPVPA, it seemed like a natural next step.

Here is an organization which makes sure that its members are kept up-to-date on areas that directly affect them — pension plan, medical issues, wellness, legal matters, travel, and hobbies. A number of benefits accompany membership in the BCRPVPA, and one of the best parts is working on the Scholarship Committee to decide which of the candidates most deserve one of our \$1,000 awards.

Here is an organization whose members compose a much anticipated newsletter, and whose website is full of information. Yammer is a 'conversational' website dedicated to members, where a variety of interests — from gardening to movies — are covered.

There are many reasons to join us — just ask Celina Mau:

"When I retired in the summer of 2016, I was looking for 'something' to fill my days beyond just taking care of my mother. A colleague from my PDK (Phi Delta Kappa) days suggested that I join the BCRPVPA for many reasons, mainly the Prestige Travel Insurance Plan and my service as a mentor to the newly-appointed Principals and Vice-Principals under the joint BCPVPA / BCRPVPA Mentorship Program.

As a family, we planned to take our mom back to Southeast Asia for an extended trip to visit her family, our relatives, and friends — the Johnson/Prestige combination of EHC (Extended Health Care) with Travel Plan fit the bill, because it has a multi-trip plan for up to 60+ days per trip with NO restriction clause for pre-existing conditions: a real bonus!

I soon became a part of the inaugural BCPVPA Mentorship Program which began in the Fall of 2016. Looking back five years later, I have gained so many mentorship skills through reflecting on my practice and using purposeful questioning techniques to guide the newly-appointed Principals and Vice-Principals as we delved deeply into the arts and crafts of leadership, and honed in on both our skills in the role and responsibilities as school-based leaders. The program afforded me the opportunity to stay connected in the field of public education, and to



BCRPVPA members at the Book Sale table,
BCPVPA Short Course, UBC, July 2018

share my knowledge and passion with the mentees throughout BC.

The BCPVPA Mentorship Program, combined with increased responsibilities in the BCRPVPA Executive, have now filled my days. Flexibility of 'work' hours and camaraderie with my retired colleagues have enabled me to keep my brain active, build relationships, and stay connected socially and virtually with members."

Travel remains a top priority for many of our recently retired members. So, to meet these needs, a few Executive members in our association under the guidance of Tom from Trip Merchant (one of our Affinity Benefits Program Partners), have organized an inaugural 14 night European river cruise for July 2022. We will be travelling down the Danube River visiting the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary. We would love for you to join us!

Pondering retirement?

Visit our website: bcrpvpa.ca

Contact:

Christine Johnson, President
info@bcrpvpa.ca

Celina Mau, Vice President
bcrpvpa.communications@gmail.com

Our Association's meeting programs such as 'The Indispensable Binder', 'Wills and Estate Planning' from DL Piper (through affiliation with BCPVPA) and most recently 'TPP and our Pension investment from BCI' have greatly benefitted our members.

Here is what a member who just retired this summer shared with us:

*"I thought last week's
(October 2021) meeting
was excellent.*

*I learned more than I
could have imagined
about investing.*

*It was great to
have the time to
focus on the details."*





Christine Johnson and Celina Mau



SPRING 2022

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NEW
BOOK!



The Helping Rock

A Story to Celebrate the Ways
We Help Each Other

The Helping Rock is about the importance of sharing our gifts with others and the strength we gain by working together. As a colourful sparkling rock is passed among Lani's friends, readers witness the many ways we help each other.

Available March 14

Trauma-Informed Care

Building a Culture of Strength

VANCOUVER May 18

VIRTUAL May 18

Addictions and Youth

Substances, Technology, Porn

VIRTUAL April 28

Motivational Interviewing

Practical Intervention Strategies

VIRTUAL May 10

Anxiety in Children and Youth

Practical Intervention Strategies

VIRTUAL May 12



MORE WORKSHOPS

on our website www.ctrinstitute.com

In September 2021, the BCPVPA was fortunate to have three amazing women join us for a panel discussion on Resilient Women Thriving in Leadership: Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, a psychology and education instructor who specializes in resiliency, navigating stress and change, leadership, and personal wellness in the workplace; Paula Gosal, a middle school Principal who is completing her Education Doctorate; and Carleen Thomas, an Indigenous leader who is the Special Projects Manager of Treaty Lands & Resource Dept. for the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

Nearly 60% of BCPVPA members are women, and 162 of them joined us for an evening of learning and connecting. Events like Leading the Way are important opportunities to hear the experiences of diverse women leaders, to network with other professionals, and to make visible how women lead.

Robyne so beautifully named the characteristics of women's experiences, and gave practical ideas on how to braid self-care strategies into our everyday. Paula brilliantly shared her family narrative with women in the lead roles as resilient, tenacious, and gracious role models. Carleen grounded us in the importance of identity, voice, and the responsibility of leading for ourselves and the generations to come.

The narratives of these three women continue to guide our thoughts many months later, and we are honoured to share just some of their words here.

LEADING THE WAY: Women in Leadership

In the words of
**Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe,
Paula Gosal, and Carleen Thomas**

Foreword and afterword
Andrea McComb
Director of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA

Photo courtesy Alejandro Tocomal_unsplash.com

EVERYDAY RESILIENCY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

by Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

The global landscape is ever-changing. Times of unparalleled stress, unrest, and uncertainty are becoming more common. Our physical, emotional, and mental health are being tested and taxed every day. There is an extraordinary need to build, foster, and practice resilience so we can navigate our lives.

I appreciate that it can be frustrating to be told we need to be resilient. It can also be frustrating to hear people tell you how resilient you are! Maybe we don't want to be resilient anymore. Perhaps we want to live and work in systems that don't create enormous amounts of stress and distress! I get that too. I appreciate that just because you are carrying it well, that doesn't mean it is not heavy. My invitation here is to share with you a kinder approach. Let us reframe our thinking of resiliency as getting stronger, tougher, grittier, or being less impacted by emotions and experiences. Let's think about resiliency as being able to be okay. I can assure you: okay is enough! My model for this is Everyday Resiliency. It is made up of five core competencies that support people's capacity for resiliency: Belonging, Perspective, Acceptance, Hope, and Humour. Together these five pillars build the foundation for us to weather any storm in our lives.

My belief that I can do hard things has transformed my life. I take pride in knowing that my personal struggles have played the most significant role in helping me find my purpose. I believe that each and every one of us is capable of doing extraordinary things when we are called upon. We are well

equipped to navigate whatever comes our way. We adapt. We learn. We are all doing the best that we can with the tools and knowledge that we have at the time. I believe deeply that our truest self is revealed in the soft whispers of our heart that say, come what may, we will be okay.

It is not the loud voices in our heads that help us through hard times. It is that tender and sweet, soulful recognition that we are capable and worthy of being here and of being well. You see it when you are feeling empty, yet you still make breakfast for your child, or when you think you cannot take one more appointment or treatment, yet you do it anyway. It is when you cannot imagine having the energy to make it upstairs, but you take that first step because deep down, you know you can. These moments shape our authentic capacity to be resilient. It is work. It can be heart work. And it will be hard. There is no shame in asking for help. Some lessons and insights can only be learned in a community. Take what you need to be well unapologetically, and trust that you can do hard things. Be sure to take care of yourself DURING the change seasons, not only when it is over. Burnout is the curse of the strong. Only those who care deeply will serve until they are fully depleted. Please recognize that those who care about you need you to take care of you too. Be open to receiving. I know it is hard, but thankfully you can do hard things. You can also do great things. Taking care of yourself while serving may seem like an insurmountable obstacle; it will be, until we all start doing it.

A STORY OF LOVE AND HONOUR

by Paula Gosal



As a school leader for 15 years, I know I am resilient, and I am thriving. However, my journey as a resilient woman leader does not begin with me; rather, it begins with the women who came before me and raised me – my grandmother and my mother. I understand myself better when I consider the stories of these strong women who achieved personal success despite adverse conditions.

My grandmother was born in 1910 and educated during the British Raj in India. My grandmother was fortunate to attend school up until grade 5 – this seems to be the grade level at which most young girls were withdrawn from school, and it coincides with the onset of puberty and menstruation. While she no longer attended school, she still had a love for learning. After her arranged marriage to an Indian Army soldier, she moved 120 kms to the home of her in-laws. Her first born child was a girl, and she was forced to give up her daughter to her own parents as her in-laws did not accept the baby girl. She then had two boys, one of whom died from pneumonia at

age three. And then my mother was born. Life was good until my grandmother was widowed at the age of 29, banished from her marital home, and left to raise two children without the support or assistance of extended family. She strongly valued education and she knew that had she been illiterate, like many of the females in her village, she may not have been able to overcome the many hurdles she faced as single parent.

My uncle left India for Australia in 1957, leaving my grandmother and my mother behind. Together, my grandmother and my mother faced the many hurdles that two women living alone in a rural village may face. However, with education as a key to personal growth and future possibilities, my mother pursued her goal of becoming a teacher. She then met and married my father and, just before the birth of my second brother, my dad left for Australia with the hope for a better life for his family. This left my pregnant mother, my 11-month-old brother, and my grandmother again without a male presence. Four years later, my grandmother, mother, and two brothers left India. My grandmother headed to Australia to be with her eldest daughter, and her son, and my mother and brothers joined my father in Vancouver.

Upon arrival in Canada, my mother realised she was unable to pursue her career as a teacher; as a new immigrant, her priority was providing food and shelter for the family. Both my mother and father took any available jobs so that they could lay the foundation for their life in Canada; this meant that they often worked two or more jobs at the same time. In 1974, my pregnant mother called upon my grandmother in Australia to ask her

to come and help with the baby they were expecting. My mother returned to working two different jobs when I was just two weeks old, and my grandmother became the primary caregiver for my siblings and me.

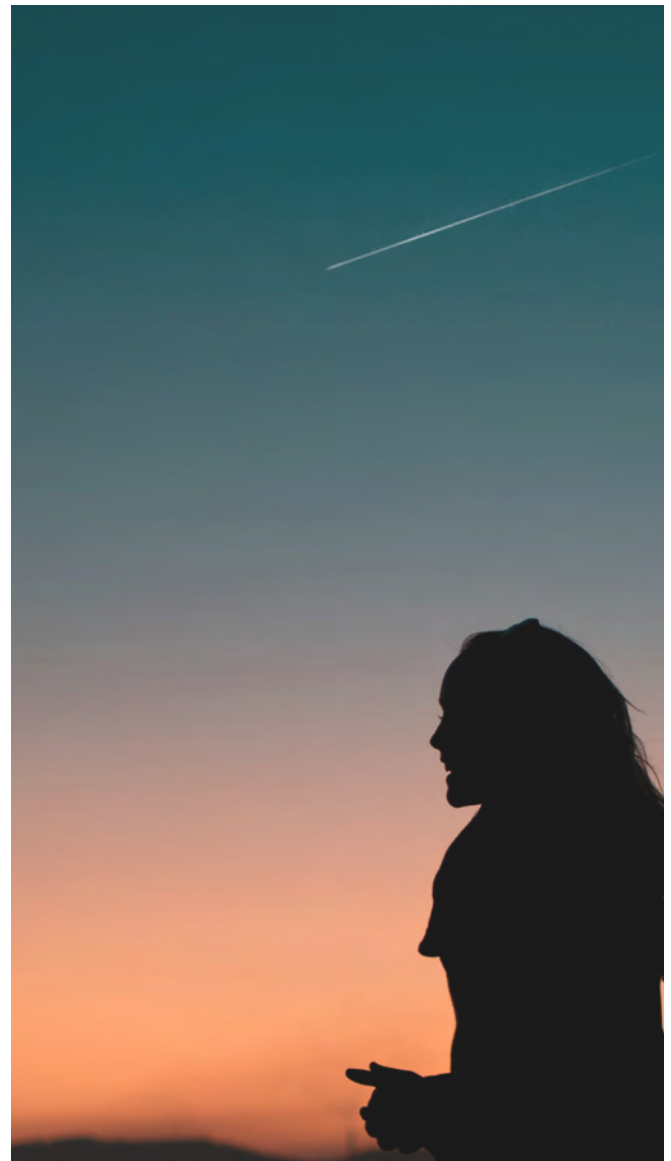
Throughout my life, the stories that my mother and grandmother told of their lives in India were shared with pride, and showcased their strength, integrity, and grace. Their reflection on the hurdles they had faced spoke to the strength they possessed, and the support they provided each other. Recently, when I asked my mother about her days in India and how she recalls my grandmother, she said, “She loved us so much, she was committed to us, we were her world”. I share the same recollection of my grandmother and my mother. When I asked my mother about living without the support of extended family and whether they were poor, my mother thought deeply and responded, “No, we weren’t poor. We had everything we needed. We had a cow for milk. We had good food, good clothes”. From this, I understand that what little they had was enough because they had an abundance of love and, with each other, a sense of security.

Facing forward, and looking for opportunities through the hurdles, defines the optimism and courage that both my grandmother and my mother possessed. And in supporting each other, they also found the time and space to take care of those around them and create networks of support.

As the youngest child and only daughter, I am proud to have been raised by such strong and resilient women. I am fortunate that I have been able to live a life that my immigrant parents envisioned for me. With the constant refrain from my grandmother and my mother about the importance of education, dedication, caring, and integrity I have been able to achieve the goals that I set for myself personally and professionally. I am the only person in my immediate family to have attended university and to have attained a BA and an MA, and I am currently working on my Doctor of Education. As I strived to reach my

goals, there were people along the way who told me I could not achieve what I set out to do, or that I should alter my career trajectory when I became a mother. As these voices tried to discourage and dissuade me, my internal response was, and always will be, “You have no idea who I am, nor do you know I follow in the footsteps of powerful and strong women who overcame all odds.”

While the obstacles that I face may pale in comparison to the lived experiences of the women who raised me, I think the grace and tenacity that they have instilled in me enables me to be resilient in the different roles I occupy as a school Principal, a mother, a wife, and a daughter.



SUPPORTING LEADERS IN A COMMUNITY

the words of Carleen Thomas

“Being a leader is role modelling how you wish a community to be.”

“Looking at the inlet, my grandfather would say, they are not going anywhere, and we are not going anywhere, we need to find a way to co-exist.”

“With all the stuff our mothers, fathers, and aunties have been through, what made them not give up demonstrates an innate desire to heal ourselves to become better. Growing up, I was taught the work I do is not just for me and my community but for the generations to come. As a grandmother, I see that coming into action now. In leadership, I don't have all the answers, skills, and strengths, but what I contribute is for the whole.”

“In my community, there was not that inequity between male and female in terms of who is a leader. We grew up knowing in our systems the males have this work to do, the females have this work to do, both types of work are important, and both are woven together.”

“It is easy to look at the up-and-coming leaders of our community and see how we have to help them weave together and become stronger.”

REFLECTIONS ON THE RICH DIALOGUE IN LEADING THE WAY

Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe differentiated resiliency for me, making a distinction from sacrificing for everyone in the name of service, to modelling habits, healthy boundaries, and self-care that strengthen our communities.

From Paula Gosal came the value and centrality of education to resilience and the privileges it affords, all told through her family story.

And from Carleen Thomas, that the clarity of identity comes from your ancestors. With that identity comes the wisdom that we each contribute to the whole.

Our Leading the Way series has been supported by profoundly accomplished women who have generously shared their stories with our members and friends. These women are contributing to innovative thinking that fosters change and growth, and are leading the way for those who walk with them and those who will follow. Taking care of yourself while serving may seem like an insurmountable obstacle: it will be, until we ALL start doing it.

Watch for upcoming
Leading the Way
events from the BCPVPA

bcpvpa.org

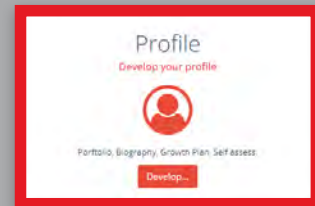


CREATE

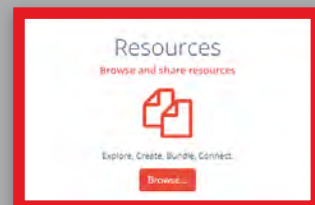
- one-stop access to resources shared by other educators, in your district and province-wide
- share resources directly with students and families: no passwords required
- record Zoom or YouTube instructions, and set meeting times for feedback and check-ins

COLLABORATE

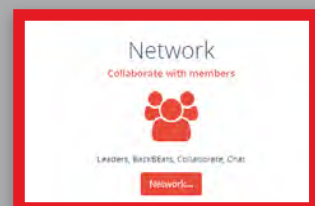
- work with multiple creators in one space
- chat with other educators and explore ideas
- use topics and tags to categorize resources
- create resource bundles
- use easily on all devices, and integrate the platforms you choose



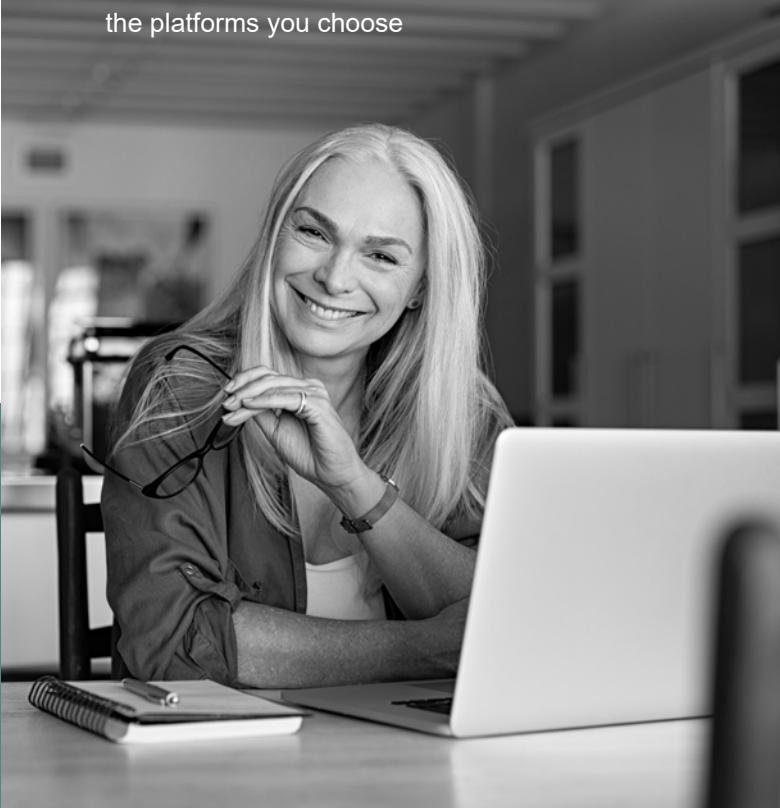
Create a personal profile with your biography, photo, and experience



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



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





School leaders
are engaging
in the work of
Equity

bcpvpa



CONNECTING LEADERS

by

Andrea McComb

Director of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA

Educators around the world are embracing opportunities to explore, understand, and create lasting and meaningful engagement around Equity. School leaders in BC have a critical role in creating a space for their staff and students to inquire, connect, and commit to action. BCPVPA's October 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference embraced the theme Leading for Equity, and this root idea was woven through every aspect of the conference. Videos produced by BCPVPA members and their teams who are engaging in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work in their districts or schools were highlighted throughout the conference.

The Power of Story

Riley McMitchell and Harjinder Sandhu shared the books and school-wide strategies they are using to make issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion more visible in our schools. They select books featuring diverse characters and themes that act as anchors for school-wide learning experiences. By exploring texts for and by people who are typically underrepresented in our system, Harjinder and Riley strive to deepen understanding, awareness, and safety for all.

Harjinder said, "I did not want my students to see white settler cultures as the norm, and their differences as deficits. I wanted them to see themselves reflected. The more we know about each other's heritage, history, and cultures, the harder it is for racist beliefs to fill out minds and hearts."



A Good Mind / A Kind Heart

Sue Boucher and Joseph Dandurand shared the voices of students who participated in an integrative immersive experience on Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being in their video, *A Good Mind/A Kind Heart*. The video illustrated the connection of cultures, and the opportunity to learn together in something culturally significant that gave life and the freedom to have good intentions.



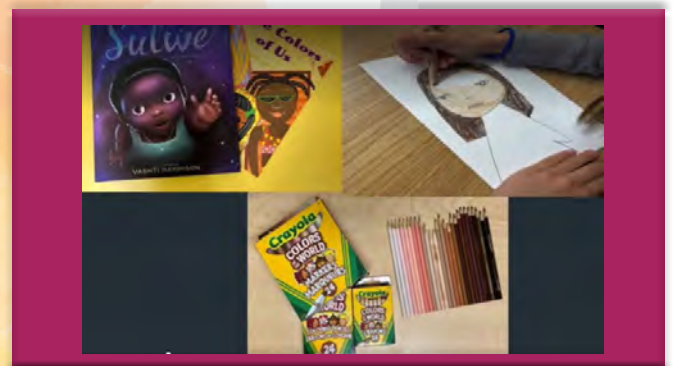
A Long and Winding Road

Sean Della Vedova shared his metaphor, *A Long and Winding Road*, for leading equity work. His story marks the journey from defensiveness to exploration, and being okay with vulnerability.



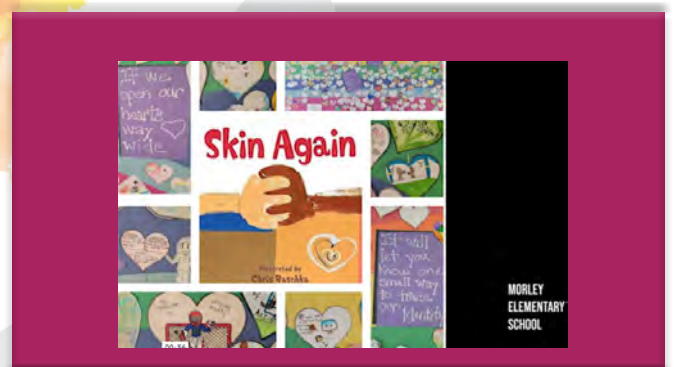
The Anti-Racism Work of Queen Elizabeth Elementary

Debbie Ramen and Queen Elizabeth Elementary shared their journey into anti-racism work. They began by intentionally setting a tone that recognizing people from all cultures was important. They explored colourism, and delved into the concept through stories and the use of the Colours of the World crayons.



Re-imagining Leadership and School Culture Through Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Beth Applewhite's video included the voices of students, teachers, and leaders. It stands as an example that when people feel heard and respected, they are more engaged and they feel braver, more courageous to be creative, and take innovative risks. Diversity is where true creativity blossoms.



Words of Reflection from Riley McMitchell

"For me, making the video helped me to synthesize my understanding of the actions I am taking in my school towards equity. The video helped to move some parts of my work from unconscious to conscious. I knew what I was doing but might have had trouble articulating the rationale behind it until making this video. Everyone approaches equity work from their own stance, and it was invigorating to see how others are putting it into practice. I truly believe the more we can connect big ideas with tangible everyday action, the more empowered we will all be to nurture awareness and change."

Connecting Leaders 2021: Leading for Equity

Carolyn Roberts welcomed us with an acknowledgement of the territories, and grounded us in the legacies of colonialism that can still be felt on this land today. She focused our attention on creating safer environments and communities for all students.



Tanina Williams from the Lil'wat Nation shared that, "Language is based on the land. "If that is where your heart is that is where your home is".

Mark Edwards, our Learning Companion, shared his deep commitment to wearing his orange shirt, and keeping it close to his heart to embody his commitment to truth and reconciliation.



Darren Danyluk
@bcvpapresident



Overheard today:" Do unto others and be for others what they need." (Edwards) New golden rule for Equity.

[#CL2021](#) [@BCPVPA](#)

2021-10-22, 9:45 AM



Candy Palmater spoke poignantly about the influence of educators in her life. She revealed how one educator advised her to set low expectations for herself because she was Indigenous, and how another educator saw the fire within her and challenged her not just to follow her dreams but to become a leader.



Robyn Evans
@revans45



Identities are complex and fluid... these vectors of identity shape "how we experience the world and how the world experiences us." Powerful conversations [@BCPVPA](#) Connecting Leaders conference [#CL2021](#) Thank you [@S_Nouman_Ashraf](#)
2021-10-22, 10:48 AM

Sean Della Vedova Reflected on Nouman Ashraf's Session

"You sometimes must walk toward the storm. If not, nothing changes, particularly in some schools where we often do a good job of telling ourselves we are doing a good job! Nouman reminding us that we are human beings, not human doings. To do lists don't foster the idea of being and existing in the present. Being able to connect with leaders from all over the province was so wonderful and important, as I was inspired by the stories and experiences of others. As Nouman said, "we are experienced creators, not knowledge holders," and stepping up to achieve this requires tenacity and a willingness to face that which is hard and sometimes uncomfortable. The conference served to create new connections with leaders who are united in this work – what a community!"

Anna Maria Tremonti spoke about what we might not see, what we might have missed, and how to listen into the silence. She challenged us to be aware of our own bias and lived experience to raise our awareness and curiosity. She encouraged us to use our awareness and understanding going into conversations.





Darren Elves
@DarrenElves



'There's a difference between a flippant question and a meaningful one. Find a way to ASK. ENGAGE. LISTEN'

[@amtremonti](#) [@BCPVPA](#)
[@newwestschools](#) [#CL2021](#)

2021-10-22, 12:05 PM



Sanj Johal
@johal_sanj



Thank you [@amtremonti](#) for your words and for sharing the importance of being a listening leader. It is important to listen with an open heart and open mind.

[#CL2021](#) [@BCPVPA](#)

2021-10-22, 12:14 PM

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Professional Learning Series



The 2021 Connecting Leaders Conference: Leading for Equity marked the beginning of our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion focus for professional learning. Equity work is ongoing work.

As we become more aware, our understanding deepens, and we embed new ways of being into our identity. To further develop and extend learning from the conference, Dr. Nouman Ashraf has continued to guide us along with three educators – Carolyn Roberts, Bryan Gidinski, and Beth Applewhite – who are leading the way with equity in British Columbia.

Nouman Ashraf is an Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, within the Organizational Behavior area, and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion initiatives at the Rotman School of Management. His webinar, Leading Equity, engaged a deeper exploration of how we might enable an equitable learning and working culture. In his session on Cultural Fluency, he introduced a continuum that begins with cultural awareness. As cultural awareness develops, it supports the development of cultural understanding. That deeper understanding results in the development of skills that enable leadership across difference.



Carolyn Roberts is a Coast Salish woman belonging to the Baker family from Squamish Nation, and the Kelly Family from the Tzeachten Nation. Carolyn is an Indigenous academic working in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University as a Faculty lecturer and Indigenous Pedagogies Teaching Fellow. She has been an educator and administrator for more than 20 years in the K-12 system. In Carolyn's webinar, Decolonizing and Indigenous Education, she talked of how the western colonial education system has shaped and formed our understanding of the colonization of Canada. She spoke of the impacts the education system has had on Indigenous people. She deepened knowledge and understanding of decolonial practices in the classroom.

Putting our learning into action requires a commitment to identify what we might start, stop, and continue to do with our teams, organizations, and ourselves to deepen the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is time for us to move beyond the performative and into the 'people work' of equity.

We look forward to our continued learning with our upcoming webinars The Performance of Pink with Bryan Gidinski and Equity in Action: Using a Cultural Humility Lens with Beth Applewhite.

The Performance of Pink

April 11, 2022 3:15-4:30 Zoom
Register bit.ly/BCP_LFE_Webinar

Bryan Gidinski is an intermediate elementary school teacher with more than twenty years of teaching experience. In addition, he has worked as a Faculty Associate and Sessional Instructor, teaching courses in Language Arts Methodology and Classroom Management as well as facilitating teacher education modules with Diversity and Literacy themes.

This session will provide some insights and perspectives on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and how leaders can influence the creation and maintenance of inclusive communities. Whether queer people are out and visible, or whether they are questioning or closeted, they are in our spaces and looking for messages as to whether it is safe to explore their identities and be their authentic selves. This session is situated in shifting the context from “Should we be having these conversations?” to “How do we have these conversation?” It will invite you to critically consider how to engage in supporting and empowering LGBTQ+ youth (and their families) and avoid performative allyship – The Performance of Pink.



Equity In Action: Using a Cultural Humility Lens

May 9, 2022 3:15-4:30 Zoom
Register bit.ly/BCP_LFE_Webinar

Beth Applewhite is the acting District Principal of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion with the Burnaby School District. BC born and raised, Beth is a bi-racial educator of Trinidadian and Scottish heritages. She has been unrelenting in her determination to challenge the status quo and create equitable experiences and spaces that both acknowledge racial bias and celebrate personal and cultural identities.

Beth uses her lived experiences to inform her practice and enlighten participants about the long-reaching effects of discrimination. This presentation is explicit, thought-provoking, and interactive. Beth's approach is not to shame and blame, but rather to meet participants where they are at with compassion and understanding. The session will take participants beyond definitions and awareness to reach honest personal reflection and authentic personal goals. Beth endeavours to create brave and courageous spaces for participants to reflect on their blind spots, share experiences, and 'try on' new perspectives. Participant voice is encouraged, appreciated, and respected. Beth looks forward to walking alongside BCPVPA members as we learn and grow together, and begin to reimagine what education could be.





Leaders Welcome!

Every spring, BCPVPA members are eligible to run for a seat on the Board of Directors.

Nominations open in April: watch for details on the **News** page at bcpvpa.org



LEADERSHIP



by
Peter Johnston

Director of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA

MATTERS

As partners in PLD, Dr. Andrea McComb and I have been settling into our new roles as Directors of Professional Learning and Development. Since starting our roles in August 2021, we have revisited and reassessed all of the traditional PLD offerings that have been available to our BCPVPA members.

Andrea and I have been working closely with our PLD Advisors and our PLD Representatives to ensure that we maintain and develop professional learning opportunities that provoke your thinking, and are transferrable to your own personal leadership growth and school context.

We know your leadership matters in the schools you lead. ‘Leading and Learning’ is a common theme throughout all our program offerings and new content development. As we have dug in, our team motto has evolved as ‘Leadership Matters’; the phrase has multiple meanings, as we know *your* leadership matters, and that there are many *matters* that affect your leadership in your schools. This is the lens we are using when developing our PLD offerings.

We have reviewed the many challenges involved in offering quality professional and development opportunities to all of members. We understand that your district may offer outstanding PLD, and acknowledge that there are many other organizations that offer PLD: you have many places to turn for your learning. Andrea and I believe that the BCPVPA offers PLD that focuses on *your* leadership at this point of the development of *your* career here in British Columbia. We will be offering multiple modalities, and the ability to connect to your Principal colleagues within your district and around the province.

After all, there are only 2,600 Principals and Vice-Principals in BC. We want to empower you to share your story, and to be an integral part of delivering leadership content across the province. In the way that teachers tend to have other teachers deliver

their professional development, we want to have our members deliver professional learning to their colleagues.

We know some of the challenges you face in choosing your PLD direction are drawn from your unique school district circumstances, perspectives, and professional learning values. Your local context may not be the same as in the rest of the province, but we feel that educational leadership has many attributes that are common, regardless of the school or district.

Effective professional learning is characterized as purposeful in its design, content, process, and application stages, and there is an intent to attain alignment and balance between personal and school needs.

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As well, effective professional learning design is long-term and embedded in one’s work, and incorporates high-quality facilitators who are knowledgeable, engaging, and skilled, and who ground their approaches in research-based content, practices, and an understanding of BC’s educational context. We will help you, as a Principal, to become a highly effective facilitator, a skill you can then take to your school, district, and region.

In Dianne Turner’s research paper “Leadership Learning and Development”, she suggests that PLD should offer ongoing support for leaders once they are assigned to a school leadership role, in the form of mentoring, participation in Principals’ networks

and study groups, school visits, and coaching. We agree, and we will strive to continue to develop these leadership support systems.

Dianne points out that researchers identify three features that appear to be particularly meaningful to school leaders, and she suggests that exemplary leadership programs have a coherent and comprehensive system-wide approach.

1. **A learning continuum** that begins with pre-service preparation, includes induction and in-service throughout the career, and utilizes the expertise of experienced and retired Principals in mentoring;
2. **Leadership learning** that is grounded in practice, which includes learning to analyze classroom practice, supervision of staff, and professional development that uses real in-school learning experiences, readings, and discussions; uses some inquiry methodology; and is organized around a leadership development framework; and
3. **Collaborative and collegial learning networks** that provide a community of practice experience, such as study groups, mentoring or peer coaching, and that engage in ongoing support.

You will find that BCPVPA's professional learning incorporates all of Dianne Turner's suggestions. Our programs focus on leadership, grounded in our acclaimed *BCPVPA Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in BC*, and support all career levels from aspiring teachers to new Principals and Vice-Principals to experienced Principals and Vice-Principals. Each program incorporates the critical aspects of the exemplary leadership programs that Turner identifies.

As former Principals in BC, we understand that lack of time, funding, and resources can be significant obstacles to your professional learning initiatives. As a member of the BCPVPA, we believe that BCPVPA's PLD should be one of the best PLD value propositions you can access.

Our members have expressed to us the necessity for cultivation of a supportive safe learning culture that has no embedded judgements or unconscious bias attached. We have created that safe learning environment for you within all our PLD programs. We are excited by the diversity of interests and needs of school leaders across BC, and the necessity for a wide range of choices and entry points for developing knowledge, skills, and critical understanding of leading our schools.

As we continue to revisit and reimagine the professional learning options for our members across the province, we are truly excited by the possibilities.

Our October 22, 2021 – the provincial professional learning day – we saw more than 700 school leaders participate in a virtual and in-person **Connecting Leaders Conference**. Connecting school leaders with other school leaders from across the province is an important facet of our PLD offerings, and something very few PLD organizations demonstrate to be a priority. We have continued the learning from the October conference with the ongoing **Leading for Equity Series**. Our conferences are not 'one and done!' We are looking to make the sharing of our learning easier as we refine and enhance the experience of connection for our members.

Our programs are charted from the beginning of your leadership journey. For teachers who are aspiring to become an administrator, their professional learning and development starts with the program called **Explorations for Aspiring School Leaders**. This program, now in its second year, offers insight into leadership roles through the eyes of current Vice-Principals and Principals.

With the input of our members, BCPVPA has recently changed the naming conventions for some of our traditional program offerings. If you are a newly-appointed Principal or Vice-Principal, *congratulations* and welcome to **Foundations for New School Leaders**. Previously titled Short Course I, this program has a 45-year history in partnership with UBC. Foundations is scheduled to be live and in person at the UBC campus July 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, 2022.

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This program has proven to be a powerful learning experience that lasts a lifetime.

We will also be gathering content and developing a program called **Extensions for Experienced School Leaders**, based on our previous offering Short Course II. This leadership program acknowledges that we require different leadership understandings depending on our leadership experience and context.

In our continuing efforts to present the best in leadership development programming, we have acquired the content of FranklinCovey's leadership programs and will be weaving these training materials throughout our programming. In addition, we have access to the Adaptive Schools Network programming and Compassionate Systems Leadership content. As we continue to acquire some of the finest leadership content available, we will tweak it to our BC context to support your ongoing leadership development.

All of the BCPVPA PLD programing will have exemplary pre- and in-service leadership development that incorporates:

A comprehensive and coherent PLD program that is aligned to our professional leadership standards, in particular the leadership standards which emphasize instructional leadership or leadership of learning;

- A leadership program that emphasizes leadership of instruction and school improvement;
- Expert leadership programs (including

FranklinCovey, Adaptive Schools Network, and Compassionate Systems), and training for Principals in facilitating these leadership programs to help further develop leaders' skills, draw on their personal experience in school leadership roles, and deliver the school's context;

- Leadership programs that integrate the theory and practice of BC schools, stimulate reflection, and engage participants in action-oriented learning experiences that include action research, inquiry, field or case studies, problem-based learning, reflective journal writing, and feedback assessment processes by peers, faculty and self;
- Leadership programs that include cohort, mentorship, and coaching structures that provide social and professional support, and may result in a Principal network that will provide support throughout your career.

As a provincial organization, we strongly believe that professional learning and development content needs to facilitate leadership for our members across the entire province. We will be developing Principals across BC to become facilitators in their region. We feel that professional learning and development should come from our Principal colleagues as much as possible.

Along with acquiring leadership development content, we continue to develop our Member Portal which will house a variety of webinars and personal professional learning opportunities that can be accomplished independently and collaboratively, in-person and online. This library of offerings will grow, and we look forward to the feedback and requests of our members.

Andrea and I are ecstatic about the potential of our PLD offerings. We are leaders in one of the highest performing educational systems in the world. We believe that the local public school is the hope of our province, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders. We are excited to be a part of your leadership journey.

LEADING FOR CHANGE

The Transformative Educational Leadership Program Gets Reviewed

by
Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser

THE ORIGINS OF TELP

We have enjoyed every aspect of our careers so far, and we both especially loved being school Principals. We feel very fortunate to have been involved in a number of leadership development programs including helping to design the provincial BCELC (British Columbia Education Leadership Council) program for new Vice-Principals and Principals. We also enjoyed the opportunity to create a graduate certificate program at two universities: the University of Victoria and Vancouver Island University. Both of these programs had a strong emphasis on equity and quality, curiosity, Indigenous understandings, and innovative learning environments. We have learned a great deal from each of our graduate students, and we are grateful that we get to observe their ongoing contributions to their schools and districts.

In 2015, we were asked by Dean Blye Frank at the University of British Columbia to create a new program at UBC for post-Masters students. We accepted his invitation and are now working with our seventh cohort in the Transformative Educational Leadership Program (TELP)¹. Right from the start, we were excited about the chance to create a program that allowed participants from all the levels of our system to learn together. There is a strong benefit to system change when teachers, Principals, Vice-Principals, district staff, and deputy ministers can learn as part of the same community.

The pandemic shifted the program to an online environment, which has made it easier for our participants from distant rural and urban communities to engage with the ideas. We have found that the certificate program is an excellent 'warm up' for those interested in tackling a doctoral program. It is also very useful for those who value working with others from a wide array of roles and places – the networking aspect of the cohort approach is very important.

In 2021, with seven years of experience with the program, Dean Frank decided it was time for an external review to examine what had been accomplished and what needed to be enhanced. Professor Louise

There is a strong benefit to system change when teachers, Principals, Vice-Principals, district staff, and deputy ministers can learn as part of the same community.

Stoll, a highly respected international researcher, agreed to conduct the evaluation. In the process, she surveyed TELP graduates as well as educators who had observed the impact of TELP graduates. She also conducted in-depth interviews with forty TELP graduates. Her findings are in an extensive report that we hope some of you will find the time to read.²

We found the graduate comments about transformation especially interesting as they reported that they were:

- Pushed to probe, inquire, and reflect deeply
- Provoked to challenge their own assumptions
- Moved towards paradigm shifts
- Forced to act
- Led to much broader perspectives
- Helped to find new opportunities
- Learned demanding ideas and gained courage
- Built confidence
- Stimulated greater interest in the potential of leadership
- Stimulated an even greater passion for learning
- Prepared them for further study and post-secondary teaching appointments

WHAT PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS HAVE TO SAY

In preparation for this article, we decided to follow up ourselves with a few Principals and Vice-Principals, to further reflect on what resonated with them from the TELP experience. Here's what we heard:

Elementary Principal

"While participating in TELP felt like an exciting opportunity for me, it was when I moved to my new school that I felt like I was able to really be part of school transformation. In my scanning and asking questions, I could see, hear, and feel that the community was in a state of stress. I thought back to my learning from Teresa Downs, Superintendent of Schools, Gold Trail SD 74, and how she always thought of the most vulnerable student in the district, and thought of that student with each decision that she made. While I was using an inquiring mindset while asking questions, it wasn't until we asked our students and families the four key questions – and looked at the answers together – that we were able to begin our journey as a staff to see if what we were doing was making a difference.

The most powerful shift that came from surveying the students was the creation of a committee that was led and facilitated by a core group of teachers on staff. What was once perceived as a task that needed to be completed by the Principal at the school has now become central to all of the decisions that we make together. Is what we are doing ensuring that everyone feels welcome and safe? We know the Spirals of Inquiry process is cyclical and ongoing. Being a part of school transformation is the most excited and fulfilled I have ever felt as a school leader."

Secondary Vice-Principal

"TELP came at the right time and right place for me. So much was constantly changing as we navigated through the pandemic, but TELP helped to frame

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my thinking as we explored new and innovative ways to support learners post-pandemic. The relevant and diverse texts with Indigenous themes woven throughout grounded my experiences by confirming my values and beliefs and challenging my assumptions.

Since participating in TELP last year, I feel that I am better equipped to navigate change, as I've been able to weave in many of the ideas and themes of TELP to future planning. In the current context, our leadership team has redesigned Educational Facilitator meetings to be centered around the Spirals of Inquiry. *The Spirals Playbook* and *Rethinking Letter Grades* will be the anchor texts for the year, and we are taking an inquiry stance that will allow staff leaders to make their curiosities visible.

In addition, our goal is to use the Spirals of Inquiry process with a group of student leaders. We want to know what is important to students, and to model curiosity around issues that are relevant, meaningful, and engaging. Our hope is that by aligning inquiry at the student, teacher, and formal leader levels, we can build more momentum towards being vulnerable and curious together to support all of our learners.”

Elementary Principal

“I have always believed that we have the collective wisdom to explore, connect, and align with our most valuable informants – our learners. With unfailing optimism and heart, I pursue how we can shift from information to innovation, and from intended learning to emergent learning. I rely on my ability to build deliberate acts of cohesion, maintain momentum, and use the Spirals to engage in focused and deep collaborative inquiry that leads to aligned action.

During TELP, I developed my capacity to transform my leadership (and my community) by exploring and engaging in dialogue, and debating about major challenges and opportunities facing schools and districts. TELP helped frame my optimism. I confidently focus on stories of hope, aspiration, and possibility. I frame concerns and expected resistance into opportunities for renewed perspectives and deep, experiential learning. I offer multiple entry

*TELP helped frame my optimism.
I confidently focus on stories of hope,
aspiration, and possibility.*

points and I know that when I focus on deepening knowledge and meeting people where they are at, we build trust. I see that transformation takes place when we understand and respect our learners, maintain our interconnectedness, and have a common, unified purpose that is aligned with a focus that has the biggest impact for our learners.

This is not easy. It is complex. *And so it should be.* I expect nothing less. The TELP program was a place for me grapple with the complexities and try to make sense of it all in the context of current research, with likeminded colleagues and experts from around the world. In studying leaders as case studies, I learned that I need to bear witness to – and understand – the stories of each individual, each group, and each network. Only then can I reflect and focus on the co-creation of next steps for meaningful learning and action, alongside one another. Our work can then be a beautiful, bold walk towards belonging and becoming. I know that when a community can see how their voice is heard and valued, and that when they can see how everything fits together, there is greater clarity and more energy for change.

The TELP program helped me learn that with cohesion, all layers of a school or organizational context can learn together, and thus enhance the likelihood of deep, sustainable change. I have been at the helm of this in my leadership and it is humbling to witness seemingly small imaginative thoughts develop amongst my staff, grow in momentum, live, and then transform a community of learners. I find joy in this work of creating commitment and taking action!”

Elementary Principal

The big impact from being a part of TELP was the realization that there is a whole community of educators and leaders who are interested in making

positive changes in schools, beyond what is already known and familiar to me. Having my perspective stretched through opportunities to hear and learn from so many different amazing minds shifted my own metrics for the work I do in schools. It also gave me a framework and grew my knowledge base around best practices for system and school leadership, from which I can make decisions and move my school community forward with more intentionality and a clearer purpose. Sometimes it’s hard to know where to grow as a leader – TELP asks us to think and act at a higher level, which is what makes it really engaging and actionable learning.

STAYING CONNECTED, MOVING FORWARD

Professor Stephan Huber leads the Institute for Management and Economics of Education at the University of Teacher Education in Zug, Switzerland. We had a chance to meet Stephan many years ago at a conference in Australia, and since then we have followed his work closely. His international research on effective Principal development programs had a significant influence on the design of each of the programs with which we have been associated, and his ongoing work continues to impact our thinking. One of the key findings from his original research of programs in fifteen countries was the importance of creating an ongoing opportunity for participants to stay connected, and to continue learning together after the program formally concluded. We have tried to create this in a variety of ways here in BC.

This year, for the first time, we have welcomed international participants from Australia and China into TELP. We are pleased about the potential for extending the impact of TELP. Right now, there is a quite lot of global interest in understanding why BC is such a strong system. We think that much of the success in BC is because of the quality of leadership in our schools. Being part of the TELP program, and getting to work alongside BC Principals and Vice-Principals in this program, is a career highlight for us both. We are deeply grateful to all the educators who have entrusted us with their learning.

Recently I was offered an opportunity to provide a two-hour keynote about inclusion in youth programming for the Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific) Fall Leadership Conference. As an educator and elementary Vice-Principal, I am very familiar with the core pedagogy of inclusion. It is an integral part of my day-to-day routine and experience. Our work as leaders in education provides us with a front-row seat to how inclusion works in the education system, yet we don't often have a window on how our work influences programs in the community. Having no prior connections or experience with National Defence, I was completely honoured by this opportunity.

As educational leaders, we are acutely aware of the multi-faceted approaches used to stretch and strengthen inclusion in our systems. Until this offer came across my desk, I hadn't truly reflected upon how far we have advanced in our understanding of how students learn, feel, and are connected to the adaptations and modifications we provide for success inside our school communities. To be honest, it sometimes just feels like 'what we do', a complete and total norm in our day-to-day operations. The opportunity to support one of the largest youth programming providers in our nation in their development of inclusion standards, pedagogy, and practice was a deep moment of critical reflection for me. It provided me with an opportunity to really consider the development in our system in comparison to other long-standing youth programs.

My belief is that all things in life connect. I recognize that this is not exactly a profound belief, nor is it truly profound to know that our story as an educational system connects to all other aspects of youth experience. However, when we start to apply this ideology to our collective story as leaders in our community, it becomes something very critical and deeply meaningful. Working with outside systems can help us – especially new leaders like myself – to look outwards in order to understand and reflect upon the

work we do within. Our students, experiences under our leadership in our system become the first pages of the story they will tell themselves and each other about what educational experiences feel like and what they mean; further layers are added to that story of experience when students participate in community programs. All of their experiences, individual or shared, connect to the work we do. Some stories are great but, for many students with complex needs, that story can take on different tones if inclusion is an after-thought instead of a forethought. So, I wondered: what happens when our work weaves into the story of other programs? My experience with this keynote presentation highlights how all of our connections become stronger when inclusion is recognized as a societal norm, rather than a unique microcosm that only exists in the scripted reality we create between the brick-and-mortar walls of our school buildings.

Something that I share with the staff and students I support is that when you are faced with adversity, a challenge, or a situation that requires reflection, start with what you know. Taking on a two-hour keynote presentation for more than 280 people working outside the world of elementary or secondary education definitely fit the bill for the 'start with what you know' mantra. So, I took my own advice and spent a few days holding space for what I know about the strategies and systemic ways of doing that make inclusion work in our system. I considered what would be most valuable to share with leaders in the Army, Sea, and Air Cadet programs. And then I began the threads of my keynote with my own understanding of inclusion.

For me, inclusion requires an understanding of a triangle approach: head (knowledge), heart (feelings), and hands (tangible efforts and actionable measures). In my head, inclusion is deeply rooted in a philosophy developed by Indigenous Education scholars Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt (2001), and Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule (2008). This philosophy is called the "5 R's of Indigenous Education", and it centers on Reciprocity, Relevance, Responsibility, Respect and – most importantly – Relationships. In my heart, inclusion is an opportunity to showcase the beauty and strength of diversity. Finally, in my hands, inclusion

WEAVING TOGETHER:

School Leadership in the Community

by
Christina Chase

Vice-Principal, View Royal Elementary
SD 61



is the day-to-day adaptations and modification in my school environment, and the teaching strategies and programming that are developed according to the strengths and needs of the individual learners we support.

Relationships are what make the story of inclusion real and meaningful. This keynote was an opportunity to develop a new relationship with a community group, and to share some of the impact of the relationships I've developed with inclusive learners over the years. I believe that the power and momentum of relationships carries all of us through those times when we face our most difficult situations. Relationships help us bridge our work between our schools and our communities. I continue to practice and believe that no student will ever remember the lessons that I have taught, but they will forever remember how I made them feel; they hold on to all of the feelings that emerge through our relationship as educator and student. This is the

message I shared with British Columbia's 135 Corps & Squadrons of Army, Air, and Sea Cadets.

The Cadet Corps and Squadron members heard, received, and celebrated this message with undivided attention and support. For me, weaving community and school leaders together is about connecting the relevance of our shared work in supporting youth. Cadets and school districts are two systems that have reciprocal relevance. We share a set of common goals for students in our community, and encourage successful participation in programming that leads to passion, opportunity, and self-actualization. The pathways that we follow in developing relationships, diversity, and inclusion have led us to share collective program goals that focus on teamwork, service, adventure, learning, skill development, gaining experience, and addressing challenges. The Cadet leaders asked questions that reflected a core understanding of the responsibility



Christina Chase with Chief Petty Officer First Class Mike Miller (L) and Commander Steph Gresmak (R)

we hold as school and community educators, ensuring all children have access to programming that is facilitated in welcoming environments, and led by a core and shared understanding of the power of inclusion.

My takeaways from the experience were that the work we do as educators to support inclusion in this province is deeply impactful outside of our educational settings. As educational leaders in British Columbia, we are integral as resources that – when tapped – can change the course of broader work in the province. What we know about how learners learn, and the development of inclusive programming, can serve as a bridge for supporting best practices in youth programs in our communities.

After the keynote on September 11, 2021, I had the honour of being recognized for my contribution to Cadet Leadership programming. In October, I was presented with a paddle to take with me on my journey of leadership and inclusion in our province.

During the ceremony, Chief Petty Officer First Class Mike Miller, MMM, CD, Regional Chief Warrant Officer, Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific), and Commander Steph Gresmak, CD Commanding Officer, Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific) shared the impact of my work for their teams and members. They shared that their learning has benefited their programs immensely in terms of the work they have ahead, ensuring that the recipients of their programs can connect in a way that reflects relevance and reciprocity. They shared a strong desire to further develop the relationships between our two systems: school districts and Cadets Programs. They spoke about their new-found understanding about the power of visual learning, support strategies, and how to start with what they know in order to build greater opportunities for inclusion in their systems. They shared the story of what I taught them through the creation of images on the paddle they presented. They stated that all the members of their team have continued to engage and reflect upon what they had learned from the presentation.

The story told through the paddle is something I will cherish for the rest of my career. The braided cords on

the top of the paddle reflect my three achievements in education: Community Support Worker Certificate, Bachelor of Education, and Masters of Education.



The three colours spun together on the bottom of the paddle represent the three strands of the Cadet program: Army, Air, and Sea.





How they described the middle of the paddle will forever be held in my heart.

The middle weave represents the message that their members took away from my work, and the core concept that together we weave our stories to provide strength, support, and community for youth in our province and country. The weave represents the bridge of support that our work as community leaders creates between systems of education and broader opportunities for experience, skill building, and relationships in our communities.

The work we do as leaders is critical in ensuring that the upcoming generation carries on the 5 core R's of inclusive practices in every aspect of our community.

“There are often many roads that lead to the same destination. This can make the journey interesting, challenging, unique and worthwhile. Sometimes, in fact, the journey becomes more significant than the arrival at any particular place and the distance travelled, and the lessons learned along the way are the purpose of the voyage. Sometimes the work of reconciliation is done on our own, and sometimes we come together and share the parts of the journey forward.”

**Aimee Craft and Paulette Regan
(Pathways of Reconciliation).**

mentorship

“I have found it valuable to learn from someone outside my district, in an authentic way. The real-life experiences of my Mentor put my theoretical learning into perspective.”

(2020 Mentee)

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

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Stepping
Out

of the

Informative

Bullet
Point

by
Vincent Tourvieille
Principal, École Anne-Hébert
SD93

Agenda

Introduction

Two things were instrumental in helping me to start the first staff meeting of the year with an activity very much like what I was doing in my classroom, and not with an ‘informative bullet point’ type of communication.

The first is a quote from the *BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide*: “There is no ‘right’ way to conduct a staff meeting, but remember that no one likes to be ‘talked at’ for an hour, so prioritize what business must be conducted at the face-to-face meeting and what can be dealt with via email.”¹ Thank you to whoever wrote this: it sparked a big change! Why was it that in the classroom I was advocating for small group thinking and sharing, with students standing up and moving around, yet that as a Principal, my first impulse when holding a staff meeting was to talk through the agenda while attendees listen?

The psychological aspect of this will be left for another time: today I want to reflect on the activity presented by BCPVPA Executive Director Kevin Reimer in his article “Developing a Staff Vision”² which is the second piece that was instrumental to transforming my first staff meeting of the year. In his article, Kevin says that in September 2020, “School leaders were challenged to maintain authentic connections with their staff members to develop and reinforce a shared understanding of the purpose of their common work”. Upon reading this sentence, I felt compelled to try the activity he proposed as – surely – two hours of informative bullet point delivery won’t achieve anything that approaches authentic connections leading towards a shared goal. So, here is how I adopted and tweaked Kevin’s activity (thank you Kevin!).

Note that when thinking about “authentic connections with staff members”, I think of all the staff in the school including teachers, teaching assistants, and

office staff. It would be a pretty obvious irony to talk about student inclusion while never having space and time where all the staff can be together. So, I invited everyone to participate in the first half of the meeting (before proceeding with the informative bullet point items – I figured I could not totally escape those!)

The Activity

1. As a group, we followed Kevin’s suggestion and went through the definition of ‘Hall of Fame’, and the reasons why people may be inducted.

2. Pens and white sheets of paper were distributed to all and, as suggested by Kevin, everyone was asked to write down thoughts related to the following questions:

Note that I gave each question one-by-one, leaving the staff with time in between for thinking and writing.

- What is your Hall of Fame moment in teaching/ working with students and their families?
- What do you view as a significant success or accomplishment in the work that you do with students, families, or staff members?
- What beliefs or values are you able to connect to that moment?

3. Small Group Sharing

- In small groups, staff shared their stories. Then they were asked to identify the values or beliefs that were central to the stories. They recorded the values on a sticky note.

- Here, I departed from the ‘choose a partner’ strategy, and I leveraged with great results the technique of visible random grouping from Peter Liljedahl.³ Both Peter’s research and my own classroom and outside-the-classroom experience have taught me that visible

1 BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide, June 2020, www.bcpvpa.org/resources/publications/leadership-planning-guide

2 BCPVPA Leading: Back to School, August 2021, “Developing a Staff Vision”, bit.ly/LBTS_sv

3 “Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics, Grades K-12: 14 Practices for Enhancing Learning” (Liljedahl, 2020), <https://peterliljedahl.com/wp-content/uploads/Visibly-Random-Groups.pdf>



Small Group Meetings

random grouping is the best way to achieve authentic and inclusive small group discussion. If the ‘choose a partner’ technique would have been used, I am ready to bet that teachers would have mingled with teachers, TAs with TAs, and office staff with office staff. And if I had myself chosen the groups in a visible or hidden way, I am ready to bet that some staff members would have resented me in some way, which would not have helped the creation of connections between all. Using the compassionate systems vocabulary, one can say that employing a visibly random strategy for group formation is very conducive to triggering a generative social field.⁴

- To create visibly random groups, I directly leveraged the technique used by Liljedahl in one workshop I attended.⁵ Playing cards are chosen at random by people, who then go to find large-size playing cards placed all around the gymnasium. The people who have similar cards find each other at the same location and form the group. It is fun, makes us move, and stand, and achieves a fast visible random grouping with a total Dollar Store investment of \$5. Unbeatable!

⁴ <https://www.systemsawareness.org/cultivating-generative-social-fields>

⁵ myPITA Conference, (Whistler, May 12, 2017). Just experiencing this playing card technique was worth the day driving back and forth from Richmond to Whistler. I will take the opportunity to thank my Principal at the time, M. Réjean Gosselin, for offering to take my classroom for the day in case there was no substitute teacher available. This is a hallmark of true leadership from my Principal, for which I am very grateful and from which I learned immensely!

4. Sticky Note Moment

- “Every staff activity needs a sticky note moment,” says Kevin Reimer in his article. I took it as a joke initially, but in fact there is a lot of wisdom to it!
- In turn, one delegate from each group went to a big sheet of paper on the wall, affixed the sticky note, and said loudly to all the value that was written on it.
- This concluded the activity. The poster with all of the ‘values’ sticky notes is in my office, and my task ahead is to engage in the follow-up process described by Kevin.

Reflection

It was my first time trying to dedicate staff meeting time beyond the traditional bullet point agenda items. It felt very much like trying something new in the classroom, and the same questions related to risk-taking arose for me:

Will it work? Will anyone sabotage the activity? Will inclusion, meaningful connections, and learning be generated from it?

I felt like a bit of an outsider. Unlike being the teacher, where I always expected to remain the teacher while students engage in activities, I found that in being the

facilitator, it felt weird to be alone in the center of the gymnasium while everyone was discussing in their small groups. I was also a staff member, and would have liked to be part of the small group conversations.

While I could have briefly joined some small groups, I never liked it when others had done this when I was in small groups in the past. It felt intrusive, and can break the flow of the small group dynamic, so I decided to not visit the groups. I was – and still am – thirsty for inside information of what happened in those groups.

I did ask two people: a teacher and an office staff member. The teacher had a mixed reaction in terms of how she liked the activity, yet she shared a very telling story. One TA in her group shared what a special needs student told him on his first day of work: “You will be like the others; you will leave soon”.

The office staff members shared that some TAs were uncomfortable writing things down. This is interesting, as TAs are supposed to help students actually engage in the process of writing things down. However, the same TA the staff member was referencing volunteered to put the sticky notes on the wall, and I remember her telling everyone with energy while

walking to the wall “This I can do”. This really felt like a good combination of different activities, one being a stretch, and the other more easily accessible. This also provided TAs with an opportunity to experience an activity that students are typically being asked to do.



What is Next?

I want to build upon this process, and continue having a similar dynamic during the first part of our staff meetings. We have started training ourselves in restorative practices,⁶ and I intend to leverage the restorative practices material so that as a staff we explore the concepts more deeply using similar types of activities.

In addition, I just completed a 4-day compassionate systems leadership seminar. Even though the intent to write this article, and its main ideas, were born prior to the seminar, the act of writing it is a direct result of my participation in the seminar. It is also obvious that the ideas in the seminar can be leveraged with great effect to continue to step out of the bullet point agenda: this is just the beginning!



Sticky Notes on the Wall



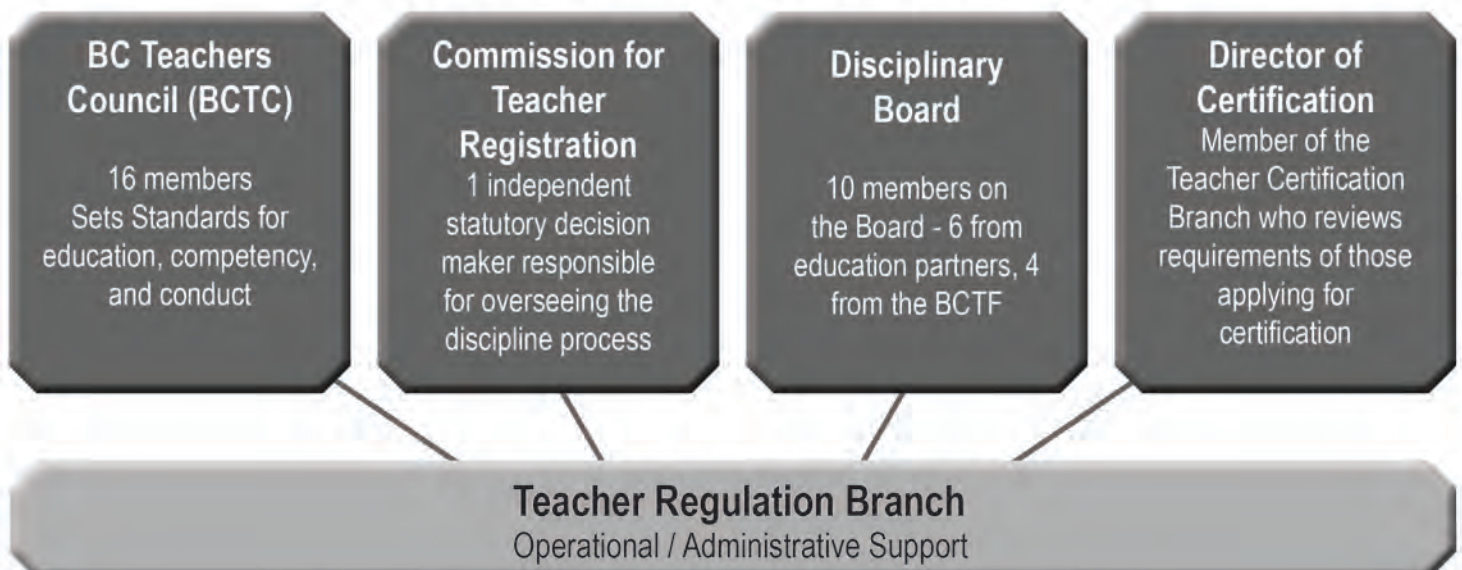
What is the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB)?

The TRB is a branch of the Ministry of Education that administers professional regulation for certified educators in British Columbia. The TRB works within a legislative mandate to ensure educators in the K-12 system maintain a high standard of competence and conduct required to ensure public confidence in the education system.

The TRB was created as part of the implementation of the *Teachers Act*. The *Teachers Act* sets out the discipline process for BC educators, and creates a system whereby reports and complaints can be received by the Commissioner. The *Teachers Act* sets the standards for the competence and conduct expected. The *Teachers Act* also establishes teacher education approval standards to ensure that teacher education programs meet program approval.

TRB Regulatory Model

Shared Responsibility under the *Teachers Act*



Adapted from BC Ministry of Education. Commissioner for Teacher Regulation, Discipline Process

by

**Carmen Eberle, Magdalena Kassis
& Ellen Roberts**

Directors of Member Support Services, BCPVPA

What is the Role of the Commissioner?

The Commissioner supervises the discipline process. The primary job of the Commissioner is to make determinations regarding complaints about the conduct of certificate holders. The Commissioner reviews all information gathered, and decide what process is most appropriate to address the complaint or report that has come forward. The Commissioner is tasked with ensuring concerns of BC certified educators are treated fairly, expeditiously, and in the public's best interest.

Why Does it Matter?

All certificate holders in British Columbia are held to the Professional Standards for BC Educators (the 'Standards') of the BC Teachers Council. As leaders in their schools and districts, Principals and Vice-Principals are held to an even higher standard, so it is important that the Standards are always upheld – while at work as well as while interacting in the community. As leaders, administrators must ensure that the teachers they supervise are reminded of the Standards, and that they themselves keep the Standards in mind at all times. This is especially important when navigating challenging situations in the workplace, and in supporting students and parents. It is equally important for Principals and Vice-Principals to remember that conduct outside of the workplace – including behaviour in social and public settings – is also measured by the TRB Standards.

When there is cause to believe that an educator has breached a Standard, a complaint can be filed. This is something that can be initiated by anyone – a staff person, or a member of the general public. All complaints are taken seriously by the TRB, and follow a strict process and protocol. The BCPVPA Member Support Services team can assist with any questions or concerns relating to a TRB complaint or investigation.

The disciplinary process has been established to ensure the Standards are upheld. Even so, the process and potential outcomes for members, founded or unfounded, can be very stressful. For that reason, it is important to know what the Standards are, and how they apply to our work.

What are the Standards?

There are nine Professional Standards, and they apply to all educators in the Province of BC who hold a valid teaching certificate. The Standards must always be upheld, both as a condition of holding a teaching certificate, and as a condition of employment. The Standards reflect the values and beliefs that are widely held within our education system.

- 1) Educators value the success of all students. Educators care for students and act in their best interests.
- 2) Educators act ethically and maintain the integrity, credibility, and reputation of the profession.
- 3) Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development.
- 4) Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families, and communities in schools.
- 5) Educators implement effective planning, instruction, assessment, and reporting practices to create respectful, inclusive environments for student learning and development.

- 6) Educators demonstrate a broad knowledge base and an understanding of areas they teach.
- 7) Educators engage in professional learning.
- 8) Educators contribute to the profession.
- 9) Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understand of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis.

Navigating the Complaint Process

When a staff person or member of the public feels that a certificate holder has breached one or more of the Standards, this can result in a formal complaint being filed with the TRB.

Receiving a Complaint

When the TRB receives a complaint about a member, they will most often reach out with a letter via email to inform the respondent. A summary of the complaint is provided, along with a deadline for response. As soon as a member receives a complaint, they are encouraged to reach out to the BCPVPA for representation, guidance, and support.

Preliminary Review

A member of the BCPVPA Member Support Services team will work alongside a member facing a TRB investigation to ensure that they understand the process, and to support them through subsequent stages.

Most complaints filed with the TRB go through a Preliminary Review stage during which the Commissioner decides whether to assign the file to an investigator for a full investigation, or to take 'no

As leaders, administrators must ensure that the teachers they supervise are reminded of the Standards, and that they themselves keep the Standards in mind at all times.

further action'. It is ultimately up to the Commissioner to decide the direction.

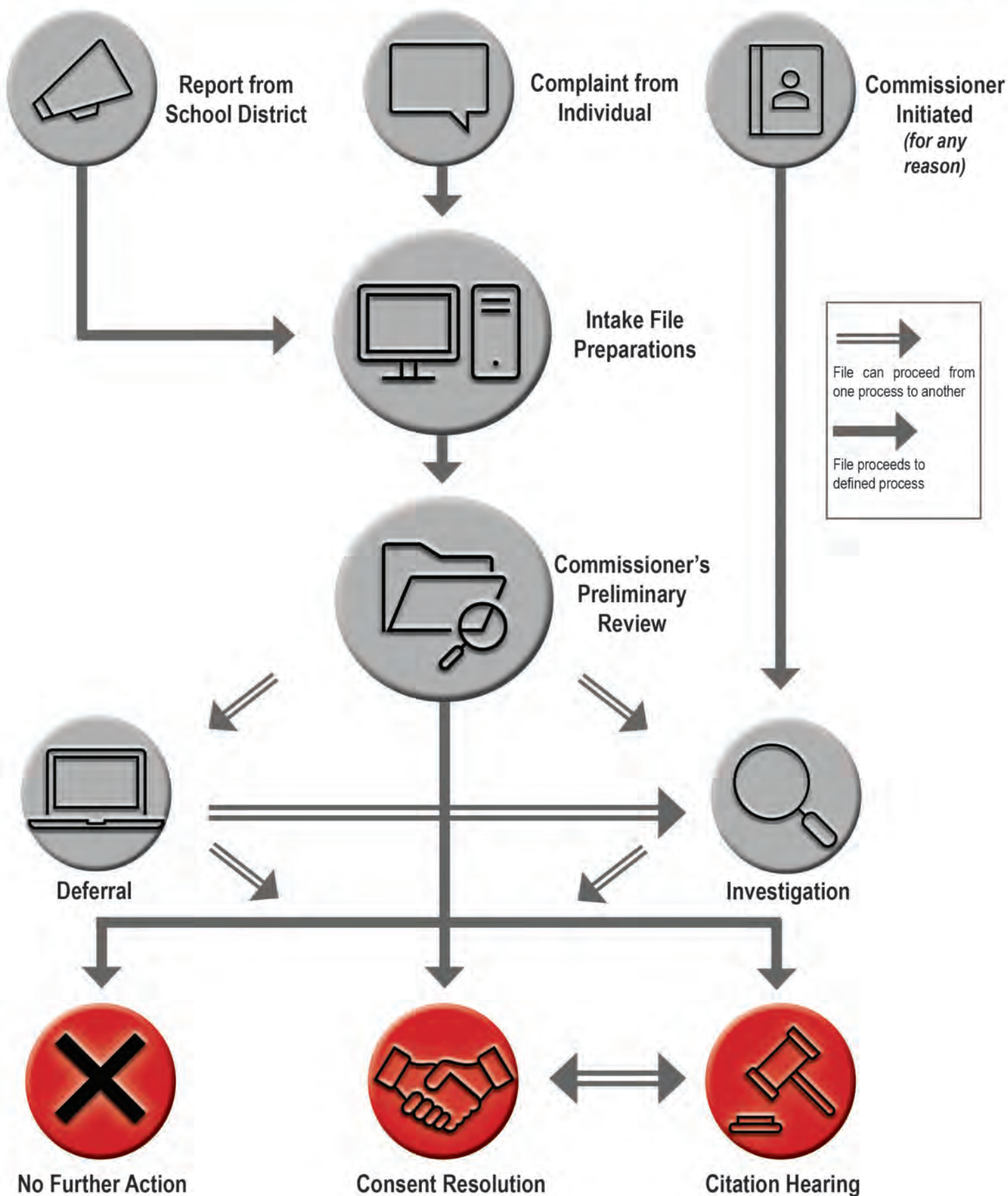
If no further action is being taken, a closure letter is sent to the complainant and to the respondent. The Commissioner's decision is final and binding. If a Complainant wishes to take further action, they have 60 days in which to file with the Supreme Court of BC to have a judge review the decision, or they can reach out to the Office of the Ombudsperson for a review of the fairness of the process.

It is not uncommon for there to be a considerable time span between the submission being made to the TRB, and receipt of an update about the status of the complaint.

Investigations

In some situations, the Commissioner makes a determination following the Preliminary Review that an investigation is warranted. The purpose of the investigation is to gather more information to assist with the decision-making process. An investigator is assigned to gather documentation, conduct interviews as necessary, and write the investigation report. The Commissioner uses the information from the investigation to determine the outcome. Following an investigation, the Commissioner will decide to take no further action, accept a proposal for consent resolution, issue a citation for a hearing, or order a further investigation. It is possible that the individual's Certification may be suspended or cancelled if the Commissioner feels there is a serious risk to the health and safety of students.

Disciplinary Process



Frequently Asked Questions

Who is expected to be proficient in the Professional Standards?

All certificate holders including Principals and Vice-Principals use the Standards to guide their practice and growth. The Standards are there to outline the role and work of educators and they must always be followed.

Under what circumstances may the Commissioner decide on no further action after a complaint?

- If a complaint was made in bad faith or for an inappropriate purpose
- If a complaint was not made in a timely manner
- If there is no reasonable evidence that the matter will result in an adverse finding
- If it is not in the public's interest to proceed

How long does it take for the Commissioner to investigate a complaint or report?

Timelines vary and can take several months before the preliminary review is completed, and up to a year before an investigation is concluded.

What if the issue has also been investigated by the district?

These are usually different processes and purposes in such a situation. The TRB's role is to look through the lens of the Professional Standards, and the district's role is often to investigate based, for example, on a Code of Conduct, or on Bullying and Harassment policy language. It is possible that the Commissioner may take the district investigation into consideration.

The Commissioner may decide to defer action until

another process has been concluded by a school district or a criminal proceeding.

Will I get a copy of the complaint?

Yes: the respondent is notified of the complaint, and a copy of the complaint is provided. Anyone who may have relevant information regarding the complaint may be contacted.

What is a Consent Resolution Agreement?

This is a voluntary process, and is a written agreement between the certificate holder and the complainant documenting what has been decided, and how it relates to the certificate holder's status and/or practice. The outcome is shared with the complainant, provided it does not cause further hardship to the person who may have been harmed.

BCPVPA members are strongly encouraged to stay current, and to remain well-versed in and abide by Professional Standards. If you have further questions or find yourself in a situation where you need support relating to the TRB, please reach out to the BCPVPA Member Support Services Team.

What does Duty to Report mean? When might my district file a report with the TRB?

Under Section 38 of the *Teachers Act*, if a certificate holder's conduct meets either of the following criteria below, a regulatory response is required even if employment discipline has already been imposed:

- The conduct alleged involves emotional, physical, or sexual harm, abuse or exploitation of a student
- The alleged conduct challenges the integrity of the teaching profession or school system — even if there is no direct harm to a student.



The Standards must always be upheld, both as a condition of holding a teaching certificate, and as a condition of employment.

The Standards reflect the values and beliefs that are widely held within our education system.

Jason Burnstick is a member of the Plains Cree Nation who has worked as a Family Wellness Mentor, Restorative Justice Worker, and Youth Facilitator, and currently as a Rehabilitation Counselor at the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Jason is a Leo Award Winner, a Canadian Folk Music Award Winner, and a two-time Juno Nominee.

With many schools both considering and implementing alternative resolutions for conflict, we asked Jason to share his thoughts on his own journey to discovering and embracing Restorative Justice.

My exploration and understanding of the philosophy of Restorative Justice began through challenging my own values, and reprogramming my own 'hard drive', a process that shaped the man I am today. I will give warning: as I speak, I will address some of the difficulties I faced as a child. So, here it goes.

As a father, a husband, a son, a brother, a cancer survivor, an Indigenous man, and a child of the 60s Scoop, I am more than proud of my perseverance and accomplishments. I'm not one of the good ones, I believe **we are all good**. Some of us were lucky enough to have the right people around at the right time – others, not so much. To say that I came out unscathed is far from the truth. I carry a tremendous amount of anger that – at times – I navigate daily. I am angry for the time and love that was stolen from me and my mother, and for my family that could never be replaced. I am angry for years that are forever unattainable. I am angry as I cannot comprehend how some adults I faced as a child were so unbelievably

cruel and inhumane. There is so much anger born from my scars, and then to hear someone say, "get over it", or look to minimize my experiences... it's almost humorous, as that is an impossible task for anyone. I no longer wonder about their intent. I know now what it is: they don't care. Perhaps I have become jaded, or maybe more enlightened with age, because I feel now that if I give into the anger, I am no better than the ones that harmed me. When I look at my son, I see how beautiful, happy, and incredibly loved he is. I know in my heart of hearts that I would go through it all again for him.

My love for music and Justice have always been present in my life. My brothers taught me music, and the world taught me about systemic racism (insert laugh here). As a youth, and even as an adult, I wondered why my friends and I were continually stopped and searched by the police. This went on well into my thirties. I often found refuge in music when I needed the escape, yet when it came to trying to understand why the relationship was strained between Indigenous populations and the Justice System, I didn't have any answers. I just knew it felt degrading, and that we were racially profiled. I've had many successes in my life; on top of being a two-time Juno nominee, I also received a scholarship to a Criminology program. It was there that I found the answers I was looking for. I was right to feel that my rights were being infringed upon, because they were. I came to learn about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and discovered that the searches I endured were in fact a direct violation of my Section 8 Rights. *Everyone has the right to be secure against an unreasonable search or seizure.* Look into Section 24.2 as well.... blah blah blah *brings the administration of justice into disrepute* – it is fascinating stuff. Anyway, I think the thing I found most interesting was asking this question: how can I utilize my struggles as something positive to propel myself forward? I heard of Restorative Justice throughout my youth, and my initial understanding was that it is an Indigenous practice, so I was more than thrilled years later to become a Youth Justice Coordinator

WHERE THE HEALING BEGINS

by

Jason Burnstick

Rehabilitation Counselor

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba



with the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services. It was there that I got my feet wet, and began the journey.

When we look at the philosophy of Restorative Justice, it includes a wide spectrum of social-economic areas. It's not only about Justice or mediation; Restorative Justice, in part, is a mindset. For me personally, it has meant addressing the challenges that came into my life, and embracing the power of choice. It doesn't mean that everything is perfect and all better. However, it does mean that I made a choice to take responsibility for myself, and to be mindful of what I bring to the world moving forward.

We must take responsibility for ourselves daily: so, what does that mean? An Elder once broke it down for me. He said, take responsibility for how we touch someone: what is our intention, is it to show love, or harm? Take responsibility for how we look at someone: there is so much in our eyes that speak to how we feel. We could say a lot without saying anything. Take responsibility for the words we speak: words are very powerful, we all know this. Of equal importance, take responsibility for the energy we bring into the room. From the best days to the worst, from absolute love to absolute hate. From those closest to us, to the stranger passing in the street, we make a choice about what kind of energy we want to bring into the world.

“We all have bad days; it doesn’t mean we have a license to ‘shit on the room’.”

We all come from different experiences and unique backgrounds, and it's a beautiful thing when we can acknowledge that and celebrate it together. I see more non-Indigenous people standing in solidarity with Indigenous people at a national level. The sea of orange has been overwhelming, and it instills hope: I never thought I would see such a day. We all have a lot of healing to do, and a lot more to learn from each other. Restorative Justice is also about repairing the harm.

The BCPVPA offers
a continued journey
of learning, and
the opportunity to
collaborate with
colleagues, to more
than 2,600 Principals
and Vice-Principals
in BC's K-12 public
education system.

bcpvpa.org

learning

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

(2019 BCPVPA Program Attendee)

Leading Through COVID-19

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL OF MAPLE LEAF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL – WUHAN

by

Jacalyn Kersey

Superintendent of Schools

China Maple Leaf Educational Systems

Maple Leaf had been successfully operating British Columbia Offshore Schools in China for 25 years, and has endured its fair share of obstacles.

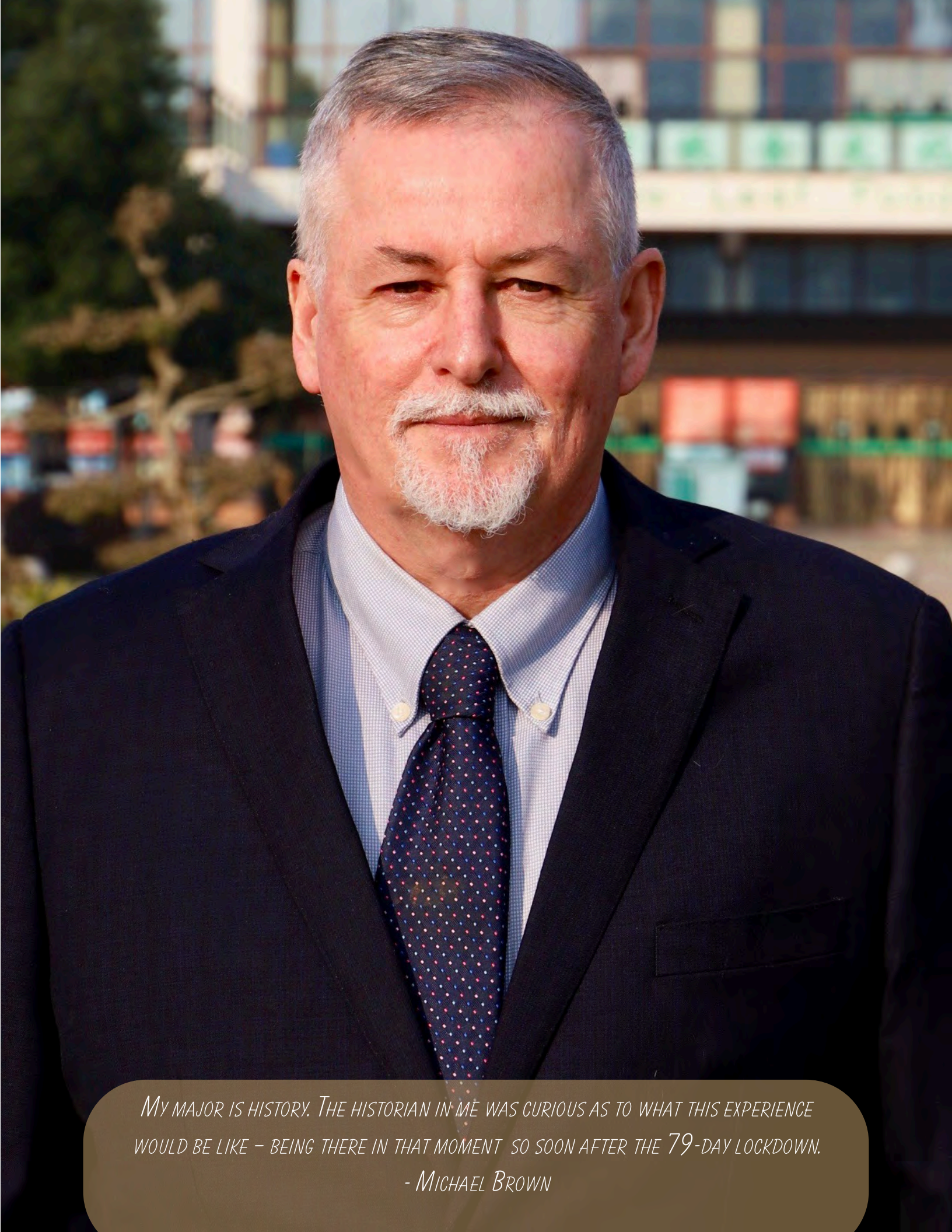
No past experience, however, would challenge school leaders like COVID-19. The entire world of education was impacted by COVID-19, but that impact was first felt in Wuhan, and the first Canadian teachers to bear its consequences were BC teachers at Maple Leaf Wuhan.

Maple Leaf International School – Wuhan opened its doors in 2007 and by the 2019/2020 school year there were 1,500 BC students enrolled in grade 10–12, and more than 60 BC teachers. In February 2020, many staff left the country to enjoy their month-long Chinese New Year holiday. The four-week vacation turned into an accidental diaspora – to this day many of those teachers have not been able to return. When China closed its borders in March 2020, only eleven BC teachers remained in Wuhan. They endured a 79-day quarantine. They lived not knowing what the future would hold, but knowing that all the hospitals were full and that a massive hospital was being built to accommodate the ever-increasing number of COVID-19 patients. The kindness of Chinese neighbours kept them sane, and kept them supplied with food and resources.

In the midst of it all, over the course of a week in February, teachers learned to use an online learning platform. The next week, students learned the platform and teachers collaborated to upload lessons and resources. On March 1, 2020, full time classes resumed via the online platform. The year was completed with remote learning.

In March of 2020 – in the middle of the city's quarantine – Michael Brown accepted a position as Principal of Wuhan Maple Leaf High School. He began his tenure in August of 2020, shortly after the lockdown was lifted.

JACKIE KERSEY: Michael, you returned to China in the middle of a pandemic in February of 2020. In March you accepted the Principalship in Wuhan. What was going through your mind at that time? (*What was he thinking!?*)



My MAJOR IS HISTORY. THE HISTORIAN IN ME WAS CURIOUS AS TO WHAT THIS EXPERIENCE WOULD BE LIKE – BEING THERE IN THAT MOMENT SO SOON AFTER THE 79-DAY LOCKDOWN.

- MICHAEL BROWN

MICHAEL BROWN: I returned to Weifang – the city where I was working in China – before the China border closed. I had decided to look for new opportunities and discovered there was a BC school in Wuhan looking for a Principal. I threw my hat in the ring. In retrospect I don't think there were too many hats in that particular ring at that time *(laughs)*.

JK: *Why Wuhan?*

MB: My family asked the same question. My major is history. The historian in me was curious as to what this experience would be like – being there in that moment so soon after the 79-day lockdown. Another reason was my wife and I, after retirement, have always wanted to donate our time to places that need support. I thought Wuhan could be a precursor to this. I imagined it would be a tough sell to get educators there.

JK: *Were you not concerned about COVID-19?*

MB: No. I thought that if there was a place where officials would want to prevent major outbreaks it would be Wuhan. When I arrived, the office staff lauded me as a hero. I should have run with that! However, I knew I would be safe.

JK: *You mentioned the office staff. Was there teaching staff there when you arrived?*

MB: We only had eleven teaching staff on the ground, folks who did not make it out or who chose to stay during the pandemic.

JK: *How do you feel this experience impacted them?*

MB: It had a huge impact. Imagine being stuck in the middle of a crisis in a country where you don't know the language, facing a disease that no one has ever

*IMAGINE BEING STUCK IN THE MIDDLE
OF A CRISIS IN A COUNTRY WHERE YOU
DON'T KNOW THE LANGUAGE, FACING
A DISEASE THAT NO ONE HAS EVER
EXPERIENCED BEFORE.*

experienced before. I would be surprised if anyone came out of that without some sort of PTSD. They are the real heroes.

JK: *How so?*

MB: I get a little verklempt talking about this. When I arrived, there was a surprise welcome party held in the office. These teachers and their families who had just been through a hellish experience were so inviting, so gracious, and so concerned about my wellbeing, it was overwhelming.

JK: *So, staff returned to work for the 2020/2021 school year on August 15 with classes beginning on September 1?*

MB: Correct. About 1,400 students showed up ready to attend in-person classes. We had eleven teachers and one administrator on the ground, and two admin out-of-country with about fifty teachers instructing remotely.

JK: *Logistically that must have been challenging.*

MB: Absolutely. We had two weeks to set up cameras and microphones in classrooms, find and train teacher assistants to supervise online courses, train newly hired staff, and distribute learning resources. It was a tall order, and if not for our Chinese partners we would have been in a real pickle. They were amazing. They secured TAs from local universities, and ensured all

had a criminal record check. I was part of the training. They were all aspiring educators. It was invigorating. The tech folks were able to set up the cameras and mics and by September 1 we were good-to-go. The admin team who was not on the ground looked after the training of new staff.

JK: So, what was September 1 like?

MB: It was seamless... I'm kidding! It was bedlam. We had the foundations set up, but the school's bandwidth could not manage the traffic. We had teachers not being able to connect to their classrooms, some of our TAs were overwhelmed. I was running around just trying to problem solve with the help of the teachers on the ground. The tech guy was amazing, to this day I don't know how he managed. As the week progressed, things got better, but did not normalize until around mid-October.

JK: And what do you mean by 'normalize'?

MB: Great question. We became accustomed to the 'new normal'. We accepted the fact most teachers would remain teaching from their home countries into the second semester. We did try to normalize in the sense that we focused Pro-D on non-COVID-19 issues. We tried to find ways to do staff events that included our on-line teachers, for example events like escape rooms were organized to promote community. However, there was nothing 'normal' about the 2020-21 school year.

JK: So, what did you learn from this experience?

MB: The biggest thing I took away from the experience was not something I learned, it was the cementing of something I knew. Educators are resilient and passionate. When I look back, I can't believe what the staff accomplished. The teachers who were there

THE BIGGEST THING I TOOK AWAY FROM THE EXPERIENCE WAS NOT SOMETHING I LEARNED, IT WAS THE CEMENTING OF SOMETHING I KNEW. EDUCATORS ARE RESILIENT AND PASSIONATE.

in August had gone through the entire Wuhan ordeal and were working under stressful conditions, while many other teachers started their day at midnight. Some single parents were trying to work through the night, and child mind during the day. Add the anxiety caused by trying to obtain the proper documentation to get back to Wuhan, and then having to endure a quarantine of up to five weeks. It took its toll, there's no sugar coating it; teaching is stressful, and this took it to another level.

JK: Did you consider the school year a success?

MB: Absolutely. When I look back it was the most adversity-filled, yet successful year in my career. A staff member once said we were "building the plane while flying it". That struck a chord with me. We landed the damn plane. The graduation rate was 98%. Watching those graduates cross that stage is something I will never forget. All staff on campus attended. The students presented each teacher with a bouquet of flowers. The genuine gratitude and concern the students and teachers had for each other was written on their faces. The entire experience affirmed for me that educators are a special breed.

JACALYN KERSEY has been a teacher and leader in the BC system for 28 years. She is currently the Superintendent of BC Schools for China Maple Leaf Educational Systems.

MICHAEL BROWN has been a teacher and leader in the BC system for 25 years. He is currently the Assistant Superintendent of BC Schools for China Maple Leaf Educational Systems.

THIS MAY, HELP KIDS GET BACK INTO THEIR JEANS

BCPVPA is proud to support this province-wide initiative during the month of May. It's a chance for students to come together and wear jeans to show what they stand for—helping sick and injured kids get out of their hospital gowns and back into their own jeans.

It's easy to get involved with Jean Up this May

- > Sign up your school now at JeanUp.ca/schools
- > Collect donations online by sharing your school's fundraising page
- > Pick a day for all students to wear their jeans—then celebrate the difference your school is making



Perks of the Jean Up school program

- > Month-long initiative gives schools flexibility to pick any day in May to Jean Up
- > We will provide stickers for all students to proudly wear
- > We provide all the tools you need—including an online fundraising page for your school, messaging for newsletters, automatic tax receipts and a poster to track progress

Double your impact!

All donations made through your online fundraising page will be matched by our friends at Odlum Brown Limited.



ODLUM BROWN
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*Gifts will be matched from May 1-31, up to a cumulative total of \$30,000.



TRUE BLUE SUPPORT FOR JEAN UP



Having “the blues” usually refers to feelings of sadness or melancholy. But for Mike Avis, a Physical Education teacher at a small school near Parksville on Vancouver Island, the colour blue represented a triumph and reason to celebrate.

Errington Elementary has been supporting BC Children’s Hospital through the Jean Up campaign for the last four years, but this past year the school kicked it up a notch by taking their fundraising efforts online and spreading the campaign to the broader community. Mike also offered an enticing fundraising goal: if the school community raised \$2,000 or more, Mike committed to dyeing his hair a bright, vibrant blue.

Mike had a strong motivation to encourage support for BC Children’s Hospital: his second son, Judah, was born with a double inlet left ventricle, a heart condition that would require multiple surgeries. The first surgery had to be done just 36 hours after Judah was born, with the second happening at four months of age and the third when Judah was four years old.

All three surgeries were done at BC Children’s Hospital, and now Judah is a healthy, energetic child who loves to run.

“I was eager to have Errington Elementary take part in Jean Up because of my son Judah and the incredible care he received at BC Children’s Hospital,” Mike said. Dyeing his hair blue was a gesture he would be happy to make if it provided inspiration to the school community.

And it did. The school blew past their \$2,000 goal and Mike showed up at the school triumphantly sporting a bright blue hairdo, to the delight of the entire school.

“I felt so proud to be able to support BC Children’s Hospital,” Mike said. “It’s the one way I can give back for the kindness and care they have shown my little boy. Judah is such an amazing person and I’m so thankful every day for having him in my life.”



BC Children’s is the only hospital in the province devoted exclusively to the care of children. That means one million kids—including some of the sickest and most seriously injured—count on the hospital for specialized care they often can’t receive anywhere else. Last year, 100,000 patients visited the hospital—that’s almost one student in every classroom.

YOUR IMPACT IN ACTION

Vanessa had already suspected the truth, even before she received the phone call from a doctor about her daughter: "We believe Maeli has leukemia."

In July 2019 Vanessa's family was moving back to Vancouver after living abroad for 8 years, with a planned 2-week layover in Taiwan. The month before they left Hong Kong, Vanessa's daughter Maeli kept falling sick with small illnesses like unexplained fevers and sinus infections. This continued throughout the trip, getting so severe that they had to visit the hospital three times while in Taiwan.

A few days after returning home, mysterious bruises started showing up on Maeli's legs, and when she tripped and scraped her knee, the wound wouldn't stop bleeding. The local medical clinic ordered blood work for Maeli, and soon after they received the fateful call that confirmed Maeli's leukemia diagnosis. Immediately, the family headed off to BC Children's Hospital.

Maeli received treatment over the next two years and during this time Maeli's school, Lions Bay Community School, pulled together to show their support for Maeli.

Sparked by the efforts of vice principal Natalie Mendes, the school created a "Daily Mile for Maeli" fundraising page as part of the Jean Up campaign. Natalie shared Maeli's story with the kids at the school and helped them understand how important BC Children's is in supporting kids with serious illnesses.

Educational hikes in the nearby woods were already part of the school's curriculum, but the students took it further by going on extended hikes and runs, rain or shine, to raise thousands of dollars for BC Children's in honour of their classmate. They also showed their support by celebrating the end of Maeli's treatment with a dance party.

Today Maeli is a spunky, high-energy seven-year-old who's developed an intense appreciation for everything life has to offer. "There are a lot of good people in the world who want to help," Vanessa said. "It's situations like this that bring the community closer, and you realize how important friends and family are."



DENIM FADES. COURAGE DOESN'T.

This May, let's help BC's kids
get out of their hospital gowns
and back into their jeans.

Sign up your school now
at JeanUp.ca/schools



SAVING STARTS AT HOME.

"I bury my savings in the backyard, or between couch cushions."



Johnson goes the extra mile for BCPVPA members with preferred rates and benefits such as:

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With the Winter season soon behind us and the days getting longer, we gravitate towards shaking off our winter willies, getting outdoors, and reclaiming our vitality. Here are three ideas to help invigorate your wellness focus and motivation with the spring season right around the corner!

Uncoil

Stretching

When we think of stretching, naturally our thoughts turn towards our physical selves. As well as turning our attention to our physical needs, it's also rewarding to focus on our spiritual and emotional needs. With so much local and global attention focusing on what's wrong with the world and our communities, it's important to gain balance through exploring our inner needs. Drawing on spiritual readings and practices can be an invitation to seeing ourselves and our perception of our world/path in a different light. I'm fond of the writing and practices of the Buddhist monk Pema Chodron (e.g. *The Wisdom of No Escape, Comfortable with Uncertainty*). There are many resources to explore and embrace that will have you stretching and feeling grateful, more engaged in your day-to-day living, and hopeful.

Unleash

Invigorating

With days becoming longer, temperatures slowly rising, and spring buds growing, spring offers us an opportunity to come out of our winter doldrums. For many, creating a wellness plan over Spring Break offers a chance to become more active and to seek the outdoors during the last stretch of the school year. Buddy up with a colleague, partner, or community friend and establish a twelve-week plan to enhance your physical activity outdoors. It's always inspiring and motivating to be outdoors as our local environment starts the process of renewal and growth. Get moving outdoors, and spring ahead with the season at hand.

Uncover

Mobilizing

With the longer days, we are drawn towards movement and rejuvenation. Take some time over the break to identify who you need to recruit or reconnect with so that you can get more active and attend to your wellness needs. This is the time for action, and accessing the resources that you need to make your health needs a priority, whether it's working with a personal trainer, reconnecting with your massage therapist or naturopath, seeing your doctor, or joining an exercise group. Reach out to your local health and wellness providers and make an appointment as a means of prioritizing your wellness. With a little research, you might just uncover a local wellness practitioner 'gem', or reconnect with a dormant one who has helped you in the past. Regardless, get cracking and embrace the many benefits of the concentrated self-care focus and intention.

by

Jack MacNeill

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



THRIVING IN EDUCATION

In the November 2021 issue of *Principled*, we introduced preliminary findings from our member survey Thriving in Education. This article brings readers further down the path of the survey results, as we shine a light on how the BCPVPA may influence change in the education system, and explore ways for members to regain a sense of control within their working environment.

PART TWO: Proactive Steps Forward

by

Rochelle Morandini

Director, Member Health and Well-being,
BCPVPA



Thriving in the education system is a complex interplay of many factors. *It is important that we acknowledge the **overall system impact** on member health*, not just at the school community level, but considering the influence from the school board office, the Ministry of Education, along with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the list goes on.

The lion's share of how well a Principal or Vice-Principal thrives is based upon two elements:

- 1) Their own health and well-being: their coping style and ability, their level of burden, and personal life factors
- 2) Their work climate: the tone and behaviours in the environment, work responsibilities, and stakeholder relationships

The survey outcomes are helping us to better understand the workplace factors present when Principals and Vice Principals thrive, even during a difficult time such as the pandemic. Not only do we care deeply for our members' well-being, but we also know that Principals and Vice-Principals are able to create the right environment for others to reach their potential when they themselves operate within a climate that enables them to thrive.

We are exploring how we can better support our members in being proactive in addressing their realities, and how members and the BCPVPA can influence both the challenges and the decisions of stakeholders within the work environment.

Member responses to the survey questions illustrated how they were 'showing up' to work, in terms of their physical and psychological functional status, and their work commitment and motivation levels. These responses were then compared to member responses to questions related to thirteen recognized psychological health and safety risk factors, with the objective of identifying which workplace circumstances were associated with thriving members, or with those who were burning out.

The top notable workplace risk factors associated with both positive and challenged levels of coping were:

- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Involvement and Influence
- Workload Management and Balance

Our objective is simple: strengthening the ability of Principals and Vice-Principals to thrive. The question is, 'How?' and the answer is two-fold: with strategies for the individual, and strategies for the system.

Taking Back Control

During the many years that I have consulted in workplace mental health, the inevitable statement from employees went something like this: *"The 'Organization' is just going to tell us to suck it up! Have us attend resilience seminars. Put the responsibility on us. This will not address the unreasonable demands and workload!"*

They were right – although most of my clients did not fall in the 'suck it up' category, as they really cared about their employees. Workplace wellness programs focused on mental health education, reducing stigma, directing people to resources, and implementing more services – all very important components in supporting individual mental health.

These interventions are akin to strengthening one's roots – growing deep and strong to hold your life tree solid, stable, and growing, despite the impact of wind, rain, snow, or that grizzly bear who decides to sharpen his claws on your bark! Cultivating broad and strong roots better braces us to withstand the challenging forces found in our working environment that can blow us back and forth. However, focused individual health initiatives – while a necessary and critical part of our fortitude – will not stop the forces of nature that may cause our canopy to bow, or possibly crack a branch!

The BCPVPA is familiar with the many factors that rain down daily on members. Workload pressures, resource shortages, complex issues, relationship strains, and many more issues contribute to a significant battering that we are communicating to stakeholders that include the Ministry of Education and the BC School Superintendents Association.

When we look to further supporting individual members, as I am sure you will acknowledge, we all have gaps in our root system that we can strengthen and deepen to minimize those elements which can infiltrate our level of coping, and ultimately cause us harm. How do we become aware of those gaps, and how do we strengthen our resolve?

We are all on a continuum of mental well-being, from healthy through to ill. You may recall from our November 2021 *Principl(ed)* article that the Thriving in Education survey results clearly showed that the large majority of Principals and Vice-Principals are in the 'I'm Fine' zone – which is really the “*I am just OK*” to the “*I am strained*” zone.

How Do We Affect the 'I'm Fine's'?



The level of intervention and resources required differ for those in the green, yellow, and red zones. The largest area of opportunity is to move the needle on the “I’m Fine” group towards the green, healthy zone, and prevent them from slipping into the red.

The unique nature of our committed population of school leaders presents a significant obstacle to helping members expand their root system, since notable change will be driven by self-awareness of thinking patterns and by changing micro-behaviours. The tendency to ‘overcommitment’ and Type A personality exhibited by our member population is a tough mindset to mold, as their core values and beliefs are what make Principals and Vice-Principals strong leaders. And, while a deep sense of purpose is important and a key value, how do we balance this with an ability to set boundaries and allow the same level of commitment to ourselves?

OK: I can hear many of you say, with frustration, “If I hear one more time that I need to set boundaries...”, or “I know that I should exercise, eat well, and sleep better...”, then, “What difference will these things make to what is continuously poured down on me?” Fair questions.

This leads us to the all-important, interim question of “How do we switch the thinking of members from being casualties in the system – understandable due to their exposure to the constant and escalating barrage of issues – to a perspective of an enhanced sense of control?”

What Can We Control

Control – it’s an interesting concept. To help ground our thinking, let’s turn to Stephen R. Covey’s model from his bestselling book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and a concept that you may be familiar with: The Circles of Concern, Influence and Control.

We all experience things in our lives – both at work and at home – that challenge us, possibly causing us stress and even harm. Covey created the clever tool below to help us to address our challenges by being proactive – using these three circles:

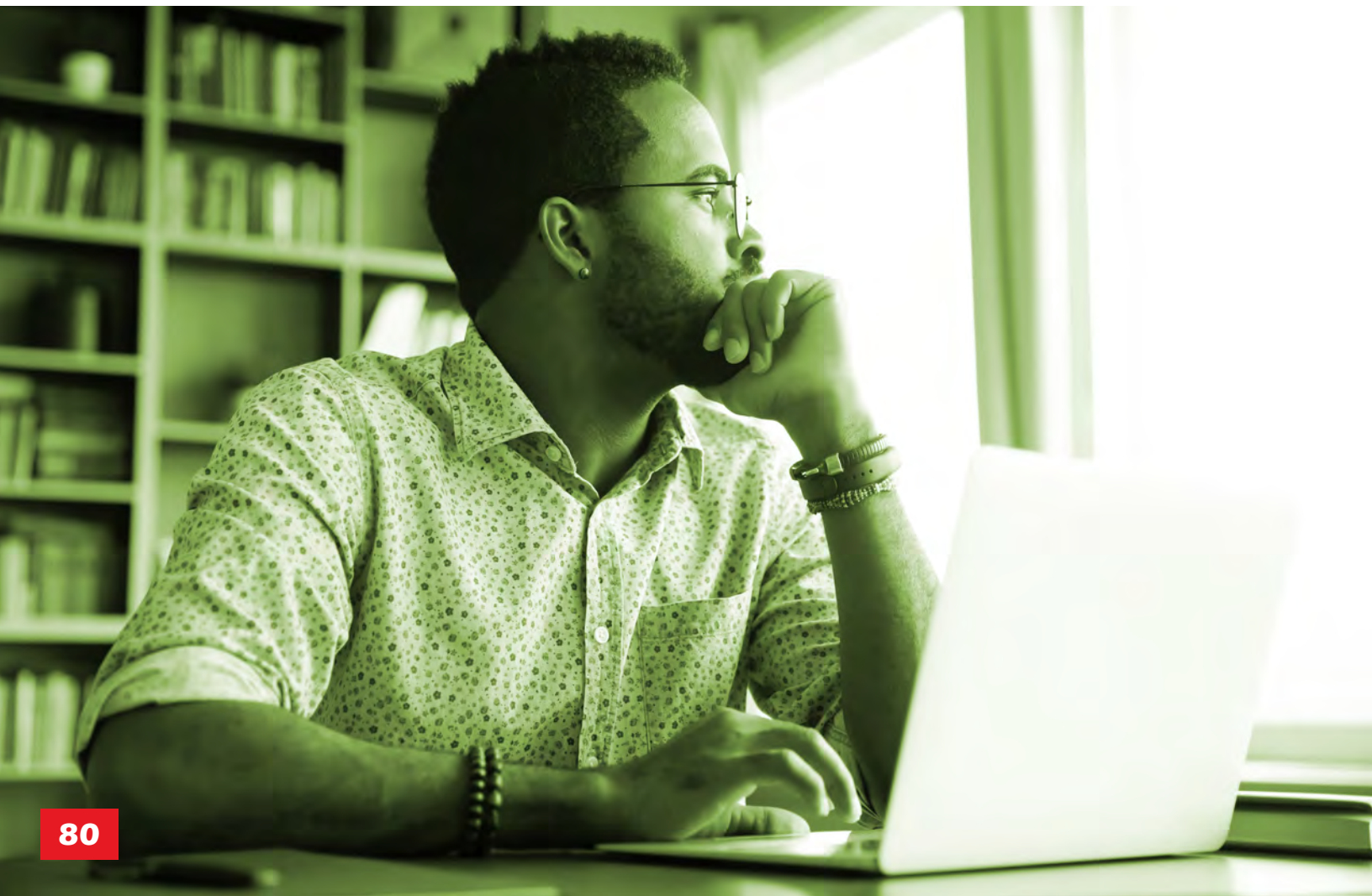
The Circle of Concern: all of the things that we are aware of in life that have an impact on us, or in which we have an interest, including ourselves and our relationships.

The Circle of Control: what we can directly control. This is limited to our awareness about ourselves and the actions we take. The key to control lies in the choices we make about how to manage ourselves in three domains – language, emotion, and body.

The Circle of Influence: what we can influence, which is defined by our network of relationships. The key to influence lies in understanding the human condition, authority, conversational skills, and the building of relationships.

The Circle of Concern includes all the trials and concerns that you have in your work and in your life. The task is to realize which of these things are inside, or outside, of your Circle of Control or Influence.

Some things – like the pandemic, Ministry of Education mandates, even the weather – are out of your control, and there's nothing you can do about them. Other things – such as how you respond to certain people, your work performance, and whether you eat healthy or unhealthy food – are totally within your control.



There are things, however, that are in your Circle of Concern, that you can't control directly, but you may be able to influence. This can include your staff's behaviours, student outcomes, even your Superintendent's connection with your school. It goes without saying that understanding your value and how you use what is in your Circle of Control – your behaviors, thinking patterns, and leadership style – can have a tremendous impact on expanding your Circle of Influence.

Being proactive and intentional in your efforts means acting on what you can control and working on expanding your Circle of Influence, taking the action available to you instead of waiting for things to happen.

You will be more resilient from a position of proactivity versus reactivity.

As you can see in the diagram below, the more proactive you are, the more you can expand both your Circle of Control and Influence. This will then result in a smaller space left over within your Circle of Concern.



Adapted from Stephen R. Covey, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989)

The key to coping and thriving in a space where you have no control or influence is to learn how to accept what is there. For Principals and Vice Principals, this could mean accepting that you cannot do everything, that you have reached capacity, and that you no longer own the problem.

That is not to say that ‘acceptance’ is easy, or even that it’s something you can arrive at on your own. Reaching a point of acceptance may require deep self-reflection and discussions with a peer, a mentor, or a professional counsellor. ***This self-learning and moving to a place of less resistance is an important step to improving your well-being.***

Embracing Workplace Factors That Help Us Thrive

The Thriving in Education survey data results indicated those elements in the workplace that help us thrive:

- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Involvement and Influence
- Workload Management and Balance

Members responded to an open-ended question that asked them to name one to two things the workplace is already doing well, or that could be enhanced to support their overall well-being and job success.

These themes emerged:

- Provide clear priorities, expectations, and a manageable workload
- Have compassionate leaders that provide direction and recognition
- Be asked for input/feedback on school-based decisions, and provide more autonomy to school-based leaders
- Provide more administration time (particularly for Vice-Principals)
- Increase the number of qualified staff in the system
- Increase the accessibility of district leaders, including regular check-ins

Considering these ‘thriving’ workplace factors, and the member perspectives on thriving expressed above, I invite you to write down your answers to these questions:

1. *“What one to two things do you need, right now, that will provide a healthy boost, and help you to feel better and to have more control at work?”*
2. ***Does your answer to question #1 fit into one (or more) of the circles in the diagrams that follow? If yes, we invite you to contemplate the suggested questions in each area – or craft your own questions that best align with your needs. If your answer to question #1 is no, consider creating your own Circle(s).***
3. *What is your first step, and who can help you?*

We know that many of our members are overwhelmed and struggling; so much so, that doing ‘personal work’ gets pushed aside. This self-neglect can result in a downhill spiral, as your repeated experience is like ‘Groundhog Day’ and continuously reinforces your challenging situation and fatigue. Be intentional and take one small step. Change one micro-behaviour. When that choice is moving you forward, take another step. Find someone to help you – but be careful not to reach out to another whose response is “Yeah; I am stressed too, we all are,” as you both may continue to spiral together. Find a professional – your doctor, a coach, a mentor, a counsellor – someone who will objectively consider where you are, and how to move you forward.

Remember: you are all leaders, and starting this work with yourself is a significant way to expand your Circle of Influence with your team, your students, and even your supervisor through the environment you create.

Clear Leadership and Expectations

Concern & Accept

What must I accept regardless of my efforts?
What must I change, either in thoughts or actions,
to move me towards a place of acceptance?
When do I need help to get me to acceptance?

Influence

What actions can I take that may
influence my leader to set clear
expectations and priorities?
What actions can I take that may better
influence staff to align with expectations?
Who could I partner with to
expand my influence?

Control

What can I do to be a good
leader and provide clear
expectations to my team?
What can I do to best focus on
what my leader expects?
What can I do to facilitate more
check-ins with my leader, so
they are up to speed on
school-based issues?

Civility and Respect

Concern & Accept

What must I accept regardless of my efforts?
What must I change, either in thoughts or actions, to
move me towards a place of acceptance?
When do I need help to get me to acceptance?

Influence

What actions can I take that may influence
individuals in my working circles to treat me
and others with civility and respect?
What actions can I take to influence the outcomes
of situations where a parent, staff member, or other
contact is disrespectful or behaves in
a manner that is harmful to another?

Control

What can I do as a leader to
promote and practice civility and
respect with my team, students,
and the school community?
What can I do to attract better
civility and respect
towards myself?
What can I do if someone does
not treat me with civility
and respect?

Concern & Accept

What must I accept regardless of my efforts?
What must I change, either in thoughts or actions, to
move me towards a place of acceptance?
When do I need help to get me to acceptance?

Influence

What can I change in my behaviour or beliefs
that may increase my chances of being
asked to be involved?
What actions can I take to influence my leader to involve me more,
and/or seek out my perspective and ideas more often?
Where can I be proactive to instill confidence in myself
and demonstrate my competence to others so
they may give me more autonomy?
Who could I partner with to expand my influence?

Control

What can I do as a leader to
promote the involvement of — and
allow the influence of — my staff
and others?
What proactive steps can I take to
share my thoughts and input, so I
feel heard and involved?

Involvement and Influence

Workload and Balance

Concern & Accept

What must I accept regardless of my efforts?
What must I change, either in thoughts or actions, to
move me towards a place of acceptance?
When do I need help to get me to acceptance?

Influence

What actions can I take to influence my leader to be
more aware and empathetic to my workload and the impact?
What information should I prepare and what actions can
I take to lobby for more administration time?
What thought patterns and/or behaviours (e.g., assertiveness) do I
need to learn to be able to set my own boundaries, and to
influence myself and others with respect to expectations.
Who could I partner with to expand my influence?

Control

What can I do as a leader to
demonstrate workload management
and balance for my team?
What actions can I take to build school leaders
and enable the sharing and delegation of duties?
How do I redirect energy that is negative and
reactive into proactive energy for better results?
What are the thoughts, values, and beliefs that
may be keeping me from better managing
my workload (e.g. perfectionism,
anxiety, inability to delegate,
overcommitment), and how
do I address these?

BCPVPA's Own Circles Within the K-12 System

The BCPVPA is concerned about our members. We continue to look for ways that we can expand member capabilities, provide needed support, and influence the education system where our members work.

We are examining the BCPVPA's own Circles of Concern, Influence, and Control and noting how we can proactively influence the perspectives and behaviours of members and others within the system in an effort to promote thriving. We are also assessing the further resources that are needed, and how to best advocate for this support for the Principals and Vice-Principals in BC.

We have shared with the Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education, an executive summary of the Thriving in Education survey results

and the November 2021 *Principl(ed)* article. We are looking forward to presenting the data to the Minister and her team, and to opening up this critical dialogue.

We also expect to present the findings to the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) and the BC School Trustees Association (BCTSA), and hope for the opportunity to engage districts in the discussion.

The Thriving in Education survey has helped us to better identify the environmental factors that our members are experiencing daily, and the factors that can help bolster resilience for our members and others in BC's education sector. We are now better informed as to where we can place our focus to strengthen the foundations. We are optimistic that, equipped with this information and the momentum that the survey has generated, we can map out our direction and support action to enhance not only the health and well-being of our members, but that of the students and school communities that our members passionately lead.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a striped shirt and jeans, sitting on a wooden bench in a school hallway. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression, resting her chin on her hand. The hallway has lockers on the left and a doorway in the background. The entire image is overlaid with a green tint.

*Our objective is simple:
strengthening
the ability of
Principals and
Vice-Principals
to thrive.*

The Last Word

Kevin Reimer is the Executive Director of the BCPVPA, a previous Director of the Board and served as President 2016-2018.



As a new teacher in the late 1980s, I was hired to a secondary staff along with a number of other new teachers. At an August meeting, the admittedly-anxious new teachers were invited to a lunch with the Principal before our first school year started. At the lunch, we were matched with an experienced teacher who would act as our mentor for the first few years. I was paired with a counsellor at the school named Tom Fuchko who had been a teacher at the junior high school that I attended. Tom had known me since I was 14 years old, and I was relieved to be matched with someone familiar. Until I left the school three years later, Tom had a guiding influence on my development as a teacher through his mentorship and coaching – and the occasional straight talk that I needed in those early years.



One Conversation at a Time...

As a new Vice-Principal in the late 1990s, I felt that everything that I needed to know about managing and leading a school community could be learned from the Principals that I worked with. As a single VP, the administrative team was a natural mentoring opportunity for me, and I was eager to learn as much as I could from my more experienced Principal partners. *Sidenote:* in one of my first VP positions, the Principal – who became a very close friend – stated at the outset that he wanted our administrative relationship to be a 50/50 partnership. To this day, I still tease him about the four straight years I spent doing bus duty as part of our ‘50/50’ partnership.

In the fall of 2017, the BCPVPA launched its pilot Mentorship Program. When we asked our members if their district had a mentoring program, about 60% of our members said yes. However, when we asked about the quality of those mentoring programs, the responses were very mixed. I have come to believe that the mixed responses are a result of districts attempting to provide mentoring support as an in-house offering, and relying on pairing mentors with mentees in the same school district. The survey responses from the mentees following the first year of our pilot program were clear – the mentees were very hesitant to pair with mentors who worked in the same school district. Anecdotally, the mentees expressed a reluctance to share their vulnerabilities with a mentor who was also a work colleague. This may be the reason why some school district mentoring programs struggle to develop a model where mentees can be fully engaged and committed to the process.

When we first contemplated the need for a mentoring program at the BCPVPA, we knew that we should

look outside of the organization for a facilitator and coach. At the time, Alison Davies had been heading up the New Teacher Mentoring Program for the province. That program was ending, and we approached Alison to lead our pilot mentoring initiative. Alison had been a lifelong teacher, and when we first approached her there was some initial reluctance, as she wondered about how to best guide our mentors when she had not herself worked as a Principal or Vice-Principal. Once she agreed to bring her skills and experience to our program, I sat in on the first training session with our mentors so I could offer my ‘translation services’ if anything she was sharing could use some additional school leadership context. As I suspected, there were very few areas where Alison required support, and as I sat in the room as a witness to the process I was impressed with her skillful facilitation and depth of knowledge.

Alison’s approach was to create a mentoring-coaching model as a means to strengthen the relationship between the mentor and mentee, and lead to engagement in conversations that matter deeply. This process of capacity building through conversation has served to nurture the capacities of both the mentor and the mentee as they learn and grow together. Our survey results are clear that our mentors gain as much from the experience as our mentees.

Initially, the program was tailored to target new Vice-Principals to support them on their leadership pathway. As word of the program spread, we added another layer to the mentee cohort and began accepting members who were new to their role,



"Our survey results are clear that our mentors gain as much from the experience as our mentees."

such as an experienced VP who had taken on the role of a Principal. Over time, the makeup of the cohort changed again, and we found that even experienced Principals were looking to be a part of the program. I think the evolution of our cohort group says a great deal about the pressure that even experienced leaders are feeling today.

Alison's time as the facilitator and coach of our program is ending as she moves on to a new opportunity. I know that the influence of Alison's leadership will leave a lasting imprint on the BCPVPA and our mentoring program participants for many years to come. With transitions come new opportunities, and I am very pleased to share with you that Magdalena Kassis, BCPVPA Director of Member Support Services, will be leading the program going forward. Magdalena led the school leader mentoring program

for the Vancouver School Board, and I know that her passion for supporting and nurturing school leaders will continue as she takes on this role.

As I reflect on my own VP experience in the 1990s, I still believe that I could have learned everything I needed to know from my Principal during that era. Fast forward to my last Principalship with a new Vice-Principal: we were both so run off our feet that there was little time to catch our collective breath, let alone engage in a meaningful mentoring relationship. That is a refrain we hear from our members in the program or considering the program. They have a keen desire to fully participate in a mentoring relationship, but the current demands on their time due to the intensification and scrutiny of their work leave them with little cognitive energy to participate to a meaningful degree. There is more work for the

"The program is intended to assist members so that they are better able to manage the demands of their work, and realize the full potential of their leadership. "

BCPVPA to do to help our members understand that mentoring is not, 'one more box car on the train', as a former superintendent of mine used to state, but rather the train that moves all those boxcars along the track. The program is intended to assist members so that they are better able to manage the demands of their work, and realize the full potential of their leadership.

Along my leadership pathway, I have greatly benefitted from the wisdom and guidance of several mentors. I can say with absolute confidence that I would not be

in the position I am today without the mentorship of Tom Fuchko when I was a beginning teacher. Sadly, Tom passed away a few years ago and I never took the opportunity to truly thank him for the influence that he had on my career. Some of the most impactful professional learning that I ever experienced took place while sharing a drink with Tom after school on a Friday, with deep conversations about teaching and learning. In the many years since my time sipping a drink with Tom on a sunny patio, I have come to believe that impactful leadership development takes place one conversation at a time.

Stay on top of your professional health



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

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