

Principl(ed)

VOL. 2 - ISSUE 1 - November 2020

President's
Perspective

Finding
Balance

Learning
Lessons

A Day in the Life of an Online Learning Principal

Karen Flello talks about the
benefits, needs & challenges
of online learning, and why
it's a lot more about people
than you might think.



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



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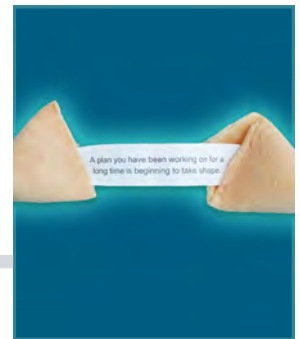
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Principl(ed)

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

**VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1
NOVEMBER 2020
ISSN: 1201-4214**

Spring • Summer • Fall
Designed and edited
by Sandra Murphy

The BCPVPA welcomes
editorial contributions

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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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Lynchpin (noun):

one that serves to hold together parts or elements that exist or function as a unit

– Merriam-Webster Dictionary

As I have mentioned before, I like metaphors. I've often thought of the principalship as the hub of a wheel, like a wagon wheel or bike wheel, the central part through which the spokes are supported to make the wheel turn. And if school leaders are the hub, then the spokes represent all the structures within the education system: the students, the parents, the teachers, the supporting staff, the community groups, the senior staff, the curriculum branch, the Ministry, policy, legislation ... I could go on. The roles of Principals and Vice-Principals are central and supportive, the 'go-between' for every interest in the K-12 system. We make the wheels of the machine turn.

So, if we're the hub, there must be a lynchpin – a strong support that keeps us locked in place and doing our jobs. This lynchpin is vital, and integrally related to the hub: without it, the wheels may endure one or two rotations before every component begins to fall away from the cart.

If Principals and Vice-Principals are the hub, then I believe that our own social and emotional well-being is the lynchpin. Without this piece of support, we may appear to be functioning and keeping the spokes connected, but are we still connected to the machine?



by
Darren Danyluk
President, BCPVPA

On September 9th, 2020, I had the good fortune to participate in the first of a series of webinars offered by the BC Ministry of Education. The webinars were launched in recognition of '*a need to support teachers across the province through various capacity building initiatives*' due to the substantial changes brought upon the K-12 sector in response to COVID-19. The first of these webinars was titled *Teaching Tenaciously*.

In the ninety-minute session, participants heard from three presenters: Dr. Kimberley Schonert-Reichl, on the subject of Social Emotional Learning (SEL); Monique Gray Smith, speaking to resiliency and an Indigenous lens; and Dr. Linda O'Neill, who shared information regarding Trauma-informed Practice. I found the information timely and poignant, but did recognize at the time that many of my colleagues may not be joining the webinar live due to the crush of those first few days back with staff in our schools. Thankfully, the webinar was recorded and can be viewed with this link following registration with Open Course Resources:

bit.ly/OS_992020

All three speakers placed a powerful focus on self-care and SEL principles. One such principle is to '*design opportunities for adults to connect, heal, and cultivate their own SEL competencies and capacities.*' Other points at the forefront were the promotion of adult SEL & well-being and staff regulation. As the educators, we are expected to be co-regulators for our students; and for well students, we need well teachers.

While not explicit in the presentations, I believe the messages conveyed were intended for all who work in the K-12 system, including our Principals and Vice-Principals. We, too, are part of the adult community in a school. And for there to be *well* teachers, there must be *well* leaders. Yet, who will be our co-regulators?

This question evoked something that I first heard in October of 2018: Principals and Vice-Principals in BC are a 'population under duress'.

The speaker in 2018 was Ingrid Gailler of Morneau Shepell, the managers of our Long-Term Disability (LTD) plan at the time. Ingrid was making a presentation to the BCPVPA Board of Directors regarding the sharp increase in LTD claims by our members. She observed that we have been the same relative population over the years, working under the same plan. So, what changed to account for such a dramatic uptick in claims? Ingrid's conclusion? The job. Her phrase set off alarm bells for me, and a tremendous concern for our people. How would we, as Principals and Vice-Principals, continue to endure such pressure?

In July 2020, Dr. Fei Wang and Dr. Katina Pollock published their paper ***School Principals' Work and Well-Being in British Columbia: What They Say and Why It Matters***. The paper may be considered a follow-up to their 2014 paper ***The Changing Nature of Principals' Work***, commissioned by the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC). You may read the full document here bit.ly/FWKP2020.

"... the health and well-being of Principals are essential to the current and future success of schools and school systems."

School Principals' Work and Well-Being in British Columbia: What They Say and Why It Matters, 2020

The current publication "aims to build on [the] previous work by developing a more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary factors that influence Principals' work intensification." The introduction goes on to assert the "potential negative impacts of the changing nature of the principalship should not be overlooked, as *the health and well-being of Principals are essential to the current and future success of schools and school systems.*"

As part of their research, Drs. Wang and Pollock

conducted a survey which captured responses from nearly 500 BC Principals and Vice-Principals from 56 Districts. Their data surfaced some troubling information about our people and our profession.

- Less than one-third of Principals and Vice-Principals reported a work week between 40 and 50 hours, with the majority of our members working between 50-60 hours a week.
- A startling 21% of our members work more than 60 hours a week.
- More than half of the members participating in the survey reported their sleeping patterns, their fitness levels, and their physical activities were considerably or extremely affected by their work.
- Fully two-thirds of Principals and Vice-Principals reported their energy levels were considerably or extremely affected by draining situations at work.
- Just under half of our members reported that diet is considerably or extremely affected.

With no energy – likely due to diet and sleep issues – how can one maintain a healthy fitness regime? It doesn't take much imagination to see the outcomes.

Despite this disquieting personal health profile, 53% of Principals and Vice-Principals report they are 'good' at coping with work-related stress. We are ever the optimists, reporting that we manage emotions well at work (90%); feel self-efficacy at work (77%); feel resilient (74%); and turn adversity into achievement (66%).

Drs. Wang and Pollock offer several recommendations to address the well-being of school leaders and the intensification of the role:

- Increase school leadership allocations to address the volume of work with more Vice-Principal roles and the reduction of teaching duties.
- Boards could introduce an accumulated discretionary leave in recognition of the additional work of Principals and Vice-Principals (on average, school leaders work at least an additional 15 hours per week than those at similar levels of work in other sectors).
- Manage email volume by setting boundaries. On average, Principals reported spending nearly ten hours each week on emails alone. Managing emails does not simply translate to 'ignore them'. Our members must seek out strategies and establish boundaries around when and where they will process electronic mail, and these boundaries must be acknowledged and encouraged by employers.

We are a passionate group, and are passionate about our work with people. Fully 76% of our members surveyed reported they often or always feel this passion. However, in the same surveyed population, only 32% reported that they feel excited when thinking about going to work. This is a disconcerting disconnect, and is evidence that the lynchpin supporting the machine of public education is in jeopardy.

And, of course, there is one more thing to consider. The research that I have cited was compiled and considered prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the resulting global pandemic. Principals and Vice-Principals have been on the front lines in schools for months with little relief, and the intensification that we have witnessed over the past few years has increased even more substantially. As that machine labours along our current rocky track, we can feel that lynchpin continuing to loosen with every rock and rut.

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 this fourth installment of the series we meet Karen Fello, and find out about how Distributed Learning is helping BC students of all ages to connect and experience success.

When the global pandemic forced the transition of British Columbia's public schools to remote learning in March 2020, Karen Fello and her staff were already there. As Karen joined SIDES (the South Island Distance Education School) as the Vice-Principal in 2008, and became Principal in 2014, she understood the benefits, needs and challenges of online learning.

Karen has been in education for 30 years, and her career as a school leader has been entirely at SIDES. "I was a secondary school English and Social Studies teacher before I came into school leadership," says Karen. "My experience ran the gamut from learning assistance support to regular program teaching, and during the last part of my teaching career I was dividing my time between doing SIDES work online, and working in the Flexible Studies Program which was an inquiry-based and cross-curricular program at Reynolds Secondary School in School District #61 in Greater Victoria. That was a very cool experience, and we had that rare opportunity to follow a group of kids through a period of time. My husband is a band teacher, and the band teachers always get to see the same kids year after year, but as a classroom teacher you don't necessarily experience that in a big school."

Karen wasn't one of those kids who had their sights set on teaching from an early age. "It's funny when I look back. Education was something that kept touching

A Day in the Life

of an
Online
Learning
Principal

"I think what people don't – or at least didn't – understand was how connected you can be even when you're doing things online ..."

Karen Fello



me throughout my life. I played school as a little girl, but the times when I thought 'I would like to do that', were the times when I had an amazing and inspirational teacher. I loved school, and I loved to learn – the teachers were great but when they weren't really connecting with me, my mind explored other things, like being doctor or a lawyer. It was always something professional: I had this vision of dressing up and going to meetings – I have no idea why! When I had a fabulous teacher, that was a touchstone for me. Those were the times when I thought, 'yes – I'd like to be with young people'."

BC's history of distance learning goes back 100 years and began with a centralized approach through the Ministry of Education's Correspondence Branch. In the 1980's the Ministry contracted with nine school districts, two on Vancouver Island and seven on the mainland,

to create BC's original nine distance education schools, dubbed 'DE schools'. At that time, the curriculum was run entirely through the Ministry of Education, while operations were managed by the nine contracted school districts. "We were one of the first nine, and we were a paper warehouse," Karen holds one hand flat at chest level, the other well above her head, "with all of those modules of paper materials. We evolved in the early 2000s to more of an online program, and as one of the early schools we had the interesting option of being cross district. Our school provides service throughout British Columbia, and we can accept students from outside our district borders."

The impact of technology on the work of distance learning has been significant and has allowed for much more interaction with students. "Because we look after students from around the province, there were often people that we couldn't really reach in



Karen working with DL Systems Coordinator, Bev Bastness, on program development



Karen and Vice-Principal Sean Hayes

the same way when you're sending paper things back and forth... I think having children see their teachers through virtual classes, and having that opportunity to connect, to even do virtual field trips, that has changed a lot. We can have video so that the children can read something, and then they can read it with their teacher, and then they can connect with a parent around it – it offers more scope.”

The work is almost exclusively online for the 3,000+ students at SIDES. “We do have some paper, and manipulative resources for the little ones, but we do video and we do virtual classes through Zoom. We are K to 12, but we also have a significant adult population because we provide grade 11 and 12 content to students who've come back to upgrade or graduate. We have lot of people who were that solid C, C+ graduate who wasn't so invested in school, but later decide it's something they want to do. They come back, and they knock it out of the park, because now it matters to them. We graduate

about 150 students a year, and we have a small grad ceremony – about 10 to 20% attend. It's cool to have that connection, especially for the high school kids that choose to work with us. And for the adults too: we had a 50-year-old who needed to graduate for some aspect of his work, and his mom ran up on the stage and hugged him because she'd been waiting for 32 years.”

The connection to students may be different, but it is no less important. “I'm a people person, so I love it when students are on site. We have face-to-face opportunities for elementary and middle school kids: we have drop-in tutoring, and we have a learning services program called Transition to Adulthood for 19 to 21-year-olds who haven't completed their IEP goals. They're typically on the autism spectrum or have Downs.”

“I think what people don't – or at least didn't – understand was how connected you can be even when you're doing things online. When I was a

“We had a young woman come to SIDES, and she wanted to just do math with us. She was going to high school, and she loved school – loved everything about school – except for math. Her marks were good, but she eloquently described it as putting 70% of her psychic energy into math every year. And she said, ‘if I can just do this at home and not worry about asking dumb questions, and not worry that everybody else gets it and I don’t, if I could just take that little piece out and do it at home and not have to worry about that part, then I could just straight-up love school – I don’t feel like that about any other part of school’. So that’s what we did for her, and she had a great first year of high school because she removed that worry.”

teacher here, we established relationships with students and often the first time we laid eyes on one another was at graduation – it would be a big hug, and you felt like you had known them all along. Some of it is more distant than it would be if I bumped into kids in the hallway, but there are many ways to connect. In various classes I’ve done drop-ins. Our teacher-librarian does story time every Tuesday night, and I’ve joined as a story reader. We find ways to say that we have a Principal, and this is who I am.”

The adult learning component is an especially rewarding experience. “So many of them are people who come for a second chance. As a group, they tend to need a tremendous amount of support and encouragement – not support in the sense that they can’t do it, but support in helping them to believe in themselves. For example, they often thought they could never learn math, or they dropped out because of their circumstances at the time. They might have thought that they couldn’t do it, or that it was useless. Whatever it was, that became their protection in the decision they made, and they have to overcome that. It’s the social emotional piece. But they really do soar. We’ve had grandmothers who just wanted to prove to their grandchildren that they can do it, and moms and dads who just want to beat their 18-year-old to grad. Everybody has a different reason, there are as many reasons as there are students.”

With the COVID-19 global pandemic came a heightened awareness of remote learning. Karen was part of the BC Ministry of Education’s task force that addressed the continuity of learning when the suspension of in-class instruction occurred. “We had to do things quickly, and as you know we can be a bit glacial as a sector. But we did it. And what was amazing was the ways we found to share and connect. We tried to identify what it was that people were going to need. And we weren’t sure, because part of the problem is that people don’t

know what they don't know. We came at it from the perspective that, in a practical sense, they're going to need a learning management system, they need access to courses, they're going to need content – even if they don't use it, they can see how it's structured. We moved quickly to find three different learning management systems – Moodle, D2L and Canvas. Those companies stepped up to offer their services. And our schools can have proprietary concerns because we've put the time into course development, but SIDES, Navigate and the Western Canada Learning Network (WCLN) all said that's the right thing to do, to make the content available."

"At our school, we had teachers from 63 districts sign in to find content. In the end, we were all a little surprised that there wasn't as much uptake as we thought there was going to be. And from people I spoke with, I think part of that comes from individuals being so overwhelmed that they didn't know where to look. The idea of putting a couple of assignments online and planning to meet with students a couple of times a week was all they could manage."

"For us through this process, we certainly saw where holes exist in terms of equity of access, content for certain grades, and support for kids of a certain age. We were already in a process of reorganizing online learning in the province, so it became even clearer that the process was needed, but it also reinforced that district to district, we have unique needs that we have to address. With the idea of a more global Ministry approach to online learning, there is the concern that in, individual districts, we may lose the customization that really addresses the particular needs of that district. We have to figure out a way where we have equity of access, and fair and high-quality access for students all through the province, while not losing sight of unique needs."

SIDES has seen an uptick in interest as educators

"We have one little guy who is truly a genius – he's going into grade 6 this year, and he's finished Physics 12. He loves school. He's on the autism spectrum and he goes to a neighbourhood school, but he is a math and science genius. He has lectured first year students in astronomy at the University of Victoria (UVIC). He came to us when he was going into grade 4 and he told me in all seriousness, 'I've done all the math in my school: my school has no more math. So, I'd really like to come to your school now, and do your math'. That's the kind of thing we can make work. He comes in to write tests, and comes into my office for chocolate afterwards."

and parents recognize that remote learning will continue, and with the awareness that there could be a return to a different kind of learning if there is a significant increase in cases. Through her work with the task force, and her interactions with school leaders through the Spring and Summer, Karen could see the impact of the shift to remote instruction.

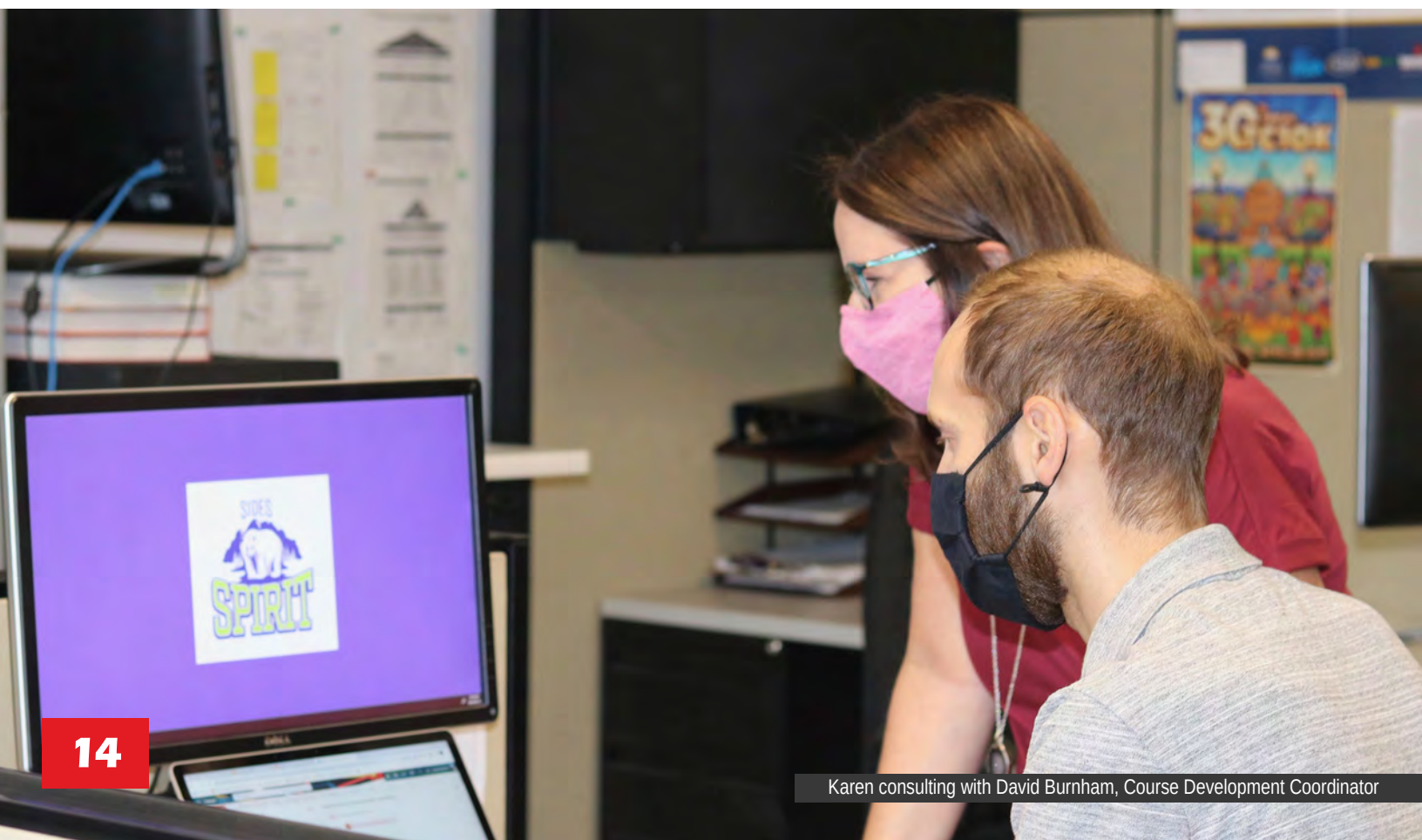
“In the Spring, I was seeing a lot of mourning: my teaching and administrative colleagues were mourning the loss of their classroom experiences. My own son was just finishing his final teaching practicum, and he was really gutted that he couldn’t say goodbye to his kids.”

“I spent a lot of time talking to people about the notion of emergency remote learning, and the emotional overlay of that: we’d lost something very suddenly, and then on top of that you discover that now you have to learn how to teach differently. My Vice-Principal was talking to friends from the classroom who said they were going to put online everything they’d planned to do in the classroom –

they had all their notes, so they were going to do that in Google. And, three weeks in, they understood that was not realistic, that the kids won’t spend the time reading what would have held them in thrall if they were hearing it from their teacher. It doesn’t necessarily translate well onto paper.”

“The instinct was to move the in-person practice to an online environment, really quickly. And for SIDES and some of the other DL schools that have been around for a long time, we’ve been through that: we had tried that, and we knew it didn’t work. Instead, we have found ways to create online classes and content that really gets to the heart of the course, and we enhance that with video content or conversations. I can talk for an hour – I may do that in the classroom – but I can’t just put all that on paper and expect that anybody is going to be interested. Kids sure aren’t going to be interested.”

“Over time, we’ve learned to distill content to the important bits, and we may get to inquiry more quickly for example, because we focus on the skills and let the kids go find the details. When I talked



earlier about those paper modules, they were written as though everything a teacher was going to say in the semester was written down. They were dry, thick and intimidating, and students didn't finish them. What we do now is designed to take the same number of hours that a neighbourhood school course would, and we design it thinking that an average student might take this long, and here's the instruction. The other important part is that they can go back and look at it again. Particularly for high school, we remove the limited time factor so that if a young person needs more time to review the concept – if they don't understand quadratic equations or the divine right of kings first time around – they can look at it again. The teacher doesn't just keep going because most of the class got the concept. We can focus more on mastery, because we don't have to get on with the next topic tomorrow."

There are similarities and differences between leading distributed learning and neighbourhood schools. While the baseline is working with people, and ensuring support for students, the frameworks for management can be quite different. Distributed learning in BC is smaller, with different rules and restrictions and a closer connection to the Ministry of Education. "My neighbourhood school colleagues don't need to attend to things like active requirements because that's something that is done at the central office level. In a regular year, they do have to make sure attendance is tight for September to generate funding for example, but I have to be concerned about other rules specific to a DL environment and make sure that everyone's in compliance. There are just a few DL Principals, and we are in frequent communication; our senior administrators rely on us to have the rules down. We're a bit more on our own that way."

Karen is reflective when thinking about the role of distributed learning, both pre- and post-pandemic. "A colleague of mine used to call schools like ours the school of first choice and last resort. We've

had testimonials from students and families to say we save kids. We offered them an opportunity when they didn't feel they had anything else left. Sometimes we worry, with the uptick of students who suffer from anxiety, and feel they can't go to school. We want to help them through that crisis and encourage them to get back into their world. We help them, we get them to a place where they can graduate or maybe go back to their neighbourhood school. It's energizing to hear the stories from those students."

"It always comes back to the people for me. From the perspective of our staff, I'm energized by our opportunities to be creative. I've witnessed how teachers have made things possible for students. We write a lot of our own course material: I'm inspired by the really thoughtful online pedagogy, the careful approaches to assessment, and the really rich conversations we have because we're publishing courses at the same time we're teaching. When the curriculum changed, our staff created 60 courses in two years; we would normally write and revise six to eight courses a year. It was a massive effort, and they were amazing."

Karen shares some thoughts for educators who may be interested in leadership in distributed learning. "I would say what I said to my Vice-Principal when he came on board: it's a lot more about people than we think. Our work is still about personal connection, but the kinds of things we talk about and the approaches we take are so different. We've all come from neighbourhood schools, so to come here a lot of learning has to happen, and there is a need to check our prejudices at the door. I was a neighbourhood school teacher and believed passionately in what I was doing. Then when I came here as a teacher, I had to unlearn a lot of my own beliefs about what doing things entirely online would look like. It really is still about relationship building. You don't have to be afraid that those connections are going to be gone, because they're not."

A Day in the Life of an Online Learning Principal

5:30 am

Mindfulness Practice

6:15 am

Check texts and emails for staff messages about the day

7:40 am

Arrive at school (Royal Oak Campus), and a second check for emails/text messages/phone messages specific to today's activities

7:45 am

Check in with arriving staff

8:00 am

Clerical department meeting

9:00 am

Staff meeting – usually in person, but more recently via Zoom

10:30 am

Head over to Beaver Lake Campus for Learning Services Screening Meeting – meeting with Screening team (ISTs, District Psychologist, School Counsellor, Administrative Team) to determine designations, placements and preliminary supports for students requiring extra services for their learning

12:00 pm

Phone call with parent wanting to know more about Online Learning options for three children (Grades 2, 5, and 8)

12:30 pm

Return to Royal Oak Campus - check emails and phone messages (eat lunch at my desk)

1:00 pm

District meeting with HR to discuss postings and staff accommodations (Health and Safety) as well as Remote Learning operations (providing the Online Learning perspective)

“Before I leave for school, my first thought is people: what's everyone doing today, what are the meetings I'm aware of, what's coming up? I'm thinking about students I need to follow up with, and thinking about the staff I need to work with or replace if they have to be away. Our school has two sites, so unless there is a district meeting I have to attend, I will be at one of the two sites.”

“I joke that someday I'm going to build a door right out of my office so I can come and go, because I need to walk from the back through the building to my desk, and by that time I've seen about eight people,” Karen smiles, “and there's not a lot of ‘leave it until your coat's off’. I'm usually working with clerical and support staff right at the beginning of the day, making sure the day is set up. And then it's into the email to find out what has emerged overnight. There's also a lot of long-term thinking. For example, how do we manage through the holidays when others aren't working, but we are? Arranging two months of TTOC (Teachers Teaching on Call) coverage for the Summer is a big task.”

“Throughout the day I connect with teachers, and my Vice-Principal and I are in contact all the time: he's here, I'm there, we're always texting. There are only the two of us, and my leadership style – and this works well for him – is that I like to bounce things off people. It's not that I don't make decisions on my own, but I believe it's important for him to understand the process. I know some leaders are very much ‘that's your job, this is my job’, and we do have a division of responsibilities, but I also believe it's important that we are able to answer for one another.”

“I've been really fortunate: I've had two absolutely fabulous Vice-Principals with skills that really complement my own skill-set. My current Vice-Principal came from a very large high school where there were three of them and there was quite a significant division of labour. In our K to 12 school, it's very different, and it's important that we're on the same page.”

“There are, of course, things that occur that can send the day off course. Sometimes we'll have a student who feels that they've not been heard, that they didn't

get the right kind of feedback, or that they've been mistreated. And where my neighbourhood school colleagues at a high school level would sometimes be involved in student behaviour issues, our student behaviour issues tend to run along the lines of academic integrity concerns. I am in contact with students and families about students cheating on assignments or – from the test scores – the concern that somebody else has been doing the homework. When we address the behaviour issues, it relates not only to where the learning isn't taking place when a student may just be looking for the credential, but also to protecting the school's reputation. DL schools sometimes have the reputation of being 'marks factories', and we work really hard to disabuse others of that narrative in respect to our school. We know that some people think 'I'm not going to do that well in school, so I'll do it online and they won't know that I paid my cousin to do it'. We're not foolish; we recognize that those things happen, but we've worked hard to put policies and practices in place to ensure that we are seen as a real educational option for people who need it, and so that the people who need it or want it aren't seen as having received a lesser education. That's the hardest part, because I'm so proud of what our teachers do, and what our students accomplish, that if anybody thinks that, it hurts my heart."

"The best thing about the work I do is the options that we give students. People often say to me – especially if they're trying to decide what avenue to take – that DL isn't for everybody and that's very true. But if neighbourhood schools were for everybody, DL wouldn't need to exist. We are the right thing for some people, and we're the right thing for some parts of some people. People have gone on to jobs because of us. We have a student – he's on the autism spectrum and was not doing well in middle school – who came to us when he was in the seventh grade. He graduated with us, went on to UVIC, did a BA in Psychology from studying autism spectrum disorders, and is now – as a person with autism – doing his PHD studying autism in California. He was never going back to school. He and his family are quite vocal about the fact that this opportunity, this place, these people gave him a second chance, and so it's about second chances."

A Day in the Life of an Online Learning Principal

1:30 pm

Check in with Secondary teachers on workload and current levels of student activities; includes impromptu discussion of new remote test proctoring technology

2:00 pm

Meet with Middle School teachers to discuss organization of the classes – core and exploratory structures; virtual class responsibility and schedules

2:45 pm

Online meeting with Learning Management System provider and our Administration and Tech teams to discuss continued partnership and providing course resources to BC teachers for remote learning support

3:15 pm

Meeting with VP to discuss class lists, building capacity, operations, and course development plans (Zoom, Teams or in person)

4:00 pm

Building closes; some staff are still here, so we take the opportunity to talk about what needs to be done tomorrow (or during the rest of the week)

4:30 pm

Connect with custodian, then back to checking emails, returning telephone calls, and writing tomorrow's "To Do" list

5:30 – 6:00 pm

Leave for home

*Throughout the day I receive many phone calls
and office drop-ins, usually prefaced by*

"This will only take a moment..."!

*And before COVID times, we would have students
in our buildings; now, our interactions are at a
distance, but I look forward to when our students
can come back again.*



Find out more at ReturnItSchool.ca

RETURN-IT SCHOOL PROGRAM 2020/2021!



Offered FREE - to all schools in BC by Return-It, the not-for-profit product steward for beverage container recycling in British Columbia.



Official Return-It 101 Certificate - Display pride in your school's recycling program with our official Certificate of participation!



Free Recycling Bins - Get up to three free Return-It bins and arrange free pick-up service (where available) from your local Return-It Depot!



\$5,000 Grand Prize Story Contest - Share your school's interesting, creative and impactful recycling story with us and you could win big!



Tools & Tips - Get support for your school's recycling program, including fundraising tips for a successful bottle drive!



Return-It Man Presentation - Register now for free at ReturnItSchool.ca and receive access to our **NEW** School Presentation video. Our recycling Scientist and Return-It Man will teach kids the basics of recycling in a fun and entertaining video. Open to all registered Elementary schools in BC.



Share Your Express Account - Return-It Express makes it easy for people to contribute to your school's program. Share your Express account number within your community. Learn more at Return-It.ca/Express

STORY CONTEST WINNERS FOR 2019/2020!

Elementary School Story Contest Winner \$5,000: Palsson Elementary

Students at Palsson Elementary set an ambitious goal to use their bottle drive money to fund a 5-month drum lesson program for 3rd grade students. By advertising the bottle drive across Lake Cowichan, the students collected beverage containers from residents of their entire community. They were also responsible for collecting the recycling from classroom recycling stations each day. The program didn't just encourage recycling awareness in Lake Cowichan – it promoted leadership and responsibility among the students. Their efforts resulted in their drumming program being fully funded by deposit refunds! This year, they collected over 9,000 beverage containers. Read the full story at ReturnItSchool.ca/schoolnews

STORY CONTEST FOR 2020/2021!

We know that our Return-It Certified Schools are doing an amazing job with their beverage container recycling programs every year and we want to hear all the great stories from around BC. Schools are getting their students involved and engaging with the community, and we want to give you the opportunity to tell your story and have a chance to win a cash prize for your school. The winning story will win \$5,000 and second place will win \$2,500. You need to be a registered Certified Return-It 101 School to enter. You can submit your story in PDF format any time before May 31, 2021. See full contest details at **ReturnItSchool.ca**.

We realize that this school year may look different than other years and that's okay. No matter how big or small your recycling efforts are, we just want to hear about them. Here are some basic criteria and guidelines to keep in mind when submitting your story:

Objectives/Goals & Measurements of Success

- Include the total # of refundable beverage containers collected and the total deposit refund collected
- Include the Return-It Depot location used for your recycling project/program
- Tell us how you measured the success of your efforts?
- Include the objectives and goals of the project/program

Creativity & Interesting Details

- Explain how your school collection program was structured (can include in-class and remote learning)
- Let us know how successful your school collection program was
- Explain what your school did with the money collected
- Include any additional creative and unique aspects of your school's program
- REMEMBER TO INCLUDE PHOTOS AND/OR VIDEO LINKS

Impact

- Highlight the educational component of your program
- Explain how you got your students involved. Did they participate at home or at school or both?
- How did you promote your program in the community? Was there any community outreach and involvement?
- Include any further details on how your program had an impact with your students and community

Register at ReturnItSchool.ca and join the other 300 official Return-It Schools across BC.

High School Story Contest Winner \$5,000: Holy Cross Regional High School

The Marketing & Promotions 11 class at Holy Cross Regional High School used their marketing skills to encourage fellow students to recycle and "go green" through their **#hcgoesgreen** campaign. The hub of their campaign was the @hcgoesgreen Instagram account, where they shared inspiring posts. During the year, the students used the account to promote contests for prizes and pizza lunches that encouraged others to engage by posting about their own contributions to the school's recycling initiatives. The **#hcgoesgreen** campaign was a huge success and they raised over \$1,200 by recycling their beverage containers in just six months! The money was used for a school trip, purchase prizes, and promote other eco-friendly ventures. Read the full story at **ReturnItSchool.ca/schoolnews**

Education is Our Business



**An Interview with
Flavia Coughlan,
President of the
BC Association of
School Business Officials
(BCASBO)**

Whether it's a large urban location or a sprawling and diverse rural site, operating the business of a school district is complex.

BC's sixty school districts are geographical areas as defined by the School Act, and within each of those district offices staff work under the direction of a board of education (or school board) comprised of elected school trustees. The business officials who work in each district – Secretary Treasurers, Assistant Secretary Treasurers, Directors of Finance and other professionals working in finance, payroll, purchasing, human resources and information technology – are represented by The British Columbia Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO), a non-profit organization that engages and supports their 200 members in their professional learning, and promotes high ethical standards amongst its membership.

We spoke with BCASBO President Flavia Coughlan about the association's priorities, what's important to the membership and the challenges of leading during a pandemic.

Flavia has worked in the education sector since 2003, and is currently the Secretary Treasurer – the chief business officer – with Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows School District #42. In her role, she provides strategic leadership to the district's business division which is responsible for finance, facilities and support services for 22 elementary schools, six secondary schools and two alternate schools. That's a population of approximately 15,000 K-12 students and 2,000 staff, with a 2020-2021 budget of \$186 million.

Previously, Flavia was the Director of Finance for the Vancouver School District #39, and Accounting Manager in the North Vancouver School District #44. Flavia was drawn to the education sector for a number of reasons. "I strongly believe that public education is the cornerstone of democratic society," says Flavia. "I found the opportunity to use my knowledge, skills and abilities to contribute to the advancement of public education in BC incredibly appealing. I feel really fortunate to be able to observe the impact of my work on the next generation."

Flavia joined BCASBO's Executive Committee in 2012, and over the next four years she was the zone director for Metro, Fraser Valley and South Coast. In 2017, she stepped up as the Vice-President of the association and was prepared when the call came two years later. "When I was asked in 2019 to put my name forward for President, there was no doubt in my mind that I was ready to take on this role and help the association reach the goals set in our Strategic Plan."

From the beginning of her presidency, Flavia has served on numerous provincial committees, including the Funding Formula Review Panel, Technical Review Committee, K-12 Education Sector Leadership Development Working Group, Accountability Framework Redesign, Procurement Steering Committee for BC Education Marketplace, Executive Committee for ERAC, Accounting Advisory Committee, and the Government Organizations Accounting and Auditing Forum. "I started joining provincial-level committees early in

my tenure. I saw them both as learning opportunities and as a way to bring local knowledge and perspective to the provincial table to help shape better provincial policy. And I continue to volunteer my time at the provincial level because I believe that strong, knowledgeable, and representative voices with on-the-ground experience can make a difference for all school districts and all students in our province."

Flavia's work as President of the association has been guided by the priorities set in the BCASBO Strategic Plan. "Together with the executive of the association, and with support from members, we have been able to deliver high quality educational programs for our members, expand our membership and participate as key partners in a number of provincial committees that have supported government and all school districts during the pandemic." Like most organizations and businesses, the work of BCASBO has felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. "As an association we had to quickly adapt to the reality of not being able to meet in person anymore. Our May Annual General Meeting and Conference had to be cancelled and replaced with a series of online events. We held our first ever AGM via Zoom in May, and we had more than 100 members join us from across the province.

Flavia adds, "We also decided to create online opportunities for our members to connect and share their experience with supporting school districts during the pandemic, and to get updates both from Ministry of Education representatives and BCASBO executive members. These online sessions have been greatly appreciated by our members. We are continuing to work on creating online learning and networking for our members, and we look forward to being able to be together in one venue in the future."

Looking ahead, Flavia defines the long-term goals of BCASBO by the three goals in the Strategic Plan:

1. BCASBO will be meaningfully engaged by and

with education partners on provincial policy and plans for K-12 education.

2. BCASBO will provide school business officials with quality professional learning, leadership, and networking opportunities that support their professional growth.
3. BCASBO will continue to diversify the disciplines in its membership.

Engagement with sector partners is a key goal for BCASBO. “Whether it’s related to provincial policy or to plans for K-12 education, meaningful engagement by and with education partners is one of the main goals of our association. We believe that together we can effectively problem solve and inform better decision-making at the provincial level. We are committed to continuing to strengthen relationships with all partner groups through participation in joint committees, and through sharing our expertise with other partner organizations and offering joint learning sessions.”

BCASBO’s motto is ‘Education is our Business’. Flavia sees that phrase as a simple but important

reminder of what can be done. “We often hear people in K-12 refer to the ‘two sides’ of school districts: education and business. Our motto reminds me and all our members that we are all working towards a common goal and that all school district staff are valuable contributors. Together we can – and will – achieve more.”

“We are a progressive association whose members incorporate current research, global trends, and a clear understanding of provincial and district cultures into our daily work. I see the impact of my work, and that of our organization, every time one of our members is successful in tackling a new role with an expanded scope, and I attribute some of this success to the professional development programs the member completed with BCASBO, or to the connections they made through our association.”

Those important relationships include the connections made with BC school leaders. “I want to thank all BCPVPA members for the amazing work that they do every day in schools around the province, and for their resilience and commitment to student success.”

iLLuMiNating conversations

Vi Hughes is a retired Principal who worked in the Vancouver School District #39. Through the years, Vi has gathered anecdotes about the qualities of an effective school leader, and is sharing just a few of these gems in this edition of Princip(ed)

Articulate a vision

“What does a Principal do exactly?” asked the grade 2 student.

We were sitting on a bench in the school basement during a heavy rainstorm while all around us the kids were running and screaming the lunch hour away.

“Well....uh...uh...,” I mumbled, trying to find words to explain my weighty Principal responsibilities to her.

I knew I was taking a long time to answer.

“Stuff?” she asked sympathetically.

“Yes ... stuff,” I sighed. “Lots of stuff.”

British Columbia Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO)

About

Established in 1958, the British Columbia Association of School Business Officials is a non-profit association dedicated to the highest professional standards of ethics, competence, and leadership, in school district corporate and business administration, to the promotion of the highest ethical standards amongst its members, and to the welfare of its members.

Structure

The Association is governed by an Executive Committee, elected by the members, consisting of Table Officers:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary-Treasurer
- Immediate Past President, and
- Five Regional Directors representing:
 - (1) Kootenay/Boundary
 - (2) Thompson/Okanagan
 - (3) North Coast/Northern Interior
 - (4) Fraser Valley, Metro and South Coast
 - (5) Vancouver Island

The Association is supported by a half-time Executive Director.

Members

BCASBO represents Business Officials supporting learning in all British Columbia school districts, including Secretary Treasurers, Assistant Secretary Treasurers, Directors of Finance and other professionals in the areas of Finance, Payroll, Purchasing, Human Resources, and Information Technology. As of September 2020, there are 200 members representing all 60 school districts in British Columbia.

Strategic Plan Goals

BCASBO will be meaningfully engaged by and with education partners on provincial policy and plans for K-12 education.

BCASBO will provide school business officials with quality professional learning, leadership, and networking opportunities that support their professional growth.

BCASBO will continue to diversify the disciplines in its membership.



BCASBO is dedicated to providing membership value, advocating for members and building relationships. We will:

- Represent and support members in their leadership roles
- Provide ongoing leadership development opportunities
- Engage members and provide relevant services
- Provide support for individual member welfare
- Provide opportunities for affiliation with other associations in the education sector
- Be a sustainable association
- Inform and collaborate with the Ministry of Education, other provincial ministries and partners through evidence-based, data-driven research
- Expand our voice, impact and involvement in education related issues
- Ensure active membership in public education decision-making committees

www.bcasbo.ca

604-687-0595

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executivedirector@bcasbo.ca

Roots

FINDING BALANCE

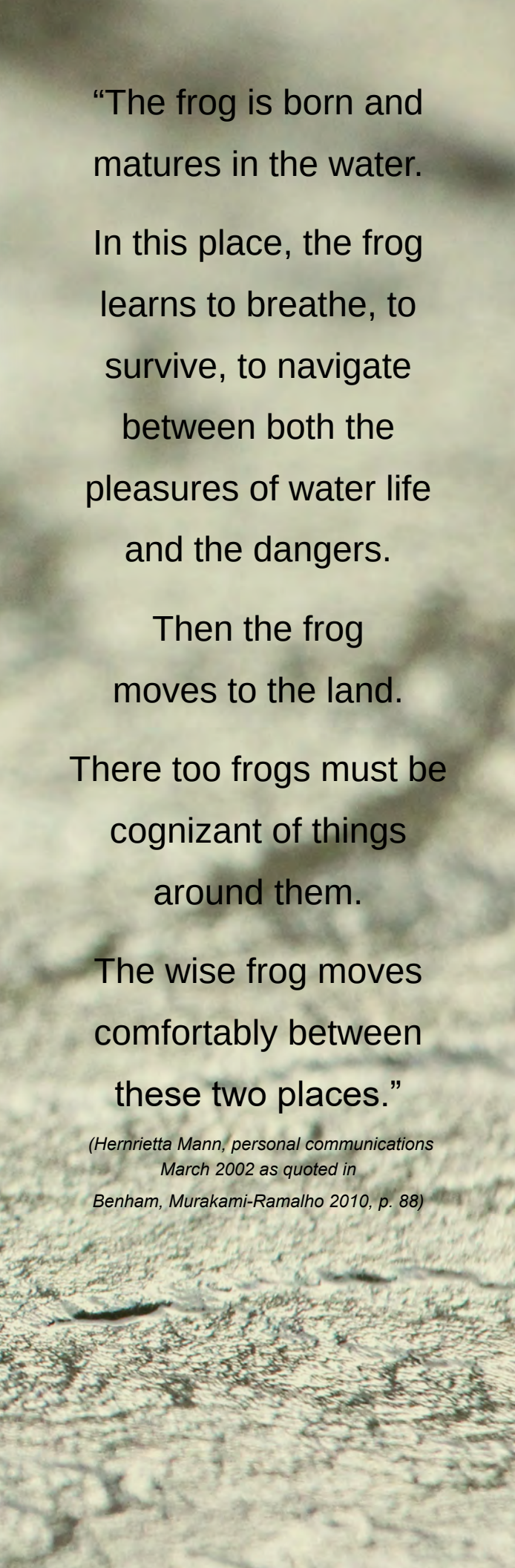


by

Carolyn Roberts

Indigenous Faculty Lecturer

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University



“The frog is born and
matures in the water.
In this place, the frog
learns to breathe, to
survive, to navigate
between both the
pleasures of water life
and the dangers.
Then the frog
moves to the land.
There too frogs must be
cognizant of things
around them.
The wise frog moves
comfortably between
these two places.”

*(Henrietta Mann, personal communications
March 2002 as quoted in
Benham, Murakami-Ramalho 2010, p. 88)*

Like the frog, Indigenous leaders must find ways to balance their Indigenous leadership style within the Westernized colonial educational school system. The balance is set between two very different worlds, one with the free-flowing water (Indigenous world view), and the other with the vast openness of the land (Westernized world view). Like the frog, Indigenous leaders must stay close to where they are born, within the water, in order to thrive. Indigenous leaders need to stay close to their roots within the educational system in order to be able to carve out the Indigenous space needed for a more wholistic approach within the current educational system.

When one thinks of the term ‘leadership’ or ‘leader’ what comes to mind? Is it the qualities of the person that makes them a strong leader, or is it their actions? Is leadership about the person or the role that they play within the organization or community in which they lead? Within their work on Indigenous educational leadership, Julien, Wright, & Zinni (2010) unpack the many different factors that play a role in how great leaders lead. Their conclusions, outlining the many traits, suggests that there are multiple layers that create a leader within our educational system. For these authors, leadership is a complex role that is dependent on many factors. Two key factors affecting this role are organizational culture and the dominant norms. Julien et al. contend that these two factors shape our educational leaders and their roles within the Westernized colonial education system.

When it comes to the topic of educational leadership, what comes to mind is the Western leadership style typically a managerial-type role within the school, that reflects Western society culture and values. As suggested by House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman's research (2002), the dominant culture and society's norms create what is to be expected from our educational leaders. This influences other leaders within the system to shift and change their leadership style in order to be accepted within the existing culture of the system.

And yet, as our current educational perspectives are shifting, as a Vice-Principal I am seeing within my own school district an educational shift where more Indigenous people are starting to take up leadership opportunities within the educational system.

When one thinks of the term 'leadership' or 'leader', what comes to mind?

Is it the qualities of the person that makes them a strong leader, or is it their actions?

The challenge that comes with this shift is understanding and recognizing the two very different – and sometimes opposing – styles of leadership, Western and Indigenous. This challenges Indigenous people to stay true to who they are, and tries to confine them to a specific style of leadership that is acceptable within the Westernized school system. Indigenous leaders are like the frog in the story: they must find ways to balance their Indigenous leadership style within the Westernized colonial educational school system.

Within their research, Julien, Wright, & Zinni (2010) found that Indigenous leaders lead in a more wholistic style, in comparison to Westernized leadership that compartmentalizes people and items. Indigenous leaders come to the work as members of the community, holding up respect and relationship as the highest standards. They do not come to the work as managers or 'boss' figures, they come in service to the greater good.

Indigenous leaders are not afraid to get their hands in the work and to get dirty. They feel that their role is to support and guide within the system. It comes from a place of interconnectedness, which is in opposition to the Westernized disconnection and compartmentalized style of leadership found within many Westernized colonial education systems

today, as suggested by House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman (2002).

Our Indigenous educational leaders within the Western colonized educational system are trying to find a balance within the system so that they can be true to who they are as Indigenous people, yet still align with the system in which they are working. The theories of House, Javidan & Dorfman (2002) about leadership behaviours and attributes outline intersections where this tension and conflict exist. One of their findings speaks to how leaders change their leadership styles to 'fit in' to the dominant culture within the organization. They also make connections between social and cultural norms dictating what leadership should look like within an organization.

The question emerges as to how Indigenous leaders can meet the challenges of knowing and understanding the Western colonized system that they work in, and still honour and uphold the Indigenous knowledges and understandings related to supporting their community as an Indigenous leader. The differences in leadership theories and styles must be understood by the leader in order to be able to move between both places comfortably, like the frog. The challenge then is how to work as a leader within a Westernized system while maintaining what culturally supports that leader and grounds them as an Indigenous person.

A research study on Indigenous Leadership in First Nations schools by Stockdale, Parsons and Beauchamp (Benham & Murakami-Ramalho 2010 p. 81) built a list of nine highly effective ways in which Indigenous leaders lead effectively in their schools. The nine ways are common traits of strong Indigenous leaders who:

- 1. Foster and nurture a sense of culture and traditions within the school.**
- 2. Take time to really know the community and are comfortable attending community functions; they are trusted within the community.**
- 3. Listen, care, and support the people**

with whom they work on professional and personal matters.

4. Create 'family-based' working and learning environments, both literally and figuratively.

5. Engage in detailed planning and develop procedures that are systematic and sustained, and shared with all staff.

6. Understand the community in which they work, developing a sense of realness about what they do. This understanding includes the impact of historical events, particularly residential schools.

7. Foster hope in their schools, and with everyone associated with the schools.

8. Are passionate and stand for what they believe in, never compromising their goals and vision.

9. Are conceptual and use the 'big picture' as their compass.

(Stockdale, Parsons, & Beauch)

As Brehm & Murakami-Ramalho (2010) state "Indigenous leadership is participatory" (p. 78). Everything that happens within an Indigenous community is intertwined and woven together. As Cajete (2016) Julien, Wright & Zinni (2010) discuss, Indigenous leaders come from strong communities built upon culture, family and history. These communities are wholistic in nature. Leaders are chosen from a young age, and they are then guided by the community around them, to show them how to live and work in a traditional way for the betterment of the whole community, not just themselves (Pointe, S. 2011). This is a key point that is opposite to Western leadership styles that are power-based and controlling. Julien, Wright, & Zinni (2010) discuss Western leadership as an individualistic leadership style that is focused on short-term gains. It is a hierarchical style that

only has the shareholders in mind when making decisions. White, Cooper, & Anwaruddin (2017) found that in this type of leadership style, it is very top down. One person is pushing objectives that possibly not everyone believes. When this happens, leaders can create a culture of mistrust and disconnection. This creates a team of people who are not engaged and fully on board with the leader's vision. Indigenous leadership models differ in their approach: their model is very clear that it is non-hierarchical, and based on what is best for the whole community. All community members have a part to play for the community to be successful. A leader is shown that in order for the good work to be done, they must also do the work, get their own hands dirty, show respect for all people within the community that they are not above them. The leader is walking with the community members on a journey that will benefit everyone. Cajete (2016) talks about the importance of this community and how belonging to it makes a person whole. This connects with what Benham & Murakami-Ramalho (2010) discuss as a wholistic way of being.

"Place is important to Indigenous people because as Indigenous people, we do not believe that only in school is where we learn. We learn from land, sea, and sky, they are fundamentally pedagogical. Place reclaims the idea that valuable learning occurs in multiple ecosystems" (p. 81).

With this in mind, one can see that Indigenous leadership has a rich cultural foundation that ties Indigenous leaders to the land and to cultural history. This creates leaders who have strong connections to their communities, families, and their culture.

As an elementary school Vice-Principal, I have to walk within the two worlds of leadership, like the frog. This is where I struggle as I work within a system that does not always allow me the flexibility and support needed to lead in a true authentic Indigenous way. The dominant thread that resonates throughout all of my research of leadership is that administrators in a school setting are the key for educational change within the

school. White, Cooper, & Anwaruddin (2017) point out that educational leaders are having to shift from the managerial-focused position to include student success within their building. This adds to an already challenging and complex job. This is not a role that is a solo act: it should be a role that all of the team are supporting, and the outcomes for our children should rest on the shoulders of all who work with them.

Within this work as a Vice-Principal, I am the only Indigenous administrator in my school district. This brings up other challenges in how I can lead in an Indigenous way, where I have no supports or other Indigenous leaders to look to for support within the work. Hohepa (2013) states, "Educational leadership has been identified as a key factor in raising achievement particularly among Indigenous and minoritized students" (p. 623). Therefore, if this is what helps build up our Indigenous youth, how do I as an Indigenous person lead our school in a way that is authentic to who I am, while still trying to follow the guidelines of what is laid out for me?

One of the biggest obstacles that I come across within the Westernized school system is the comment, 'We have always done it this way.' This does not mean it is the right way. When I challenge the status quo, this causes discomfort amongst my colleagues who can be truly stuck in doing things the way they have always been done.

**This is not a role that is
a solo act: it should be a
role that all of the team
are supporting ...**

Hohepa (2013) also talks about the difficulties Indigenous people have within the educational institutions:

"The educational institutions seldom reflect Indigenous peoples "cultural purity" and plurality in any traditional shape or form, or wholehearted

embracement of the new world. Education should not be an either/or choice with respect to Indigenous people access to their own cultural knowledge or indeed world knowledge forms" (p. 623).

Indigeneity is what grounds me as a person, who I am, and what I hold true from my ancestors. Within the school, I want to feel that authentically being who I am will be respected and honoured. Julien, Wright, & Zinni (2010) state that Indigenous leadership is grounded in what has come before us, and it is always looking forward toward what it entails for our future generations. Our decisions come from the solid teachings from our ancestors, knowing that they have walked this walk before, and have left us with valuable teachings to share with the next generations. Pointe (2011) makes some great connections about leadership from his mother's teaching, "in order for me to be a good leader, I must be a good follower" (p.5). He also talks about knowing himself inside and out, knowing his strengths and weaknesses in order to know how to lead. His mother also taught him the importance of being connected and listening with respect to all teachers who surround you. This is in opposition to what Julien, et al. (2010) examine as Westernized leadership within institutions that focuses more on outcomes, individual importance and plans in the short term, while Indigenous leadership emphasizes being wholistic and relational. This is one of the core differences between the leadership styles of the Westernized and Indigenous systems. My belief as an educational leader is that relationships come first and that as a school we are nurturing and cultivating a family community.

The more I read and research, the more I want to start to reinvent the system I am in. I want to include my culture, my teachings and strong traditions within my work as a leader rather than trying to fit into a place that may not ever change its way of thinking and looking at leadership.

Hohepa (2013) also states: "Putting Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language at the center of Indigenous education leadership is important, so that emotional and moral energy related to identity may be harnessed to enhance Indigenous student



learning more generally” (p. 622).

What connects us as Indigenous leaders is our connections to each other, and how we relate to each other as we are all teachers and we are all learners. Everything is always interconnected. This brings me back to the frog story and how the frog moves comfortably between both places, the water and the land. This story helps to illustrate the capacity of all people to grow and change. We as leaders need to be flexible and aware of the people and relationships around us, and to build a strong community so that we all have a safe place to be, not only the children but the people who work for us as well. The common thread within the readings about Indigenous leadership is that:

“Indigenous leaders lead from individual generosity, from a sacred space. They lead because our relations challenge us to make a difference” (Benham & Murakami-Ramvalho 2010, p. 90).

Even though the frog has the capacity to live in two worlds and to go back and forth, it is the water that rejuvenates and ensures the strength and endurance of future generations. In this way, the balance has multiple meanings when it comes to the work of Indigenous leaders and the journey of Indigenous leadership. To affect change, Indigenous leaders need an understanding and recognition of how both perspectives work and are transmitted; once this occurs, only then will true change happen within our educational system.

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Learning

Many of us may be dreaming of traveling, in a far-off future.

This article explores the essence of the program Leading Educators Around the Planet (LEAP), the research underpinning the program and the benefits/outcomes of participating in the program, as reported by numerous Principals from participating locations (including BC).



by
Dr. Warren Marks & Dr Suzanne Lazenby
Directors, LEAP

Australian LEAP group on the Nanaimo ferry (October 2018)

L-R Dyonne Anderson, John Farrell, Suzanne Lazenby, Warren Marks, Paul Tracey, Susan French, Jane Cameron, Jane Bridges

LEAP is an innovative Australian-based international peer-shadowing program which enables Principals and Vice-Principals to experience the excitement, exhilaration and professional growth that comes from collaborative learning with colleagues across the globe. The program began in 2009 and has attracted approximately 600 participants, connecting educational leaders from Australia (NSW) with Canada (BC, Ontario, New Brunswick), the UK, Finland, and the USA (Alabama).

There are two phases to the program:

Phase 1:

BC participants visit Australia for two weeks during their summer holidays while NSW schools are in session (late July/early August). Based on matching applicants, peer-shadowing participants engage in a hosting/billeting arrangement. The educational program, comprised of school visits and professional learning workshops, is augmented by a social program and sight-seeing.

Phase 2:

NSW participants return to their BC partner during their summer holidays (September/October) for a reciprocal two-week hosting/billeting experience while BC schools are in session. In BC, the program is supported by the BCPVPA, which facilitates professional learning and a school visitation program.

The program encourages the formation of HUBs where local Principals and Vice-Principals (from a geographical area) collaboratively plan action research topics, travel arrangements, professional learning activities, and social functions. This model encourages collaborative professionalism and Collective Principal Efficacy ¹.

International research consistently emphasises the importance of Principals learning collaboratively ². Further research points to the fact that Principals judge collaborative networked experiences as the most impactful leadership professional learning as it builds 'Collective Principal Efficacy' ³.

Research ⁴ conducted in Australia with experienced school Principals sought to locate what Principals see as the best professional learning. The result was that Principals most highly valued networking and collaboration with their colleagues, as the most effective, beneficial, and relevant professional learning. Networking needs to be initiated and managed by the Principals themselves, and not imposed on them by the employing authority. In a climate of trust and confidentiality, networking not only supports professional development, renewal, and wellbeing, it also supports self-efficacy: the belief that as a Principal, they can succeed and make a difference in their school.

Such a network of Principals – who believe that as a group they can succeed and make a difference in their schools – creates collective efficacy. Harnessing this power within a network through deep reflection and professional dialogue, Principals can effect positive change. This concept of the collective efficacy of Principals – or Collective Principal Efficacy (CPE) – validates networking as a creditable, effective, beneficial and relevant professional learning strategy.

Opportunities for Principals to engage in networks at an international level are viewed by experienced Principals as an essential component of their professional development portfolio in today's world. It offers them opportunities to enhance, reinvigorate, extend, and renew their principalship. The reconceptualizing of networking into self-initiated and self-managed networks 'by, for and among' Principals, is the philosophy which underpins the LEAP program.

We asked Principals from around the world about the impact of participation in the LEAP Program on their leadership:

Canadian Principals

"My LEAP experience was the best professional learning experience I have ever had in 28 years as an educator."

Tina Pierik (SD #61)

"My LEAP experience...allowed me to recognize and celebrate the strengths of both educational systems, and now I am able to use these in my daily practice as a Principal."

Steve Dalla Lana (SD #57)

"The LEAP program allowed me to experience professional learning in a very personal and meaningful way. The LEAP peer relationship is created when two educators become colleagues, mentors, friends and family. Some of the absolute best professional development I have been privileged to be part of."

Michele Reid (SD #43)

"Through the deep peer-shadowing relationship, you collaboratively identify school procedures and programs that were authentic and valuable rather than just being showcased for a one-off visit."

Margaret Mary Deck (SD #43)

"LEAPing" to Australia was, by far, the most valuable professional development experience I have ever had in my 30-year career...The reciprocal experience of LEAP was truly inspiring and re-energizing...Thank you for providing this invaluable, international, professional learning for administrators."

Heather Groves (Ontario, Canada)

Australian (NSW) Principals

"The LEAP program has provided me with global insights...has strengthened my self-reflection and highlighted the importance of contextual factors. The friendships I've made with international colleagues will stay with me always. What a privilege."

David O'Connor

"LEAP has allowed me to take the best of so many great education systems and make these contextual to our school. The connections with colleagues around the world have been beyond all expectations, and it is an experience I will forever value in my leadership."

Therese Corben

"The LEAP Program has developed my skills as a more sophisticated and reflective leader, able to lead changes that are sustainable."

Leonie Stevenson

"LEAP is truly a peer-to-peer experience with true deep sharing. I have learnt how other countries grapple with Indigenous education, and I have been challenged to look at how we meet the diverse needs of our students."

Sharon Tollis

International Principals

"The 24/7 discussions during the LEAP visits have given me an understanding of how different ways of leadership must be used in different educational systems and school cultures. And, of course, it has given lifelong friendships!"

Marjo Rantanen, Finland

"LEAP encourages the sharing of ideas, collaboration & friendship amongst education professionals across the globe. To meet with and listen to colleagues in different contexts and systems...is the key strength of the program."

Will Ryan, Ireland

"The LEAP Partnership has had a huge impact on my leadership...I came back to the UK renewed and refreshed with a clear idea of how to improve outcomes for children...I would fully recommend the LEAP experience to colleagues across the globe. I wish I had embarked on this much earlier in my career."

Julie Hogan, England

If you are a 'risk-taking' leader, keen to engage in internationalised collaborative learning with like-minded global Principals, consider taking 'the LEAP'.

Principals and Vice-Principals interested in learning more about the program and possibly forming a HUB to participate in the LEAP BC-NSW LEAP program in 2022, contact LEAP or the BCPVPA by March 2021.

1. **LEAP:** www.aleap4principals.com.au

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3. **BCPVPA:** Elizabeth Bell, Director, Professional Learning & Development
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LEAP meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia (January 2019)
L-R Warren Marks (Australia), Barbara Novinec (Slovenia), Suzanne Lazenby (Australia), Nives Počkar (Slovenia)

What's In **YOUR** Toolbox ?



Julie Molliver - unsplash.com

In my first position as a Principal, I would jokingly ask my Associate Superintendent about sending me the 'manual' for my role. He thought I was kidding. And I was, but only a little. Moving from the classroom to school administration requires the development of a new set of skills and tools that match your new responsibilities as a leader.

by

Read Jorgensen

*Principal, Northridge Elementary School
SD #61 (Greater Victoria)*

Learning your new role can be humbling. While on-the-job training can be effective, it can also be a cruel teacher. And as you are often the only administrator in your building, you learn in isolation. Fast forward from my first Principal posting: I am still learning and building my toolbox, with no manual in sight.

Over the years as an administrator and leader, I have collected a wide range of tools that have helped me. While Principals and Vice-Principals are experienced educators, your day is more about managing the people in your school than about leading the educational program. Several BCPVPA surveys tell us that much of your day

relates to people. You might deal with an employee disagreement, an angry parent, a recalcitrant student, an annoyed Assistant Superintendent, or an employee seeking advice on career advancement. Sometimes all before lunch.

**"Fast forward from my first
Principal posting: I am still
learning and building my toolbox,
with no manual in sight."**

To fill my toolbox and keep my skills sharp, I read articles about Organizational Behavior. Organizational Behavior – or OB – is the study of how people behave individually, in groups, and as whole organizations. While the topics in OB may not seem educationally relevant, I assure you that your day is filled with them. Employee motivation, influence, leadership, employee engagement and persuasive communication are embedded in many of your actions and decisions. Don't get me wrong, I still read a steady diet of educational topics, but OB theory and techniques are the tools I use every day in leading my school.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when a great deal of industry was still dependent on manual labor, scientific management was developed to help increase efficiency. The prevailing thought was that organizations worked like a massive machine,

and a scientific approach could make the 'machine' function more profitably. Schools to this day are dependent on manual labor in a sense, and they function as a hierarchical organization governed by policy, procedures, and legislation. The machine model seems to live on and, theoretically, if everyone in your district functioned like a cog in a big machine, the organization should run without a hitch.

In 1924, Western Electric engaged Elton Mayo to investigate the effects of factory lighting on the output of a small group of workers. These workers built – by hand – components for telephones, and Mayo was looking for a connection between lighting and output. The confusing result of the Hawthorne Works study seemed to show that output increased regardless of the change in illumination. No matter how bright or dim, production temporarily improved. This unintended finding, dubbed the 'Hawthorne Effect', theorized that the human interaction encountered between the experimenters and factory workers – and not the lighting – positively affected the output. The Hawthorne studies were not very rigorous in design and have been revisited many times with varying explanations. But regardless of the interpretation, they seemed to be a turning point that ushered in the study of behavior in organizations.

The more you understand about OB, the more effective you become as a leader. Try not to think





of it – as in the Hawthorne studies – as simply increasing production, but rather as providing an opportunity to better understand the interpersonal subtleties in your school. The tools of OB can help you analyze situations and respond with greater confidence when managing the human dynamics in your school.

"The more you understand about OB, the more effective you become as a leader."

Let's look at an example about an employee who repeatedly leaves work right after school. We might conclude from their behavior that they are lazy, or not interested in being a good teacher, by attributing their actions to personality rather than a specific situation. When an employee leaves work early, there could be other extenuating circumstances – rather than personality –

influencing the employee. Through Fundamental Attribution Error, we can be quick to judge such actions as personal attributes rather than resulting from a situational cause. Before you say, "I would never do that", think about the last time you made an attributional error about your neighbor leaving out their empty garbage cans, or the driver of a slow-moving car blocking the road as you rush home from work.

Motivation is another important area in OB. We assume that money is the prime motivator for every employee: you work, you get paid. While money is an important motivator in showing up for work every day, studies will show that providing more money generally does not make someone work harder. More sophisticated motivators such as recognition, responsibility and opportunity for advancement are better at eliciting additional effort. Demotivation is also important to consider as it can be damaging to your organization and leadership. If you as a leader have an 'inner circle' or show

fickleness in how you treat employees, you could be demotivating performance in the workplace.

My favorite topics in OB center around leadership and leadership behavior. What is leadership really (as opposed to having 'power of position', or a high level of task, or subject proficiency), and how do people demonstrate leadership? What does bad leadership look like, and why do some leaders excel in certain situations but not others? Should leaders be judged by what they accomplish or by the success of those they lead? In a recent column in BCPVPA's eNews (Sept. 26, 2020), I explored the difference between leadership using Mission Command or Command and Control. Although these sound like military concepts, I am sure that you have encountered them both. If you have ever described your boss (or maybe yourself) as a 'control freak', or if you have been frustrated when

"Should leaders be judged by what they accomplish, or by the success of those they lead?"

someone won't clearly communicate the 'end goal', you have experienced the downside of Command and Control or Mission Command leadership.

We are school leaders, managers, and administrators in a people-centric business. Our days are filled with dozens of personal interactions that require skill in analyzing and interpreting human behavior. Understanding elements of Organizational Behavior can help you be a better manager, leader, and administrator as you navigate, adapt and lead the complex interpersonal landscape in your school and district.

Look for Read Jorgensen's **Leadership Skills in Under 5 Minutes** in BCPVPA's eNews.

This monthly column is published on the last Friday of each month, and explores

OB topics that you can add to your leadership toolbox, all in under 5 minutes.

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It was an interesting Summer, a time where I have felt uncomfortable, sad and angry, and not because of COVID-19. I have been sickened to learn about so many people – George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake in the US; Chantel Moore, Rodney Levi and Ejaz Ahmed Choudry in Canada – being killed by police. I attended a rally in my community, and I have done a lot of reading about racism and anti-racism in these past months. I know that my perspective is limited, I may make mistakes and need further education, but I want to start a dialogue. I recognize that I work within an imperfect system, and that trying to change that system may be a challenge.

I may sound somewhat negative about the public education system, but that is not the case. I am grateful to connect with parents, teachers, education assistants and senior leadership as we discuss racism. I am proud to work in a system that – while flawed – will “get us out of this mess” to paraphrase the words of Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Murray Sinclair. While we still have miles to go, our curricular documents integrate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into all aspects of our curriculum; students in BC can take English 12 First Peoples as an equivalent to English 12; and my own 10-year-old son knows more words in Hul’qumi’num than I do. I see all of this work as part of the long road towards reconciliation and I am grateful to work in a school district where we can speak openly about racism.

Here are some lessons that I am learning.

Lesson 1: Awareness

As a person, and a Principal, I acknowledge that I have grown up with the privilege of white skin, and have much to learn about the injustices that many Canadians experience because of their cultural heritage or the colour of their skin. I recognize that there are lived experiences within my own community that I cannot see because of my privilege.

With the publication of the *Calls to Action* by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the *Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, and the ongoing news reports of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) who continue to be murdered and incarcerated in high numbers in Canada, it is obvious that there are inequities and systemic barriers that negatively impact the children in my province and country. As an educator, I must acknowledge that the education system is part of those inequalities, and that systemic barriers continue to exist for children and families. The education system was founded on colonialism, and there are structures that linger and perpetuate the inequity that we see reflected in these publications and reports.

My BIPOC friends have taught me two important things:

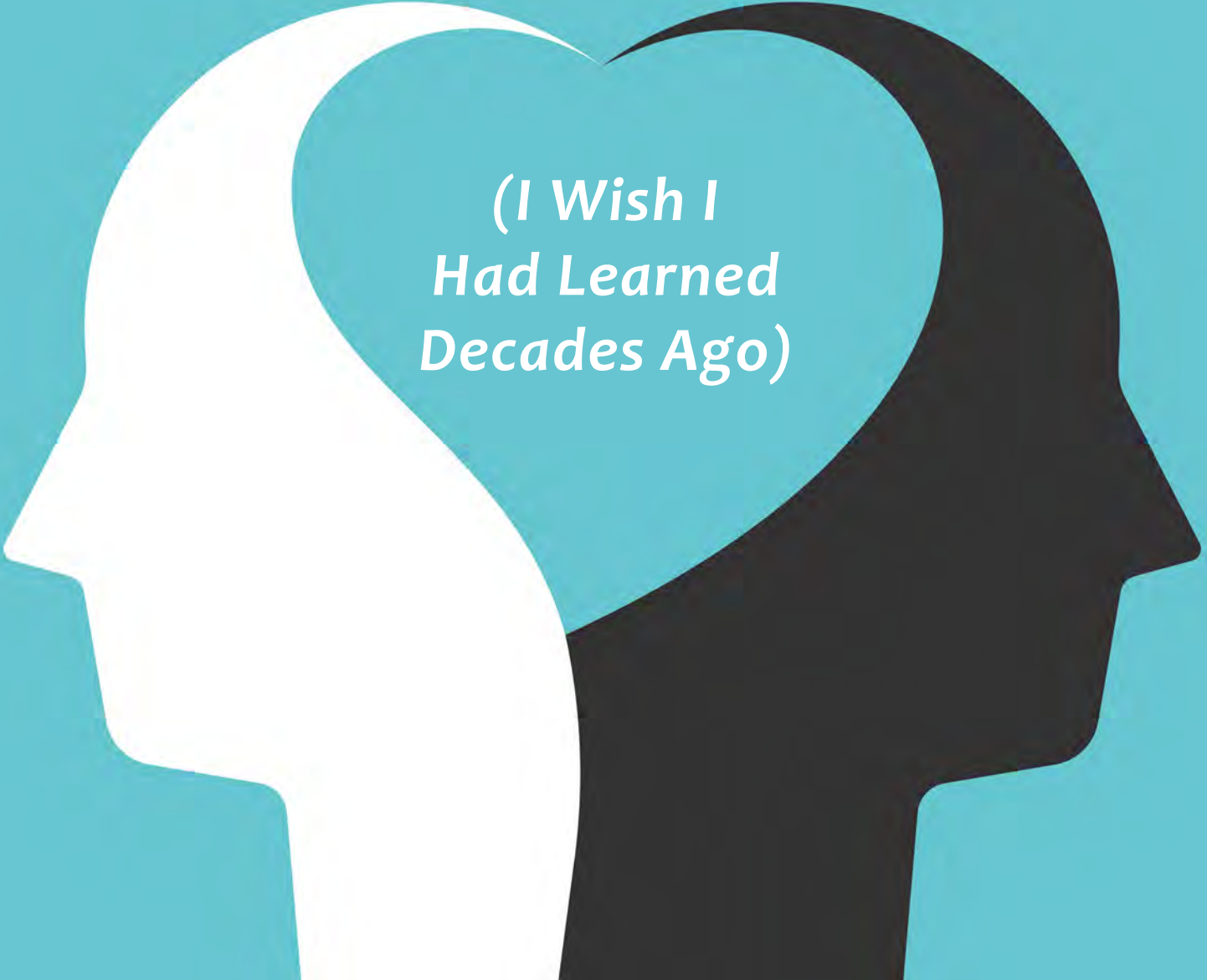
- 1) **That it’s not about me:** the discomfort I feel is nothing in comparison to the discomfort that they have felt at times growing up in Canada.
- 2) **That it’s a time to listen and learn,** not to publicly express my own outrage and guilt which may have some unintended consequences for those who are more vulnerable.

Considering those points, I am conflicted about whether I should be writing about what I am learning, but my purpose is to underscore what those of us with privilege can do to better support the children and families experiencing barriers within the system and in our communities. I do so with an acute awareness of my privilege. As Desmond Cole, Tanya Talaga and others have stated, there are two Canadas. It’s important for us – as educators – to be aware of this.

Lesson 2: Denial

When I bring up the topic of racism with others, I often hear the phrase, “Well, at least Canada isn’t

lessons about racism



*(I Wish I
Had Learned
Decades Ago)*

by

Kelda Logan

Principal, Fernwood Elementary School
SD #64 (Southern Gulf Islands)

as bad as what's happening in the US." This is one of the many ways that we deny the racism that people experience in Canada.

In an interview with Brené Brown about his book, **How to be an Antiracist**, Ibrim X. Kendi stated, "The heartbeat of racism is denial... to deny one's policies... and one's nation... is racist... Anti-racism is the willingness to be vulnerable, to be willing to diagnose oneself and our country and our ideas and our policies..."

There are several ways in which Canadians deny the presence of racism in the education system. I will list two here:

Denial #1: *I am not racist, my school is not racist, our district is not racist, our province/country is not racist, etc.*

Kendi points out that "the word 'racist' is not... a *pejorative*... it is *descriptive* and the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it and then dismantle it. The attempt to turn this usefully descriptive word into an almost unusable slur is... designed to freeze us into inaction." In other words, we are not racist or antiracist, but our *behaviour* at one point in time can be racist, and two minutes later be antiracist. We should not be afraid to describe racist actions and policies as what they are, instead of hiding behind a 'mask of neutrality' pretending that racism doesn't exist.

Kendi says that racism is "the marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities." For example, we know from data that Indigenous children in our province are not graduating at the same rate as other children in our province. Unless we subscribe to the deplorable racist idea that certain children are somehow inferior to other racial groups, then we must conclude that there are racist policies in our province and country. It then becomes important for us to identify those policies and ideas, and work to change them. In this case, it would mean that all children from different racial

groups graduate at approximately the same rate. This is exactly what the BC Ministry of Education is doing with the Equity Scan, a tool to allow districts to self-assess and engage in meaningful dialogue about the experience of Indigenous students in the public school system, and to respond in ways that create the conditions of success.

In **Decolonizing the Classroom**, Michael Seward states, "Those interested in decolonizing the classroom must take a first, crucial step: a personal commitment to political change. To deny the racial nature of politics (and power) — both inside of and surrounding the classroom — is to perpetuate the inequities created by colonization."

While it is uncomfortable to admit that there may be ideas and policies at work that perpetuate racial inequalities, we cannot pretend that we, or the society we live in, are neutral. We are either racist or antiracist — there are no other choices. As Jo-Anne L. Chrona in **Continuing our Learning Journey: Indigenous Education in BC** suggests, "The work doesn't begin with classroom resources... it begins with an examination of our own knowledge, values, and perspectives."

Denial #2: *If we focus on a multicultural approach to education, we can do the work of Indigenous Education (or Black Canadian education, etc.)*

In **Avoiding Racial Equity Detours**, Paul Gorski warns that "celebrating diversity" is crafted to help "white students learn about diversity" and that this could "create the illusion of diversity appreciation while entrenching inequity... Requiring students of colour to participate in diversity spectacles while failing to attend adequately to inequity can be exploitive."

People sometimes wonder why the BC Curriculum puts a strong emphasis on Indigenous Perspectives. With so many different cultures represented in Canada, why is there such a strong emphasis on First Nations, Inuit, and Metis cultures? Chrona points out that many of the diverse cultures

represented in Canada are thriving in other places in the world – their language, customs, culture, arts, and spiritual practices are being passed on to future generations. This is not so for Indigenous cultures in Canada. She states that it is imperative to teach the languages, unique histories and cultural practices of our Indigenous peoples because “this is the only place on earth where these languages have grown from, where this knowledge is connected to, where these literatures grow from... if we don’t teach about Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives that reflect Indigenous Peoples here, it does not get learned anywhere else on the planet.”

Stating that we will take a multicultural approach without focusing on awareness of white privilege and racism is akin to saying, ‘All Lives Matter’. We are, of course, a multicultural country that celebrates diversity, but we also have extreme racial disparity. Ignoring this perpetuates the problem. Instead, we need to teach students not just about multiculturalism, but also about how racism has operated for centuries in our country, and how to be antiracist.

Lesson 3: Fix the System, Not the People

In his essay, Gorski points out two other ways that we avoid dealing with racism in schools: ‘pacing for privilege’, and ‘deficit ideology’.

When we ‘pace for privilege’, the “pace of equity progress prioritizes the comfort and interests of the people who have the least interest in that progress.” If we only meet people where they feel comfortable, we are letting those with privilege determine the pace at which we work for change. “Students, families and educators experiencing racism cannot afford to wait... for all white educators to ease into racial equity commitments at a pace of our choosing.” ¹

‘Deficit ideology’ warrants some unpacking, as it comes up repeatedly in the literature on racism.

Kendi recounts a painful experience where he gave

a racist speech toward the end of his final year at high school, when he pointed out what he saw as the faults and problems with the Black youth of the day ². What he now knows, is that he was duped into seeing “the ongoing struggles of Black People... and decided that Black People themselves were the problem. This is the consistent function of racist ideas – to manipulate us into seeing people as the problem instead of the policies that ensnare them.” ³

Gorski describes it this way: if we use equity efforts to “‘fix’ students of colour by fortifying their grittiness, modifying their mindsets, adjusting their emotions” then we are placing the source of the educational inequities within the students rather than ignoring the role of racism. “It shifts the onus of responsibility away from the schools and onto the very youth who are cheated out of equitable opportunity – and who, due to this cheating, often tend to be quite resilient. It can obscure structural conditions with which marginalized communities contend.” ⁴ He later points out, “what good is grit against... inequitable school policy... or... trauma informed practices... for students whose primary source of trauma is the racism they experience at school?”

I remember reviewing the files of some students I was concerned about when I was a high school Vice-Principal. I found that they all had ‘Kindergarten readiness’ reports, which indicated whether they could do things like identify numbers and letters, write their name, or even hop on one foot. It really hit home for me when Chrona stated in her video series that we should not ask, “How are the learners ready for school when they come into the education system?” but instead, “How are schools ready to receive the learners that come into our education system?” I reflect on the ‘school readiness’ conversations that I have had over the years with regret for the missed opportunities to examine the school’s readiness for the child, rather than the child’s readiness for the school.



Lesson 4: Action

I'm a fairly typical Principal, someone who likes to 'fix things', 'find solutions' and 'move to action'. But before 'action', I recognize that I have more to learn about racism and the inequities that are impacting students and families in my community.

Gorski cautions us against a "common impulse in education to grasp for simple strategies to address challenges that are more about ideology and will, than about strategy."

When I attended the anti-racism rally in my community, there were many speakers calling for improvement to curriculum, and different learning resources. While textbooks and lesson plans are part of the change that needs to be made, complex issues require complex solutions. Shifts in ideology and perspective are neither simple nor straightforward.

School districts across Canada are engaging in complex actions that go beyond textbooks and lesson plans. A few I have heard about include examining suspension and expulsion data, examining educational programs that promote academic streaming, delving into achievement data to look for disparities, and creating committees to look into policies and procedures to ensure that they are equitable for all students.

As I write this, I find myself wishing that I could jump straight to 'action'. In my mind, I imagine an easy list of steps that I can implement in my school to enact a process of making our school more socially just. But there are no shortcuts. Rather than coming up with a plan of action that may miss the mark, I am committed to the hard and slow work. It's my responsibility to continue my own learning and to make sure that my students, and my own boys, don't find their own education about racism lacking.

I will continue reading about racism, and I will continue talking about racism. I can start with small actions within my own sphere of influence

as I continue to learn. It will be part of my staff meeting conversations. I will examine the imagery in our school to ensure that BIPOC students are represented. I will continue to seek out professional development and learning resources that are culturally relevant, and address anti-racism education directly. I hope that within our districts and within our membership, that we can have meaningful dialogue.

Every journey starts somewhere. I wish I had learned these lessons decades ago, but I'm grateful that my learning has begun.

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¹ p.58, Avoiding Racial Equity Detours

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Did You Know?

Conducting Fair Reviews

The Link between Defensible Decision-making and Workplace Morale

On an almost weekly – if not daily – basis, school administrators and other workplace leaders are asked to resolve workplace issues. Some may relate to concerns about staff performance or disruptive behaviour, while others may be linked to interpersonal conflict between staff, students, parents and others.

More and more often, the way in which leaders review and resolve these issues is being scrutinized and challenged, in staff rooms, PAC meetings, arbitration hearings and beyond. If leaders have resolved issues or conflicts using a flawed process, their decisions are often overturned and their credibility is called into question.

What's key to remember is this: even if a leader's decision is 'right' on its merits, it often will be criticized and/or overturned if the decision-making process is seen as biased, disrespectful, or unprofessional. In more serious situations, the leader may also be subjected to a separate complaint of harassment.

Anyone who has been investigated through an unfair process, or has been challenged on the fairness of their own investigation, knows that it is not a positive experience and one that should be avoided wherever possible.



by

Marli Rusen

*Labour Arbitrator, Mediator,
Investigator & Workplace Consultant*

Marli Rusen brings years of experience as a labour, employment and human rights lawyer to her current work as a labour arbitrator, mediator/investigator and workplace consultant. Marli has transformed her legal knowledge of workplace dynamics into practical tools to help identify and resolve workplace challenges in order to build strong and productive teams.

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For these reasons, it is critical that all leaders learn how to make fair and defensible decisions by conducting objective, neutral and timely reviews of the issues that come before them. This is not simply a best practice – it is also a legal requirement.

General Principles

Regardless of the type of review you are conducting (individual issues or interpersonal conflicts), and regardless of who is involved (students, parents, teachers or leaders), every review must be conducted in an objective, neutral and timely manner. More specifically, the review should occur:

- shortly after the issue or concern was brought forward;
- in a confidential manner;
- in a manner that protects everyone involved from retaliation, improper influence or interference;
- in an objective manner, ensuring that all relevant information, perspectives and perceptions are genuinely considered (including those of the accused);
- in a respectful manner, using curious and open-minded questions with everyone involved; and
- in a neutral manner, by someone who is not biased or *seen to be biased* against or in favour of anyone involved. If there is any possibility of the leader being biased or seen as biased in favour of or against a particular person, they should recuse themselves and have someone else conduct the review on their behalf.

It is critical that leaders not get ‘sucked into the drama of the first story’ (or, conversely, into the passionate denial of those being accused), however compelling or enticing their narratives

might be. There are always, **at a minimum**, two sides to every story and it is the leader’s legal and ethical responsibility to listen to both or all before arriving at a decision.

"If leaders have resolved issues or conflicts using a flawed process, their decisions are often overturned and their credibility is called into question."

The Two Questions That Count

Whenever a leader is asked to make a judgment call about a person’s behaviour/performance or to resolve a conflict that has arisen between individuals, they must interview those involved and then answer these two fundamental questions:

1. What most likely happened – in that situation, or during that period of time, or as between particular individuals?
2. On the basis of what was decided in question 1, did one or more of those involved do anything wrong or inappropriate? Did one or more of those interviewed contribute to the conflict/dysfunction, and in what manner?

The first question requires leaders to make findings as to the **facts** that unfolded; and the second question requires them to draw **conclusions** based on those facts.

These two questions must be asked and answered whenever a leader becomes aware of outstanding concerns or issues, regardless of the fact that: (a) the leader may not have witnessed anything directly; and (b) there may not have been any witnesses to the event in question.

Many workplaces have suffered greatly from

festering and protracted issues and conflict caused by a leader's failure to inquire into, or resolve issues on, the basis that they were 'he said/she said'.

"There are always, at a minimum, two sides to every story and it is the leader's legal and ethical responsibility to listen to both or all before arriving at a decision."

Key Questions to Ask

When interviewing those involved, the following questions are critical:

- **What happened?** This should be in detail, unpacking broad labels such as bullying, rude, incompetent, angry.
- **Who was involved?** This should include witnesses prior to, during and subsequent to any event or exchange.
- **Where did this take place?** This should be in detail.
- **When did this take place?**
- **Why did the person being interviewed react or respond in the manner they did?** Or why did they not act in a given situation?
- **How did they – and others – act, speak or interact with each other?** This should include a description of verbal *and* non-verbal behaviour and body language, facial expressions, as well as content, tone and delivery of any conversations that have happened.

Answer each question one by one. Let the person

speak without interruption and truly listen to their responses, in contrast to 'checking the box' and waiting to ask the next question. Then ask more questions. Keep doing this until you have the full picture.

Once you're nearing the end of each interview, ask, *'Is there anything else you wish to share with me? Is there any other information that you think might be relevant to the matters we discussed today?'*

You will be surprised – and humbled – at the new information you learn by opening up the dialogue in this manner. Even in those rare situations in which you don't learn anything more, the fact that you have asked this one final question will be genuinely appreciated by those involved.

Allowing people the opportunity to be heard – and then genuinely listening to and considering what they have to say – costs nothing, yet is invaluable to building trust, strengthening relationships and increasing morale.

Interviewing the Respondent

When meeting with someone who is accused of performing or behaving poorly, it is critical to fully and genuinely hear and understand their perspective before reaching any conclusions. This is not a mere technicality you must follow before reaching a pre-determined outcome.

The person faced with concerns deserves to know the specifics of the conflict or complaint that involves them and then be given a full opportunity to share their own views on and concerns about what happened.

They have a right to deny the allegations against them. They have a right to admit to some or all of the allegations, and then provide an explanation for why they did what they did, including any instruction they had been given, any direction they were following or perhaps any personal or medical challenges with which they were faced at the time.

They have a right to be heard. Plain and simple.

"Once you're nearing the end of each interview, ask "Is there anything else you wish to share with me?"

Now What?

After hearing from everyone involved, the leader needs to determine – on a balance of probabilities – what most likely happened in relation to a specific issue or during an event in question.

The *balance of probabilities* is the required civil standard of proof in BC.

The leader must then determine whether the behaviour, communication, conduct or performance of those involved is unacceptable, unreasonable or inappropriate, and must provide a clear rationale for their determination in this regard.

As a leader, you will have received numerous conflicting opinions about this during the course of your review. What is reasonable to one person is seen as unreasonable to another. However, a leader's conclusions of wrongdoing should not be based on the personal opinions of anyone involved, including those of the leader themselves. Instead, their conclusions must be based upon whatever

governing standards, policies and procedures are in place in their District, province or jurisdiction at the time. This includes current educational and teaching standards and regulations, professional codes of conduct, student codes of conduct, and relevant legislation, including school, safety and human rights laws.

The final step in a fair investigation is to clearly communicate to those involved the outcome of the review and any relevant next steps. This should be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis only, not broadcasted generally or gossiped about in any way.

The Bottom Line

This process should be consistently applied to everyone, regardless of their relative popularity, competence or reputation. It will allow leaders to make decisions that are factually accurate and evidence-based, and will help them to avoid making costly decisions that are emotionally charged, unprofessional and biased.

Investing in fair investigations is key to building credibility with staff and students, and is truly fundamental to a culture rooted in mutual respect and equality.

Satire, Mystery and Humour



Being A Principal Isn't All Joy!

A principal uncovers a stunning plan to transform public education, using his school as a launching pad.

"Woolman's characters are brilliant composites that anyone in education can relate to. The use of irony and satire make them enjoyable, memorable, and engaging."

Gerald Fussell - BC Principal

"I really identified with the colourful characters and the humour poked at the system. This was an enjoyable walk along the road of school administration."

Judy Berkeley - BC Vice-Principal (retired)

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The Delicate and Intentional Art of Transitions for Principals and Vice-Principals

Changing

Districts

Schools

Roles

Teams

by

Magdalena Kassis

Director, Member Support Services

BCPVPA

Being a Principal or Vice-Principal is extremely rewarding. No day is ever the same, and this brings with it a unique set of challenges and rewards.



When a Principal or Vice-Principal is faced with a transfer to a new school or site, this can bring a whole new set of emotions, challenges and rewards.

In most districts, changing schools usually occurs either in January or at the end of the school year, although it can also happen at any time. Despite the many tasks that school leaders have in December and June, it is important to take the time to ensure that there is thoughtful and intentional transition time.

Changing Districts

It can be an exciting yet daunting prospect to consider applying for – or accepting – a Principal or Vice-Principal position in a district different from where you currently work. While it is important to weigh the factors that may seem the most obvious – the commute, housing, impact on your family or personal connections – there are questions and factors that we encourage you to take into consideration.

During the application process and before accepting a position, ask questions about any potential differences in that district's contract, benefit plan or compensation package. What impact would those differences have on you? What are the options within the district for advancement? What are the professional development opportunities within the district? What is the district strategic plan, and does this align with your educational philosophy? Are you leaving behind a retirement gratuity? Will the new district provide you with sick days when you begin?

If you do take the leap and accept a position as a Principal or Vice-Principal in a new district, then congratulations on your new journey! Districts, like schools, are all unique and have their own sense of culture, priorities, and traditions. Taking the time within the first year of your appointment to listen,

learn, ask questions and appreciate the change of culture will go a long way to ensuring that you become fully integrated and involved in your new district environment. You will undoubtedly have fresh ideas to share with your new colleagues once you have had the time to understand your new educational context.

If this is a consideration for you, don't hesitate to reach out to the Member Support Services Team at BCPVPA, and we can answer your questions about specifics. Or, we can make sure to point you in the right direction.

Changing Schools

Different districts have varied processes and practices when it comes to Principals and Vice-Principals moving schools. In some districts it can be common practice for a school administrator to be moved to a new school every few years. In other cases, depending on the size and culture of a district, a Principal or Vice-Principal may remain in their assigned school for many years, making a change of school something of an anomaly. A change of assignment might be at the request of the school leader, or it might be initiated by the district.

Regardless of the reason for the administrative move – retirement, attrition, the needs of the district – ensuring a seamless transition for the school community and for the incoming administrator is crucial. Here is what to consider in the delicate and intentional art of transitioning from school to school.

"If I've done my job well as a Principal, the school will run smoothly without me when I'm gone".

BCPVPA member

If you are the outgoing leader...

It may feel hard to leave!

Perhaps you have been well-loved in the school community, and your departure is not by choice, or perhaps this is your final school before retirement. Or, you may be grateful to be leaving your current site, and you are ready for a change. Regardless of the reason, it is crucial that you do everything possible to foster success for the incoming leader, and continuity for the school community.

Some things to consider in the weeks prior to your last day:

- Arrange meetings with your successor prior to the change of assignment
- Send a letter of introduction to the community, welcoming the new administrator
- Invite your successor to come to the school and meet staff, PAC and students
- Ensure your successor has the information they need, including the school plan and planning process, plans for individual students with high needs, relevant PAC information, budget information, staff committees, staffing/hiring needs, school activities and traditions, student initiatives, admin portfolios
- Leave all relevant school-related files for your successor
- When parents, staff and students see that you and your successor are working as a team, this will relieve anxiety about the change in leadership
- If your successor is new to their role as Principal or Vice-Principal, do what you can to help ensure they have the necessary supports – introduce them to colleagues, encourage them to take BCPVPA's Short Course I, and encourage them to attend district workshops
- After the change in leadership has occurred, stay in contact with your successor in case they have any questions

Once your successor has taken leadership of the school, it's time to step back and let them lead. Although visits to the school community can be tempting, they can unintentionally make the new administrator uncomfortable.



If you are the incoming leader...

Hopefully, your predecessor has invited you to the school, and reached out as the outgoing leader!

Prior to your assignment:

- Reach out to the current administrator, and ask to meet and review the needs of the school
- Every situation is different, but remember that the current administrator is the school leader for now – avoid the temptation to ‘play the role’ too early

Once your assignment starts:

- It is possible that your predecessor and you have different philosophies or styles. Or, it's possible that the school culture is different from your own educational beliefs. Avoid the temptation to jump in and make changes too quickly. Take time in your first year to listen, ask questions, learn. Make notes for yourself, discuss with a trusted colleague, and take time and care before suggesting any major changes
- You may wish to connect with each staff

member of your new school to gain their perspectives, with questions like:

During your tenure here, what has been one of your most memorable moments?

What are the important traditions of the school?

What do you value most about the school?

In your view, what is something that needs attention?

- Remember that building relationships and understanding the culture and traditions of the school will be your first important task before you embark on any initiatives, projects or changes
- If you are new to the role, participate in any program or workshops offered by your district for new administrators. Network with your new colleagues and the BCPVPA as much as possible



Change within an AdminTeam

For schools that have Vice-Principals or an administrative team, it will be important to ensure a smooth transition when there are changes within the team. Regular check-in meetings with the team are crucial. Sometimes, portfolios might benefit from being shifted, based on the expertise and growth plan of each member of the admin team. Even in extremely busy times, having a scheduled admin team meeting is important. Discussions will ideally focus not just on the operational needs of the school, but on the growth and efficacy of the team as a whole.

Moving to a new school as a Principal or Vice-Principal can be both exciting and scary, and there is always something new to learn. The list is endless: it might be your first time administering a French Immersion program, supporting students with a particular learning need, overseeing a construction project, working with an administrative team or supporting an active PAC. Regardless of the specifics, every BC school community is unique and will require an individualized approach. As Principals and Vice Principals, we can help these school communities through times of transition, and we can take pride in supporting our administrator colleagues as they embark on their journey of leading a new community of learners.

Good luck – you've got this.

Don't hesitate to reach out to your colleagues or to BCPVPA for support and guidance.



Remote Learning Made Easy

WebTESS Student Information System

Online learning has become a necessary tool for educators and students in the current environment.

Create an Online Hub

Establishing a single online hub for students to visit for up-to-date information is ideal. A single online hub, such as WebTESS, allows students to feel comfortable visiting the same site and using the same online tools consistently.

Self-Paced Learning

Focusing on assignments that are longer term with clear milestones and reporting points is important. The Course Documents module allows students to download course material and class descriptions,

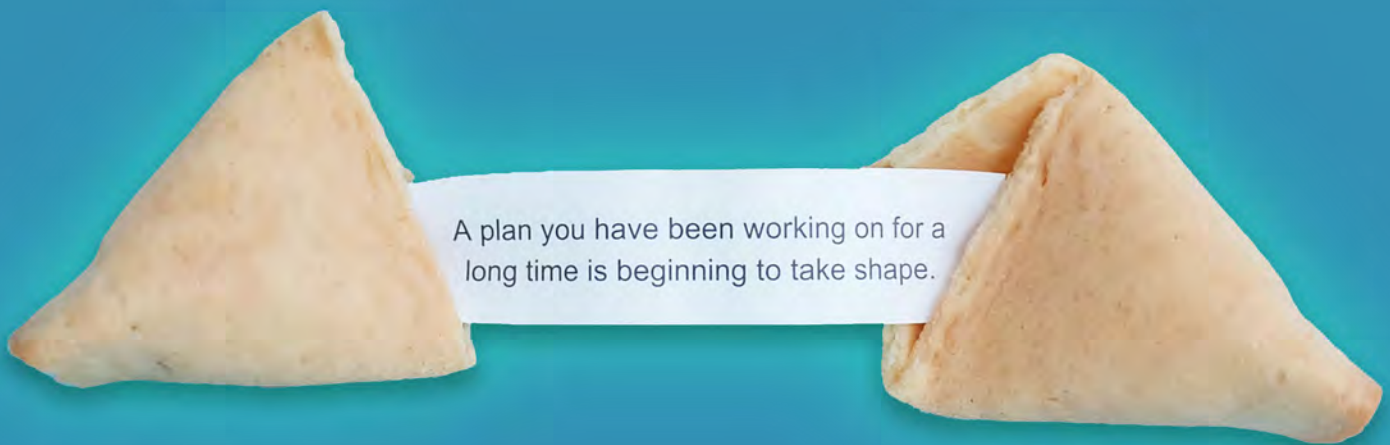
syllabi and other documents. Students can work at their own pace while teachers track accomplishments. The Homework module allows teachers to assign work and set deadlines by date. Links to course documents and external resources can also be included.

Consistent Contact with Students

Checking-in with students regularly (telephone calls, emails, chat messages, etc.) provides students with a sense of belonging to the school community. The Email-Out and Homework modules enable clear communication with parents and students on a regular basis.

How Well Do You Know Your PENSION?

It goes without saying that most people do not pay much attention to their pension plan benefits until they are nearing retirement age or are ready to retire. It is critically important for members to understand how their plan works and what benefits they can expect in retirement. It is recommended that people pay attention to this throughout their careers by participating in 'at least one' retirement session hosted by the BCPVPA.



Regardless of where you are in your career, or how long you have been contributing to the plan, when you take this Retirement Quiz you will discover how well you understand the Teachers' Pension Plan.

You'll find the answers to these ten questions on the following pages.

by

Don Boyd

Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA

QUESTIONS

1. Is your plan a '**defined benefit**' or a '**defined contribution**' and what is the difference between the two terms?
2. The Teachers' Pension Plan is a very successful plan which provides members a level of financial security once they enter into retirement. How does your plan provide security during your retirement in the face of '**inflation**'?
3. How can you find out what your pension will be in '**retirement**'?
4. Both you and your employer contribute to the Teachers' Pension Plan. The percentage of salary contributed by each party may vary slightly depending on the '**valuation**' which is conducted every three-years by actuaries. How did the December 2017 '**valuation**' affect contribution rates?
5. According to the Government of Canada – Canadian Retirement Income Calculator and the CIBC, how much should you have **saved for a successful retirement**?
6. Are you able to **change your pension plan** once you have submitted it to the Teachers' Pension Plan?
7. On your pension statement it includes both '**pensionable service**' and '**contributory service**'. Which one of these two is used to calculate your monthly pension amount?
8. What does the **Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA)** provide for members?
9. There are many options to consider when planning your retirement such as **Joint Life, Single Life** and **percentage of plan**. By 'law', what is the minimum level of coverage that you must provide to your partner/spouse?
10. What is a **temporary annuity**?

1. Is your plan a **'defined benefit'** or a **'defined contribution'** and what is the difference between the two terms?

The Teachers' Pension Plan is a 'defined benefit' plan. A defined benefit plan provides a guaranteed income for life, and the amount you are entitled to is calculated on a formula that uses your years of service, highest average salary (HAS uses your best 60 months), and multiplies this by a set accrual rate (percent) established by the plan.

A 'defined contribution' plan is one in which both the employer's and the plan member's contributions are defined. The pension benefit amount that members receive upon reaching retirement is entirely dependent upon how much money they have contributed to the plan, how the money was invested and how those investments performed over time.

2. The Teachers' Pension Plan is a very successful plan which provides members a level of financial security once they enter into retirement. How does your plan provide security during your retirement in the face of **'inflation'**?

The Teachers' Pension Plan is 'indexed'. This means that each year on January 1, the plan factors in the inflation rate, uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous 12 months and applies it to the pension that a person is receiving. This rate is calculated from October 1 to September 30. This allows the pension to remain current in relation to the price of goods and services purchased by Canadian consumers. This is called a 'cost-of-living adjustment' (COLA) which becomes part of your yearly pension. On January 1st of most years, retirees will see a raise in their pension benefit amount.

3. How can you find out what your pension will be in **'retirement'**?

Each June, members receive their updated pension statements from the Teachers' Pension Plan indicating the earliest retirement age without penalty, the years of pensionable service and information regarding retirement based on current information. If a member wishes to see what their pension will be on a specific date and year, they can go to 'My Account' to register and then use the personalized pension estimator to compare their estimated pension at different retirement ages.

4. Both you and your employer contribute to the Teacher's Pension Plan. The percentage of salary contributed by each party may vary slightly depending on the **'valuation'** which is conducted every three-years by actuaries. How did the December 2017 **'valuation'** affect contribution rates?

In October 2018, the board announced that contribution rates will be reduced for both members and employers, effective January 1, 2019. This change results from a strong valuation as at December 31, 2017. Your contribution rates as a percentage of your salary dropped to 11.17 from 12.92. This means for every \$1,000.00 of salary, you now pay \$17.50 less in pension contributions. The employer's portion also dropped from 13.23 percent to 11.30 percent which resulted in a savings of \$19.30 per \$1,000.00 of salary that they pay. The next valuation will be December 2020.

5. According to the Government of Canada – Canadian Retirement Income Calculator and the CIBC, how much should you have **saved for a successful retirement**?

When it comes to income required in retirement in Canada, there are several opinions. You can visit the Government of Canada website and use their Canadian Retirement Income Calculator to estimate how much you would require each year based on your spending habits. If this calculator shows that you require \$40,000.00 per year in retirement — and you live for 25 years — you would need \$1,000,000.00 in retirement.

For the purpose of this exercise let's say you believe you require \$1,000,000.00 for a successful retirement, based on your spending habits.

The Teachers' Pension Plan provides you with a base amount to build upon in your retirement. This, combined with CPP, OAS and your other investments and sources of income, means you will retire successfully.

Example: You decide to retire at age 60. You receive an annual teacher pension of \$60,000.00 in retirement based on your highest 5-year average salary (HAS) of \$120,000.00, and you have 30 years pensionable service. You incur a penalty of 4.5% for the one year that you retired under the age of 61. If you collected your pension for 25 years, you would receive \$1,500,000.00 over the course of your retirement, which exceeds your targeted amount. *Please note that in the education field women, on average, live to be 91 years of age and men live to be 89 years of age.*

The above calculation does not include the Canadian Pension Plan, to which you are entitled. The CPP maximum monthly payment — unless you defer collecting your CPP — is \$1,175.83, which is \$14,109.96 per year. If you were to multiply this by 25 years, it equals \$352,749.00 over the course of your retirement. This is in addition to your Teachers' Pension amount. As you can see from these calculations, you will be in excess of the targeted \$1,000,000.00 for your retirement. In addition to this, both your pension and the CPP are indexed so you can expect increases to offset the cost of living throughout your retirement.

6. Are you able to **change your pension plan once you have submitted it to the Teachers' Pension Plan?**

Yes, you have 60 days from the date on your pension letter that you receive from the Teachers' Pension Plan to make a change to your pension option.

7. On your pension statement it includes both 'pensionable service**' and '**contributory service**'. Which one of these two is used to calculate your monthly pension amount?**

Contributory service is the number of years you have made contributions to the Teachers' Pension Plan. Pensionable service refers to your actual working time – the number of full-time equivalent years you have spent working and contributing as a member of the Teachers' Pension Plan. Pensionable Service is used to calculate your monthly pension amount.

8. What does the **Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA) provide for members?**

Your monthly pension payment may increase to reflect increases in the cost of living through the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). This adjustment may be added to your pension to help it keep pace with increases in the cost of living over time. Since 1990, in all but one year, there has been a CPI increase made to pension benefits for retirees.

COLAs are not guaranteed. They are based on:

- Changes in the Canadian consumer price index (CPI) over a 12-month period from September to September
- The funds available in the plan's inflation adjustment account

Both active members and employers contribute to the inflation adjustment account. Each year, the Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees reviews any changes in CPI and the available funds in the inflation adjustment account. If the board grants a COLA, it will take effect in January.

Once a COLA is granted, it becomes part of your lifetime pension. The COLA is also applied to the bridge benefit and temporary annuity portion of your pension, if applicable.

9. There are many options to consider when planning your retirement such as **Joint Life, Single Life and percentage of plan**. By 'law', what is the minimum level of coverage that you must provide to your partner/spouse?

By law, you must choose at least 60% Joint Life coverage unless waived by your spouse. This means your beneficiary receive 60% of what you were receiving after your death. Joint Life means a benefit is paid for both you and your spouse's lifetime. You are insured your whole life, and your survivor (beneficiary) is insured for their whole life.

10. What is a **temporary annuity**?

You may purchase or choose a "temporary annuity" along with your pension option. A temporary annuity is a top-up to your pension. It increases your monthly payment until you reach age 65 or your death, whichever comes first. Basically, you are front-end loading your pension by borrowing from your pension, for a period of time, which will result in a reduced pension amount after the temporary annuity has expired.

We encourage you to visit the Teachers' Pension Plan website and open a "My Account". This website has a wealth of learning resources for you as you navigate your retirement planning.

If you wish to attend one of the Retirement Seminars hosted by the BCPVPA's Member Support Services, please contact Emily Rogness emily@bcpvpa.bc.ca.



"Remember that it is never too early to begin your planning for retirement"

TAKE 3

During this school year of the COVID-19 reality, we seek effective and efficient means to tend to our own needs. It's hard to carve out large chunks of time with the extra workload, pandemic health precautions and extra mid space devoted to the needs of others and ourselves. *Here are three ideas to help maximize your wellness value with minimal time.*

wake

Morning Rituals

Establish a new morning ritual that can help set the intention for the day, in as little as a few minutes. Put aside five minutes each morning to attend to a self-focus exercise that better prepares you for the day.

Whether it becomes a short stretching routine, deep breathing focus, 'mindful' shower, daily affirmation or moment of gratitude, by focusing on ourselves and our daily intentions, we can start the day on a more positive footing and with a deeper personal connection.

stretch

Micro Wellness Goals

When we have little time, micro goals have a way of being consistently delivered on – and more easily woven into – our busy lives. With time and energy being more precious, small daily goals go a long way to being sustainable and have an underestimated compounding effect on our overall health.

Much like establishing a new morning ritual, micro goals can be integrated into daily life with little resistance or motivation required. Pick one micro goal for home and/or one for work, and be amazed at the overall exponential effect these have in our lives.

laugh

Humour

Humour is easily one of the most under-rated activities that helps boost low mood, reduce anxiety and improve physiological health. From reducing blood pressure to boosting our immune system, humour offers us a chance to relate and to find common ground with others, even in the toughest of circumstances.

There are many small desk calendars that offer wonderful daily jokes and humour, and they pack a great wellness punch for so little effort. Find one that best meets your particular funny bone taste. I'm awfully fond of Gary Larson's 'The Far Side' comic.

by
Jack MacNeill

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

Flip the switch. Recycle your old electronics.

Recycling your old electronics keeps metals, plastics, and other valuable resources out of landfills, and puts them back into the manufacturing supply chain. It also prevents e-waste from being illegally exported or handled by irresponsible recyclers.

Always bring your old, unwanted, or unusable electronics to our authorized drop-off locations to ensure that your end-of-life electronics are being recycled in a safe, responsible, and environmentally sound manner.

The Electronics Products Recycling Association (EPRA) of BC is a not-for profit, industry-led organization designed to manage end-of-life electronic products that have exhausted their potential for re-use by donation to friends, family, or authorized re-use organizations.

WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED?



Desktop/Portable
Computers



Display
Devices



Printing, Scanning
and Multi-Function
Devices



Desktop
Printers



Home Audio/
Video Systems



Medical
Devices



Vehicle Audio/
Video Systems
(aftermarket)



Personal/
Portable Audio/
Video Systems



Video Gaming
Systems/ Battery
Powered Toys



Cellular and
Non-Cellular
Devices



IT and Telecom
Equipment



Musical
Instruments

For more information, and to find out what and where to recycle, visit

Return-It.ca/Electronics

Even when they stop working, your old electronics can still be useful.

Craig Wisehart,
Executive Director, Western Canada

Since 2007, Return-It Electronics has provided British Columbians with safe and environmentally responsible ways to reuse or recycle old, obsolete, broken and unwanted electronics devices.

Today, we recycle more than 3 million electronics devices every year in BC, and over the past 12 years we've worked together with British Columbians to recycle more than 214,000 tonnes of old electronics. Keeping metals, plastics and other valuable resources out of landfills, and putting the recovered materials back into the manufacturing supply chain.

The Return-It Electronics program operates on behalf of the Electronics Products Recycling Association (EPRA), a national not-for-profit dedicated to collecting and recycling end-of-life electronics in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. For more than a decade we've been working together to make it easier and more convenient for people to drop off their old devices for recycling. The program has grown from only a few depots, in 2007, to now more than 285 authorized collection sites found in communities spread all across BC.

The number of categories of eligible

devices that are accepted has grown since the program inception. A decade ago we could only accept computers and monitors, printers, fax machines and televisions, but today British Columbians can recycle 17 different categories of electronic devices including cell phones, video games, home entertainment devices, medical devices, musical instruments and more.

Once they've been collected at a Return-It Electronics depot or an authorized collection site, devices are sorted and sent to local EPRA approved recycling facilities for processing, where their component materials are then separated to recover metals, plastics, glass, and other natural resources that are then used to make new products. In addition to saving these materials from ending up in landfills, this process also keeps them from being illegally exported out of Canada.

More than 72% of British Columbians are already aware that they can safely

and responsibly recycle their old electronics, whether through drop off locations like their local Return-It Electronics depots, or during one of our regular electronics drop-off events in communities across the province. Last year alone we recycled about 3.4kg of electronics, per person, for every person in BC.

We're also working hard to spread the word about other responsible uses for old electronics, by connecting businesses that would prefer to have their reusable electronics refurbished – rather than recycled – through organizations like the BC Technology for Learning Society. This helps give new life to old electronics by supporting the Computers for Schools program in BC, and by helping British Columbians to give away electronics items to a BC-based refurbisher qualified under the comprehensive standards of the Electronics Reuse & Refurbishing Program.

Return-It Electronics and EPRA British Columbia are not-for-profit organizations dedicated to protecting BC's environment and our shared future. The program is funded through the Environmental Handling Fees (EHF) which are applied to the sale of all new electronics products in BC. Neither a tax nor a refundable deposit, the EHF on each new device is used for the costs of the collection, transportation and responsible recycling of the device once it reaches the end of its life.

In addition to protecting the environment through the programs listed above, Return-It Electronics is also dedicated to helping protect the privacy and data of British Columbians, by providing easy, practical advice on safely and securely wiping devices and memory cards before getting rid of them. This information – and more – is available online at the Return-It.ca website.

WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED?



Desktop/Portable
Computers



Display
Devices



Printing, Scanning
and Multi-Function
Devices



Desktop
Printers



Home Audio/
Video Systems



Vehicle Audio/
Video Systems
(aftermarket)



Personal/Portable
Audio/Video
Systems



Video Gaming
Systems/ Battery
Powered Toys



Cellular and
Non-Cellular
Devices



IT and Telecom
Equipment



Medical
Devices



Musical
Instruments

Give new life to your old electronics. Learn more at Return-It.ca/Electronics

BRAIN STRAIN

MENTAL HEALTH 101 - Part Three Rising from the Ashes

This is our third and final installment of our Mental Health 101 series on Burnout.

We started the series with a sample scenario to introduce the prevalence and fundamentals of burnout. Our second article featured an interview with a functional medicine and psychology expert, Dr. Edalati, regarding the cause and physiological impact of burnout and the slow road to recovery. Our last installment features two stories from BCPVPA members who share their own burnout experiences.

We want to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to both **Kevin Luchies** and **Dan Watt** for their willingness to be open and vulnerable in sharing their realities. Please heed their learnings and advice to — ideally — avoid burnout, or to mitigate the impact before you turn to ash!

Kevin Luchies

is a long-term BCPVPA Member from Victoria who has been on LTD for more than three years.

Kevin wrote a letter to his Chapter colleagues and the BCPVPA team earlier this year; entitled 'Sidelined', the letter chronicled parts of his LTD journey.

My questions, and Kevin's responses, are based in part on this letter.



RM: Thank you for talking with me today. Can we start by learning a little about yourself and your career?

KL: My story is typical of many Canadians. I'm a child of refugee families. My elders worked very hard. They relied heavily on community. They donated a percentage of their earnings to their faith and gave whatever was required when neighbours were in need. They expected that the opportunity we were given should not be squandered. Education was critically important. Contributing to a greater good was, and remains, a primary driver. Each of us was taught to strive to emulate the shining light of a righteously lived life ... and to sacrifice 'self' when called to do so. Perfectionist personality traits abound. We see these same dynamics in our schools today, as later waves of families send their children to our schools to fulfill the dreams their new country provides.

As an eldest grandchild in both of my huge families, the hopes behind why we needed to flee to a haven like Canada rested on my generation's shoulders. I felt it strongly as a young adult, and no less today. We felt a powerful drive to live up to the privilege we were granted. We have a responsibility to give back – and

pay forward – through service. I was raised by workaholics and ‘giveaholics’. Both were virtues in an era when a unit of work, or unit of giving, yielded a predictable and positive result. These are tricky drivers in our era, and in our vocation, as each are so increasingly complex to execute accurately that we can easily lose balance. Our health, and thus our ability to contribute in the way we choose, can become at risk. We exercise a part of our life’s purpose via our chosen profession in a service context filled with increasing pressures, acute challenges and less-than-sure-to-work solutions.

My small family moved to Ucluelet in 1990 to start a new life on the wild side of Vancouver Island. After four years at Ucluelet Secondary School (USS), and two years at Oak Bay High School in Victoria, I became a Vice-Principal at Oak Bay in 1997. I returned to USS as Principal in 1999. In 2002, I was asked to return to Victoria to support our District’s plan to transition to a middle school model. I was placed at Lansdowne Junior Secondary to help guide it to become Lansdowne Middle. I later became District Principal of Alternate and Continuing Education. I then served six years as Principal of Lambrick Park Secondary School and served as Principal of Gordon Head Middle School for six months before taking Medical Leave on February 1, 2017. I was a Principal for 18 years, and have been on LTD for more than three and a half years.

RM: What motivated you to write ‘Sidelines’, and to participate in this interview today?

KL: I wrestled for a long time, deciding whether or not to send something to colleagues which might help some avoid what happened to me, and might help precipitate required changes in our profession **and** the culture which supports those of us who contribute as servant leaders. I have long believed these goals are necessary. Each supports the best interests of every stakeholder in education – most especially our children. The healthier we are, the healthier and richer our service can be for them. I

believe elements of my story are common. I believe the challenges which led to my illness are **too** common. If I can help one colleague avoid illness, reduce illness, or help one part of our complex service culture heal through my contribution, it will be well worth the sacrifice of a little privacy and sharing how I got ... here.

RM: Before we talk about your burnout experience, and how you navigated that journey, how are you today?

KL: Thanks for asking, Rochelle. I am as OK as I’m going to be. Work-limiting symptoms have not improved, though my lifestyle is healthier and there have been improvements in other areas of my wellness. I lost weight. I have a very healthy diet. I pay close attention to sleep hygiene. We adopted two puppies to build in regular exercise and introduce even more love into our lives. Though I wouldn’t wish the last three-and-half years on anyone, I am well looked after and am truly blessed with a great family and loving friends. Too many are far worse off than I.



I do want to take a moment to stress that my story is not shared to garner pity, sympathy, or any form of appreciation for being open about what happened and is happening. I have a mental illness. It is accompanied by a host of physical symptoms. I am not ashamed of it. I shouldn't be, given how many times in my career I supported people to speak their truth with their head held high to better enable diagnosis, treatment and recovery. The stigma which too often accompanies my illness is an unwelcome shadow.

Begone shadow!

Most people who have what I have, or any of the variations of it, stay silent and simply disappear. It is tempting to stay quiet and let time and the busy lives of my colleagues allow me to drift into whatever that place is where old Principals go. I will soon enough... just not quite yet.

RM: *What do you believe led up to your burnout?*

KL: Tough question. Looking back, there were many factors which contributed to burning out. ***I joyfully worked too hard, for too long.*** Being a school leader for 20 years, and feeling so urgently immersed in the purpose we share, had to be a significant contributor. As I grew in experience, I felt I grew in knowledge. I felt a responsibility to use that knowledge to try to move our profession in a better direction. I became frustrated that I wasn't succeeding as much – and as quickly – as I thought I should. I joined think tanks. I volunteered for Association roles and served in many positions, including Chapter President. I became President of a provincial professional association supporting Continuing and Adult Education. I lobbied hard.

I probably fought too intensely for change without being able to create an effective coalition. I believed I could out-think, out-work, out-argue and out-love any problem or condition. I became philosophically out of balance with many I served alongside. It doesn't matter now if I was right, wrong, or part way between. Those who know me knew where

*"I joyfully worked too hard,
for too long."*

I stood. Assigning grades of righteousness about my positions are theirs to give ... not mine to take. It was enormously stressful. Maybe there was no other path, maybe I didn't try hard enough to find one. By the time I had to leave active service, I felt more isolated than I ever thought was possible.

Feeling out of sync with my employer and some colleagues wasn't enough to bring on illness by itself. I was strong, confident, sure, stubborn and resilient ... and too proud. Life eventually caught up with *that* and washed much of the resolve I had away. I had a sequence of events which came in a long steady wave for almost exactly ten years before I was ultimately stricken. It started when someone very dear to me was injured in an accident in 2006. In addition to the increasingly difficult challenges this presented, there were four very traumatic events which happened a few weeks apart from October 2016 through to January 2017, which took my legs out from under me, and I've yet to regain them.

The incidents were incredibly difficult. Each were of the kind each of us deal with – or will deal with – in our careers and personal lives. Death, dysfunction causing harm, and more death. They came at just the wrong time, and in just the wrong sequence, after two decades of working as hard as I could as a school leader.

RM: *What were the early warning signs and when did you reach out for help?*

KL: I stopped being able to recover energy and concentration through getting good sleep for about a month before I knew something was really wrong. All of the ways to describe exhaustion in our profession were given voice during the 2016 Winter holiday. By the time I first saw my doctor, near the end of January 2017, he tried to convince

me to stay home and begin finding a diagnosis. He knew I was too far gone to continue. My doctor thought I was burned out right from the start. Given I was an infrequent patient – and had been healthy – he voiced a prediction that came to pass many months later. He said we need to rule out biological causes before we would arrive at the likely truth that I was traumatized by those life events I referenced. I smiled. I disagreed. I refused to stay home – but said I'd be careful.

A week later, I came home from a long, rough, day and collapsed on the couch. My life partner said as surely as she's ever said anything to me: *"You aren't going in tomorrow. Period."* I knew she was right. I was starting to blank out while trying to finish tasks. I started to forget names and everyday facts. I struggled speaking in complete sentences. I felt like I had a long-term low-grade flu. I was exhausted to a degree which I still struggle to describe, as it has not abated. My whole adult life I had been able to leap out of bed at 5:30am, pound through a 12-14-hour day, maintain a family and community life, and volunteer. I always felt there was a limitless pool to tap into ... until it was clear there wasn't. I felt more than a little lost.

"I always felt there was a limitless pool to tap into ... until it was clear there wasn't. I felt more than a little lost."

RM: *Once you agreed to stay home and begin a medical leave, you started your diagnostic journey. How did that unfold?*

KL: After three years of tests, amazing care by my doctor, two psychologists, two internists, three psychiatrists, a cardiologist, a whole host of tests via machines that whirled and went 'ping', and eight trials with medications, my primary symptoms have not abated. Only time and the

healthiest regimen I can maintain are left to see if I can regain some of the vitality I thought would never wane. I simplify live life as much as possible, and try to be as healthy as I can. I have now phased into a longer-term category of LTD. I am now one of 'those' who may not ever be able to return to the service they left.

RM: *What is it like to be away from service? Any reflections you'd like to share?*

KL: There are some nice things about being away from what had been 20 plus years of working so earnestly. More and regular sleep. Having a calendar that has few stars, asterisks or exclamation points punctuating the events of a day. Petting the cats. Walking the puppies. Watching a whole movie. It isn't all bad.

It just wasn't, and still isn't ... time. I never got to choose.

One of the most difficult byproducts of disappearing as I did, along with all of us who are suddenly afflicted, is the sidelines we find ourselves on are not 'present' and visible for long as our educational communities carry on with the urgencies of each day, week, month ... and year. We are left behind, and literally vanish. Too many of us thought we were so important and needed that the big wheel couldn't possibly spin without us. We have learned the hard truth that *"Nobody has yet lived who can pull their hand out of a bucket of water and leave a hole"*. We lose being needed. We lose professional social lives. We lose collegiality. Lastly, as we fade and busy lives around us carry on, and the truth resonates that chronic illnesses are never fun to be around, we lose friends. Doubts creep in. How did this happen? What did I do wrong? What should I have done more often ... or better? What part of my work and professional context could have been more supportive or structured to protect my health and wellbeing as much as we are charged to protect the health and wellbeing of those we so urgently care(d) for?

I've had to do a lot of self-coaching to remind myself that I served long and well. I mattered. I matter. After years of using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy techniques to help others, I have relied heavily on those same lessons to fortify the truth that I was – and am – valued and valuable. I have an even deeper gratitude in my heart for those I shared those years with, and those of you who continue.

RM: *What advice would you give your colleagues – or your younger self – to avoid burnout?*

KL: *First*, only you are responsible for your health. Be filled with purpose. Feel needed – because you are needed. Build circles of influence and a fulsome portfolio of responsibilities. Give. Receive. Go hard ... *BUT* ... find and keep balance. Take careful time for you. Don't be one of those who brags about retiring with 500 sick days in the bank and passes away at 64, proud but spent.

Second, build a solid network of professional and personal confidants. Talk often. Go for coffee. Try to find 20 minutes to close the office door, call a colleague, and seek full, collaborative, honest input. Close your door for 20 minutes when the call comes for you. Have a hobby away from school. Nurture friendship circles away from your professional life.

Third, if you find you are struggling with any part of your health in a way that strikes you as unusual, see your doctor. Drive the bus. Ask questions. Research your own symptoms. Ask for tests. It is a partnership. Insist. I can't tell you how important it is to be proactive and co-manage your own care.

Fourth, if you and your doctor feel there is a recommendation for you to take some time for diagnosis, treatment or healing, call BCPVPA and speak with one of the Member Support Services team. A two-week rest can turn into something you never imagined possible. You need to know what supports and services are there for you ... and which are not. **Only** BCPVPA can give you the full and accurate advisement you require. They may refer

"... only you are responsible for your health. Be filled with purpose. Feel needed — because you are needed."

you to *humanworks* to access Early Intervention Support (EIP). They will guide you through layers of Leave protocols. *Thank you, BCPVPA team!*

Finally, set aside time to do your part to create a better, more powerful, and more 'supportive-of-the-role-society-needs-you-to-be-healthy-enough-to-do' coalition which will help take our Association – and our profession – to a better place. You can help diminish some of the stressors which are contributing to more and more colleagues being left on the sidelines. 'Work Intensification' is everywhere in our Association discourse now. Years ago, we talked about being overwhelmed and took steps to try to figure out what 'wellness' was, and how to get it. Today's challenges are *growing in number and intensity*. There are three times more of 'us' away for mental health issues today than not so long ago. There will be more before we figure it out.

I encourage each of you to read BCPVPA Executive Director Kevin Reimer's essay entitled: 'The Last Word' at the end of the first edition of Principi(ed) magazine. Kevin succinctly outlines where our Association is, and where we need to go, to live the full promise of what BCPVPA Version 2.0 could mean for all of us. For a little over 40 years, we have experienced service condition deprivation as Vice-Principals and Principals. These have brought us to a state that is unsustainable. Meet. Discuss. Support Kevin and your elected representatives. Students, families, staffs and our wider community will benefit. YOU will benefit - and be able to have a better chance to serve as *long and as vitally as you choose*.

Dan Watt

has been a Vice-Principal or Principal in Prince George for 13 years, and returned to work in February 2020 after four months of recovery.



RM: Dan, thanks for agreeing to speak with me and sharing your story. Let's start with an introduction to your background.

DW: Sure. I was born and raised in Prince George and come from many generations of teachers. My mom was a nurse. So, it is understandable, coming from a background of 'helping professions', that I would develop a caretaker personality. Helping others is something I am good at and enjoy. I like to help people solve their problems. However, this desire to help others can become an over-extended strength. I can create situations where a dependency may develop. Sometimes our strength, skill, or personal 'superpower' – when used to an extreme – can be problematic.

Teaching is a second career for me. I went to school at 30-years-old and completed a couple of degrees, including teaching. I taught for four years before going into administration. As I

was encouraged by my first Principal to take on leadership roles, I applied to be an administrator early in my career. I have been a Principal or Vice-Principal for 13 years in seven different schools – all in SD #57 (Prince George). My first job was in a large Elementary school for two years as a Vice-Principal with teaching time. SD #57 then opened a large elementary school for 700+ kids where I was a Vice-Principal, and then I was a Principal at two small rural schools. I wanted high school experience, so I then became a Vice-Principal at my old high school for a couple of years, and went to my last assignment prior to my leave, at an inner city school which was large and complex. Since I have been back to work, I am now at an elementary school in a more affluent neighbourhood.

RM: *What do you believe were the factors that contributed to your burnout?*

DW: There were a couple of things going on for me, both professionally and personally.

I had been at the inner-city school for four and a half years. The kids and families there had the kinds of challenges that are unsolvable in the school system: poverty, homelessness, addictions, trauma and abuse. We would try to help as best as we could from the school, but these are bigger societal issues.

I discovered over time that just as I would get a handle on one child and their family, and learn how to support them and work with the multiple agencies (which could take from one to three years), then another family with similar issues needing different solutions would appear. It felt like a revolving door of unsolvable problems. I knew that this posting would be challenging, but didn't understand the toll it would take on me.

On the personal front, around this time I ceased participating in a long-time hobby that both my wife and I enjoyed together. This hobby not only brought me joy, but was a considerable source of exercise, provided a network of relationships, and

enabled me to hone some special skills. I poured a lot of time, effort and money into this hobby which also formed a component of my identity. We ended this hobby at the right time for our family. However, discontinuation meant that I lost the valuable social connections, and the respite it gave me from my work life. I under-anticipated the time it would take to fill the huge gap this left, including the need to develop new social relationships and a new schedule.

RM: *Looking back, what were some of the first early warning signs you experienced that indicated you were starting to burn out?*

DW: The big one was that I was tired all the time. Actually – beyond tired. I discovered that having a good sleep, resting on the weekend, or even having the summer break, no longer helped me feel refreshed. I felt constantly depleted. I could never get my energy back to normal.

I also started to get feedback from people close to me. My wife told me it was time for a change as she could tell I was weary. I would say, "I can do this, I will muddle through and make it through one more year". I think I was aware on some level that I wasn't bringing the best version of 'me' to the work, but avoided it because I felt guilty or ashamed that I couldn't handle things.

Then a good friend who is my running partner (it is good to have critical friends!) kept pointing out the same things my wife was noticing. I kept trying to put my head down and persevere at work. I continued to not listen to the people close to me.

"I started to get feedback from people close to me. My wife told me that it was time for a change as she could tell I was weary."

RM: *What else did you experience?*

DW: I believe my tinnitus is a direct result of this burnout: a non-stop ringing in my ears. I was regularly irritable and angry. I had depleted my adrenals as my system was on red alert and constantly in fight or flight mode. I couldn't find enough time to rest and reset my system.

RM: *When you felt this fatigue and early warning signs, did you seek medical help right away? And if not, why did you delay getting help?*

DW: No, I never considered medical help as an option at the beginning. I did not think that I was sick or unwell. I just felt I was tired due to my work situation.

I only sought medical help after a particularly difficult workday and a realisation.

RM: *Tell me about what happened on that day that was your 'tipping point'?*

DW: In mid-October 2019, I had a fairly typical challenging day. I had a crummy situation brewing with a staff member that I knew was going to result in an investigation. I was then called out to a Violence Threat Risk Assessment as I was one of our District VTRA team leads. I needed to drive two hours to a nearby community to do the risk assessment. As I got in the car and got a coffee, I felt like I was heading off on holiday. This was an odd feeling, considering I was going to a school to deal with a crisis. I got there, interviewed parents, teachers, and kids. It was someone's crisis, yet I felt like I had the day off. I felt like my head was finally above the clouds. I then had to return to my regular school before dismissal to address the employee concern and draft a letter. The meeting with the employee did not go well: frankly, it went sideways and hit me hard emotionally. I ended up going home earlier that Friday than I normally would.

I went home and told my wife about my feelings of being on a holiday when I was offsite dealing with a crisis, and she pointed out that that did not

seem normal. On my Sunday run with my friend, she suggested that maybe I needed a day off as things didn't sound like they were going well.

So, I thought – "OK. Yes. I will take a day off." I was feeling enough intensity that it had pushed me to the brink. It had worn me down so much that I wasn't sure I could go back on Monday, if ever. Just experiencing that thought was difficult, as was saying it out loud to my wife. I felt like it was a risk to say it out loud, like I was letting something come into my world that was out of my control. Could I navigate this? Yet, to say it out loud was like giving me permission to not go back.

"As I got in the car and got a coffee, I felt like I was heading off on holiday. This was an odd feeling, considering I was going to a school to deal with a crisis."

I called my physician Monday morning and was in by 10 am. I explained my situation to my doctor who said that to continue was unmanageable, and that I needed at least a couple weeks off to get a good perspective on my situation. Two weeks! This was surprising. My doctor felt that I was likely experiencing extreme anxiety, maybe even depression. He prescribed me meds: I was resistant. He explained that the medication was for a specific diagnosis, and would help calm me and allow my system to reset.

I felt that there was someone else to care for me, that my doctor had given me permission to take the time to recover.

I called my supervisor. We have a good relationship, and she has been my supervisor for many years through many roles. I can always call her, and feel that she always has an open door. She was

empathetic and encouraged me to take all the time I needed to get well.

The interim Superintendent, once he heard of my situation, met with me and was grateful that I was taking time to get well and that I was to take all the time I needed to get well. He shared the plan for my school while I was gone, and told me not to worry. I was to let them know when I was ready to return and they would help me reintegrate back. I had great support from my district.

RM: *Once off work, how did your recovery progress?*

DW: When I left work, I did get a couple of emails, my supervisor certainly kept in touch. However, I felt VERY isolated.

My physician was great in many respects, but not super helpful with the tinnitus I'd developed. My tinnitus worsens when my energy is depleted and/or I am dealing with emotional issues. The ringing becomes louder and is very persistent, and I become more irritable.

I discovered a naturopathic physician who had lots of suggestions to help reset the nervous system. These suggestions ranged from tapping and toning (tapping acupuncture points), repeating a mantra using a vibrational technique, and supplements to help the adrenal glands. Acupuncture has been suggested, and I am still getting my nerve up for the needles!

I discovered that your level of health support really depends on who you talk to – not just the right specialty, but the right person, one who you feel is a good fit and who is really interested and has experience with your specific issues. I went through three doctors in the medical practise. It is important to seek out a variety of experts as they bring different strengths, different opinions, and introduce you to different resources and ideas.

RM: *What do you believe was the key intervention that helped you to start to feel better?*

"It is important to seek out a variety of experts as they bring different strengths, different opinions, and introduce you to different resources and ideas."

DW: Simply being away from work: giving my brain some time and space away from emails, and permission to tune out and not deal with anything work-related. I was also fortunate to have entered into a contract with a leadership coach before I went off work. I kept this coaching going over the year which really helped. I also had a great connection with Jack MacNeill at *humanworks*.

RM: *When were you ready to return to work?*

DW: To be honest, I personally felt an obligation to come back. I was not pressured by my district. I really felt that I had abandoned my Vice-Principal in my old school by leaving her in that situation. I had been assigned to a new school in January 2020 while I was still off work: I felt that I needed to return to support my new Vice-Principal and the staff at my new school.

RM: *How did the return to work go?*

DW: I felt some pressure from the new staff to be more present at the school; they communicated that they needed me to have a strong presence. This was challenging. When I started coming back in February, I needed to start slow. It was impossible to do this job part time. It was helpful that my physician would pull me back and slow me down as I kept trying to push. She was an important part of this journey.

I came back in February 2020 for six weeks, and then COVID-19 hit. We then had to welcome CUPE staff back. Here I was in a new school, and I did not

know anyone. This was certainly an unanticipated part of my return. I thought I was ready when I returned to work in February, but then: COVID. I felt the need to step it up with a desire to be back full time in June. I think I pushed it.

RM: *How are you faring now?*

DW: This Fall, I am back and doing my best with self-care routines and setting boundaries. I am careful to only schedule 70% of my time – instead of 100% – to make room for the unexpected. I do not ever feel rested. It is a delicate balance. I want to finish the year strong.

I am still on my journey. I am not as rested and able as I could be. I am still not feeling my best, and often wonder what I could have done differently.

And here lies a gap. I know people in the district cared and were supportive. But our system is not set up to help me return to work any differently. Coming back to a permanent .8 position is not an option. I know that many administrators who cannot do the full 1.0 FTE get pushed back into the teaching pool, and this isn't right. I feel that this is a system issue that needs to be addressed: is this just an expense item?

The biggest piece I am still working on is to build back my social network. I have always relied on my relationships for support: I am stronger with others than on my own. My social circle is a part of my emotional support. I think that developing these relationships is challenging due to the volume of work, and partly due to COVID.

RM: *What is different in your life now since you experienced burnout?*

DW: Diet is now a bigger component of my health. When I take the sugar out of my diet, I have way fewer mood swings, less hunger. I am more even keeled. I also keep an eye on the quantity of what I eat.

"This Fall, I am back and doing my best with self-care routines and setting boundaries. I am careful to only schedule 70% of my time — instead of 100% — to make room for the unexpected."

I have a very different perspective of my work and the importance of work in my life. I am replaceable. I am less defined by my job now. I give less importance to it. It is still a crucial role and has a tremendous impact on our society, which is wonderful. But I look at it now as a smaller piece of my overall time. I now have a whole bunch of aspects to my day and week that need fulfillment, instead of primarily one.

It is hard, as people may not understand how or why things are the way they are with me, unless they have experienced a similar situation. Staff may not like that I may have boundaries they do not understand. There are sometimes snide comments and opinions. But I know what I need for my own health.

RM: *Looking back, what advice would you give others to avoid the burnout you experienced?*

DW: For me – keep your friends close. Pay attention to the signals that come from those around you, and get help when needed! Keep close networks, both professional and personal. Value those connections as they are the ones where you can be most genuine. This is what helps sustain me.

I also learned that the unsustainable pace that I used to strive to achieve pre-burnout could not continue. I had to redefine things.

You can do this anytime: don't wait to burn out.

A Word from Rochelle Morandini

When interviewing both Kevin and Dan, and upon reflection of my own experience with clinical burnout, I was struck by the similarities in our experiences. Although each of us had unique circumstances, the causes, impact and learnings are eerily similar. Those include:

- Understanding how core beliefs and behaviours developed in our upbringing can be strengths that – if not managed – can become over-extended and cause harm. Take a moment and think about your core beliefs and how they influence your perception and approach to your role, and how you cope.
- How a strong work ethic, or an “*I can handle anything*” approach, can be a fast track to burnout if you do not set boundaries within yourself and with others, as well as not taking time to recuperate. Finding ways to add 'space' in your day and life is so important to 'cooling the electrical circuit' that is your brain. Be disciplined in self-care and in setting your boundaries now before it is too late.
- Our identity with our role can be all-encompassing, and we pour our heart, ethics and values into our work. When our working experience is in conflict with these values, or when we can not 'win' the fight we so believe in, this can take a toll on our mental health. Our reserves get low, and then something from our personal life can tip the scales of our health as we have little energy and resilience left. Seeking coaching or counselling to help you regulate your thoughts and perceptions when you are struggling with inner conflict is

a sign of self-awareness and growth, not of being fragile.

- Early warning signs of burnout included a level of fatigue that was all-encompassing and with no ability to improve. People close to you often are concerned and know that something is off. This is the time to react – now! We are all too quick to say, *I can hang on another day, week, month, year...* We do not want to admit vulnerability or 'weakness', but this is not weakness: it is a sign that your strength has been over-taxed.
- People who burn out readjust their behaviours in order to cope or recover; if they had adopted these behaviours sooner, they may not have burned out at all. These are behaviours that would have offered them a greater ability to recover. It reminds me of people who experience significant back injury or have had surgery. These are the folks who stretch regularly and lift properly, as they had to learn the hard way to take better care for their spine. Same goes here: don't wait until you are so far gone to adopt these behaviours. Believe me when I say, every day that you do not address burnout adds to your risk and the duration of recovery time.

At the BCPVPA, we want to support our members' health and well-being as much as we can. Sadly, we cannot stop the 'rocks' falling on you from the sky, but we hope we can help you to strengthen your shields. Look for tips and learnings on self-awareness and coping in our upcoming series **ReCharge**. We will also be sending you weekly 'reminders' to take a moment for your health in our **ReFresh** outreach, with ideas that take only minutes per practice, and help you to consciously rest your brain. Resilience is not built on just pushing forward continuously through the quagmire. It is ensuring small recoveries throughout the day so that you can carry on with strength!

For more information and support, contact me at rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

CULTIVATING CONVERSATION

An Interview with Artistic Director of Green Thumb Theatre, **Patrick McDonald**

Actors (L-R) Ella Simon and Aslam Husain in *500 WORDS* (2011) by Jamie Norris. Photo by Emily Cooper

For more than 40 years, Green Thumb Theatre has been a driving force in theatre for young people in Canada and internationally. Green Thumb has done more than 100 productions, exploring an extensive scope of contemporary topics including: Internet safety; consent and personal relationships; racism; mental illness; and simply being different.

Since its inception, Green Thumb has been planting seeds of curiosity in young viewers through innovative performance art, with the hope of sparking meaningful conversations.

We sat down with Patrick McDonald, Artistic Director of Green Thumb Theatre since 1988, and asked him about the roots of Green Thumb, their impact over the last 40 years, and their mission to get young people talking.

by
Paige Jung

Communications Assistant, BCPVPA

How did Green Thumb Theatre come to be?

PM: Green Thumb Theatre started in 1975, by a group of theatre and writing students that graduated from UBC. A lot of Canadian theatres started around then because there was a grant program that provided university students with start-up money for different enterprises.

It would have been in 1979, a play called *HILARY'S BIRTHDAY*, produced by Green Thumb and written by Joe Wisenfeld, that really changed the direction of theatre for young people and the work that Green Thumb produced. Prior to *HILARY'S BIRTHDAY*, most plays for young people were of the fairy tale variety. *HILARY'S BIRTHDAY* deals with a 10-year-old girl whose parents are going through a divorce on her birthday. It was focused on a real social issue and

was dealt with very sensitively. It was a big deal: it was unlike anything that had been seen before.

With the success and recognition from *HILARY'S BIRTHDAY*, Green Thumb evolved and became not only a provincial and national leader, but, an international leader in developing and producing plays on social issues for elementary students, and eventually for high school students and young adults.

What is Green Thumb's mission? Why is Green Thumb's work important?

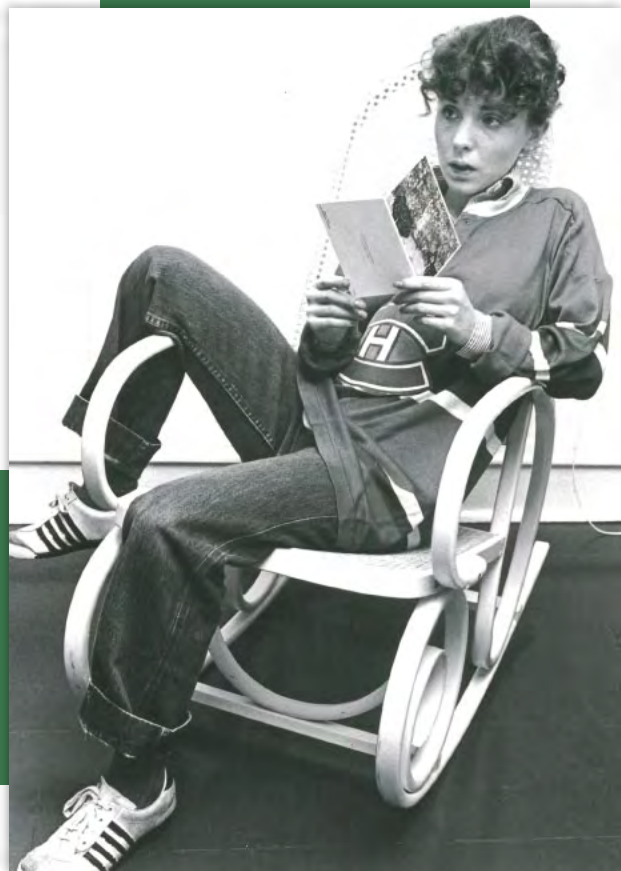
PM: Green Thumb Theatre is really about creating world class theatre that can be shared across Canada. That's always been a part of our mandate — to tour entire provinces and get the show out to as many young people as possible. Our shows never want to be didactic. We've never in our entire history told the

student what they should do. First and foremost, it's just entertainment. But it's entertainment based on a social issue.

For example, you yourself, may never have any trouble with Internet safety but, lo and behold, there are those quiet students who are being bullied on the Internet. So, a play on Internet safety may give them an opportunity to speak to someone about it. It may liberate them to think, *'hey, I'm not alone in this'*.

Over the years, I have received hundreds to thousands of letters and comments from students who have seen our shows, and the common thread is: *'Thank you very much for your play. It made me realize I'm not the only person dealing with this'*. Or more briefly, *'That's it. That's my story'*. We're just one 40-minute window and we want to make that an important 40-minute window.

There's a Green Thumb solo show called *STILL/FALLING*, written by Rachel Aberle. It's about a 15-year-old girl who really has everything going in life: upper-middle-class, has mobility, and all that kind of stuff. She has one sibling and they're going to be moving to Vancouver. She makes friends at school, and she's a really good creative writer — that's her thing, writing — but she's completely overwhelmed by anxiety and depression. Rather than talking about it, she does her best to hide it from everybody.



HILARY'S BIRTHDAY (1979) by Joe Wisenfeld. Actor Ruth Smilie. Photo courtesy of Green Thumb Theatre.

"We're just one 40-minute window and we want to make that an important 40-minute window."

What we really wanted to do was to get anxiety and depression onto the conversational floor. Let's face it and not hide it. It's a heavy show. Well, the first show that we did was at an all-girls high school — there were about 300 students in the audience. After the show was finished — other than the sounds of a bit of sobbing — all you could hear was a pin drop. I thought to myself, *'they're going to think we've gone too far, right?'*

It turns out that on the day of the performance, nine girls went to the counselor's office, seeking help for anxiety and depression, and not one of the nine had ever been red-flagged by staff before. The school wanted to say thank you, because these girls are now getting the help they need and deserve.

Is there a Green Thumb production that is especially important to you?

PM: We developed a show about a 10-year-old girl, named Celeste, who has Asperger's. In the show, she's building a rocket ship in her backyard to go back to her home, planet 'Celestia', because she's being bullied at school. It's called **CELESTIAL BEING**, written by Dave Deveau. And why is that production closer to me? Because I have an adopted daughter and she has Asperger's. So yeah, it's her story to a degree. This one to me, at the core of it — at the core of all of the shows probably — is friendship and communication.

You don't have to say that you're different because you have Asperger's — you just happen to be different! And that's the point of that story: we're all different, and it's a gift. It's not holding Celeste back. She's one



CELESTIAL BEING (2014) by Dave Deveau. Actors (L-R) Jordan Jenkins and Katey Hoffman. Set, Props and Costume by Drew Facey. Photo by Moonrider Productions.

of the most creative 10-year olds you'll ever meet! It's just that for certain things, her mind takes more time to figure out and adjust.

In theory, she goes to space in the rocket ship that she built — she's escaping the world! Yet not one kid, out of thousands and tens of thousands who have seen that play, have ever gone: *'Was she really in space?'* No, they believe it. They believe it because the production was strong enough and kids want to believe that is what was actually happening.

How do you see Green Thumb's work, and, more broadly, performance art being used as an educational tool?

PM: We want the shows to have huge lives beyond Green Thumb — these are not one-off shows. We

also want educators and students to begin to be able to differentiate between a so-so show and a really good show. Sometimes, as creators, we mystify what theatre is. And because there isn't enough of it, the general public can feel that they don't have the lexicon to discuss it.

I don't know what we've done culturally to create this, but people are in fear of how to talk about a play. We may have gotten away from just discussing a play and put too much emphasis on *what's the educational value*, or *what's the message*. Rather than framing it as: it's just 40 minutes with your fellow students and teachers to share a story — and there's nothing wrong with that. I think we need to drive ourselves back to that position.

Imagine if you took your cousin to a movie and you got in your car afterwards. You would just casually start talking about the movie and it wouldn't faze you. But because we've put such an emphasis on the message

and the education value, kids are afraid they're going to get the message wrong, rather than just talking about it. All of Green Thumb's productions do come with a study guide that includes activities and resources to help teachers and students with having those conversations — inside and outside the classroom.

People have often said to me, '*You're building tomorrow's audience!*'. And I say, '*No, adult theatres can find their own audience. I'm just dealing with the audience today*'. My job is to make sure the audience is engaged and entertained to give them a little bit of subject matter to chew on.

We don't even necessarily need to worry about what discussion we'll have with them. We just need to talk. I think that will make our culture richer and I think we'll make all of our students richer in many, many ways.

STILL/FALLING (2015) by Rachel Aberle featuring actor Olivia Hutt. Set by Ken MacDonald. Props and Costume by Tina Ozols. Photo by Moonrider Productions.



“For students, the opportunity to observe the process of production development and also provide feedback on performances was truly an amazing artistic opportunity and one which definitely impacted students as they moved on to High School.

Partnerships like the one we enjoyed with Green Thumb need to be developed more often, as the positive, reciprocal benefits to both the school community and the outside agency are immeasurable.”

Tim Krug, SD39 Principal, John Norquay Elementary

DERWENT IS DIFFERENT (2000) by Jamie Norris. Actor Allan Zinyk. Photo by Green Thumb Theatre.



Green Thumb Theatre is currently pivoting and planning adaptive programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keep an eye on their website greenthumb.bc.ca or email touring@greenthumb.bc.ca to learn more!



Special thanks to Patrick McDonald and Green Thumb Theatre. After a distinguished 32-year tenure, Patrick will be passing the reins and retiring at the end of 2020.

Award-winning theatre artist Rachel Aberle has been appointed as the next Artistic Director of Green Thumb Theatre, effective January 1, 2021.



THE CODE (2018) cast during an interview (L-R) Actors Joe Rose, Elizabeth Barrett, and Teo Saefkow. Set by Ruth Bruhn. Photo by Green Thumb Theatre.



by

Conor McMullan

Education Director at Cheakamus Centre,
North Vancouver School District (SD44)

The Power of Place



One of the silver linings that the pandemic has presented is a significant focus on outdoor teaching and learning. To be clear, the focus has not been driven by an instructional or curricular mandate but rather as a means of reducing virus transmission through increased availability of space and fresh air. Now in my 25th year as an outdoor educator, I've never seen the depth and breadth of current media coverage and societal focus on the need to provide greater opportunities for students to learn outdoors. For many in areas of the world experiencing wide-spread and sustained outbreaks, outdoor learning may be the difference between students returning to school or remaining in a remote or distance-learning mode.

Like many responses to COVID-19, calls for outdoor learning present a range of opportunities and challenges. The belief that outdoor spaces should simply be re-purposed to simulate indoor classroom environments is misguided, and misses the mark in terms of the potential for developing a more student-centered and experiential learning approach. An exploration of how teaching and learning can be

connected to place and community, while providing for physical and social-emotional health benefits, is well-worth consideration. Fortunately, there are a growing number of organizations and resources available to help support and guide schools and districts in further developing outdoor place-based competencies and priorities.

Given the many physical, cognitive and social-emotional benefits associated with outdoor and place-based learning, it's heartening to see attention being directed towards building capacity in this area. Since the release of Richard Louv's seminal "Last Child in the Woods" in 2008, there's been a virtual tidal wave of research and evidence reflecting both the positive impact and critical need to re-connect children with nature. This has helped to re-energize the field of outdoor and environmental education, and has served to shift outdoor and place-based approaches further into the mainstream. An obvious example includes our renewed BC Curriculum which is well-represented with references and conceptual frameworks that support place-based learning approaches.



"I loved how hands-on everything was! The fishing in the river with the nets was amazing! I will take my children on more walks outside, I will make connections to the land, I will include opportunities for Elders to come to my classroom to share their knowledge."

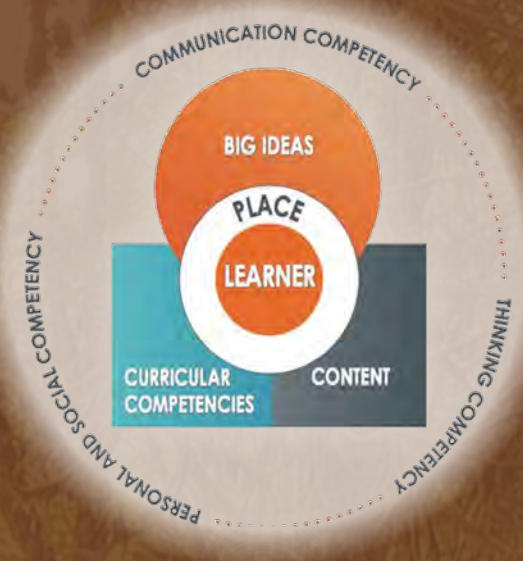
Teacher, Renfrew Elementary School, Educator Workshop, September 2019

NVSD and Cheakamus Centre: The Natural Place to Learn

The North Vancouver School District (NVSD) has long identified with the power of place and the importance of the natural environment in shaping and informing educational practice and school culture. Stretched out between two watersheds and framed by mountains, rivers and a coastal fjord, NVSD is blessed with an abundance of diverse outdoor learning spaces, a mild climate, and a deeply-rooted outdoor culture. Significantly, the district is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and the collaboration and partnership with these two strong nations has helped guide our collective understanding of the important role of place in our community and schools.

NVSD's commitment to outdoor and place-based learning is perhaps most evident at the Cheakamus Centre. Now in its 51st year of operation, the centre – formerly known as the North Vancouver Outdoor School – is located on a 165 hectare ecological reserve just north of Squamish in the Paradise Valley. Each year, thousands of students from North Vancouver and schools across BC come to Cheakamus Centre for overnight and day-based outdoor and Indigenous cultural programs.

The centre's programs are aligned with the BC curriculum, ensuring that time spent outdoors supports learning objectives and core competencies. The Cheakamus instructional team has developed a set of guiding principles, providing a framework that informs program design and development. www.cheakamuscentre.ca



21st Century Learning Connections

Place-based education embraces personalized, student-centered learning, as students inquire about concepts, topics and issues relevant to their lives and local community

A place-based approach provides students with a learning environment that connects the concept-based, competency driven curriculum to the real-world of their daily lives

Place-based learning is embedded in and across the K-12 curriculum and is a core SD44 strategic priority

During this unprecedented time, there is an opportunity for educators to connect classrooms to community, and begin to explore the students' homes, yards and neighbourhoods as potential learning environments

*from Place-based Outdoor Learning—
Supporting Education Continuity in SD44*
www.cheakamuscentre.ca

Place-based 'Sticky Learning'

In my role as Education Director at Cheakamus Centre, I often receive feedback from students, staff and parents that offers keen insights as to the impact of outdoor place-based learning. Through these conversations, I've noticed a recurring theme that can best be described as the 'stickiness' of the learning that is typical at Cheakamus Centre.

Several years back, a parent, whose daughter was initially very anxious about attending our Gr. 3 Skw'uncne-was Indigenous education program, shared some of the powerful connections that speak to the resonant nature of these experiences for participants.



My daughter just participated in the Bighouse program. I just wanted to share some feedback with you about her experience. Based on the stories and experiences she shared with our family after she got back from Bighouse, I can confidently say this was an incredible learning opportunity for her and that the learning was very 'sticky' because of the experiential education involved. My daughter was very nervous about going to the Bighouse – she talked about it over Spring Break and was very nervous the morning that they left.

When she came back and told us about her experience – learning Squamish, being part of the Cedar working family,

sleeping in the Bighouse, eating Bannock, learning about bats and night vision, doing chores (and what the best and the worst chores were!) ...how it rained, but it was kind of sunny and just sprinkled most of Monday – about sleeping on the platform in the Bighouse in the rain, and being at the fire inside... All of that from a quiet girl who was very nervous about this experience.

I want to say how much I appreciate this opportunity for really deep learning. This is a kind of learning you don't get in the classroom. It's deep, thoughtful, sticky learning that will resonate with her probably throughout her life. She seemed to come back a little wiser, a little more independent.

Interestingly, these deep and lasting connections to learning are evident with adult learners as well. Over the past several years, the Cheakamus team has developed a range of environmental, place-based and Indigenous learning workshops for K-12 and post-secondary educators. The design and delivery of these day and multi-day workshops has been very rewarding for our staff as they share

instructional practices and traditional knowledge with other educators from across the province. What's been particularly interesting is the extent to which teachers identify many of the exact principles that help to inform student experiences as being the most meaningful for developing their own outdoor and/or Indigenous place-based learning practice.

What is it about these experiences that produce such powerful learning for children and adults? I don't think there's a single answer to be found but rather an appreciation of an approach to learning and educational design that is student-centered, experiential, relational and deeply rooted in place. Not surprisingly, all of these principles are reflected in established Indigenous pedagogy and are considered integral elements of progressive contemporary approaches to education. Recognizing and better understanding the different ways these approaches can be applied across all Indigenous cultural and environmental programs has been an ongoing focus at Cheakamus Centre and one that we're excited to be sharing with our educator colleagues.

Adapting to a New Environment

Due to the intensive and mostly residential nature of the site-based programming, Cheakamus Centre has not evaded the pandemic's ubiquitous impact and we've had to temporarily suspend our operations for the Fall. As we look forward to welcoming back students and teachers in the new year, we've continued to develop and share online

resources supporting both school and home-based approaches to outdoor place-based learning. In addition, we've adapted several Cheakamus program elements to support teachers' capacity to get their students outdoors.

NVSD is fortunate to have many teachers and support staff with a depth and breadth of experience in accessing and integrating outdoor learning into their daily routines. Given the current climate, additional supports including virtual and site-based workshops, outdoor learning networks and the identification and provision of teaching resources will go a long way in supporting teachers and schools in implementing successful outdoor learning efforts.

While requiring flexibility, adaptation and resiliency, outdoor learning has also been shown to develop these same dispositions that will be critical in navigating the complexities of teaching and learning now and into the future. Finding new and creative ways to connect and learn in, with and about the natural world may just be a step in the right direction as we look ahead to educating and inspiring our children in a rapidly changing world.

"I have a better understanding of Indigenous practices and I will be more aware of my actions and how my words about Indigenous topics can inform the opinions and actions of my students."

Teacher, West Vancouver Secondary School, Educator Workshop, September 2018



Andrea McComb SD #43

**Who Do We Choose to Be?
Facing Reality Claiming Leadership Restoring Sanity**
by Margaret J. Wheatley (2017)

Margaret Wheatley is my
grounding author.

Wheatley is a speaker, teacher, consultant, and advisor who believes, "leaders must invoke people's inherent generosity, creativity, and need for community", (cover). For those days when I sat at my desk with my head in my hands deliberating about thoughtful action, I would open one of her books to any page. Within her pages, I often became reacquainted with my values – my 'why'. And in every solution, she asks us to summon up the courage and bring people together: our answers lie in our connection to one another.

"I know joy to be the experience of connection, communion, presence, grace, as it is." (p. 234)

In this book Wheatley talks about what shifted since her earlier books. The state of our world is calling us to action, action to create islands of sanity among the chaos. She sets out to answer three questions:



Facing Reality:

Where are we and how did we get here?

Claiming Leadership:

What is the role of leaders now?

Restoring Sanity:

How do we create islands of sanity that sustain our best human qualities? (p.18)

Wheatley has woven together essays, stories, commentaries, and quotes to bring focus to the qualities of leadership that are necessary for this time. She deems the essential leadership skills as compassion, discernment, and presence. Beautiful photographs are

Have you read a book that changed you, challenged you or surprised you?

Can you share your story in 500 words or less?

Your review could be part of the next issue of Princip(ed):

contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca to book your spot!

interspersed throughout the book to provide space for contemplation.

This book situates us in the arrow of time (everything having a beginning, middle and end) with a grounding in the Science of Living Systems and the Patterns of Complex Civilizations. These lenses paint a picture of where we are situated politically, culturally, and humanely. Facing 'what is' calls us to choose who we want – and need – to be to lead and to be more human. Her guiding image is the Warrior of the Human Spirit.

"A Warrior of the Human Spirit is a decent human being who aspires to be of service in an indecent, inhumane time." (p. 255)

"The Warriors are armed with only two weapons: compassion and insight. They are peaceful warriors, vowing to never use aggression or fear to accomplish their ends." (p. 252)

This book was written prior to 2020 but could not be more relevant in this time of extremes. Leadership matters in this time as we see new patterns of interacting and creating community emerge, as we challenge our systems to become equitable, and as we give up personal freedoms to keep each other safe during a pandemic.

Andrea is in her 34th year of education and 23rd year as a school leader. She has worked in the Comox Valley and Coquitlam School Districts, and also taught for a year in Abu Dhabi. Presently, Andrea is the Principal of Learning Services in Coquitlam. She is the mother of four grown children and one dog, and Nana to two children and four dogs. Her husband is an understanding Retired Principal.

Holly Zurak
SD #27

A Walking Curriculum Evoking Wonder and Developing Sense of Place

by Gillian Judson (2018)

M-Kuwetem-kt – "We walk"

This September has been like no other. Like many other BC schools, we began with the plan to spend more time learning outside. Students and staff at our school were used to doing a daily morning walk as an entire school. We have long recognized that the benefits of walking daily with students are numerous. And, like seemingly everything else this Fall, it was a routine that required some reimagination to be COVID-protocol friendly. At École Nesika Elementary, we kicked off our Walking Challenge with this intent.

We will walk with intention and imagination every day for thirty days. That's where "A Walking Curriculum" (Judson) comes in. In the summer of 2019, I was fortunate to be sent by my school district to the Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE) symposium at UBC, where Gillian Judson was a guest speaker. When Gillian began speaking about her passion for imaginative structures and ecological education, something powerful started happening in my heart and I thought, "Wow: I need to have this book". At the time, I was the Principal of a very small rural school with thirty students, and it was like the missing



piece of curriculum I was seeking. I thought, “We can do this. We are this”.

At Big Lake Elementary, in September 2019, we began to walk. Our walks ranged from a five-minute walk all the way up to an hour-long walk. One of the intentions of doing the curriculum as a challenge was to do it in partnership with other schools taking up this initiative from across BC and around the world. We shared on our social media accounts with other schools, and felt connected around the province.

The Walking Curriculum is a teaching resource for K-12 educators. It is designed for the educator who is passionate about supporting student learning and dedicated to growing in their practice, but who may not have considered moving outside the school walls in these pursuits. All educators can afford their students the opportunity to connect with the wildness in the world, whether in urban, suburban, or rural settings.

The sixty walks provided in the resource reflect a variety of themes, perspectives, and motivations. For example, students may be asked to find things (shapes, spaces or lines, evidence of growth or change, the 'best' hiding places), to change perspectives (imagine being a beetle, a detective, or a visitor from outer space), to encounter the world differently (with an emphasis on one sense over another, or moving through space differently), or to seek evidence of human-nature relationships. In all activities, the aim is to deepen awareness of the particularities and meaning of place.

Now in the Fall of 2020 – and a September like no other – we handed out 16 copies of the book to all of our division teachers. Educators using the Walking Curriculum at École Nesika Elementary, with 300 downtown students, say they are experimenting, collaborating and discussing these ideas in ways that can support their professional growth. We are finding the Walking Curriculum to be a powerful bridge, connecting traditional, ‘placeless’ ways of teaching with an Indigenous worldview that acknowledges that human beings learn from the relationships they experience within their human, other-than-human, and more-than-human communities. Our Shuswap language teacher, Floyd Dick, has been walking with his language and culture classes and has adapted some of the walks to incorporate Secwepemctsin words and place names.

They are noticing the positive impact that the walks have on the students’ mental well-being, and their ability to regulate their emotions. He calls the program **M-Kuwetem-kt** (in Secwepemctsin: ‘We walk’).

Holly lives and works in Williams Lake, Cariboo-Chilcotin (SD27). She has worked and walked as Principal in three small rural schools, and is now Vice-Principal at École Nesika Elementary where she is laughing and learning every day. She is a wife and mom of two daughters who keep her appreciating the little things.



iLLuMinating conversations

Vi Hughes is a retired Principal who worked in the Vancouver School District #39. Through the years, Vi has gathered anecdotes about the qualities of an effective school leader, and is sharing just a few of these gems in this edition of Principl(ed).

See from Different Perspectives

Overheard at recess as the kindergarten students were getting ready to head out to the playground ...

"You've got your boots on the wrong feet," the teacher pointed out to one of the children. The student looked down, studied her feet and said, "But these are the only feet I've got."

Younger Next Year
Live Strong, Fit, Sexy and Smart — Until You're 80 and Beyond
by Chris Crowley & Henry S. Lodge, MD
with Allan J. Hamilton, MD (2007)

What is your preparation for 'retirement'?

This book delves into both the physical and mental aspects of retirement, and preparing for retirement before it happens.

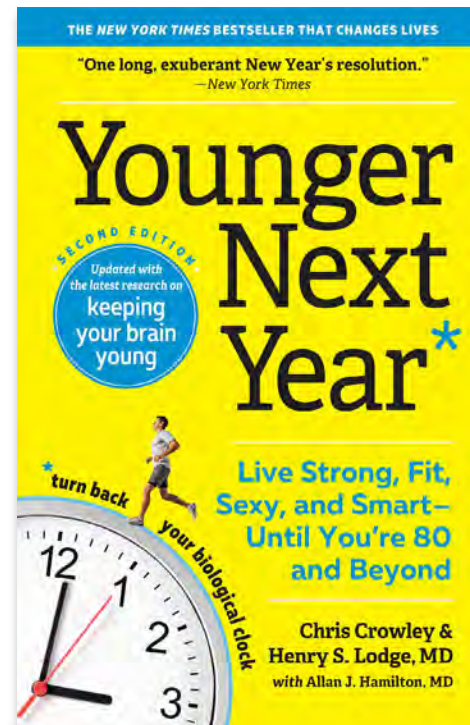
Many advances in health and education have changed what retirement looks like for today's generation. Forget about what your grandfather's and father's retirement looked like: you can design your own as the rules are changing. Young Next Year focuses on being healthy and beginning your fitness plan now while you are still working, not waiting until you retire. Remember that planning is required for successful retirement.

"Most of us can be functionally young every year for the next five to ten years."

Henry S. Lodge, MD

The book carries us through its chapters with a focus on common sense, science and the stories of people who have taken control of their lives. These vignettes provide us with light-hearted moments as we read about the missteps of the authors and their friends as they embark upon their journeys. I found myself chuckling at some of the scenarios they portrayed about their fitness adventures. I found this to be an easy book to read, with practical ideas of getting fit. The key is that it is not a magical transformation that happens all at once; it takes time, and you need to make a plan for your journey and to stick with it in order to realize your goal and to achieve success.

The book is divided into two parts: **Part One: Take Charge of Your Body**, and **Part Two: Take Charge of Your Life**. The first part focuses on your physical health and well-being and steps that you need to take in planning for your exercise program.



Some Chapter titles:

New Science of Aging

Life is an Endurance Event:
Train for It

The Biology of Strength Training

The Ugly Stick and
Other Curiosities

The Biology of Nutrition:
Thinner Next Year

In Chapter One, it states, ..."you can choose to live like fifty until you are in your eighties."

Each Chapter provides the reader with scientific facts, basic health information and provides real life scenarios. The recommendation is to find your passion and develop a fitness plan around it. Remember that progress is incremental, and that you need to develop your fitness plan in stages. One of the

funny scenarios discussed is about 'spinning', and how the author ended up in a class – at the end of it, he could barely walk, however his pride wouldn't allow him to stop spinning until the class was over. You need to build in reasonable goals, and factor in stages of time to achieve them.

The second part of the book, **Take Charge of Your Life**, focuses on the mental aspects of retirement and factoring in 'care, commitment and making connections' in order to have a successful retirement. People thrive when they are passionate about what they are doing, are committed to their goals and are connected with family, friend and their communities. The book emphasises that you need to take control of your retirement by planning for it, versus having it just happen.

Some Chapter titles:

The Limbic Brain and
the Biology of Emotion

Connect and Commit

Things that Go Bumpin the
Night

The New, New Thing –
Smarter Next Year

Protecting Our Brains For Life

Restless Optimism

They have developed a set of rules to live by, entitled *Harry's Rules*:

1. Exercise six days a week for the rest of your life.
2. Do serious aerobic exercise four days a week for the rest of your life.
3. Do serious strength training, with weights two days a week for the rest of your life.
4. Spend less than you make.
5. Quit eating 'crap'!
6. Care.
7. Connect and Commit.

In closing, the authors say that you have a choice in your retirement life. They recommend staying healthy through exercising, caring about family and friends, staying connected, and building purpose into your plans. Another key component of your retirement plan is to have 'fun'! By combining all of these factors and staying true to your plan, you will be rewarded with a rich and fulfilling retirement. The authors have also provided additional resources at the end of the book for readers to further their knowledge in the areas of:

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Cognition
- Aging

I would recommend this book to those looking for ideas about staying fit in retirement, and looking for a book that provides real life scenarios with a personal touch of humour. This book is available at Chapters.



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The Last Word

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

**A vision of a preferred
future leads to hope.
Hope leads to inspiration.
And inspiration leads to
commitment.**

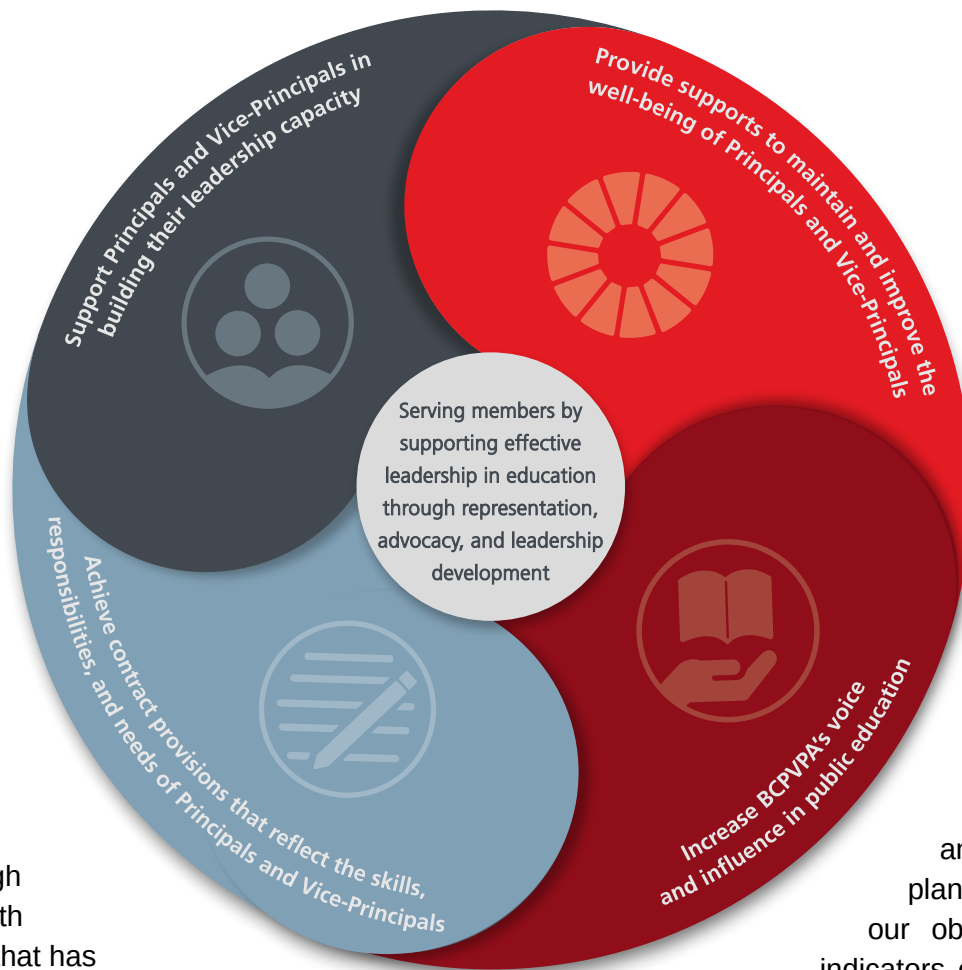
As a Principal, I had the great pleasure of learning about strategic planning from a few highly respected educational leaders around the province. When I was an elementary Principal, Faye Brownlie led our staff through an afternoon professional learning session and then stayed for our staff meeting. When the meeting conversation turned to the creation of our school improvement plan, there was some cynicism on the part of staff regarding the process and the value of our school plan. Faye listened carefully as an observer during the meeting.



Her subsequent response to the concerns that were raised quickly cut through the skepticism with a simple phrase that has stuck with me ever since: “No plan. No point.” Faye’s message was clear; without a relevant plan for overall school improvement, the individual work of teachers would not have the impact that we all hoped for.

I have also had the pleasure of participating in leadership development sessions with Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser, who describe the visioning process for schools by using a mirror and window metaphor. The strategic planning process should act like a mirror for the organization to better understand its reflected reality, and at the same time, should serve as a window which we look through to imagine our preferred future.

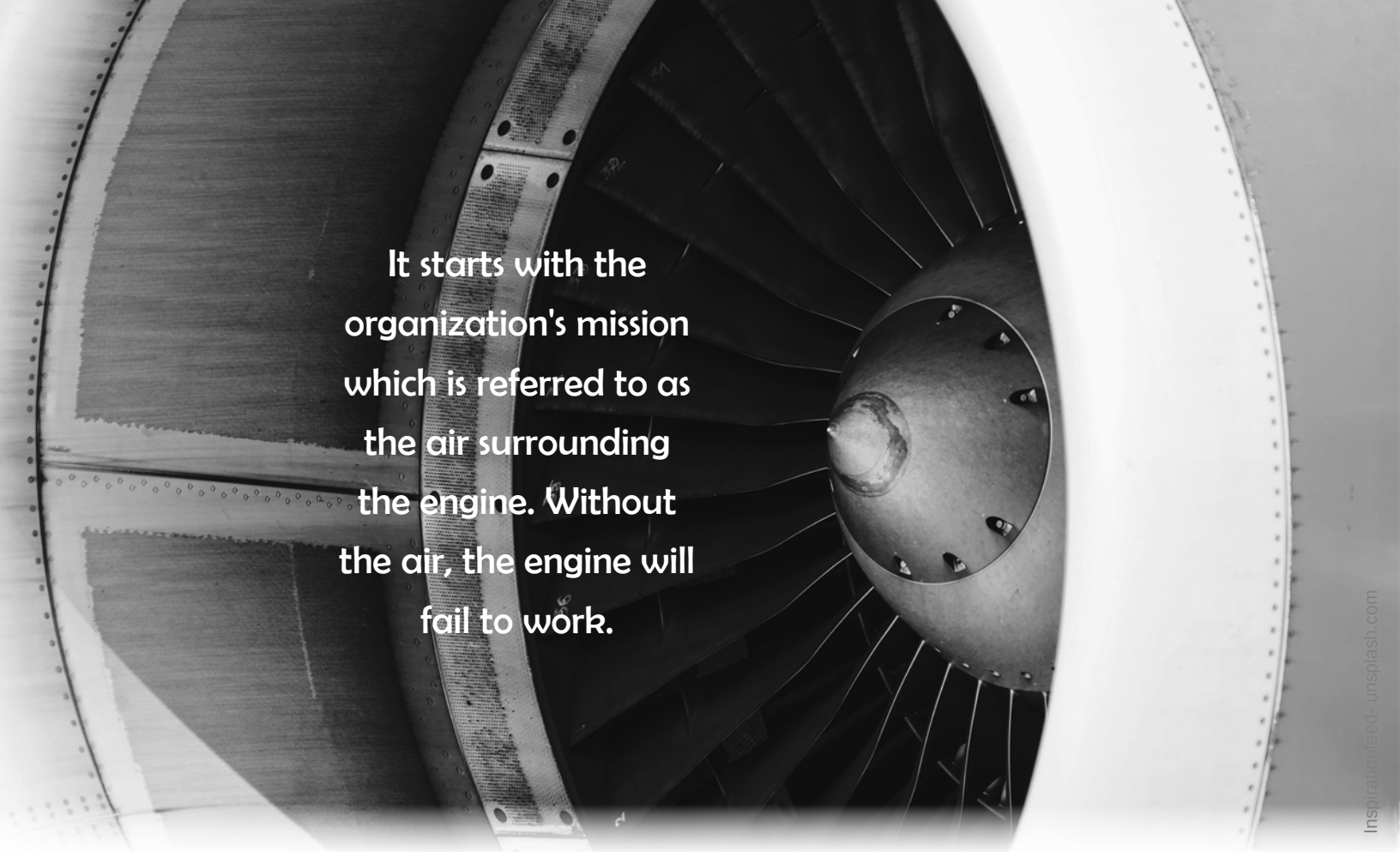
For more than a year, the BCPVPA Board of Directors and staff members have traveled the path of creating the BCPVPA’s 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. Capably led by BCPVPA Director of Finance Carol Powell, the process was a fact-finding and consultative investigation with input from our members, the Ministry of Education and our partner organizations. That comprehensive process led to



the creation of the 2020-2023 BCPVPA Strategic Plan and the operational plan that outlines our objectives and our indicators of success. While the goals and objectives are listed separately, they are fundamentally interdependent and evidence-informed, and reflect the current thinking on the research and policy initiatives that affect the work of the BCPVPA and its members.

The process led to the formation of four goals for our Strategic Plan:

1. **Achieve contract provisions that reflect the skills, responsibilities, and needs of Principals and Vice-Principals**
2. **Provide supports to maintain and improve the well-being of Principals and Vice-Principals**
3. **Support Principals and Vice-Principals in building their leadership capacity**
4. **Increase BCPVPA's voice and influence in public education**



It starts with the organization's mission which is referred to as the air surrounding the engine. Without the air, the engine will fail to work.

A book that has significantly influenced my understanding of not-for-profit organizations and how to increase their influence and effectiveness in a social sector is **The Engine of Impact** by William F. Meehan and Kim Starkey Jonker. The interdependent essentials of mission, strategy, impact evaluation, insight and courage, organization and talent, funding, and board governance, work together to enable an organization to increase its impact and realize its strategic mission.

The authors contend that not-for-profit organizations must build, tune, and fuel their strategic plan if they hope to make a real difference in the world, and use aviation imagery to demonstrate the interdependent forces of strategic planning that determine the level of engine thrust or, rather, the impact of a not-for-profit organization.

As the book details, the practice of strategic planning is not just doing 'good work' but also doing the work in effective and intentional ways. To explain their approach, they use the metaphor of a jet turbine engine to illustrate the interdependent components

of mission and strategic planning. It starts with the organization's mission which is referred to as the air surrounding the engine. Without air, the engine will fail to work. Next comes the compressor – or strategy – that takes the air of the mission and applies pressure to it, accelerating the air to increase the engine's thrust or the organization's impact on their sector.

The turbines, which generate power for the engine, are insight and courage. The fuel for the engine includes funding, personnel, organization, and governance. When the engine works well, it creates thrust or impact for the organization because it provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals.

With the adoption of our Strategic Plan by the BCPVPA Board of Directors, we now have a renewed organizational compass that helps guide the day-to-day decisions of the organization as we evaluate our progress, measure our impact and support our members.

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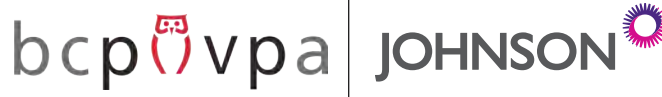
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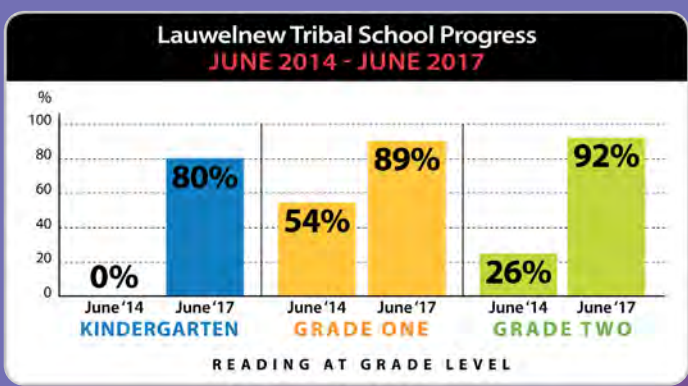


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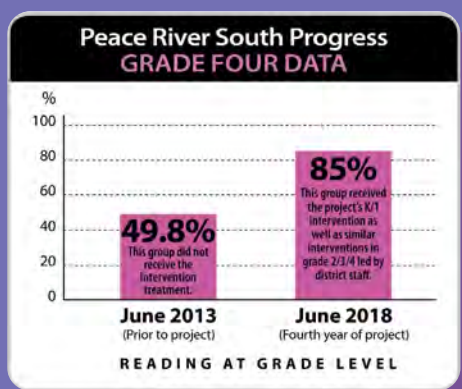
Joyful Literacy Interventions is proud to announce that our founder Dr. Janet N. Mort was awarded the Order of British Columbia on August 3rd, 2020 for her work over the past ten years on behalf of Vulnerable Children (over 30% of BC's students entering Kindergarten).



For the past seven years, in collaboration with four BC school districts and an independent Indigenous School, Janet and over 200 teachers have been implementing the Joyful Literacy Framework with exceptional results.



Our Evidence-based Conclusion: Over 85% of all children (vulnerable or not) can achieve at grade level in literacy by grade three when the Joyful Literacy Framework is applied by school staffs consistently K through 3.



An Invitation from Dr. Janet Mort to Twenty BC School Staff Teams (K to 3)

I am inviting twenty primary school staff teams to join me and my BC Joyful Literacy Teacher Team **BY ZOOM** on February 12th 2021 (BC Pro D Day) to explore and begin implementation of the Joyful Literacy Framework in your school.

Vulnerable children need us more than ever after missing five months of early learning essentials. Now is the time! I am eager to share our new research and knowledge with groups of primary teachers who are ready to commit to long-term change for vulnerable children. Brace yourselves for lots of fun, hard work, excitement and a rewarding JOYFUL experience!

You will leave the day with a step-by-step understanding of how to begin and proceed with Joyful Literacy implementation and with:

- ✓ **18 Narrated PowerPoint Videos**
11 hours of Professional Development that will guide you through complete Joyful Literacy implementation over the next three years.
- ✓ **A Set of Janet's Published Books**
Joyful Literacy Interventions, *Putting on the Blitz*, and *Understanding and Assessing Foundational Literacy Skills*
- ✓ **Janet's New Unpublished Book**
Joyful Literacy (K - 3) Guiding Principles Summary
- ✓ **Twenty-six Circle Charts**
(Assessing and Tracking Foundational Skills K to 5)
- ✓ An ongoing connection with Janet and her Team by Zoom and social media – to support each other on the journey with ideas, excitement, successes and problem solving throughout the implementation process. We will plan this together.

The cost of the entire package: \$2800.00 (plus GST) per school.

For more information about this invitation, and for a free preview of our video series package, visit:

JoyfulLiteracyOnline.com

Please contact Dr. Janet Mort directly to discuss possibilities.

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