

Principl(ed)

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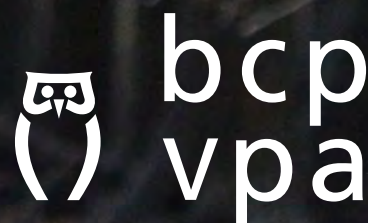
President's
Perspective

Learning...
To Go!

Educational
Leadership

A Day in the Life of a Middle School Vice-Principal

Tu Loan Trieu shares her
perspective on collaboration,
being agile in your leadership,
and why she simply loves
Middle School.



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



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"I remember my first goal had been to collaborate with every teacher in that school by the end of the year and I did meet that goal: having that connection with the teachers made it easier when I suggest, 'let's do something different' because they've worked with me before. And, of course, when teachers collaborate, magic happens!"

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"The mandate I recently received as Minister of Education builds on a government commitment to put people first, through a strong focus on equity and truth and reconciliation."

Advocate, Partner, Supporter



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"The Tyee program accepts kids for who they are and where they are at with their learning. Each day is an opportunity for students to feel supported and to obtain skills that will help transition them into the high school world."

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"Those who have been reading and learning about Anti-Racism know that the journey is never ending. I will never be done as my learning and growth will never be complete."

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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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I have a brother, four years younger than me. We lived together as brothers in our family until I was eight years old. For reasons that are complex and irrelevant to this story, we were raised in different households for the subsequent ten years.

From his birth and until the time we parted, my brother and I lived in a suburb of Edmonton called Sherwood Park. I was originally born in Port Moody and returned there in grade three, leaving my brother in Alberta. A few years later, he was moved to rural BC. There were considerable differences in our childhood experiences, not the least of which was the degree of shelter from the world under which we each lived. My upbringing was worldly, and led with tolerance and an open mind.

During our time apart, each with a different parent, we did spend some holidays together. One occasion in particular comes to mind as I think about the subjects of race, prejudice, and racism.

It was Spring Break, and my brother had come to Port Moody. As was often the case, my mother would plan something special while he was with us. This time it was a train trip to Seattle along with my aunt and cousin, with a couple nights in a hotel near the Space Needle. Because I'd never been to Seattle before, I was excited – we all were.

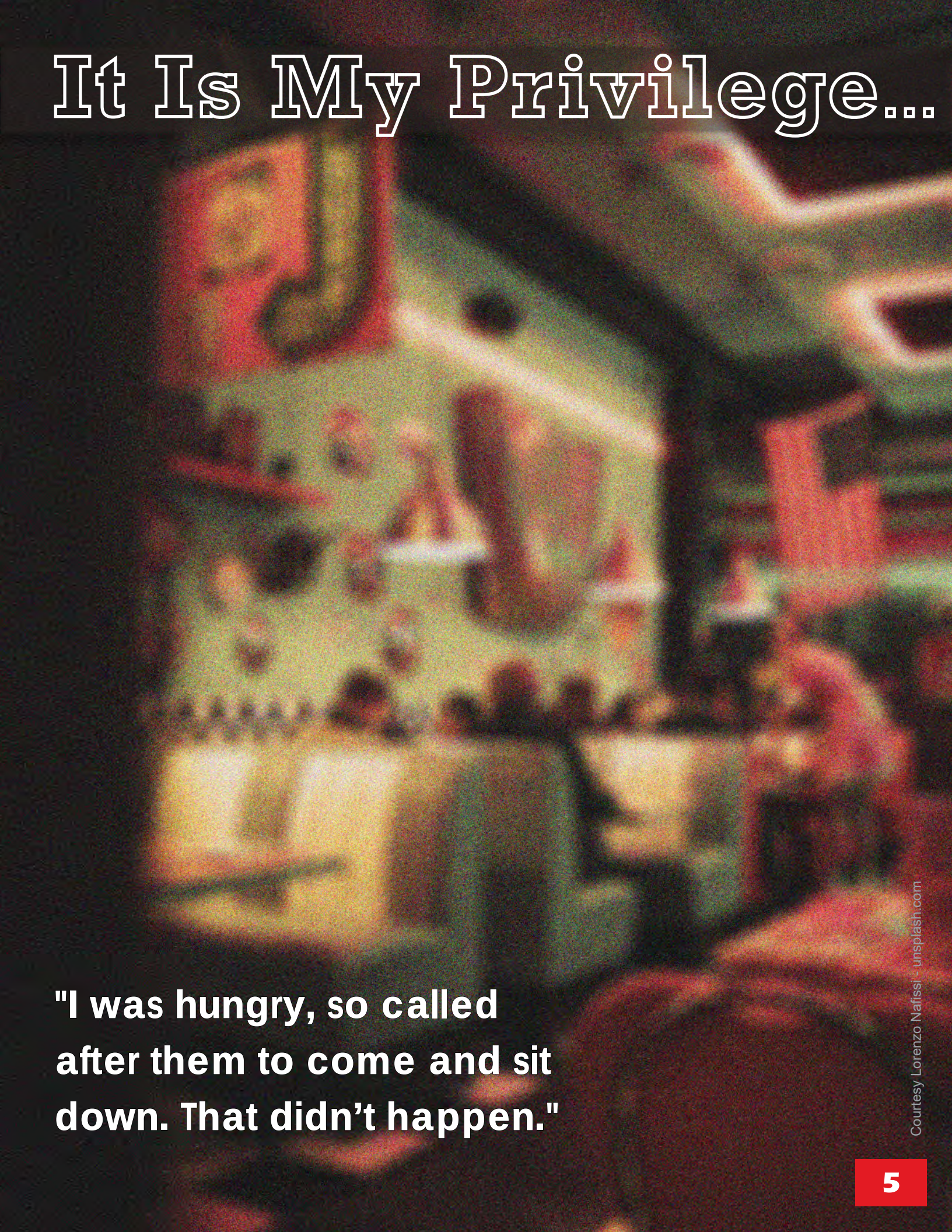
It was our second day, and we'd spent the morning walking around the city near our hotel. It was time for lunch. Mom spotted a diner, and in we went. My cousin and I walked straight in, looking for a table. I turned around at an empty table, expecting everyone to be gathered right behind me, but there

was only my cousin. My brother, my mom, and my aunt were still in the doorway of the diner, and my brother had a look of concern on his face.

I was hungry, so called after them to come and sit down. That didn't happen. Instead, my mom called *me* to join *them* in leaving – we would find another place to eat. Hungry, confused, and impatient, I left with them and complained loudly. *What was the problem?* My mom couldn't tell me exactly, only to say my little brother wanted to eat somewhere else. It would take some time for the source of my brother's unease to surface, but when it did, I remember feeling both shocked and superior. Seated in the diner, both at tables and the bar, had been a number of Black customers – this scared him. I was shocked by my brother's apparent prejudice, and smug about my own apparent lack of it. It was 1978.

In a blink, it was 1988 and I left my worldly existence in Vancouver for small town British Columbia. I began my teaching career in a small northern community. The student population mirrored the town's, with roughly a three-way division of Indigenous, Indo-Canadian, and European students. Many times during my first year in this community, I found myself thinking about my brother's behaviour in Seattle and feeling less smug, recognizing shameful stirrings in myself. I struggled to reconcile this dissonance: racists were offensive, hurling ugly language and physically oppressing people of colour. Racism was the jokes that were told with bluster and stereotypical punchlines, like those some of my family liked to tell. *How could I be racist?* I was on Rodney King's

It Is My Privilege...



**"I was hungry, so called
after them to come and sit
down. That didn't happen."**

side during the riots in Los Angeles. Without the vocabulary to describe it, I was rationalizing my exceptionality.

Today, with some vocabulary, I can begin to understand and recognize my behaviour.

I'm privileged, and I've lived a privileged life. Try telling that to my mother, though. We were not affluent. I had a teen-mother, married very young, with three kids and a divorce before she turned 23, and I grew up in a string of rentals and a double-wide near the Coquitlam River. I babysat a lot while she worked two jobs. Mom would argue that I rose from disadvantage, not privilege.

My mother would point to the challenges in my life, thus providing examples of the assumptions which underly the concept of *White Fragility* as discussed by Robin DiAngelo. My mother would argue that I achieved my position through hard work and determination, and that no one gave me a hand up or a handout. At the core of her argument would be the ideologies of individualism and meritocracy: I am the master of my own destiny, and I got everything my hard work deserved. Although anyone who has ever adjudicated my application, favoured me in a job interview, appointed me to a committee, approved my loan, or cast a ballot in my name would not likely attribute their decision to my race, it is clear: my skin did not pose an obstacle. How could it, when the world I move through is shaped and influenced by those who are of my colour? I benefit, and it has nothing to do with my intentions or whether I participate in overt acts of racial discrimination. To paraphrase DiAngelo, I could have the purest of hearts and completely accept people of colour, yet

I would still experience the benefits of my colour, whether I liked it or not.

DiAngelo writes of the American experience, citing that greater than 90% of those in positions of authority and exceptional wealth are white. Greater than 90% of those who will decide programming on network television and the publication of music and books is white. Canadian numbers will be different. One report of the 2019 federal election results suggests an increase in the number of visible minorities among national leaders over the previous election; however, the representation is not yet proportionally aligned with our Canadian population. And this privilege – that which my

mother would object to – relies on the continued dominance of white people in positions of authority who retain control over institutions, and decide what to print, publish, and teach.

As I write this, I take in my surroundings and circumstances: even my mother would have to acknowledge that I am living a remarkably privileged life. Do I enjoy that I live a privileged life? There is only one honest response to this question: yes. Am I comfortable with this privilege when I square up and face it? No, nor am I entitled to a level of comfort when confronting racial prejudice and racism. To avoid this discomfort is to reinforce racism by preventing it from being challenged, examined, and addressed. Two conversations I had in July of 2020 have led me to conclude that I should think on what is to be done *with* my privilege rather than what is to be done *about* it.

The first conversation was by invitation of the Minister of Education at the time, Rob Fleming:

"I could have the purest of hearts and completely accept people of colour, yet I would still experience the benefits of my colour, whether I liked it or not."

the Anti-Racism Community Roundtable. The second conversation was with Dr. Mark Edwards, a long-time friend and partner of the BCPVPA. Both conversations charged me to reflect upon the platform I have been given and how I may best use it to challenge and reject not only racial prejudice, but also systematic racism. Of course, I first have to understand the distinction and begin that learning. I am responsible for my own education, and I am grateful to colleagues in SD 42 and SD 39 who have welcomed me to participate and learn alongside them. My first session with the Maple Ridge Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (MRPVPA) Chapter took me full circle to reflect upon family, and my own action ... or inaction.

An exercise shared among the MRPVPA group in early December 2020 was a cultural competence self-assessment. After completing the assessment, I found myself returning to,

and reconsidering, the fourth statement: "I do not participate in jokes that are derogatory to any individual group." It was the verb in this statement that gave me pause and a fair degree of discomfort, more so for my personal life than my professional life. Many times have I been among family and experienced their racial prejudice through jokes or offensive statements, and too frequently have I 'participated'. To leave their company in silence is to be complicit: this is participation. If I accept this definition, then I must acknowledge my role in perpetuating racial prejudice. There was nothing *anti-racist* in my response.

I have been an educator for more than thirty years, yet I am only beginning to learn and understand racism in our society. In my role as President of the

BCPVPA, I have been granted a platform to share thoughts and ideas – and perhaps, even influence them – for only a short time. I now understand that being anti-racist is not a passive philosophy but a choice I make, through my decisions and my actions on a personal level, to speak out and speak up when I see harm on a community level. It is giving voice to what is right and advocacy for changes which need to be made on a systemic and institutional level. I see so much action taking place in schools, much of it led by youth, and it gives me hope and inspiration. Like any belief or commitment, it will require intention to make a difference, to recognize and create opportunities and to listen.

**"I have been an educator
for more than thirty years,
yet I am only beginning
to learn and understand
racism in our society."**

More than forty years ago, I silently judged my brother. More than thirty years ago, I was disturbed by my own thoughts. And I have wrapped this commentary around a story of my family so that I may ground it in *my* lived experience. In our schools, our offices, our homes,

and communities, we have all – literally, all of us – experienced moments when words or actions of someone close to us evoke shock, alarm, or shame: casual comments of stereotypical prejudice, the snubs, the jokes and cruelty. My starting point has been educating myself, beginning to speak out in my role, and ensuring that others have voice. I have many roles in this life – brother, son, nephew, father – and in these roles I might find the greatest challenge to speak with the voice of an anti-racist. But it's about time.



@bcvpvapresident

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

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

In our fifth installment of the series,
we meet Tu Loan Trieu,
a Vice-Principal at Ecole Glenbrook Middle School
in New Westminster

Tu Loan Trieu always loved school, loved the library and knew she wanted to pursue education. But when she participated as a University grad in the JET (Japanese Exchange and Teaching) Programme for two years, it opened her eyes to the difference she could make as a teacher. “With this program, some people call you an ‘English tape recorder’ because you repeat and they repeat after you”, says Tu Loan, “but you were there to support the English teacher with lessons and pronunciation because – at that time – Japanese teachers were really shy about speaking English. I didn’t have a teaching degree, and I was really lucky that I had freedom with my lessons. I was teaching forty junior high school students in a class with very little English, and my first experience of being an educator was engaging them, and encouraging them to speak English.”

Tu Loan’s time in Japan presented some challenges, but not just because she was new to teaching. “For my first six months in Japan, I could not communicate. I could see, but I couldn’t understand what people were saying, and I didn’t yet have the language skills to connect with them. That experience really built my compassion for new learners and for students who have difficulty learning, because suddenly that was me! I could relate to what it feels like for some students, that sense of being uncomfortable, that struggle, and it set my foundation as an educator.

A Day in the Life

of a
Middle
School
Vice-Principal

"I did the Middle Years program at UBC, and just fell in love with it. I remember being in that age group myself, and how formative that was ..."

Tu Loan Trieu



Tu Loan having fun with supervision at Ecole Glenbrook Middle School

I'm a refugee and I came to Canada when I was little. I didn't have difficulties learning the language because at that young age, you're a sponge with learning and I was indeed a sponge! Like many teachers, I loved school and was a good student, but I'm also grateful for challenges along the way."

After her experience in Japan, Tu Loan decided to pursue teaching, first by teaching English to adults and then by attending UBC. "I did the Middle Years program at UBC, and just fell in love with it. I remember being in that age group myself, and how formative that was, how the person that I am today was developed during that time. The running, the sports, reading, all the clubs that were being offered: the world was just opening up during grades 6, 7 and 8, and students in grade 6 and 7 were just becoming leaders in school."

"Like many teachers, I loved school and was a good student, but I'm also grateful for the challenges along the way."

When Tu Loan applied to UBC, she understood 'middle years' to be 'intermediate', not realizing that there were middle schools right there in Coquitlam. "I love the structure set in place for collaboration. You have this big school: you arrive from an elementary school with 300 or 400 kids and you come to a massive school with 500 or 600 students, but you build this team community and identity first, this small community, and then the kids become part of the larger school community."

In her 17 years of teaching, Tu Loan worked primarily in middle schools. That experience,

and the focus on collaboration and working in teams, was a perfect fit. "We would have common prep together, and you'd have the opportunity to talk about students, and not just students in your class, but also students from your switch class. We 'platoon' in a team of four, and if you're my switch teacher I'll teach science and math for both of our classes, and you could teach the humanities for both classes. It helps get students ready to go into high school where they'll have a different teacher for each subject, moving on from the one teacher you have in elementary school. I loved that I had a partner teacher to work with and another teacher in the other platoon who would teach the same subject and we could share resources and plan together. In our team, we would plan field trips, collaborate on curriculum, and build team and school spirit — there was a lot of team building."

When Tu Loan thinks back, she did not expect her path to lead to the Vice-Principal's office. Her love for the library continued to beckon, as she had worked for the Vancouver Public Library through high school, University and her first ten years of teaching. In her fourth year of teaching, she decided to pursue a diploma in Teacher-Librarianship at UBC and landed a library job at a middle school. "I applied for the role and I'm not sure that I was really ready to do that transition — at the time, I was happy with my class, my school, my teaching partner — so it was a bit of a shock when I got the job. Now I was going from being a classroom teacher with sixty kids to being responsible for literacy in a big middle school. That really launched my journey, because when I did my degree it was about literacy and collaboration and co-teaching as a teacher-librarian. And I slowly created this position — my first teacher-librarian position, and the only one in the school. I didn't have anyone telling me 'this is what you have to do.' I was very grateful to have a supportive Principal, Ross Davidson, who essentially took a



Tu Loan with staff Audrey McMann, Tammy Dewear (front), Anli Qi, Daman Gill, Katerina Kamagianis (back)

chance on me and let me develop the role. I was also very fortunate that the teachers were open to working with me. For me it's always about engaging students, and now it was about getting kids excited about ... reading! bibliography! And research skills! Maybe not so exciting for them, but it was exciting for me: information literacy, digital literacy, those were my strengths. Quite often, when they see my enthusiasm, they also get excited about it."

Tu Loan was collaborating with many teachers, and was encouraged by her Principal to embark upon new projects. "I remember reading a wonderful book over the summer, and I thought it would be

a great school-wide read to bring the teachers together and the school together. We started with something small, and the feedback six weeks later was so positive that we decided to do another book the next year. You have all these classes of kids having the same book read aloud to them, and I now had something that connected me to all 20 classes: I had a platform. I've heard that the school-wide read has continued as a culture in some middle schools in Coquitlam where I was at that time."

"I've been fortunate to work with supportive teachers and administrators who were excited about some of

the initiatives that I brought forward, like a 'literacy day' conference at the school, organizing a school triathlon, or taking students on a Quebec exchange programme. I remember my first goal had been to collaborate with every teacher in that school by the end of the year and I did meet that goal: having that connection with the teachers made it easier when I suggested, 'let's do something different' because they've worked with me before. And, of course, when teachers collaborate, magic happens!"

Tu Loan moved on to do her masters as she could see the leadership potential of the teacher-librarian. "When I first did my diploma, that wasn't my focus: it was literacy, everything was literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, reading strategies. I love reading, and I loved being a librarian." At that

time, Coquitlam was offering education leaves; she applied, and was successful. "The big thing that I had to give up was working at this school that had been so amazing for me for four years. With an education leave, you're not guaranteed a return to that position, so I took a huge risk because I had great colleagues. But I felt that things were becoming – not easy, I don't want to use the word easy – but it was becoming comfortable, and I wanted to push myself."

Tu Loan completed the University of Alberta program online. While she did take a course at UBC, and travelled to Edmonton, it was a challenging year for a social and collaborative educator. "We did get to collaborate; they didn't have Zoom but they did have Blackboard and I was meeting with teacher-



librarians in P.E.I., Ontario and Alberta on Skype. It was lonely after all that interaction at school, but I learned so much that year. I was reading all about teacher-librarians as leaders, and I thought: 'oh my goodness, this is what I've been doing'. That was my paper, *Teacher-Librarians as Leaders in the School*."

"It was lonely after all that interaction at school, but I learned so much that year. I was reading all about teacher-librarians as leaders, and I thought: 'oh my goodness, this is what I've been doing'. "

The pursuit of a Vice-Principal role was again a result of Tu Loan feeling that she may be too comfortable. She credits both of her Principals, Judy Robb and Nadine Tambellini, for the nudge and mentorship. "They were very supportive of my initiatives which helped build my confidence. They are great school leaders. I started thinking that maybe I could do this. I was bringing some of the success I had experienced to a new school. No-one really knew about me, and I was building relationships with everyone, doing a lot of coaching, and feeling very visible in the school. One year I was athletic director, department head, teacher-librarian, and I taught in a classroom after the strike year of 2014. I had to teach and be in the library, which was good, but it was a lot of work. I organized school-wide events and

reads, I was booking authors, organizing school and district sports events, and helping teachers with curriculum. At that time, I was doing a lot of instructional leadership, including working with my Principal to encourage teachers to embrace the revised curriculum."

At the end of 2017, Tu Loan applied for Vice-Principal positions in several districts and an opportunity presented itself at New West Schools. There was a decision that had to be made: stay in an environment that was familiar and comfortable in a district where she was thriving or go to a new district where she did not know anybody and start a new role. "It comes back – again – to getting too comfortable. Why not go somewhere where they don't know me, and I can build again. And that's how my leadership transpired."

Professional learning has been a foundation of Tu Loan's journey, and she has been involved with the BCPVPA PLD Committee for two years. "Professional learning has always been important to me. Learning is about being engaged and curious. I fundamentally feel that to be the best teacher that I can be, I have to be a learner as well. I need to know how my students are doing, how they learn and how they struggle. And I learned early on that if you're part of the ProD Committee you have a say in what that learning will be. That's why every school, every year, I was always part of the ProD committee ... and the social committee!"

The best part of the role for Tu Loan is, of course, the people. "I love it when a student approaches me with a problem, and I help them sort it out: it could be big things, it could be little things. It's really about helping kids learn how to solve problems and how to be assertive. There's that, but there's also working with teachers and staff. I've had such great Principals who have always given me room to take risks. And now I've had to shift: I'm now

creating an environment for students and teachers to take risk. And I'm trying not to be the person that's always fixing things. When teachers come and they want to do something, I can say, 'what can I do to help you to achieve that'. I love seeing teachers work together, and them asking me to be a part of it."

One of the more challenging aspects of the role has been the communication with parents. "Quite often I am the person who calls a parent to tell them that their child is having challenges at school, and it's not a phone call every parent wants to hear. The first year was hard, because relationships are key, and you need to know the kids. The kids in my school know me now, and they know I didn't send them to the office, it's just that I have to deal with *why* they were sent to the office."

"I learned a lot the first year. My Principal, Chris Evans, has been in the community for a long time, and has been able to offer background on the families which helps me to approach phone calls. I've learned so much from him in this regard, especially the piece about timing, and the power of being patient. But I've been relying too on something that I learned from a parent: he used the analogy of a sports team. When I make the phone call, I let the parents know that I'm not just reaching out to tell them their child did something wrong, but to talk about it as a team, and determine what can we do together to support this child. He framed it so well. The idea of a team solution is to work together so that the child can have a better end of the year, a better end of the week, a better end of the day. I still have challenging conversations with some parents, but I'm lucky to have a relationship with my Principal where I can say, 'hey: did I do this wrong?' This wasn't something that was taught in my teacher-librarian leadership course, but you learn along the way, and you reflect on your mistakes and successes. I also try to make 'good' phone calls,

check-in phone calls, so it's not always the difficult conversations."

Moving from the classroom to a Vice-Principal role was a shift for Tu Loan, but she was able to draw on what she had learned both as a teacher and teacher-librarian. "With my first Vice-Principal position I was in the classroom 80% of the time, teaching grade three and four for the first time. I had the reading strategies and the teaching strategies, but I had to learn about pacing. Grade 3s and 4s have a different energy level than middle schoolers! It was an opportunity for the teachers to see that I was a competent teacher, and there was curiosity about what I was doing in athletics and in digital literacy. I was in the office for only one day a week. My previous Principals were great role models in supporting teachers and giving them the time to collaborate, so I was able to offer to take a couple of their classes to give them some time to collaborate. They appreciated that because in elementary school you don't have common prep time – it was like giving people a taste of middle school! While I couldn't do it all the time, it gave me a chance to get to know the kids outside of the class I was already teaching."

Tu Loan is a huge fan of middle school, and has some words of advice for educators who may be considering a move. "Be open-minded. Be flexible. Being in middle school means collaboration and working with many different teachers. My role as a teacher-librarian prepared me for that, and removed the fear of going to different classes. Have an open mindset, and know that you could be placed in many different situations. Let it roll, and go with the flow. All my transitions, the different schools I've been to, and the different roles I've played have prepared me to take on things without having trepidation. To take them on with grace. It's demonstrating agile leadership".

*"I love it when a student approaches me with a problem,
and I help them sort it out: it could be big things,
it could be little things . . .*



Courtesy Holly Nathan

*. . . It's really about helping kids
learn how to solve problems
and how to be assertive."*

A Day in the Life of a Middle School Vice-Principal

Monday: my favourite day of the week!

5:00 am Wake up for yoga or a run

6:00 am Check absences for the day

6:45am Arrive at school, put the kettle on, read emails

7:30am Open school, opening shutters, greeting community, staff and students
Sort out teaching or Education Assistant shortages, determine coverage

7:50am Touch base with Principal

8:15am Monday Morning Meeting with all staff

8:40am Greet students at one of three entrances, ensure they have masks and that hands are sanitized

9:00am Meet with Principal to review issues of the week and formulate 'to-do' list, which could include:
email from parent about bullying issue, graffiti in the bathroom, rumour of physical altercation with group of students outside of school, email from parent about teacher, support for new teacher, scheduling issues

10:00am Visit classroom along with youth worker and counsellor to model a class circle in response to teacher request

10:40am Go outside to connect with classes for their brain breaks and Daily Physical Activity (DPA)

11:00am Work on the 'to-do list', visit classrooms, touch base with TTOCs, chat with teachers on prep

I'm a morning person, so I'll get up at 5:00 a.m. and – depending on the weather – I'll go for a run or do yoga to get my body moving. This year because I'm not coaching, I'm at school just before 7:00 a.m., I put a kettle on, put the dishes away while I wait for the water to boil and sit down to catch up on my emails. I don't have Wi-Fi at home, so it makes it difficult to do work at home – it's good for balance, but sometimes I'm at school really late or really early.

I spend about a half hour catching up on emails and news, and then my secretary arrives and I leave to do the morning opening. I really enjoy this part of the morning because it's quiet and I get to greet the teachers who come early and the staff in the daycare. By now it's 7:45 a.m., and my Principal and I will sit down and touch base. Every Monday morning, we have a 15-minute meeting where the whole staff gets together – it used to be in the library, now it's on Teams – to look at the highlights of the week. It's a nice way to make sure we're all on the same page, and gives everyone a chance to add their events or reminders. It's great to start off the week like that.

I then go to the front and greet the students. In the past the kids would just come in, but because of COVID-19 we have different assigned entrances, and two start times. When that's all done, my Principal and I meet again, briefly. My first year here, I was .5 teacher and .5 admin, and our check-in times were a lot more scheduled – and longer – because I was teaching so much. Now I'm .8 VP and .2 teaching because we have more students. We have more time to connect, and it doesn't have to be as scheduled.

After our meeting, I'm walking around, making sure I'm visible in the school. I'm checking in with students who might be high needs, then I'm visiting classes. We have a class that's had a TOC (Teacher On-Call) for more than a week, so I make sure that the TOC is comfortable; today, the TOC was actually late, so I had to step in and teach.

The first year, when I didn't know the kids, my job was very focused on discipline. But now in my third year, I've known the grade eights since they were in grade six and that

makes such a huge difference. I visit classrooms as much as I can, if a student is sent to the office, I need to deal with that. Because of our new schedule during the pandemic we don't have a recess – teachers take their classes out on their own, when it suits their schedule, so I make a point to go out between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. to offer extra supervision for the kids and to touch base with teachers.

Lunch time is when I am on supervision, and it's a good time to connect with students, watch them play and support any kids that need help. I try and give myself about 15 minutes to have lunch before lunch – I've learned that if I don't eat my lunch before lunch, I won't be eating lunch after lunch, and I won't be eating lunch until 3:00 p.m. The reality is that things happen at lunch. But this year has been going really well: because of the structure we've put in place due to the pandemic, we've had fewer office referrals. We now have our lunch breaks in two sections with half the school inside eating lunch, half the school outside playing. There's so much space now for kids to run around and play. I can't even imagine last year how we had 650 kids all outside at one time for 20 minutes. We would have, on average, eight to ten office referrals.

The rest of the day I could be connecting with my Principal, with our counsellor, our youth worker, or with teachers. After school, we are all out there to say goodbye to the kids at the two end times. From 3:00 to about 4:30 p.m., depending upon how hectic the day has been, my Principal and I are putting our heads together trying to solve problems. The last couple of weeks it has been COVID-19-related. After that meeting, I'm calling parents and meeting with teachers, so I'm usually leaving by 6:00 p.m. When I was coaching, the day could end at 7:00 or 8:00 p.m.

One of the key things in my work is that I try to have fun. It's up to me to make my workplace enjoyable. I love Mondays: Mondays are my favourite days of the week because staff and students come back well, rested and fresh – it's a fresh start. I'm fresh because I haven't worked much over the weekend and I'm ready to go. But I will say, I'm just exhausted by Friday!

A Day in the Life of a Middle School Vice-Principal

- 11:40am** Eat lunch, before lunch! Quick check of emails
- 12:00pm** Lunch supervision, outside and inside. Scan the school and see how students are doing socially. Watch out for flying balls on the field!
- 1:00pm** Return to the office to find several students waiting: food was thrown in a classroom, and a physical altercation ensued. Talk to the students, witnesses and bystanders to get the big picture
- 1:30pm** A teacher arrives to share an email from an upset parent whose child went home in tears during lunch, engage in fact-finding and prepare for tomorrow's conversation with the student
- 2:30pm** Report of a plugged toilet in the bottom floor bathroom! Go downstairs to put up tape, photograph the scene, speak to the reporting student. Email teachers – *to be continued*
- 3:00pm** Say goodbye to students at one of three entrances
- 3:15pm** Debrief with teacher regarding today's class circle exercise. Meet with teachers, youth worker and counsellor. Meet with Principal to reflect on what went well, what was challenging, and what needs to be carried over for tomorrow
- 4:30pm** Catch up on emails, call parents, update OneNotebook on office referrals or student visits, email teachers regarding any incidents and make general notes of the day (*learned this from a retired Principal!*)
- 6:00pm** Head home for the day

Education is the cornerstone of a strong, equitable society. It is fundamental to building possibility and opportunity, nourishing our minds and our spirit.

From an early age, education has played a pivotal role in my life. It has guided my decisions, given me confidence to stand up for my beliefs and provided direction and drive throughout my career. I grew up in New Westminster, attending Herbert Spencer Elementary and New Westminster Senior Secondary, before graduating from Burnaby South Secondary. I then attended Douglas College and Simon Fraser University.

My educational journey was enriched by the support and mentoring from teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals and professors who motivated and encouraged me.

I have always been driven to be an advocate, partner and supporter on a wide range of social issues, from accessible post-secondary education and affordable public childcare to medicare and health equity.

In my most recent role as chief spokesperson for the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), I represented more than 50,000 people who provide care and services in our health care system. It was a privilege to listen and learn from their experiences, to advocate for a strong public health care system, and to help address their concerns and challenges in the health sector, to support them to do their best work. I will do the same in my new role – be

Advocate Partner Supporter

The province's new
Minister of Education
talks about the work ahead
as we move past the pandemic,
and the focus on Indigenous
education, anti-racism
and mental health



an active listener and passionate advocate for students and staff.

It is an honour to be appointed Minister of Education. As a lifelong learner this is an incredible opportunity to delve into the complexities of the education sector and find innovative ways to build on our collective successes. Ultimately the strength of the sector is dependent on strong and respectful relationships with all partners including students, families, teachers, support staff, Principals and Vice-Principals, superintendents, Indigenous educators, trustees and others.

Our shared responsibility is to ensure all students – no matter their ability, background, community or age – have every opportunity to achieve their best.

B.C. students continue to be recognized as among the best in the world through national and international assessments, due in large part to their hard work and dedication, but also through mentorship from education professionals. Principals and Vice-Principals play a vital role as leaders who help teachers and staff build day-to-day relationships with students. In many respects, school administrators set the foundation, culture and environment in each school, and set the tone and expectations for student-to-student and student-to-staff connections.

"Our shared responsibility is to ensure all students – no matter their ability, background, community or age – have every opportunity to achieve their best."

The past year has been one of the most challenging for everyone in every sector and every household. By mid-March 2020, the world recognized the rapid spread of COVID-19, and education systems everywhere adjusted quickly to determine how and where students could learn safely during a pandemic.

In B.C., we took this challenge head-on and adapted to the new reality by putting in place a comprehensive staged plan to provide remote learning for most students. Schools stayed open for children of Essential Support Workers (ESW) and those with complex needs who required in-class instruction. This temporary, but monumental shift in how and where students learned, was championed by more than 2,600 Principals and Vice-Principals in nearly 1,600 public schools.

While the 2020/21 school year has presented a variety of challenges so far, we have worked together to address concerns and make changes to improve health and safety guidelines and keep schools open. The ongoing commitment by Principals and Vice-Principals is at the forefront of school operations and student success, so I thank you for your tireless commitment during the past year.

As the vaccine rollout is now underway, our goal for this coming September is for all K-12 students to fully return to school under Stage 1.

The mandate I recently received as Minister of Education builds on a government commitment to put people first, through a strong focus on equity and truth and reconciliation.

I'm committed to ensuring students have more access to meal programs and classroom supplies, so parents and teachers don't have to pay costs out-of-pocket. There will also be a renewed

"The mandate I recently received as Minister of Education builds on a government commitment to put people first, through a strong focus on equity and truth and reconciliation."

focus to bring childcare into the broader learning environment through a strategy that is expected to move the delivery of childcare into the Ministry of Education in the next few years.

I'm also committed to building on our investments in safe and accessible playgrounds for students in our schools.

As we move past the pandemic, we will focus on our ongoing systemwide commitments for the success and well-being of all students, with a particular focus on Indigenous education, anti-racism and mental health.

The Ministry of Education hosted a Community Roundtable on Anti-Racism in July 2020 to support the development of a K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan, which continues to be developed and is expected to be released later this year.

The roundtable allowed us to review how we can strengthen our provincial curriculum to include new teachings, perspectives and history. Since then, we've seen school districts lead the way to develop new courses on Black and Indigenous history.

In December 2020, Vancouver (SD 39) approved African Descent History in British Columbia, for its grade 12 students, which will allow them to better

understand the rich history of the Black community in B.C. The teachings of black history will enlighten students and serve as a commitment to anti-racism.

B.C.'s 18 Ministry-approved Indigenous languages in the curriculum, as well as courses and teachings for additional Indigenous languages, continues to be recognized by other provinces, territories, countries and education organizations in the world. School districts have demonstrated a commitment to make learning about Indigenous languages and cultures more accessible to students by engaging with local Indigenous communities to develop curriculum, and by acknowledging the necessary financial and human resources needed to build, expand and maintain Indigenous language programs. With new programs and courses being offered, B.C. students learn more about Indigenous cultures every day.

Kamloops-Thompson (SD 73) has a leadership development program where current and future Principals and Vice-Principals attend cultural competency sessions with a local lens and pay attention to potential systemic biases in pedagogy. They also submit short, medium and long-term equity goals in school growth plans.

In Mission (SD 75), a Vice-Principal initiated a schoolwide Legacy Project and partnered with classes to incorporate Indigenous Worldviews and Perspectives. Local Nations, trustees and the entire school body were included to witness the unveiling of the project.

It's exciting to hear about the recently proposed Academy of Indigenous Studies at George Elliot Secondary in the Central Okanagan school district (SD 23), which will be offered to all students in Grades 10 through 12.

I am optimistic that more school districts will

follow Vancouver, Kamloops, Mission and Central Okanagan with innovative programs. While we have taken many steps forward in our journey to teach history, heritage, diversity and inclusion, there is more work to do.

Now, more than ever, we need to prioritize the mental health and well-being of our children and our staff. Our experience through COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of having strong mental health supports in our K-12 sector.

We know there will be a lot of young people who have experienced stress and anxiety in their lives as a result of this pandemic. Mental health represents a large commitment in my mandate as Minister. That's why I'll be working with my colleague Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, to get dedicated child and youth mental health teams up and running as soon as possible, so school districts have more resources available.

"Now, more than ever, we need to prioritize the mental health and well-being of our children."

The dedicated teams will build on our new Mental Health in Schools (MHIS) Strategy, which embeds mental health and substance use programs and services for students throughout the education system and also expands on A Pathway to Hope, our government-wide strategy to transform mental health and substance use care for children and young people.

The Cowichan Valley School District (SD 79) started the school year by reviewing the Compassionate Systems Leadership models with

all Principals and Vice-Principals. Compassionate Systems Leadership is one of three elements in the MHIS Strategy. The school district established a multi-disciplinary Clinical Leadership Competency Framework (CLCF) Community of Practice that is being led by school district counsellors who are applying the principles in their practice throughout the district. The development of Compassionate School Communities teams is also being piloted in six schools across the district.

The Mental Health in Schools Strategy also identifies adult well-being as a key priority. As a part of the Compassionate Systems Leadership element within the Strategy, the Ministry is partnering with education leaders to explore and foster adult well-being in the school system. The Ministry is partnering with The Center for Systems Awareness to host workshops for educators and leaders to support positive mental health and adult well-being. And we have offered trauma-informed practice training for staff. In February 2021, the Ministry offered an Introduction to Compassionate Systems Leadership workshop specifically for Principals and Vice-Principals.

We've seen some amazing examples from school districts. Surrey (SD 36) has implemented a virtual leadership coaching program to support the growth and development of Principals and Vice-Principals with over 90 participants. The Surviving to Thriving program includes group and individual coaching with a focus on leadership in times of complexity. While West Vancouver (SD 45) is using a Compassionate Systems Leadership approach in hiring an external facilitator to explore how racism is experienced in the school district, the findings will be used to create a framework to address inequities within their system and leadership.

Principals and Vice-Principals, teachers, school

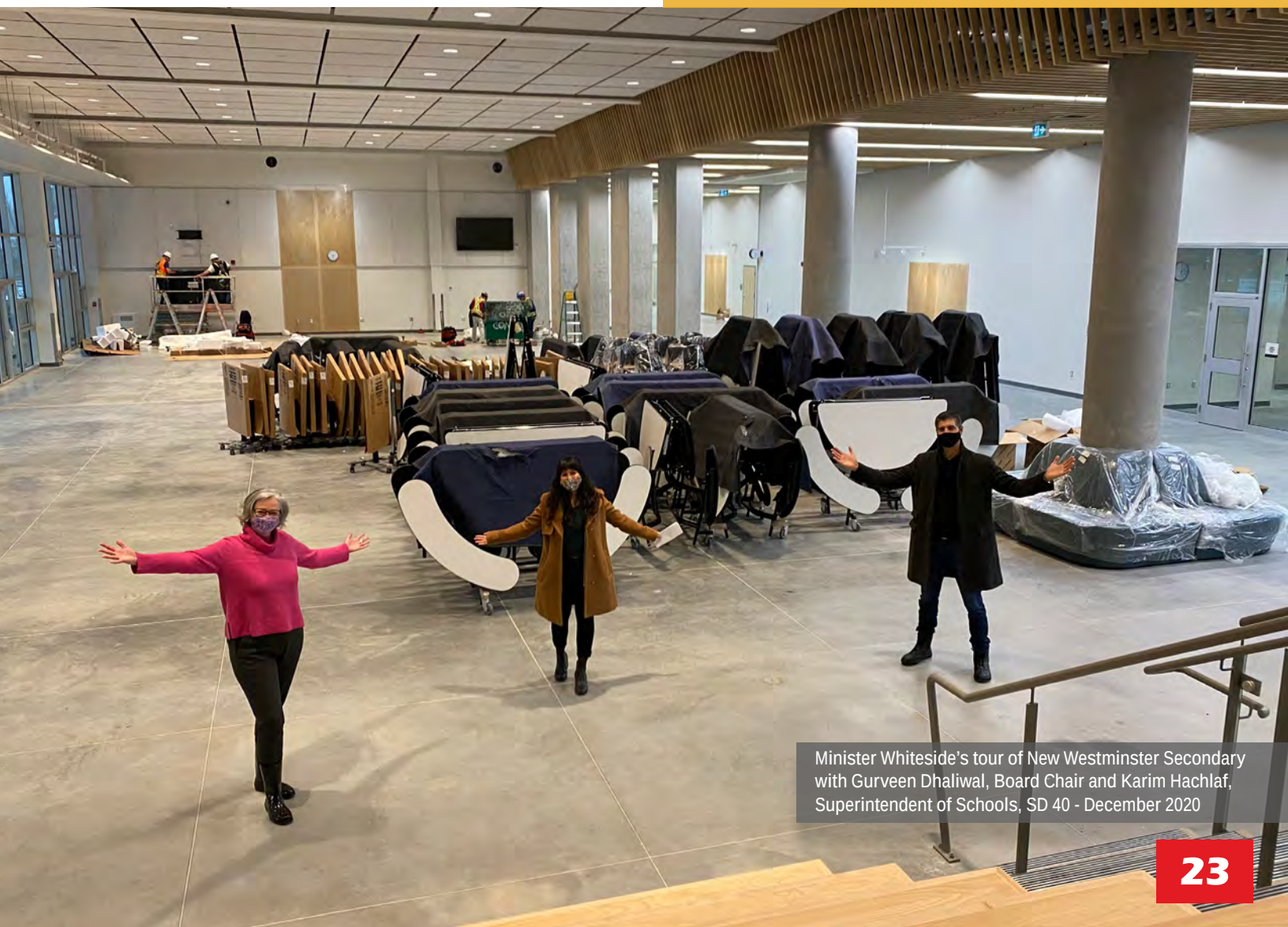
staff, parents and communities have done a tremendous job to keep kids learning throughout the pandemic. I applaud this collective teamwork by our education professionals and parents to keep students learning in safe spaces and places. I know we will continue to maintain our success to the end of this school year and into September.

While we still have a challenging road ahead of us until vaccines are widely distributed, let's all continue to support each other during these difficult times and continue to put the success of our students first. The lessons we teach today through our words and actions, will shape generations to come as an example of resiliency, unity and hopefulness.



@JM_Whiteside

"Principals and Vice-Principals, teachers, school staff, parents and communities have done a tremendous job to keep kids learning throughout the pandemic. I applaud this collective teamwork by our education professionals and parents to keep students learning in safe spaces and places."



Minister Whiteside's tour of New Westminster Secondary with Gurveen Dhaliwal, Board Chair and Karim Hachlaf, Superintendent of Schools, SD 40 - December 2020

Children

Benefit from Parents and Schools Working Together

*The best school is one where
parents, educators, staff, and
school administrators have a
shared vision and work diligently
together to achieve it.*

by
Andrea Sinclair
President,
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)



Children are at the core of everything in education. The public education system benefits – and our children benefit – when parents are recognized as a valuable resource forming mutually-respectful relationships with the school administration. When we put our collective talents together, we can achieve so much more for our communities, our schools, and our children. This is true during a regular school year and becomes essential within a pandemic environment.

As president of the British Columbia Parent Advisory Council (BCCPAC), I truly enjoy getting to meet and know so many school parent advisory leaders. Before COVID grounded us all, I would often be invited to school districts to discuss the importance of PACs (Parent Advisory Councils) and DPACs (District Parent Advisory Councils), and their role as stakeholders. Although I no longer travel, I still enjoy meeting PAC and DPAC leaders and parents virtually, and hearing about their districts and the relationships between the parents of the school and the school administrative team.

BC is a very diverse province, and the disproportions between school districts can be glaring. I've had the pleasure of speaking with PAC Chairs whose schools enrolled fewer than 100 students, and to some that have populations of more than 1,500 students. Inevitably, conversations with PACs come down to the satisfaction they have regarding their relationship with their school administrator(s). The basis of that relationship rests on three questions:

- 1. Does the school administrator understand the importance of a strong engaged PAC?**
- 2. Does the school administrator energetically work at maintaining a strong relationship with PAC?**
- 3. Does the school administrator believe in the importance of regular communication outside of scheduled PAC meetings?**

PACs are often described as bridges between schools and parents. Although there is some truth to that, I believe we are all part of the same education community. Parents should be providing advice on the development of both short and long term school goals. Parents, teachers, and school administration play an important role in teaching positive values and attitudes. These are an important part of a child's education and can be instilled more effectively when parents, teachers, and school administrators are working together. We want your students and our children to be knowledgeable, and to also be endowed with a sense of responsibility and respect for self, for others, and for their community and beyond.

PACs and school administrators must focus on ways to nurture all students, helping to improve their learning environment and ensuring that the school is thriving. When we put our collective talents together, we can achieve so much more for our school and for our children. It is our mutual obligation to give them everything they need to be happy, healthy, and caring citizens.

To ensure there is a welcoming school climate for parents, school administrators need to encourage and maintain regular interaction with the PAC. Supporting parent engagement is more than a courtesy: it is one of the best ways to create a positive learning environment. To create a school community built on relationships, school staff need to ask parents how they understand parent engagement and then ask how best to nurture it so that there is willingness among parents to involve themselves in multiple aspects of the school community. If school administrators don't make time for parent partnerships, then they are limiting their school's capacity for growth. The school administration must work with PACs to develop a strong sense of community that is based upon caring relationships. Relationships are formed when parents are involved in all aspects of school activities. PACs and administration must take the time to not only meet

with each other, but to listen carefully to what each other has to say. The PAC, as a stakeholder, should be seen as an integral part of the school especially when planning and decision-making are occurring.

In addition to the ever-growing list of administrative duties and responsibilities, communication is a fundamental component of the bond that unites a PAC and school staff. I remember one PAC Chair telling me how her school's Principal phones her a couple of times a month just to do what they call a 'check in'. The Principal does not have an agenda for the phone call, but is basically ensuring that the lines of communication are open. The Chair told me that most of the time these calls are short, but they let her know how important the relationship is to the Principal.

I heard from another parent who talked about how their Principal will call, rather than wait for the next PAC meeting, when there is educational news available from the school district or Ministry of Education. The Principal will take the time to explain how the news might affect their school. The information will be revisited at the next PAC meeting to ensure that everyone fully understands the ramifications, but it is the personal touch that assures the group that the PAC leader and the Principal are working well together.

Many parent leaders have shared with me of how hard Principals and PACs have worked to develop relationships that go beyond meeting once or twice a month. Parents shared how, at their schools, there are always activities designed to bring the PAC and the staff closer.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

In addition to forming working relationships with school administrative teams, PACs are recognized in the *School Act*, Section 8, as the collective voice of

parents in the school community and in their role of supporting parents, they have the legislative right to advise school administration on any matter relating to public education. **PACs can:**

- Advise school staff/board of education regarding any matter relating to the school or provincial education
- Advise the school Principal and staff on parents' views and feedback about school programs, policies, plans and activities
- Organize PAC activities and provide parent education
- Encourage parent involvement at the school level and support programs that promote parental involvement
- Communicate with parents and promote co-operation between home and school, providing support for the education of children
- Assist parents by helping them to understand the educational system, and advocating on their behalf; advocacy issues may involve DPACs.
- Act on behalf of parents and students
- Provide financial support for PAC goals

PACs are required to have Bylaws under which they operate (self-governing) and they are composed of, run and managed by parents. This point is non-negotiable, and is key for both parents and school staff to understand. If, for example, the PAC undertakes a fundraising initiative, the funds raised (and the funds received by the PAC from Community Gaming Grants) are the PACs' to manage, distribute and report on. PACs will consult with school staff to ensure school processes and procedures are followed, and any item purchased for the school becomes the property of the school.

All parents/guardians/caregivers with children registered in the school are members of the PAC by default. Each PAC has an Executive, per the PAC's Bylaws, who have been elected by their peers to represent them and to conduct business on their behalf. The PAC must represent all students and families with inclusion and equity, regardless of which parents – and how many parents – are elected to the Executive.

PAC meetings are for parents of children enrolled at the school. School administrators and staff representatives should be welcomed to attend PAC meetings as regular invited non-voting guests; often their input and insight is invaluable to the discussions. Similarly, PAC executives should be meeting regularly with their administration team. PACs may request to present at staff meetings when deemed necessary to share information. Working together and sharing information is key to building and maintaining this relationship for the benefit of students.

PACs communicate with their parent community through meetings where issues of importance regarding their school are discussed. PACs will then advise school administration of the parent position, expecting that this information will become an important part of the decision-making process. In addition to regular meetings, the PAC will also communicate with the parent body through newsletters, telephone, email, and websites so that all parents have the opportunity to provide input regarding school decisions.

Many within the education sector do not realize that PACs are neither required nor obligated to fundraise. The practice of fundraising began many years ago, and today there is a heavy reliance and an expectation for the practice by both parents and schools. It is a major concern to parents that there continues to be both 'have and have-not schools', and the resulting inequity. It is important for district administration to

understand that not all PACs have the same ability to raise funds.

There are many things a PAC can and should do that isn't connected to fundraising, and aligns with their role under the *School Act*. During this particular school year, parents are relying on their PAC to keep them informed and updated: they are the link between administration and parents. Some parents will always feel more comfortable sharing their concerns with PAC members. It is often the role of the PAC to act as a conduit and bring forward issues that parents have shared. A well-functioning PAC that has a solid working relationship with the administration and staff will in turn benefit the school community.

District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

District PAC (DPAC) is the official representative body of parents/guardians of children in a school district. The *School Act* provides DPACs the power to advise the board of education respecting any matter relating to education within the district, including educational policy. As a district stakeholder, DPAC – like the other stakeholders – should have representation on all standing committees, and on any advisory committees, ad-hoc committees, or working groups.

Recognized in the *School Act*, Section 8, DPACs are required to have Bylaws under which they operate (self-governing) and are composed of, run and managed by parents. DPAC bylaws provide direction on the level of participation of invited guests, and what to do if a trustee or school district employee is also a parent at a school. The DPAC is comprised of elected parent representatives from district PACs and serves as an umbrella organization for local PACs; all PACs in the district are – by default – members of the DPAC, but many DPACs require member PACs to register with them.

DPACs can:

- Assist parents in forming/dissolving a PAC in every school
- Assist member PACs and parents in obtaining information and communicating with district personnel
- Help parents navigate the school system locally
- Advocate for greater parental involvement in the education system
- Support and encourage PACs and parents in accessing the school system at all levels by providing regular forums for the exchange of ideas and information to ensure that public education serves the best interests of all students

DPAC meetings are for PAC representatives and parents of children enrolled in public schools in the district. District administrators and trustees should be welcomed to attend DPAC meetings as regular invited non-voting guests. Similarly DPAC executives should be meeting regularly with their senior district teams. DPAC can – and should – set up meetings with whomever they determine is appropriate within the district.

DPACs communicate directly with their PAC parent community, gathering and discussing issues of importance regarding their district (items such as Strategic Planning, District Budget, Long Range Facilities Plan) in order to adequately advise those that influence their district decisions. In addition to DPAC meetings, communication may also be accomplished through surveys, newsletters, email, and websites so that all PAC parents have the opportunity for input.

It's to the advantage of the local PACs and their parent communities to be connected with their DPAC, both

electronically and through engagement. The DPAC needs to communicate directly with its PAC members and parent community and, for that, parents need to provide contact details to their PAC. This means that if individuals don't provide email or other contact information to their DPAC/PAC, neither the DPAC nor the PAC is able to communicate directly with PAC parents.

A solid DPAC with the engagement and support of its local PACs will benefit students and the school district.

Provincial Parent Advisory Council (BCCPAC)

BCCPAC is a non-partisan, registered non-profit charity established in 1922. We are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors elected annually by our membership which consists of DPACs and PACs who pay an annual fee, and through which we represent the parents/guardians/caregivers of more than 565,000 children in provincial public schools. As the provincially mandated voice of parents in public schools, we have the authority to get involved and to share concerns directly with the Minister of Education and Ministry staff.

BCCPAC is the provincial voice of parents on K-12 public education and related issues, and we directly support DPAC and PAC members and individual parents. We promote, support and advance meaningful parent participation throughout the public education system in order to advocate for the success of all students; and, through our membership, promote leadership, communication, cooperation, and representation in British Columbia at the school, school district and provincial level.

We advocate for systemic changes at the provincial table. BCCPAC sits at that table alongside our education partners — The BC School Trustees

Association (BCSTA), The BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), The BC School Business Officials Association (BCASBO), The BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA), The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), The Canadian Union of Public Employees, BC (CUPE BC), Metis Nation BC (MNBC) and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) — and the provincial government. BCCPAC has a credible and respected voice, and is uniquely positioned to ensure that the parent perspective is heard loudly and clearly. We communicate and meet regularly with the Ministry of Education and our education partners.

This year, and for the coming year, parent advocacy and advocacy for school-aged children has never been more important. The parent/guardian/caregiver perspective at the provincial table has been critical during the pandemic and the return to school. We are the only provincial group that is 100% dedicated to parents and their children in public school. All other education partners represent their members who are employees in the system: that is their primary mandate. In all cases, parents engaged in their school, district or provincial PAC are volunteers who give their time for their community, and who do not receive any remuneration.

There is ample research to support the importance of parent involvement in schools. Parent involvement is associated with a wide range of outcomes, such as improved student learning and a positive community support for the school. By working together, parent advisory councils and school administration can best meet the needs of our students.



LESSONS FROM THE BOARDROOM

What our Boards of Directors Have Taught Me About Effective Governance

I first stepped into the BCPVPA boardroom in the Spring of 1989 as the staff accountant, there to provide support and resources for the Board. I heard thoughtful conversations about supporting our members, sometimes tough but punctuated by levity and comradery. These were dedicated Board members seriously fulfilling their responsibilities: I was hooked, and eagerly awaited the next Board meeting.

Research has demonstrated how effective job-embedded learning is. Association meetings taught me how a dedicated Board, operating within the right framework, and with the proper supports, can effectively carry out its responsibilities. My first-hand experience has been both lively and memorable.

by

Carol Powell

Director, Finance, BCPVPA

ROLE OF DIRECTORS

Part 5, Division 3 of *British Columbia's Societies Act* describes the role of Directors. Their functions are succinctly defined in **Section 52**:

"Subject to this Act, the regulations and the bylaws, the directors of a society must manage, or supervise the management of, the activities and internal affairs of the society."

Section 53 outlines the duties of Directors:

- (1) A director of a society must, when exercising the powers and performing the functions of a director of the society,
 - (a) act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the society,
 - (b) exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reasonably prudent individual would exercise in comparable circumstances,
 - (c) act in accordance with this Act and the regulations, and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c), act in accordance with the bylaws of the society.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), a director of a society, when exercising the powers and performing the functions of a director of the society, must act with a view to the purposes of the society.
- (3) This section is in addition to, and not in derogation of, any enactment or rule of law or equity relating to the duties or liabilities of directors of a society.
- (4) Nothing in a contract or the bylaws of a society relieves a director from
 - (a) the duty to act in accordance with this Act and the regulations, or
 - (b) liability that, by any enactment or rule of law or equity, would otherwise attach to the director in respect of negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust of which the director may be guilty in relation to the society.

These words present a multitude of considerations, including:

- Directors are responsible, as a Board, for the stewardship of the organization and its resources, and for activities undertaken to advance the purposes of the organization.
- There is a fiduciary duty to act honestly, in good faith and in the best interest of the Association, not for individual Directors, individuals or limited groups of members.
- Directors have a duty to be informed, to enable them to make appropriate decisions.
- Directors should understand the legal framework they work within, including the *BC Societies Act & Regulations*.
- Directors cannot avoid their responsibilities through contracts or bylaws, or by delegating a portion of their responsibilities. They are ultimately responsible for the activities and internal affairs of the organization.

The various responsibilities and expectations outlined in the previous section demonstrate the depth, responsibilities, and importance of the Directors' work. There are several elements of a strong governance framework and resources that assist Board members in fulfilling their responsibilities. When I frame my thoughts about this, I evoke the image of an octopus. Directors are the upper body, and the arms that reach out are various supports. Below are the eight arms that contribute to effective Board governance.

BC SOCIETIES ACT & OTHER LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

BCPVPA is incorporated under the *Societies Act*, meaning that the Association is governed by a framework established by legislation. This creates consistent procedures for operations and decision-making, which provides clarity and accountability.

BOARD STRUCTURE

The Board is comprised of a President, a Past President or President-Elect, and ten other Directors. The Directors have diverse experience in their school districts, and come together with different perspectives that enhance debate around various issues.

The position of President is a two-year term, with access to consultation from the Past President during his or her first year. During the second year, the President-Elect can liaise with the President to learn more about their upcoming position. This facilitates a smooth transition for the Board and a President's school district commitments.

The ten other Director positions are two-year terms, and the election of these individuals is staggered. This enables a blend of continuing Directors, who

are already aware of the issues the Board has been dealing with, and new Directors.

Prior to 1997-98, the President's position was not full-time. This made it challenging to fulfill both the BCPVPA and district responsibilities. The role of the President is to:

- Act as spokesperson for the Association and its membership, provide leadership to the Board of Directors and membership and work in partnership with the Executive Director to ensure that the objectives of the Association are achieved.
- Work on behalf of members, and in cooperation with the Board of Directors and the Executive Director, undertaking the following responsibilities:
 - Foster effective communication with members
 - Represent the positions of the Association to government, education partners, the media and community groups
 - Visit BCPVPA Chapters to strengthen ties between the Association and its membership
 - Chair meetings of the Board of Directors
 - Serve on all Association committees
 - Name Association representatives to standing committees, ad hoc committees and Ministry committees seeking Association representation
 - Advocate for the role of Principals and Vice-Principals to government, partner groups and the public

**BCPVPA
Constitution
& Bylaws**

**BC
Employment
Standards
Act**

**Canada
Revenue
Agency**

**BC Societies
Act &
Regulations**

DIRECTORS:
Manage or supervise the
management of the activities
and internal affairs of the society
(Sec 52. of *BC Societies Act*)

**BCPVPA
Constitution
& Bylaws**

**Societies
Act and
Other Legal
Requirements**

**Other
Governance
Documents**

Staff

Board Structure

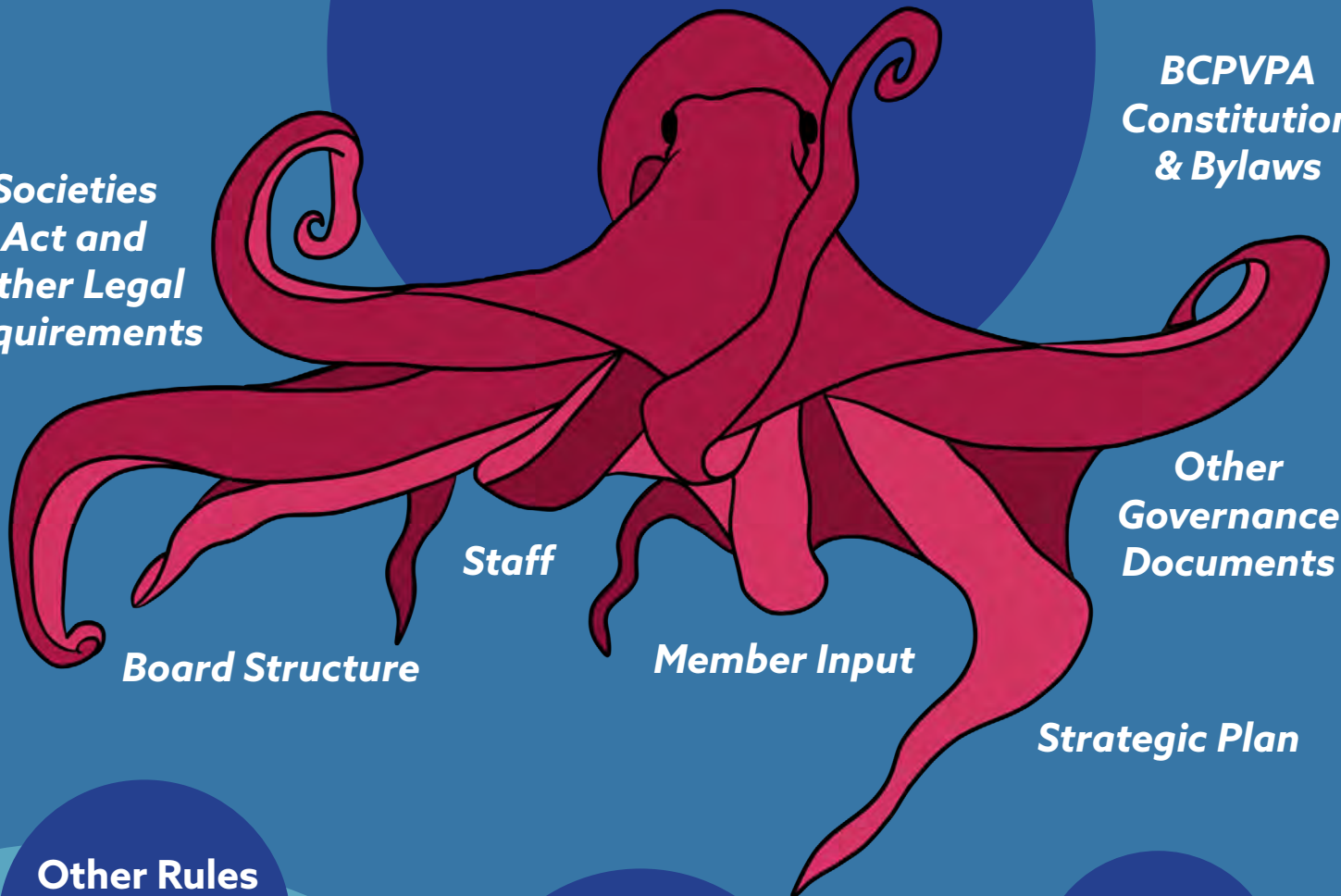
Member Input

Strategic Plan

**Other Rules
of Law &
Enactments**

**BC Personal
Information
Protection Act
(PIPPA)**

**Common
Law**



These duties provide connections to staff, members, and other stakeholders. This helps the Board to remain informed about current issues.

The Board meets seven times a year, in person and whenever necessary by video conferencing. At these meetings, the Directors receive background information, discuss and ask questions about various topics, and make decisions when necessary. It is an opportunity to monitor progress on strategic priorities and the use of BCPVPA's resources. It is an opportunity to reflect on the 'big issues', strategize and identify potential risks to the Association. During these conversations, it is essential that Directors consider what is best for the Association, not individual members or groups of members.

Occasionally a Governance Committee will be convened that includes Directors who work with staff to review and draft items related to governance. In recent years, the BCPVPA's Constitution & Bylaws were amended to reflect the requirements of the *Societies Act* that replaced the prior statute. Most recently, Board Policies & Procedures have been upgraded.

BCPVPA CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

Directors must work within the BCPVPA Constitution & Bylaws. Association activities must relate to the purposes stated in the Constitution. Like the *Societies Act*, the Bylaws provide procedures for operations and decision-making. If a BCPVPA Bylaw conflicts with the *Societies Act*, the *Societies Act* will prevail. Any revisions to the Association's Bylaws must be approved by members.

OTHER GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

The Directors Code of Conduct refers to many of the items discussed in Sections 52 & 53 of the *Societies Act*. Each year Directors take the Oath of Office and acknowledge that they have read and understand the Code, and agree to comply with all

the obligations stated within it. The Code, as stated in its introduction, is intended to:

- (a) Explain the standards of conduct by which Directors are required to abide;
- (b) Protect the interests of the Association;
- (c) Maintain the Association's reputation of integrity and excellence; and
- (d) Promote compliance with applicable legal obligations.

Board Policies & Procedures provide extra assurance that operations are carried out consistently and appropriately. They are an important element of good internal controls that assist the Directors with fulfilling their stewardship role. Board Policies & Procedures address topics such as operations (personnel), membership, finance, governance, member support services, and elections. Changes to Policies & Procedures are approved by the Board after Directors have had a chance to vet proposed changes. Suggested changes may be brought forward by the Executive Director, a Standing Committee, or a Governance Committee.

STRATEGIC PLAN

While the purposes included in BCPVPA's Constitution are supported by the Association's core services, additional needs are identified as critical for further support. The Strategic Plan offers a roadmap to achieve the goals established as top priorities. These priorities are developed by an extensive planning process that includes input from many sources: a survey and feedback from individual Directors; a strategic planning member survey; sessions with Advisory Committee members; and feedback from Chapter Representatives. Staff members also provide input from day-to-day contact with members and educational partners. Educational partners are also surveyed, and the collective input is thoroughly

analyzed. Hence, when approving the Strategic Plan, the Board of Directors has considerable information to base its decision on.

The Strategic Plan informs the budget, which the Board approves after the Budget Committee and Chapter Council representatives have provided feedback. The Budget Committee advises the Board on whether the budget is aligned with the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan, and accompanying operating plan and budget, allow the Board to monitor the progress of the Association's priorities, ensure that activities align with the Association's purposes, and monitor the use of the Association's resources.

MEMBER INPUT

The duty to be knowledgeable about all issues discussed before the Board can seem daunting. With the exception of the President, BCPVPA's Directors have full-time positions in their districts. How does the Board receive and process information that is needed to make informed decisions? We'll dive back into the water with the octopus.

An octopus has nine brains, one central brain in the upper body and a 'brain' in each of its arms that can work independently but can take direction from the central brain. The Board has numerous ways of receiving information from members that can be used when making decisions about the organization's operations.

BCPVPA bylaw 10.1 states "the Board may create such standing and special committees as may from time to time be required. Any such committee will limit its activities to the purpose or purposes for which it is appointed and will have no powers except those specifically conferred by a Board Resolution."

The standing committees include the Budget, Contract Advisory, Indigenous Leadership Advisory, Professional Learning and Development Advisory, and Workplace Intensification and Wellness Committees. As Board Policy 601(2) states, "the Board may establish advisory committees to assist the Board in carrying out its responsibilities". A Board member chairs each of these committees and reports back to the Board. The role of standing advisory committees is to undertake duties described in the committees' terms of reference; advise the Board on policy directions, activities, and budget; assist in the development of the Association's strategic plan; and undertake any other duties as assigned by the Board. Examples of the useful planning information that can be provided by these committees include advising the Board on matters that pertain to the economic welfare of members (Contract Advisory) and conducting member needs assessments on a regular basis (Professional Learning & Development Advisory Committee).

Special committees are created to deal with emergent issues.



Examples of other opportunities for member input are provincial meetings (Chapter Council Representatives, Presidents, Contract Representatives, and Professional Learning and Development Representatives); the President's Chapter visits; surveys; and polling.

STAFF

Staffing is another method of assisting Directors in carrying out their responsibilities. BCPVPA Bylaw 11.2 specifies "the Board will appoint an individual as the Executive Director who will be the chief appointed officer of the Association." Amongst the Executive Director's duties listed in this bylaw is to "conduct the day-to-day business operations and affairs of the Association in accordance with the Bylaws, Association policy that is not inconsistent with the bylaws, and proper directions from the Board." The Board hires the Executive Director to manage operations. The Executive Director hires staff to help perform this work. The Board monitors the performance of the Association's operations, which is executed by staff under the Executive Director's guidance. It is measured against the Strategic Plan, Operating Plan and budget, purposes listed in the Constitution, and policies.

OTHER

This catchall category recognizes that relevant information and support to assist the Directors in performing their duties can come from a variety of sources such as meetings with stakeholder groups, professional services (including audit and legal advice), and specialized training for Directors.

I have seen many iterations of the BCPVPA Board over the past thirty years.

The Board's and individual Directors' responsibilities are easy to define: one only has to look at the relevant sections of the *Societies Act*. Observing governance in action has allowed me to see what makes a Board an effective Board. Its effectiveness is supported by all the factors identified above but – above all – I think its effectiveness comes from within the Directors themselves. The Directors walk in the shoes of the Association's members. They have varied experience – urban and rural; elementary, middle, secondary and district; Principal and Vice-Principal – that combines to create a knowledgeable Board that is passionately committed to its members, students, and public education.

Our friend the octopus is extremely adaptable. I have also observed this with the Board when unexpected changes occur, as was demonstrated during the past year's pandemic. Ways of communicating and operating needed to change. The environment was not the same. Yet the Board remained effective in carrying out its responsibilities.

I am looking forward to attending the next Board meeting. There is always more to learn.

connection

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

(Member Event Feedback)



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

bcpvpa.org

bcp  vpa

INDIGENOUS GRADUATION COACH



NEW ROLE FOR AN OLD PROBLEM

by
Lauren Stelmaschuk & Katie Marren
SD 57 (Prince George)

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

A study probing the phenomenon of Indigenous students' school completion by MacIver (2012) begins with the declaration that Canada is failing Indigenous youth.

Current data from School District 57 (Prince George) indicates that the five and six-year school completion rates for Indigenous students remain at 53% and 65% respectively, compared to 81% and 87% for non-Indigenous students (School District 57 Prince George, 2019). Despite Indigenous graduation rates increasing from 22% in 1996 to 52% in 2001, nearly half of students are still leaving the system (MacIver, 2012). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Executive Summary (2015):

29% of Indigenous students in 2011 did not complete high school compared with only 12% of non-Indigenous students;

28% of all admissions to judicial custody in 2011-12 were Indigenous people even though First Nations people make up only 4% of the Canadian population; and

3.6% of children in foster care were Indigenous compared to 0.3% non-aboriginal children.

(TRC, 2015)

This data shows the dichotomy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. These high rates indicate that a web of social inequity remains to marginalize Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations. The historical effects of residential schools, institutional and systemic racism – and the presence of very few role models or mentors – certainly influence these statistics (MacIver, 2012). These staggering statistics further underscore the obligation for special considerations for Indigenous students' connection to education.

INDIGENOUS GRADUATION COACH AT YEAR ZERO

If, as the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair portends, “Education got us into this mess and education will get us out” (Watters, 2015, para 18), developing a network of supports for our Indigenous students within the schools is a necessity to bridging the gap that these numbers so starkly demonstrated. To this end, we are honoured to report on a pilot of SD# 57: the introduction of an ‘Indigenous Graduation Coach’ at all of the local high schools. This portfolio exists in its infancy, ‘year zero’ as we term it, and is being built even as we write this article. Pam Spooner, Director of Instruction for Indigenous Education and Shendah Benoit, Vice-Principal Academic Success of Indigenous Education, are guiding, directing and supporting an Indigenous Grad Coach at each of the Secondary Schools in SD# 57.



Katie Marren, Vice-Principal PGSS (left) and Lauren Stelmaschuk, Indigenous Grad Coach and Teacher, PGSS (right)

At Prince George Secondary school (PGSS, one of five secondary schools in our district), the *Spiral of Inquiry* (Timperley et. al., 2014) is guiding our work: Scanning, Focusing, Developing a Hunch, Learning, Taking Action, and Checking. Through this Inquiry process, a clearer picture begins to emerge. The initial stages of ‘scanning’

and ‘focusing’ reveal a number of ‘gate-keepers’ that pose problems for our Indigenous youth; attendance, post-secondary planning, mentorship, and academic supports. Not every student requires targeted interventions for each of these gatekeepers, but each student will benefit from at least one. When exploring the situation – ‘developing

What’s going on for our learners?
How do we know?
Why does this matter?



a hunch' – clear detriments to graduation emerge. Unsurprisingly, the socio-economic status of the youth, any learning gaps to previous attendance problems, deficit ideologies of both the youth and staff who serve them, and a sense of disconnection hold the most power over the ability to graduate and find positive post-secondary life outcomes. Moving from this facet into 'learning', the work of other jurisdictions can help shed more light on what has been successful. The Four Directions Graduation Coach program from Manitoba, for example, has been incredibly helpful in designing a program for the youth here. Reviewing this work helps clarify mandates and goals; while the Four Directions program (Lessard, 2018) is a full-time portfolio and covers all high-school aged Indigenous youth, it offers key guidelines for moving the work ahead. Currently, we are in the 'taking action' phase, creating targeted interventions for students and assigning duties. This also requires a good deal of people-management to support our learners. The data being generated and gathered through this project will offer clues as to the successes and opportunities for the coming year. 'Checking' will be completed at the end of the school year, and will offer insight into what has been successful and what will require further improvements and modelling.

In discussions with case-managers, counsellors, Indigenous Education Workers, Administration and other stakeholders about each of the students in our caseload, we have found four themes emerging from a risk/needs assessment of the students at PGSS: relationship and mentoring, academic support and advocacy, transition and planning, and cultural connection, as well as attendance and outreach supports. The goal is to build a network of supports for each of the students based on their needs, and always in relation to community-building and connection. Successful post-secondary transitions will be different for each student, and it is the work of these networks to best support this success.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESS

The Indigenous Graduation Coach Program is only just beginning to gain traction and momentum. Transitioning from the philosophical and theoretical foundation of connection and network-building will prove labyrinthine, as different students will need individualized attention and supports. It will be necessary to gain the trust not only of the students and their parents, but of the staff at large to aid in shouldering the responsibility. The definitions of success will also need attention. Is it enough to 'walk the stage', or is success placed at a goalpost of academic success? Is success truly measurable at all?

CONCLUSION

When considering the statistics of school completion and school connection, a particular focus must be given to Indigenous students as, by and large, this demographic makes up the bulk of students feeling chronically disengaged and ready to leave school (Brendtro et al., 2019; MacIver, 2012; Preston et al., 2018). The success of an entire demographic, it seems, rests at the heart of connection, care and relationship delivered through a culturally sensitive lens.

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Carihi Secondary

by

Louise Panziera

(current Principal, Carihi Secondary)

Fred Schaub Ed D.

(former Principal, Carihi Secondary)

SD 72

Helping Grade 9 Students

Rationale

Experience shows that a substantial group of incoming grade nine students, during their transition to high school, struggle to remain engaged in their learning. For many of these students, the struggles continue into their later grades: they fail courses, begin to self-identify as poor students, and perceive secondary school as too difficult.

In Campbell River School District 72, as students transition from Phoenix Middle School to Carihi Secondary School, we are exploring the benefits of a program based on supporting transitions for students who might fit this profile. With our Tyee program, the intent is to support students within a cohort of a smaller student/teacher ratio, with a primary focus on self-efficacy as a learner, and as a Carihi Secondary student.

"Tyee feels like a normal school day in this pandemic. I don't feel like going crazy because it alternates subjects."

- Tyee Student



Tyee Program

Find Support on Their Path

PROGRAM

Program in Year One (2019/20)

Disengagement from their learning is a common occurrence within this student population, leading all too often to students dropping out of secondary school. The Tyee Program is intended to increase engagement for students through focusing first on social and emotional needs, while reducing the pressures and demands of high-paced academic courses, especially in semester-based timetables. The Tyee Program creates an environment where students are encouraged to express their thoughts and emotions, and to address the hindrances and obstacles that can get in the way of being successful in secondary school – often occurring away from school, but tend to follow students to school.



"I wish there was
another
Tyee Program
for grades
10 and 11."

- Former Tyee Student

Year One Program Structure

- 30 to 40 students spent their mornings in their Tyee Program cohort for semester one
- Over the semester, the Tyee Program covered Social Studies 09 and Mathematics 09, with a focus on readiness in those courses for the grade ten level
- For afternoon classes, students were scheduled into two blocks per semester along with the general school population
- The teacher team was comprised of three teachers, with two teachers being assigned to individual blocks at any time
- The scheduled morning time allowed students to benefit from a soft start on days when that was needed, without the consequence of a lost lesson
- Teaching the two courses in a cohort model allowed for flexibility in daily schedules, but also in course delivery and completion over the semester
- The cohort was supported by a learning assistant teacher, an education assistant, the school youth worker, and the youth worker for Indigenous students
- The Program included a partnership with a neighbourhood elementary school for buddy activities, plus regular visits to – and participation in – an industrial sewing program

Observations During Year One

During its first year, the Tyee Program was scheduled for the mornings of semester one only. While this format showed positive results, especially in the areas of attendance and student engagement, we found that in the following second semester, without this daily support, some students fell back into the struggles previously observed in this student population.

While we did not apply any kind of structured research to Year One, our observations showed that students stayed connected and identified with their Tyee cohort, and attendance did improve. Our follow-up conversations with students revealed that the possibility of a soft start removed the stress of being late in the mornings, or of missing crucial instruction time. Instead of staying away for the whole first block, or giving up on the day, students felt safe to join the class. Having students in class allowed us to work on skills such as punctuality, or to support students in their needs and make it possible to be at school more regularly and on time.

Program in Year Two (2020/21)

Our observations in Year One demonstrated the need for the Program to be available for the whole school year. In the current school year (2020/21), we expanded the Program and moved it into a linear schedule for the morning blocks in semester one and two. We had a team of four teachers who planned for the year, with two teachers scheduled into the Tyee Program classroom on a rotation base. The teachers in the cohort had strong backgrounds in physical education, mathematics, language arts, and counselling. The Program remained focused on taking care of social emotional needs first, and making learning possible second.

Year Two Program Structure

- 30 to 40 students spend their mornings in the Tyee Program cohort all year
- Over the year, the Tyee Program covers Mathematics 09 and English 09, Physical Education 09, and Learning Strategies 09, with a focus on readiness for the grade ten level
- For afternoon classes, students are scheduled into two blocks, per semester, with the general school population
- The teacher team is comprised of four teachers, with two teachers being assigned to individual blocks at any time
- The scheduled time in the morning allows students to benefit from a soft start on days this is needed, without the consequence of a lost lesson
- Teaching the four courses within an all-year, linear cohort model, allows for flexibility in daily schedules, and in course delivery and completion over the school year
- The cohort is supported by a learning assistant teacher, an education assistant, the school youth worker, and the youth worker for Indigenous students

Observation during Year Two

The second year of the Tyee Program has been overshadowed by COVID-19. Secondary schools had to re-adjust their schedules to meet the health and safety requirements of this current reality. The district decided to go to a one-eight model of course delivery, meaning each course is taught over five weeks in a full-day format.

For the Tyee Program, which was scheduled into the two morning blocks, this means that the cohort was together over the first five weeks and will continue being together for every second five-week course period throughout the school year.

As we have moved through the one-eight rotations of this very different school year, we have made some interesting, school-wide, observations of the intensive full-day, five-week course delivery model. Initial observations have shown that for many students – beyond the students in the Tyee program – the full-day delivery model has helped with both attendance and course completion. While these are early observations, we see trends that show students feeling more connected to that one course and to the teacher of that course. The perceived ‘competition’ between courses throughout the day has fallen away, eliminating the need some felt to ‘sacrifice’ one block for the supposed importance of another course.

We also feel that being primarily with one teacher all day has made students more visible in the classroom, and removed the option or temptation to skip one or the other block. These experiences have revealed the value of a program like the Tyee Program, bridging that transition from middle to secondary school with more time together, and resulting in closer connections between students,

teachers, and support staff. Students from last year's Tyee Program are still connecting with those teachers, and talk about the positive impact the Program had for them.

As we navigate the very different experiences of altered schedules – especially at the secondary level – we see a need and a great opportunity to revisit and reflect on the ways we schedule secondary schools as we move into the future. While we are in the very early stages of this school year, and much observation and data-gathering lies ahead, we can see the potential for new opportunities and learning that is emerging from our current emergency situation, for our Tyee Program and beyond.

"Tyee provides an opportunity for kids to find success where they may have had a difficult time elsewhere. The Tyee program accepts kids for who they are and where they are at with their learning. Each day is an opportunity for students to feel supported and to obtain skills that will help transition them into the high school world."

- Tyee Staff

"Better connections with students. More time for conversations with students. Continuity for students for a full year in a regular school year."

"Programs like Tyee should be available at every grade level to meet the diversity of students learning and the diversity of their backgrounds. "

- Tyee Staff



Learning

Learning ... TO GO!

Developing Take Aways and Best Practices for Professional Learning in Your Own Building

Professional learning and development will not only affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, Principals, Vice-Principals and other school employees, but will also alter the culture and structures of the organizations in which those individuals work and ultimately improve student learning and achievement.

(Sparks, Hirsh, and Jones)

Designing professional learning and development (PLD) opportunities is often a complex planning and learning process that Principals and Vice-Principals face as they focus on meeting the individual needs of their schools and the community of learners they serve. Leading, teaching and learning occurs in a diverse landscape, where policy, research, history, experience and communities shape practice.

(LeFevrae, Timperley, Twyford, Ell, 2020)

by

Jessica Antosz & Elizabeth Bell

**Directors of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA**



As we travel along our own Professional Learning and Development journey at the BCPVPA, we review and consider multiple resources, research and materials to guide us in the design of PLD opportunities that can include programs, conferences, workshops and learning sessions.

Research materials and resources in the field of Professional Learning and Development are extensive, and we want to share some key learnings that may help you as you plan for professional learning in your own school community.

Characteristics of powerful professional learning and development include:

- Establishing a school culture focused on teaching and learning
- Honouring the staff's professionalism, expertise, and skills
- Promoting inquiry and reflection
- Ensuring a level of application of the skills and strategies learned in the PLD design

(Lois Brown Easton)

Key components and features of effective PLD include:

- The quality of content
- The learning design and implementation
- Continued support and sustainability

(The State of Educator's Professional Learning in Canada)

This article focuses on four key take-aways:

- 1) Models of PLD
- 2) Framework for PLD
- 3) Change Process
- 4) Learning Designs for PLD

1) Major Models for Professional Learning and Development

based on research by Guskey, Sparks, Loucks-Horsley, Drago-Severson and Lee Anne Sulzberger

Principals and Vice-Principals who design professional learning and development experiences or opportunities for their schools should consider several of the major models before determining the most appropriate approach for their context.

Ask yourself, "What knowledge, skills and attitudes do my staff need that will support them in their work and ultimately impact and improve student outcomes?"

Then, consider these models, and review the examples of what the BCPVPA offers in each area:



Training: This model of professional and learning development is familiar to most educators. Training is typically presented in the form of a workshop, seminar, institute, conference or some other form of large-group presentation.

Connecting Leaders Conference
Effective Feedback Institute

Observation/Assessment: This model of professional learning and development is based on the use of collegial observation and feedback to provide educators with information about a specific practice or skill. For teachers, such activities may involve peer observations of lesson design and instructional strategies.

Leading a Culture
of Learning
1 & 2

Involvement in a Development or Improvement Process: Educators are often asked to serve on a curriculum committee or school growth plan team. Such groups can provide a valuable source of professional growth as educators work collaboratively to solve a specific problem, review relevant research on a particular content area or reflect upon the effectiveness of a newly implemented process or strategy.

Leadership Standards Review
Committee
Leadership Planning Guide
Committee
All Program Development
Committees

Study Groups or Learning Teams: Study groups or learning teams expand upon the concept of the development and improvement processes by involving an entire school staff in finding solutions to common problems. Small groups of educators focus on different aspects of a problem or issue. Topics should arise out of the careful study of the school data and student achievement.

Article Review Study Series
Book Studies
Indigenous Committee
Wellness Committee

Inquiry or Action Research: In the inquiry or action research model, participants use a structured method to investigate how a change in a particular practice impacts teaching and learning. An example of an inquiry/action research model could be the six stages of *Spirals of Inquiry* designed by Dr. Linda Kaser and Dr. Judy Halbert.

Short Course II

Individually Guided Activities: Educators involved in this model of professional development determine their own professional learning goals and select the activities they believe will lead them to successfully meet those goals. This model of professional development provides a variety of flexible options that enable educators to individualize their professional growth experiences. Activities such as professional portfolios, reflective journaling, and video/audio self-assessment are examples of individually guided activities

Growth Plan Model in
BetterEducate

Mentoring/Coaching: Mentoring/Coaching, as a model of professional learning and development, pairs experienced, successful educators with colleagues who are less experienced and who can benefit from the guidance and support provided by the mentor or coach.

Mentorship Program
Essentials for New School Leaders

The models of professional learning and development each have their strengths and weaknesses; some are more appropriate than others to reach a desired outcome. The criterion for the effectiveness of professional learning and development is that it changes leader and teacher practice in ways that make a positive difference to the learning and well-being of their students. (Viviane Robinson, 2020).

When choosing a professional learning and development model one must also be reminded of the fundamentals of what makes learning meaningful for adults. “A team member’s mindset influences how receptive he/she is to learn and change.” (Elisa MacDonald, Carol Dweck) Adult learning theory is one of the most important sources of information about what works in terms of professional learning and development. Adult learning is different from student learning, and a good resource to further explore this concept is an article written by Lois Brown Easton and Terry Morganti-Fisher, “How to Choose the Right Learning Design” (2014), or the book *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* by Jane Vella (2002), which outlines a comprehensive description of the needs of adult learners.

No matter which model is selected, the activities should:

- 1) focus on narrowing the gap between actual and desired levels of student learning;
- 2) involve stakeholders in identifying content and objectives of the model;
- 3) help participants understand both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the new learning;
- 4) be reflective, integrate follow up and provide support; and
- 5) be part of a larger change process that focuses on improving student learning.

(Lee Sulzberger, 2003)

2) Framework for Design

When designing the BCPVPA professional learning and development opportunities, we consider a simple framework that is based on questions of curiosity and that is reflective in nature.

The framework consists of these four elements:

Purpose: (Why?)

Why are we designing this professional learning and development opportunity? What data are we considering? Why is this learning important?

Context: (Where?)

Where will PLD learning occur? Who will be involved in this learning? What is the learning culture of the group?

Content: (What?)

What is our intended learning outcome? What research and resources do we need?

Process: (How?)

How will this learning best occur? How do we plan to move forward? What change process and strategies might we consider?

(adapted from *Learning Forward*)

3) Change Process

When considering the implementation of a PLD model that might involve a systemic change within your school culture, one should reflect on a change structure to use that will fit the context of learning culture and environment of the school.

In a variety of literature, change has been described as “... a process, not an event” (Hall and Hord) and something that happens over a period of time. There are multiple theories, processes and research on the concept of change, and it is important to view change simultaneously from both individual and institutional perspectives.

We know leaders are key facilitators of change. Michael Fullan stated in 2007 that “today, no more serious change effort would fail to emphasize the

role of Principals”. Robbins and Alvy in 2014 noted that, “It is critical to go about change in a way that shows sensitivity to individuals affected by change and the institution that will be transformed as a result of it. Change does affect the individuals and the organization.”

Before choosing a change model for your school, it is important for one to reflect on a variety of curious questions:

Why do we want to change?

What’s going on for our learners?

What do we want to change?

How do we know?

How do we change?

Why does it matter?

(Robbins and Alvy)

(Kaser and Halbert)

These sets of questions can help guide the change process that a Principal or Vice-Principal is about to undertake.

Change Model Examples

Shewhart

Halbert and Kaser

Fullan

Breakspear

Plan, Act, Do, Check Cycle

Spirals of Inquiry

8 Drivers of Change

Capture, Cleanse, Weave

There are multiple models of change demonstrated through research from which one can choose or adapt when developing a PLD learning opportunity. It is important to choose a change model process that fits the context and culture of your school as the process can be key to bringing about a change initiative. It is equally important to remember that whatever the model, a change process should develop new teaching and learning approaches that measurably improve student learning and performance.

(Clauset and Murphy, 2013)



Remembering your school context, it's important to understand that implementing one model may not suit your needs. There are times when the combined pieces of several models is more appropriate. An example of the adaptation of several models combined into one is PIER2 developed at Qualicum Beach Middle School. It provides a cycle that we sometimes apply for program development at the BCPVPA in order to keep programming both responsive and proactive.

- Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Reflection
- Revision

"Indeed the, measure of a leader may well be his or her capacity to understand and work successfully with change – to stimulate it, shape it, nurture it, guide it, manage it, revise it, and keep the change journey going." (Robbins and Alvy, 2014)

4) Choice of Learning Designs

"A professional shift is taking place in the design, delivery and evaluation of professional learning and development for teachers and leaders....In short, the shift is from an adult-centred to a more student-centred approach ... Creating a school culture of formal and informal student-centred PLD is one of the most important things a leader can do." (Viviane Robinson, 2020).

There are many learning designs for Principals and Vice-Principals in the literature of PLD to choose from and we offer a few suggestions for resources to read that focus on learning designs for educators.

The State of Educators' Professional Learning in Canada and in BC (2016) suggests there is consensus that effective professional learning design is long-term, embedded in one's work context, and incorporates high-quality facilitators. (Executive Summary)

Dr. Linda Kaser and Dr. Judy Halbert outline their powerful learning design in the book *Spirals of Inquiry* (2016).

Reduce Change to Increase Improvement by Viviane Robinson (2018) provides a design for how to move schools through an improvement process.

Michael Fullan and Joanna Quinn outline their learning design in the book *Deep Learning* (2018).

Lois Brown Easton offers 24 designs succinctly outlined in third edition of the book *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (third edition, 2015). The book outlines learning designs such as: action research, instructional rounds, lesson study and classroom walk-throughs.

Jenni Donohoo reminds us of the powerful impact that "believing as one" can have on students in her book *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning* (2016)

The design should fit the unique context and learning culture of the school and often requires the adaptation of one or several published designs.

Effective professional learning and development opportunities, designed by Principals and Vice-Principals, should create and support the conditions to help teachers learn more about effective instructional strategies. Staff must be given the opportunity to design, apply, adapt and assess the success of new strategies in their particular setting, with a focus on evidence of impact of how these strategies improve student learning and outcomes. John Hattie (2012) has measured the impact of many important factors that predict and influence student learning in his book *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. Awareness of the findings of Hattie's research can further help Principals and Vice-Principals create a PLD learning opportunity that develops the learning culture of the school.

Professional learning and development is a process. It requires continuous inquiry into the purpose of a program, the implementation of a program, and the ability to monitor progress and make adjustments to the purpose, context, content, and processes. The four key elements outlined in this article are suggestions to consider as one embarks on designing professional learning and development opportunities for the school community one serves.

“The habits that produce significant change in teaching and learning begin with what leaders think, say and do.”
(Dennis Sparks)

“If quality teaching is to occur in every classroom, all teachers must be supported in turn by skillful Principals and Vice-Principals who work in systems that support their sustained development as instructional leaders.”
(Linda Darling-Hammond)



Learning ... TO GO!

TEXT RENDERING EXPERIENCE

The purpose of this exercise is to collaboratively construct meaning and clarity, and to expand our thinking about a text or document.

Roles

1. A facilitator to guide the process
2. A scribe to track the phrases and words that are shared

Set-up

Take a few moments to review the document and mark a sentence, a phrase, and a word that you think are particularly important for our work.

Steps

1. First Round: Each person shares a **sentence** from the document that they think or feel is particularly significant.
2. Second Round: Each person shares a **phrase** that they think or feel is particularly significant. The scribe records each phrase.
3. Third Round: Each person shares the **word** that they think or feel is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.
4. The group discusses what they heard and what it says about the document or text.
5. The group shares the words that emerged and any new insights about the document.
6. The group debriefs the text rendering process.

So, You Want to be a Vice-Principal?

I arrived at the school office on my first day in my new role as a Vice-Principal, and was met by the Senior Office Assistant. “Now,” she said, “You know that you will have to be much ‘tougher’ in this role.”



by
Jessica Antosz & Elizabeth Bell
*Directors, Professional Learning &
Development, BCPVPA*

Coming from a counselling position in the high school, and following a Vice-Principal whose nickname was *The Terminator 2*, I guess there was some concern that the necessary discipline for students may be in question with me in the role.

Yes, this was the late 90s, and I suspect the perception of the job of a Vice-Principal was somewhat different than today, but it caught me off guard nonetheless. While I understood that the relationship that I was to have with students would be slightly different as a Vice-Principal, I didn't then – and I still don't now – believe that the role required me to be 'tougher' than I was as a counsellor. Compassionate, empathic and 'firm but fair' made sense to me. As it turns out, it meant the same to my predecessor.

What became quite clear to me in the first weeks, months and year in the role was that prior to stepping into those shoes, I didn't know exactly what a secondary school Vice-Principal did each day. As a teacher, I was aware of some of the actions of the administrative team: of fulfilling the support that I needed with a student, of organizing fire drills and assemblies, of arranging the staff meetings we attended. But I didn't know the 'behind-the-scenes' intricacies.

As a counsellor, I worked closely with the administrative team and had a sense of the depth of support the Vice-Principals provided for staff, students, and families. I became more aware of the inner workings and complexities of constructing a timetable that worked for both students and teachers. But still, I didn't know exactly what each day would present, or that each day never looked the same. And I certainly didn't understand how leadership was actually an extension of my love for teaching, or fully grasp the lack of boundaries to time, effort and concern that lay ahead.

I'm not sure we can ever truly know the role of another until we have walked in their shoes. As such, there is an element of systemic trust required that allows us to rely on the expertise that each member of the team brings to the table, without knowing the complexities of their work. For the most part, this was my experience through the various roles that I have held in my career as an educator, and I believe that trust and reliance keeps us all supporting students and families in the world-class manner that we do in BC.

That said, there is value in some deeper advance knowledge when considering the life changes that come with shifting roles within the education

system. Consideration of the move to a leadership role – as a school Vice-Principal and possibly, later, a Principal – is a natural progression to some, and to others it comes through invitation and encouragement by current leaders. There are real, imagined, and false perceptions of what the role entails. There are assumptions made about the level of energy

required, and the level of impact that can be had. And there are important personal questions to be asked about the potential shifts and challenges to your family and professional life.

The BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association supports Vice-Principals and Principals at every stage of their careers, and we now plan to provide some insight to educators on the brink of making the move to school leader. **Essentials for Aspiring School Leaders (EASL)**, will be piloted in Spring 2021, reaching teachers who are interested in school leadership and curious about the underpinnings of the role.

Over four three-hour weekend sessions, participants will be introduced to the four domains

What became quite clear to me in the first weeks, months and year in the role was that prior to stepping into the shoes, I didn't know exactly what a secondary school Vice-Principal did each day.

Current Vice-Principals Share Their Thoughts

...

What did you expect, and
what do you know now?

"I expected more instructional leadership, less administrative functions. I have learned that instructional leadership is best delivered from a teacher's perspective, and that admin must understand it to stay relevant and build connections with staff."

"I thought I would be working more with teachers and students in the classroom – the instructional leadership – but now I know that I need to schedule that in, and that it will only be a small portion of my time in a week."

What was your 'ah-hah' moment
as you began the role?

"This job is very important. I was always interested in leading, but had not considered the importance of the administrative role in a school and its impact on the school community."

"There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that you will be doing – that you have never done before – in order to provide an environment for learning and teaching. You will be a life-long learner in this role."

What do you wish you knew
about the role before you started?

"You will feel like you know nothing for at least a few years in this role, and that is normal!"

"Your relationship with teachers and staff will change, and your support system will become other administrators (*who are amazing!*)"

of the BCPVPA Leadership Standards: Ethical Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Relational Leadership and Organizational Leadership. In each of these domains, participants will explore theoretical considerations, and be introduced to practical tasks and the implications for learning. They will learn how the necessary work of running a school requires leadership, and how the impact of the seemingly mundane is immeasurable in setting the conditions for learning.

Some may take this program prior to investing in a master's program, or perhaps in concert with leadership programs in their own district. Some may take it to solidify their interest in – and commitment to – this career path.

The virtually delivered program will be interactive, and small group discussions will be facilitated by practicing Vice-Principals.

The intent is to present in a clear and honest way the inspirational work that one can expect in the role of a Vice-Principal. For the BCPVPA,

it is part of our vision to offer support to the next generation of school leaders.

The pilot program of EASL is designed in collaboration with the BCPVPA and our members from across the province, with input from the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) and representation from the UBC Faculty of Education. It is intended to augment the many successful leadership programs that exist in some school districts, and to support a need in other districts.

Educators are learners, teachers, and leaders. Many teachers learn by example, and pursue a leadership role based on the encouragement of others; as current Vice-Principals and Principals,

we can inspire colleagues to consider advancement to leadership roles. *Remember looking around the desk for the Vice-Principal Handbook on your first day and not finding it?* Consider sharing this opportunity with those members of your staff who may be ready to explore a budding passion for leadership.

There is value in some deeper advance knowledge when considering the life changes that come with shifting roles within the education system.



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Voices

Are You an Educational

Leader



Or an Institution

Manager?

by
Peter Scott, MEd
SD 51

Have you ever felt more like a manager of your school than the educational leader? The answer can depend on a multitude of elements, many of which are in your control.

Some teachers manage like prison guards, whereas others teach, inspire, and foster learning in their classroom. Administrators can wear the same guise; they can be wardens of their institution or they can be leaders that nurture capacity and academic achievement, and encourage collaboration in all of their stakeholders. As an administrator, I strive to be the latter. I believe most others would feel the same way, as administrators take on this increasingly challenging role to foster positive change in their school. If this is true, why do so many administrators struggle with this transition from warden to leader? It may be because many can learn to manage, but not everyone is willing to learn to lead.

An administrator's role is complex and diverse; being a catalyst of change where you are seen as 'leading' and not simply 'managing' takes dedication, perseverance, and skill. Sullivan and Glanz advocate that, "transforming schools is easily done if superficially, such change, however, is ephemeral".¹ Lasting change takes time: move too fast and you will experience overt – or worse covert – resentment that results in lower buy-in. Move too slowly, and staff may lose focus, and lose sight of the school vision.

There are techniques that can foster a transformational process through which school managers can become school leaders. This transition is no simple task, especially when you factor in the school climate or culture that you are currently working in, or that you may be joining. One of the first things to consider in your transition is communication.

1 *Supervision That Improves Teaching and Learning* by Susan Sullivan and Jeffery Glanz California 2013 Corwin Press, p. 172

Communication is a skill which needs to be learned, contemplated, and practiced. In my experience, the best form of communication comes through a democratic leadership model where the focus is on reciprocal communication. This means creating a culture in the school where everyone feels they have a voice, and conversations between all staff are acknowledged and actively heard. Having this culture in your school will encourage staff to feel safe and to take risks when trying or proposing new ideas that will improve the learning environment. I have found that this can be accomplished by modeling vulnerability (taking risks by thinking outside the box), seeking out staff opinions, and not being afraid to acknowledge that you are wrong. It's through this process that a collective and collaborative voice can be established, while providing a school leader the opportunity to truly lead rather than informing from a top-down position.

*Communication is a skill
which needs to be learned,
contemplated, and practiced.*

Linked with the idea that communication is fundamental to leading is the concept of presence.

Presence is key to being a leader. There are too many times that I have seen managers isolate themselves in their office, and you can't lead behind a closed door. To be a leader, you need to be on the front line supporting, problem-solving, and listening to the needs of your staff in a transparent manner. You need to practice what you preach, be present, be proactive, and be available as we implement and model democratic leadership.

Regardless of who you are talking to, in order to attain and maintain consistent buy-in and trust from staff, you need to listen. This is critical to leading staff, rather than managing them. And listening means active listening, not just with

Presence is key to being a leader.

*There are too many times that I have
seen managers isolate themselves
in their office, and you can't lead
behind a closed door.*

your ears but through body language and active engagement in two-way relational communication. You need to listen without preconceived notions of what you will hear, and to let the staff member you are speaking with finish before you jump in. Be mindful of your body language, since much of what is said doesn't come from what we say. By being an active participant and making time for dialogue – whether or not you can assist or solve the issue in that moment – you begin or continue to foster a relationship with that individual.

As with students, the key component to working with and leading staff is an authentic relationship. The reality is that you can't lead unless others choose to follow. It's the foundation that distinguishes a leader from a manager. Without a relational partnership, it will be difficult to garner respect, and continued growth in your school will be challenging, if not impossible. Dunklee mirrors this view saying that “effective Principals use careful listening to gain direct access to their followers’ most pressing concerns”² and by doing so, it increases the likelihood that your staff will support your desire to lead the school into a stronger future together. Active listening helps to build a relationship that allows you to extend beyond the walls of management, and affect change.

2 *If You Want to Lead, Not Just Manage: A Primer for Principals* by Dennis R. Dunklee California 2000 Corwin Press. p. 73

There is one more component needed to free yourself from the shackles of being a school manager, and moving to become a school leader. Managers transform into leaders when they not only actively listen, but when they take an interest in their staff's teaching methodology. In this way, they can learn more about those people and their skills. This enables teachers to pursue their own passions within the school, creating the capacity for a multitude of school initiatives that may not otherwise have developed. It empowers staff, giving them a sense of ownership and pride in their workplace. It also increases the likelihood for future engagement with initiatives the administrator has in mind. A supportive culture is formed, and the school becomes a place where learning occurs on many levels without any one person burning out. Active listening naturally allows for trust and a shared vision to materialize and flourish. It can also open up team-teaching opportunities, where mutual respect can grow and best practices for students can be achieved.

I hope that these strategies will aid in creating a positive school culture where you are seen as the leader and not just the manager. It's important to note that when you incorporate any of these strategies – or others not mentioned here – that you do so with purpose. Leading with purpose ensures that your daily tasks – walkthroughs, stakeholder conversations, modeling – will have a positive impact. Whether the impact is small or large, purposeful leading will eventually promote your desired outcome. It will build capacity within your staff, and remind them to also be purposeful in their actions.

Becoming the leader of your school is different from being the administrator who manages it. Through communication and active listening – all in a purposeful manner – you will achieve an outcome where all stakeholders will benefit and thrive.

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As a school leader who has now completed 27 years as an administrator in the Kamloops/Thompson school district, I am feeling the need to share some of my experiences with colleagues who are either just embarking on their own careers as Vice-Principals and Principals, or those who have been in the business for some time and may find some delight or refreshment in reading a number of stories that have never been told before. Yes: *I'm writing a book!*

The purpose of my book is to share some of the lessons I have learned along the way through informal stories taken from my stops at nine different schools along the way. The book will be organized by three central themes which underline

my own philosophy of school leadership. School leaders:

1. **Influence** their community
2. **Intercept** entropy
3. **Invigorate** their followers

Everything we do fits into at least one of those categories. When we can personally identify our own mission as leaders, we have something to 'hang our hats on' each day that we take on the immense and awesome challenge of leading our schools!

Here's a chapter from my upcoming book:

Chapter: Balancing the Odds Of Life

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant once wrote, "Heaven has given human beings three things to balance the odds of life: hope, sleep, and laughter." As I reflect on Kant's words, I must say I agree with him wholeheartedly, but I wonder if sleep should come before hope and laughter, especially when it comes to being a school Principal. It is very difficult to lead with any sense of confidence when one has not had enough sleep to refuel his energy tank. You must keep your wits about you, and be ready to wholeheartedly invest in the myriad of unexpected problems that are bound to surface at any given moment. There is no such thing as coasting through your day when you are a school leader.

That is why I make sure that I am in bed as close to 9:00 pm as possible every school night. My days start early at 5:00 am, and I need that quiet time in

the morning to prepare my mind, body, and spirit for the challenges of the day ahead. If I can arrive at school by 7:45, I have time to make notes for my morning announcements and connect with my staff, even if it's just quickly popping my head into their classroom to say good morning. I want to be sure to set a good tone for everyone by my positive, welcoming presence and attitude in the morning, and that is very challenging to accomplish without a good night's sleep under my belt.

One of the best ways to ensure that I get a good sleep is to stay away from reading any school district emails after I get home. There is nothing worse than opening up an email from a distraught staff member or concerned parent at 8:30 pm. Suddenly, I go from peacefully winding down my day to anxiety, and steep myself in worries about how I will handle the problems of tomorrow. The

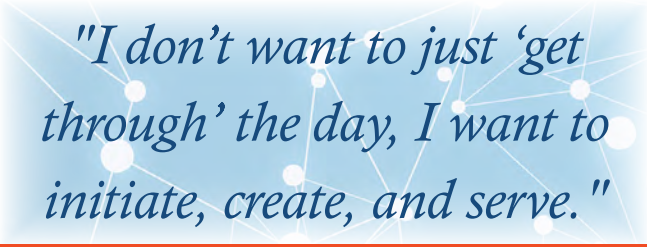


HOPE

by
Anthony Rempel
Principal, SD 73

truth is those problems will be there whether I read the email or not, and often they will resolve themselves before I even respond. Many a good night's sleep has been sabotaged by a last-minute email check: resist the temptation. I can count on one hand the number of district emails I received over the past year that would have brought joy to my heart at bedtime!

So, I set my boundaries, and communicate them to my team members. I let them know that evening emails will be check in the morning, and to phone me for an emergency. My intention is not to be selfish: establishing boundaries around my personal time is motivated by my desire to do my work wholeheartedly. To do that, I have to be refreshed so that I can be present and engaged during my work hours. I don't want to just 'get through' the day, I want to initiate, create, and serve. Preserving my off hours and sleeping soundly positions me to be that kind of leader!



"I don't want to just 'get through' the day, I want to initiate, create, and serve."

I write these words during a time when the world is facing fear and uncertainty in the midst of a global pandemic. I suspect that many people have lost hope as they slog through life, with so many of the pleasures and routines they have come to count on taken from them. We keep hearing about a 'new normal' and witnessing chaos and despair on the news each evening. Life was challenging enough without these present circumstances, and I am not immune to the effects of these catastrophic events even though I have not experienced the devastating effects many others have. Losing a sense of hope is a constant danger, and it would be easy to give in to the attitude that there is nothing to look forward to anymore.

Here I will skip back to the first of Kant's balancing elements, that of hope. He wrote that hope is one of the three things that balances the odds of life, and I ask myself this question each day: how can I as a school leader instill a sense of hope in the children and adults who comprise the fabric of my school community? The author of the Biblical book of Proverbs wrote that "Good-tempered leaders invigorate lives; they're like spring rain and sunshine." (Proverbs 16:15). If I had to choose a single statement to describe my primary mission as a school leader, I would embrace this verse: I am going to invigorate lives!

Everyone needs a mission statement to 'hang their hat on', one that forms the foundation of each decision and action – large and small. 20th Century French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin made this observation: "Do not forget that the value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things ... as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value."

A typical day as a school leader is comprised of countless such 'ordinary' or mundane moments. Our days are filled responding to emails, signing cheques, unlocking doors, and engaging in spontaneous conversations. I believe there is no such thing as an insignificant moment, or a second that does not matter. It is the amalgamation of those moments that tell the story of the kind of leader I hope to be, and the true impact and influence that I hope to have. Are we effectively leading in those moments which could be viewed as mundane? I believe we are, when we:

- Greeting staff members in the morning
- Making eye contact and smiling at individuals in the hallway
- Picking up bits of trash on the ground
- Helping someone solve a problem now, rather than waiting until later
- Showing a willingness to be interrupted

- Visiting several classrooms a day, listening, observing, and participating
- Returning phone calls the same day
- Responding to email messages
- Thanking people
- Recognizing the efforts of others, privately and sometimes publicly
- Sharing encouraging words
- Standing outside after school to wish students farewell
- Sitting down in the staff room and joining conversations
- Washing other peoples' dishes
- Being present when others are speaking
- Playing with children
- Having as many moments of mutual laughter as possible

"I believe there is no such thing as an insignificant moment, or a second that does not matter."

And that brings us to Kant's third and final element, laughter. One definition of the word is 'the sound of mirth or joy'. It is a sound that almost always brings light to its surroundings, an irresistible force of positivity that draws people in. I am not much of a joke teller, but I tend to see the humorous side of things (which is nearly always lurking just beneath the surface when children are around). I currently have one staff member whose laugh is so infectious, I can't help but chuckle whenever I hear it, even if I don't know what prompted it. Laughter invariably makes us smile.

Some of us come naturally by a sense of humour: in my case, it was growing up with a mother who



embraced silliness. While she is no longer around, the sound of her laughter is forever engrained in my memory, and the thought of it even now makes me smile. I continue her tradition by bringing up the silly side of things. One of my favourite ways to respond to a situation at school is by saying, "That reminds me of a song..." It's amazing how simply letting loose and belting out the first line of a familiar tune will shift the energy of the space around you!

We can also encourage laughter in our schools by surprising or shocking people. Perhaps because of my role as a Principal, people expect me to be serious and business-like. And I am, as required. So, when someone asks for the school phone number and I reply with a straight face, "867-5309", the reaction can be priceless (at least, for those old enough to remember Tommy Tutone's 1981 hit single). Or, if I announce at a staff meeting that the school board has decided to install a driving

range on our roof to raise funds for an addition to our building, or use a foreign accent when doing announcements over the P.A. system in the morning, it can break the ice. I find that not taking myself too seriously, being ready with a smile and a laugh and allowing an opening for lightheartedness, can make all the difference.

I can hear Louis Armstrong's voice, those timeless lyrics a reminder that my smile and my laughter is needed now more than ever before:

"When you're smiling, when you're smiling

The whole world smiles with you

When you're laughing, when you're laughing

The sun comes shining through"

Louis Armstrong and Immanuel Kant both were on to something: keep life in balance and maintain perspective with a daily dose of hope and laughter, always preceded by a good night's sleep, of course!

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The BCPVPA is fortunate to have a dedicated group of lawyers from **DLA Piper** who work collaboratively with our Directors to ensure that they have the most current legal advice, and can help members to navigate a variety of challenging situations.

We are delighted to introduce the DLA Piper legal team, who we consider to be part of *our* team.



Kate Bake-Paterson

Kate leads DLA Piper Canada's practice in the areas of charity and non-profit law.



Kate was born and raised in Vancouver, but wanted to experience life on the other side of Canada so she went to Dalhousie Law School. Upon returning to Vancouver, she started working for DLA Piper Canada (then Davis & Company) and has been a lawyer at the firm since 2004.

Kate regularly advises charities and non-profit organizations on a variety of regulatory, governance, corporate and charitable gifting matters as well as other issues arising in their day-to-day operations. She spends a lot of time assisting BC societies with their bylaws and has become very familiar with the *B.C. Societies Act* since its introduction in 2016. Kate actually began her law practice as a corporate/commercial transactional lawyer but soon saw the light and her practice has since evolved to focus exclusively on the charity/non-profit sector.

Kate is involved with various professional organizations in this sector and co-founded the Charities and Non-Profit Law Section of the Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch. She is a frequent speaker on topics of interest to charities and non-profit organizations.

Kate assists the BCPVPA with corporate matters arising under the Societies Act, including the BCPVPA's transition to the *Societies Act* and the ongoing review and revision of its bylaws, as well as various other governance matters.

When she's not working, Kate is kept busy by her two kids, her two cats and her husband (who happens to be a DLA lawyer as well). She spends much of her time outside and is happiest in the mountains — skiing during the winter and doing her best to keep up with her kids on a mountain bike during the summer — or curled up with a good book.

Dana Hooker

Dana works with DLA Piper Canada's Employment Group advising and representing clients, including the BCPVPA, with respect to all aspects of the workplace.

Dana regularly advises clients regarding the preparation of employment agreements, workplace policies, occupational health and safety and workers compensation, human rights, employee privacy and access to information requests, performance management and investigations, layoffs and terminations.

Dana is an advocate of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and beyond, and plays an important role in supporting DLA Piper Canada's diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Before settling on the legal profession, Dana dabbled in sciences working as a lab technician in the biotechnology sector. However, Dana soon recognized that the law was her true calling after she set a fume hood on fire.

When Dana can tear herself away from reading the latest judicial pronouncements, she spends time with her husband and two young daughters, and tries not to resent her teacher-husband during his summers off.

Dana is happiest with a yoga mat, pair of gardening shears, or small hand in hers. After living in Japan for three years Dana is proficient at speaking just enough Japanese to be able to tell secrets to

her husband when her kids are within earshot. Unfortunately, Dana's French is not good enough to understand her children when they do the same.



Tamara Hunter

A former Supreme Court of Canada law clerk, Tammy leads DLA Piper Canada's Privacy, Data Protection and Security practice.



She has many years of experience advising and representing clients, including the BCPVPA, on privacy, data protection and security and on access to information matters.

Tammy has extensive experience advising on privacy compliance issues, anti-spam law compliance, information security breaches, privacy impact assessments and has conducted numerous proactive privacy reviews and audits, and has developed and provided information security breach plans, breach reports to privacy regulators, as well as privacy training.

Tammy has represented numerous organizations before Canadian privacy regulators, including the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Alberta and the Federal Office of the Information Commissioner. Tamara has represented organizations in litigation related to privacy and data protection issues before the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the British Columbia Court of Appeal and the Federal Court of Canada.

Tammy is the President of Fraserside Community Services Society — a multi-service agency that supports people needing housing, seeking work, and/or living with developmental disabilities, mental health or substance use issues. Tammy is also a member of P.E.O., a society which raises money for women's educational scholarships, loans and grants, and is a former Chair of the BC Law Foundation.

When she is not practicing law, Tammy enjoys yoga, gardening, reading fiction, amateur fiction writing, working on her rural property in Hope, B.C. and watching classic movies.

Allen Soltan

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



Between 2012 and 2015, Allen served as the Head of the Firm's Vancouver Litigation and Dispute Resolution Department. Since 2015, he has served as the Co-Chair of the National Employment Group represented at the Firm's five offices across Canada.

After earning degrees in Honours Business and Law from UBC, Allen earned an LL.M. degree from Columbia Law School, and has since then undertaken extensive training in negotiation and mediation at Harvard Law School. Allen is called to the Bars of British Columbia and the Yukon, has spent his entire career with DLA Piper Canada, and is now in his fourth decade of practice.

Allen has been repeatedly recognized as leading counsel by "Best Lawyers in Canada" in the fields of Administrative and Public Law (2015 - 2021) and Alternative Dispute Resolution (2017 - 2021), and by "Chambers Canada" (2018 - 2021) and "Legal 500 Canada" (2016 - 2021) in the field of Employment and Labour Law .

Allen has regularly appeared as counsel in employment, education, administrative, and labour relations disputes, human rights cases, and on judicial review of administrative decisions. He has appeared as counsel before the Court of Appeal on appeals involving judicial review, employment law, commercial arbitration, and labour arbitration.

Allen has also lectured and spoken widely on various workplace law topics, including at the UBC Sauder School of Business and meetings of various professional regulatory bodies and professional associations, as well as at the UBC National Centre for Business Law. He has presented papers at Continuing Legal Education Society of BC seminars

on human rights litigation, employment law issues, and the effect of criminal prosecutions on the employment relationship. In conjunction with Prof. Joe Weiler of UBC Law School, Allen prepared a comprehensive Canada-US comparative analysis of workplace wellness programs for the BC Law Foundation.

Between 2004 and 2016, Allen was a Director of the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference, and between 2010 and 2018, he served with other senior business leaders on the Advisory Board of the UBC Sauder School of Business.

Allen is a former Director of the Vancouver Bar Association, and sits on the Editorial Board of the *Education Law Reporter*.

Allen holds a black belt in Tai Kwon Do, loves watching international rugby, and enjoys playing squash, golf and tennis. He coached children's hockey for 10 years, and also dabbled in coaching children's soccer and baseball. He hung up his skates from beer league hockey about three years ago because of all the aches and pains involved.

Allen is married with two grown sons. These three members of his family have always been the most important people in his life.

Allen has been involved with the BCPVPA's legal work right from the beginning, since January, 1987 (the BCPVPA was incorporated as a society on July 14, 1987). Allen trained under and was mentored by Frank Borowicz, QC, a preeminent counsel and former distinguished litigation partner of DLA Piper Canada.

Allen has enjoyed travelling the province giving advice and representation to the BCPVPA. Allen is extremely proud of his long-standing relationship with the BCPVPA and also proud of the exceptional legal team that regularly assists the BCPVPA and its members.

All of us remain at the ready to assist the BCPVPA and its members in any way we can, 24/7.

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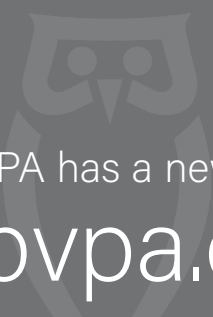
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This wordless children's book has beautiful imagery and the potential to create many imaginative storylines. It empowers children to tell their own stories and explore the meaning of their own experiences of loss. The book includes helpful tips, questions, and activities to support parents and caregivers as they help children navigate their way through loss.

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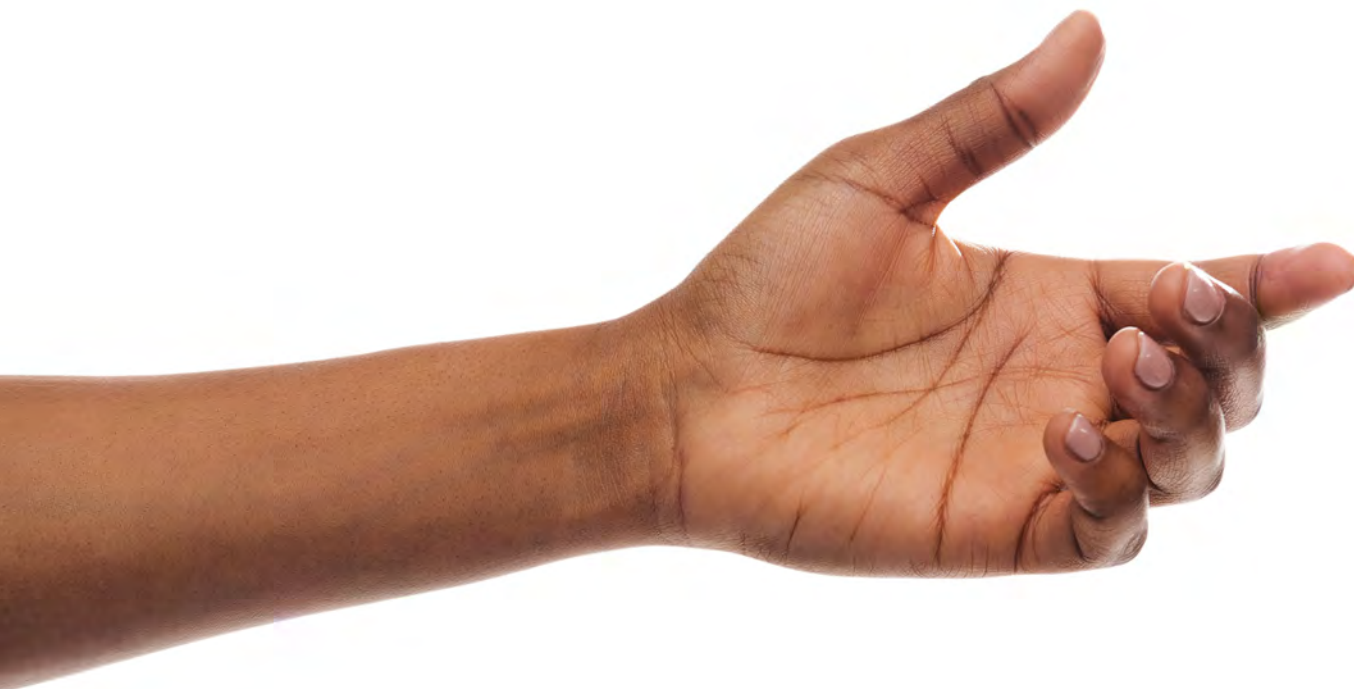
The BCPVPA has a new website!

bcpvpa.org



What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore – And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over – like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

– Langston Hughes



by

Beth Applewhite

*District Vice-Principal of Equity,
Diversity and Inclusion, SD 41*

A Professional Dream Deferred

Racism hurts.

Racism sometimes stings, sometimes bites and, too often, cuts deep. Racism crushes dreams, destroys hopes, and slaughters spirits. I do not know this from reading books or watching webinars. I know this from lived experience – personally and professionally.

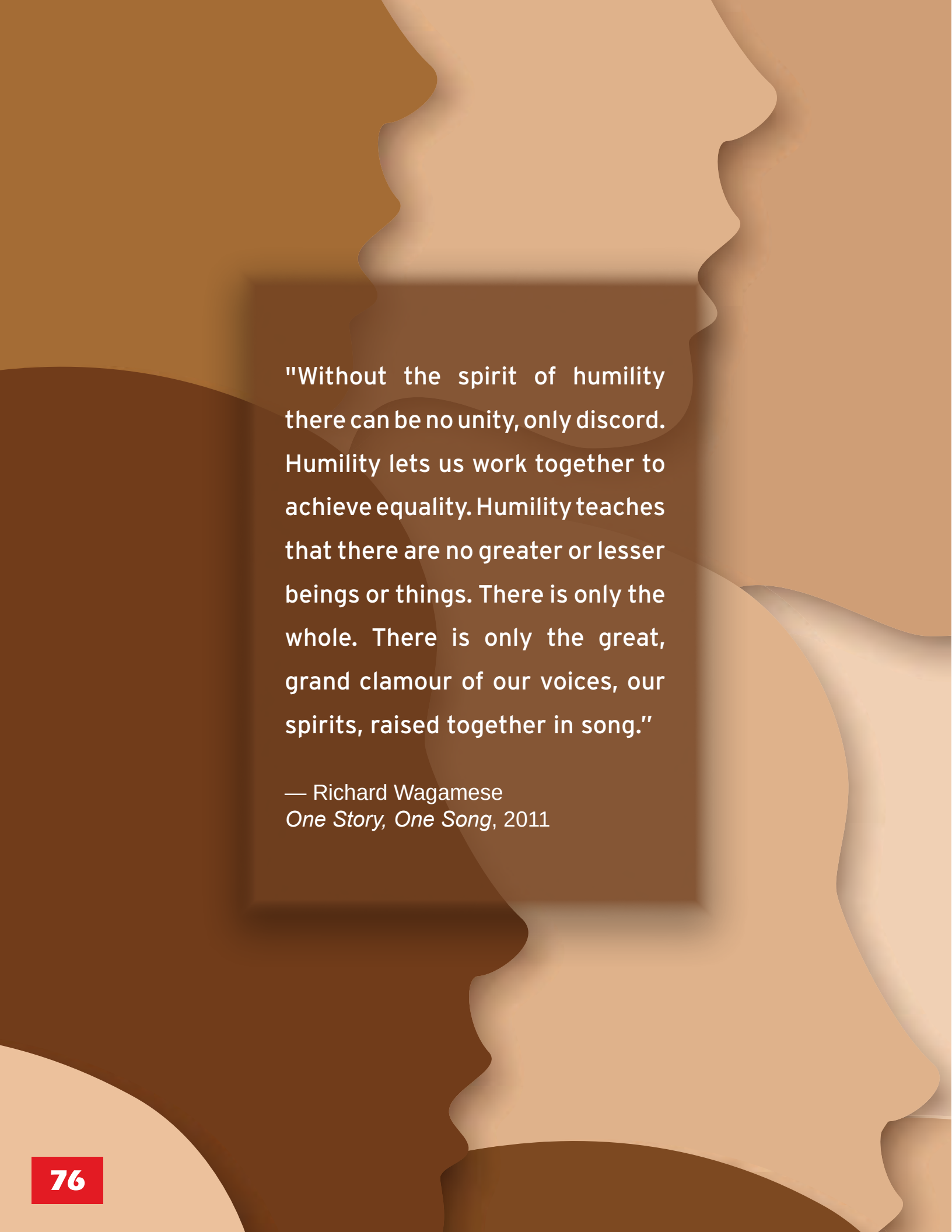
I started my Anti-Racist journey young. From standing up against racism on gravel and grass fields to asking tough questions in classrooms, from calling out prejudice on playgrounds to pointing out the erasure of Black History in Socials class, I have carefully spoken up against racial discrimination since grade school. If a nine-year-old bi-racial Black child in a predominantly white school can muster up the courage to face racial injustice, the reluctant leaders of present-day school communities most certainly can; in fact, they must.

I am aware that my opening comments will inspire some, and annoy or scare others. That has been – and continues to be – the paradoxical nature of my professional life. Often celebrated for exposing systemic racism in our education system, yet equally criticized for not hitting hard enough. Though I have been consciously doing Anti-Racism work since 2006 when I first read Canadian scholar George J. Sefa Dei's work *Anti-Racism Education: Theory & Practice* (1996), I am not an Anti-Racism expert. Those who have been reading and learning about Anti-Racism know that the journey is never ending. I will never be done as my learning and growth will never be complete. I have been a student, a student-teacher, a teacher, a school administrator, and I am now a District Vice-Principal in the BC public school system. As a student in B.C. public schools, I had to find and create opportunities to bring my cultural heritages into the classroom. As a teacher, I had to search for and create units and lessons (initially, without the benefit of Google) that

were more culturally inclusive, and to learn how to create safe spaces for discussions about racism, stereotypes, and discrimination. As a school-based administrator, I have had to pick and choose very carefully when to highlight inequities in policy and practice at the school and district levels. Such work has been risky, and often does not endear one to their colleagues. Yet now, as a District Vice-Principal of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, this has specifically become my work. *Somebody pinch me!*

I have dreamt of doing Anti-Racism work in a recognized position for years. I once considered leaving a Vice-Principalship for an Anti-Racism teacher-lead position. I was encouraged to move to Ontario where work in Anti-Racism education had started in schools. Tempting, but I never wanted to leave British Columbia.

Sadly, it took modern-day lynchings and a racial reckoning for many privileged folks to open their eyes to the reality of racial inequities in Canada, in our province, and in our school system. I know and recognize the suffering and sacrifices that have led to recent opportunities to fight against oppression in school districts. It is the reality of that pain and loss that inspires me to move colleagues from awareness and concern, to action, and eventually to transformation. I do not share this in order to shame or blame, but rather to reveal. I do not believe valuable learning and growth come from shame and guilt. In fact, it is my experience that shame shuts most folks down. I centre this work in the *Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being*, the wisdom of the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*, and the generosity of cultural humility (Dr. Evan Adams – First Nations Health Authority) which all teach us to suspend judgement and express compassion. Indigenous colleagues have taught me to always try to remain humble — not just state that I am humble but to sincerely sit with humility:



"Without the spirit of humility
there can be no unity, only discord.
Humility lets us work together to
achieve equality. Humility teaches
that there are no greater or lesser
beings or things. There is only the
whole. There is only the great,
grand clamour of our voices, our
spirits, raised together in song."

— Richard Wagamese
One Story, One Song, 2011

"Without the spirit of humility there can be no unity, only discord. Humility lets us work together to achieve equality. Humility teaches that there are no greater or lesser beings or things. There is only the whole. There is only the great, grand clamour of our voices, our spirits, raised together in song."

Richard Wagamese
One Story, One Song, 2011

This is especially important when listening to racialized folks who are bravely willing to share their lived experiences. Humility is also essential when working with white folks on issues of implicit bias, privilege, and power – providing a safe space for people to 'try things on', to accept new perspectives, and to learn and grow without judgement. I also ground my work in the Maasai traditional greeting "*Casserian Njera*" which, translated from the Maa language, means "*How are the children?*" Maasai warriors in Kenya and northern Uganda constantly ask and answer this question. "It is always on their minds, in their hearts, and floating in the air." (Fania E. Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice*, 2019) I try my best to keep students at the centre of this work because, as educational leaders, we are responsible for our society's most vulnerable and defenseless. Whenever the grown-ups become tangled up in 'race or oppression Olympics' – competitions about whose genocide is worse, and who has it worse, or in arguments about racism being harsher back East and in the U.S. than here in B.C. – I choose to avoid the discourse as it especially pits racialized groups against each other. Instead, I focus on improving the lives of all students and their families. When folks become stuck in opinions and egos, we can usually find common ground in our motivation to make all students feel welcome, heard and included.

I am so fortunate to have worked in three B.C. school districts, and to be able to continue to work with and support a few districts in the Lower Mainland. This work has definitively shown me that despite some cultural differences, there are many commonalities in the concerns, fears, and hopes of administrators when it comes to dealing with racism in school communities. My bi-racial heritage provides me with a special ability to walk in two worlds, and to be more aware of the invisible cultures in which I move. It allows me to recognize common human struggles and joys. Having worked in a number of districts, I have seen how similar our values, experiences, fears, hopes and reactions are despite the geographical, cultural, and socio-economic differences of our school communities. Because of this, I know, without question, that there is no valid excuse for *not* acting against racism. School leaders can no longer project their own fears onto racialized students and families, claiming that such discussions and school or district initiatives would prove too upsetting, disruptive, or contentious.

When folks become stuck in opinions and egos, we can usually find common ground in our motivation to make all students feel welcome, heard and included.

The dangers of leaders within the education system not recognizing the importance of Anti-Racism work – or diluting it by merely giving it lip service – include the disengagement of racialized students and their families, increased feelings of mistrust, and the loss of a powerful opportunity to work toward healing, and toward truth and reconciliation. School and district leaders' fears of engaging in

Anti-Racism work are real and legitimate. However, we can no longer hide behind our anxieties.

If you are a leader who is reluctant to take action because you fear the critiques of social justice activists in your school community, or a leader who avoids taking risks because you are afraid of making a mistake, saying the wrong things, and letting your own bias show, then it is time to stop evading. Your silence and inaction are harming students and families with much more severity than if you messed up while trying to act. In trying and in failing, there are opportunities to learn and grow. While trying, there are opportunities to reach out to racialized students, to their families and to your critics for support and collaboration. Such relationship building can be powerful, and is often transformative. I admit there are many ways that tackling issues of race can get us publicly denounced. We must do this work with care, while remaining mindful of process. No one wants to be the villain in the next horror story on the news about racism in schools. It can be unnerving in a world where intentions no longer matter, where asking *“How can I help?”* may get you in hot water. However, our reasons for engaging in Anti-Racism work cannot simply be to avoid bad publicity and vulnerability. Such motivation makes the work disingenuous and hollow.

Recent events of racial injustice have become a part of our collective conscience. There is much media attention right now, but it comes and goes. The media cannot be that spark that incites us to take action; the impetus must be the well-being of our students, families, staff, and colleagues. There is no time for performance art. We cannot disrupt the dominant culture with tokenistic attempts at education reform. Staff, students and families are acutely aware of the hostile racial climates that exist in many schools, and they are firm in their resolve to transform the education system.

The media cannot be that spark that incites us to take action: the impetus must be the well-being of our students, families, staff, and colleagues.

School leaders need to stop being reactive. They need to proactively challenge staff around deficit-based thinking about racialized students, and make it clear that there is zero tolerance for differential treatment based on race, racially demeaning comments, race-based jokes, the use of the n-word, and other racial slurs. School and district leaders do not earn the trust of racialized folks when they appropriately react to public displays of racial discrimination and hatred, such as racist slurs spray-painted across the wall of a school building. Staff, students and families look more sharply to their administrator’s handling of the day-to-day microaggressions and racist incidents that students experience in classrooms, in the hallways and on the playgrounds. When *that* work is grounded in Anti-Racism, administrators will build stronger, more trusting relationships. When it comes to complaints, leaders must listen: not to judge, not to respond, but to believe, to validate and – most importantly – to act. Leaders must also constantly probe their own actions for performance, because if they lack authenticity, they will be called out for performative ally-ship. Remember: ‘window dressing’ is insulting. Administrators need to have a pure, authentic, and unapologetic commitment to Anti-Racism work.

The fact that close proximity to whiteness is rewarded in our society is not lost on me. I acknowledge that it comes with privileges and currency. As a light-skinned Bi-racial Black educator, I can attest to this. My experiences are

not the same, and will never be the same, as any other person whose skin marker is Black or Brown. All leaders must be conscious of this. Because of white supremacist culture, racialized folks can also internalize racism and invest in the dominant culture. We all must be aware of our privileges, “not only how we are implicated in, but also how we are complicit in a system that we reap benefits from – and then consciously and continuously divest from it.” (Sefa Dei and Vásquez Jiménez, 2017) My “dream deferred” definitely “sugar[ed] over – like a syrupy sweet”, as I have been afforded so many opportunities to work with remarkable staff, students, families and community groups using Anti-Racist strategies to help students succeed, irrespective of their racial backgrounds. There are no words – to say the journey has been rewarding is exceedingly inadequate. Working toward making several school communities more equitable, and being able to support and validate in those small everyday moments has been such a gift – a gift of growth, perspective, and human connection.

In Burnaby School District #41, incredible work is being done by students, staff, school leaders, district leaders and trustees. Presentations, workshops, clubs, committees, and school initiatives that I used to only dream of seeing have now come to fruition. I am proud to work in a district that is not afraid to say, “*We can do better*”, and which has committed to an Anti-Racism plan that respects and honours the voices and lived experiences of those affected by systemic racism, implicit bias and discrimination. There is much richness and joy in Anti-Racist education, and it warms my heart to see that so many have begun to embrace the journey instead of fear it.

Education spaces are not innocent. They continue to be places of injury, pain, and vulnerability, but they are also places of validation, love, resilience, and freedom. Should you have the luxury of never

having experienced racism, please believe those who have. Recognize it as a systemic problem, but act locally. Do not merely reside in courageous conversations.

Should you have the luxury of never having experienced racism, please believe those who have.

I urge you to use the power and privilege that come with your leadership role to take Anti-Racism action, and “create the schools we are taught to believe are impossible: schools built on justice, love, joy and anti-racism.” (Dr. Bettina Love, *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, 2019) If you cannot, I implore you to get out of the way and allow those who *have* the will to push on with this courageous work. Please do not disparage or impede the Anti-Racist work of your colleagues. Support them. Stop considering Anti-Racism work as an ‘add-on’ or an ‘extra’. Anti-Racism education is good for everyone, not just for racial minorities. This work is not easy: it is messy and uncomfortable. We have seen what the opposition looks like, and what they stand for. We can no longer afford to wait for the right time, a more comfortable time, or a less ‘charged’ time. The time has long come.

“With earnest humility in the face of the heavy lift before us, let us begin.”

— Matthew R. Kay
Not Light, But Fire, 2018

Darren
Danyluk

Magdalena
Kassis

Kevin
Reimer

Rochelle
Morandini

Jessica
Antosz

Elizabeth
Bell

Carol
Powell

Paige
Jung

Sharon
North

How Well Do You Know Your BCPVPA Team ?

Take the Quiz



Emily
Rogness

Don
Boyd

Find the
answers
on the
next
page!

Ellen
Roberts

Sandra
Murphy

Amorie
Kruger

Jennifer
Harfield

Kim
Maxwell

Helen
Tseng

Is our
2020-2022
President



Oversees the
work of the
Association

Provides guidance
and advice on
your LTD claim

Coordinates
the member
database

Works with
Chapter Contract
Committees

Supports the
President &
Executive Director

Is our
wizard of
finance

Heads the
Connecting
Leaders conference

Coordinates
annual student
scholarships

Coordinates your
PLD events &
meetings

Makes sure
that payments
are made

Produces
the weekly
eNews

Supports members
facing complaints &
investigations

Has just retired
following 30 years
with the BCPVPA

Helps members
navigate their
pensions

Is a leader of
professional
learning

Edits
Principl(ed)
Magazine



**Darren
Danyluk**
President



**Kevin
Reimer**
Executive
Director



**Rochelle
Morandini**
Director,
Member Health
& Well-Being



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Director,
Member Support
Services



**Sharon
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Executive
Assistant



**Carol
Powell**
Director,
Finance



**Jessica
Antosz**
Director,
Professional
Learning &
Development



**Emily
Rogness**
Assistant,
Member Support
Services



**Amorie
Kruger**
Assistant,
Professional
Learning &
Development



**Helen
Tseng**
Senior
Accounting
Clerk



**Paige
Jung**
Communications
Assistant



**Magdalena
Kassis**
Director,
Member Support
Services



**Kim
Maxwell**
Reception
Services
retired Feb 2021



**Ellen
Roberts**
Director,
Member Support
Services



**Elizabeth
Bell**
Director,
Professional
Learning &
Development



**Sandra
Murphy**
Director,
Communications

learning

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

(2019 BCPVPA Short Course I Attendee)

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

bcpvpa.org

With Spring just around the corner, we look towards renewal, revival and rejuvenation. Here are three ideas to help invigorate your wellness focus and motivation, with the Winter season soon behind us.

Renewal

Growing

With longer days, temperatures slowly rising and spring buds growing, Spring offers a chance to shake off the winter coats and turn our attention to what can be. Take time to identify what you would like to shed from your day-to-day activities and mindset coming out of Winter. Envision a personal wellness mindset that inspires new intentions and focuses on growth, optimism and movement. Let the Spring season be your launch point for making space for new ways of being and self-care.

Revival

Shifting

Many of us found ourselves sheltering and hibernating through the Winter months, especially this year with the COVID-19 challenges we have all faced. Turn your attention to shifting your diet and physical activity to reflect the lightness that Spring offers. It's time for many of us to put away our Winter comfort menus and turn our attention to food that inspires movement and vitality. Like our change in diet, move away from more sedentary behavior and engage in regular activity outdoors before and after work as the days grow longer again.

Rejuvenation

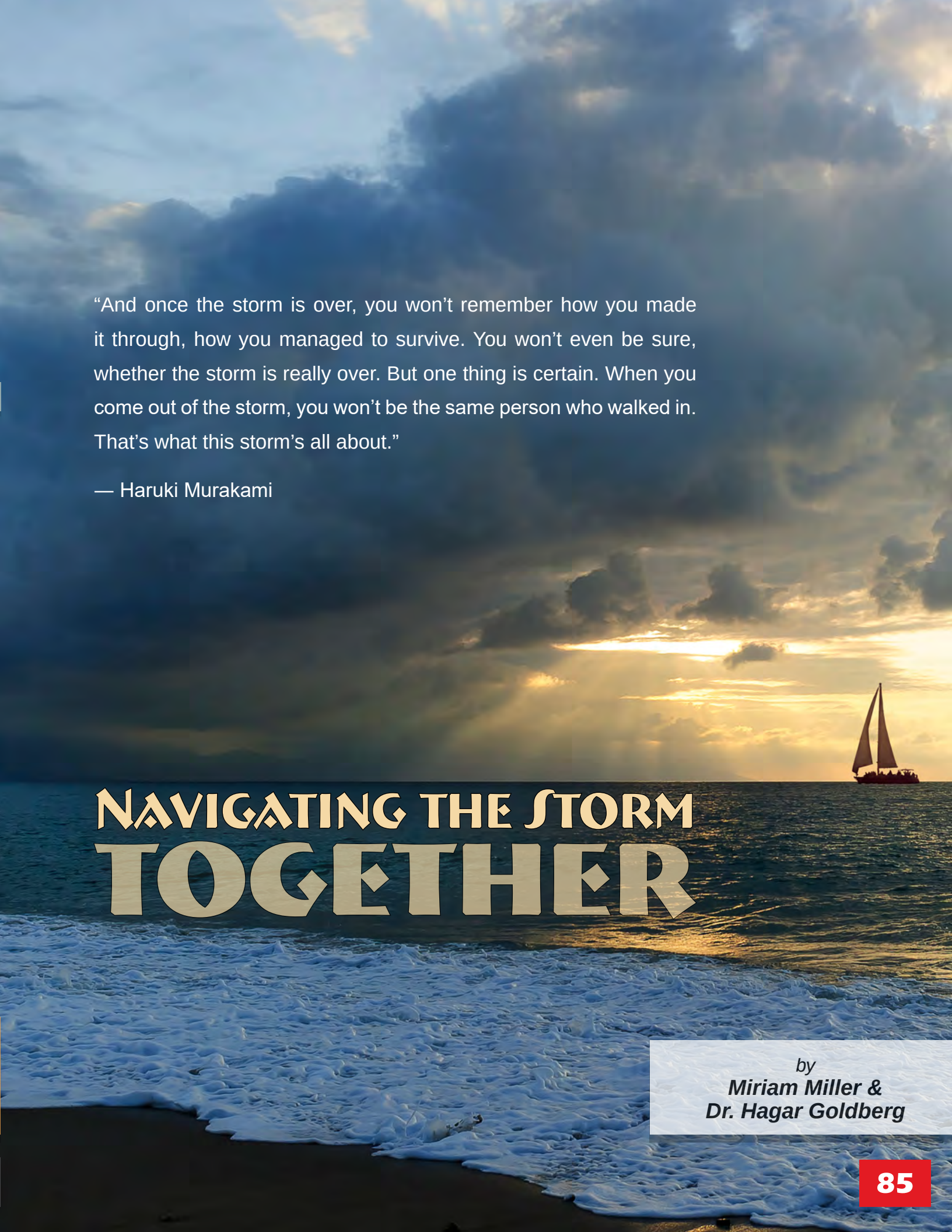
Reclaiming

If you haven't done so yet in the New Year, this is a great time to assess what supports you could use to help you reclaim greater lasting wellness, whether it's working with a personal trainer, reconnecting with your massage therapist or naturopath, joining an exercise group or exploring mindfulness. Focusing more on your specific wellness needs and identifying resources to help you realize your wellness goals can improve your motivation and success. Using the Spring as motivation to improve your vitality and help you navigate the latter portion of the school year with greater resiliency and confidence.

by

Jack MacNeill

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



“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.”

— Haruki Murakami

NAVIGATING THE STORM TOGETHER

by
**Miriam Miller &
Dr. Hagar Goldberg**

With great challenge comes great opportunity. It goes without saying that the last year has been one of incredible challenges, where discomfort has often overshadowed the potential for growth. Sometimes, the weight of the challenges felt too great to even raise our eyes and scan the horizon for opportunities. We were forced into a reactive mode, focused on surviving and just getting by; it was not always an option to pause and consider how we might grow stronger as we emerge from this storm.

We already know administrators are strong, resilient folks who are often faced with difficult situations – they manage budget cuts, staffing shortages, job transfers and workplace safety (not to mention they are the ones who are called to clean up more than just ‘spills’ in the classroom). The pandemic brought about seemingly impossible odds, requiring educational leaders to dig deep and find the assuredness to weather the storm. For many, our emotional resources became depleted and emotional exhaustion was the result. So, how can we find further strength to weather the storm together while maintaining hope for optimal outcomes?

BE ANCHORED IN YOUR ‘WHY’

Leading a school is deeply personal work. During challenging times, it can be easy to lose sight of the values that guide us. But who we are and how we feel, think and behave shapes our leadership and influences our teams. We need to practice self-awareness to be attuned to and clear about our values, beliefs, biases, strengths and limitations. Research indicates that self-awareness and social and emotional intelligence are key to effective leadership, especially in times of crises. Effective leaders leverage their social and emotional skills and continue to develop areas of growth; they model healthy communication skills and coping strategies in challenging and stressful situations. Leaders with robust social and emotional skills contribute to a safe

"Leading a school is deeply personal work. During challenging times, it can be easy to lose sight of the values that guide us."

and supportive school climate and directly influence teachers' motivation, performance and experience at school.

In the day-to-day shuffle of school-life – pandemic aside – we sometimes forget why we are in this work, and why we do what we do. Having a clear sense of purpose is a critical aspect of resilient leadership. Elena Aguilar reminds us that we need to “get clear on [our] why and use it as anchor.” We can do this by checking in and asking ourselves, “What brings me joy and motivates me in this work? What do I imagine my legacy to be? What difference do I want to make?” When we know and remind ourselves of our core values and beliefs, we are better able to align our decisions and policies accordingly. When we know our purpose, we are better able to handle challenging situations.

SUPPORT YOUR CREW

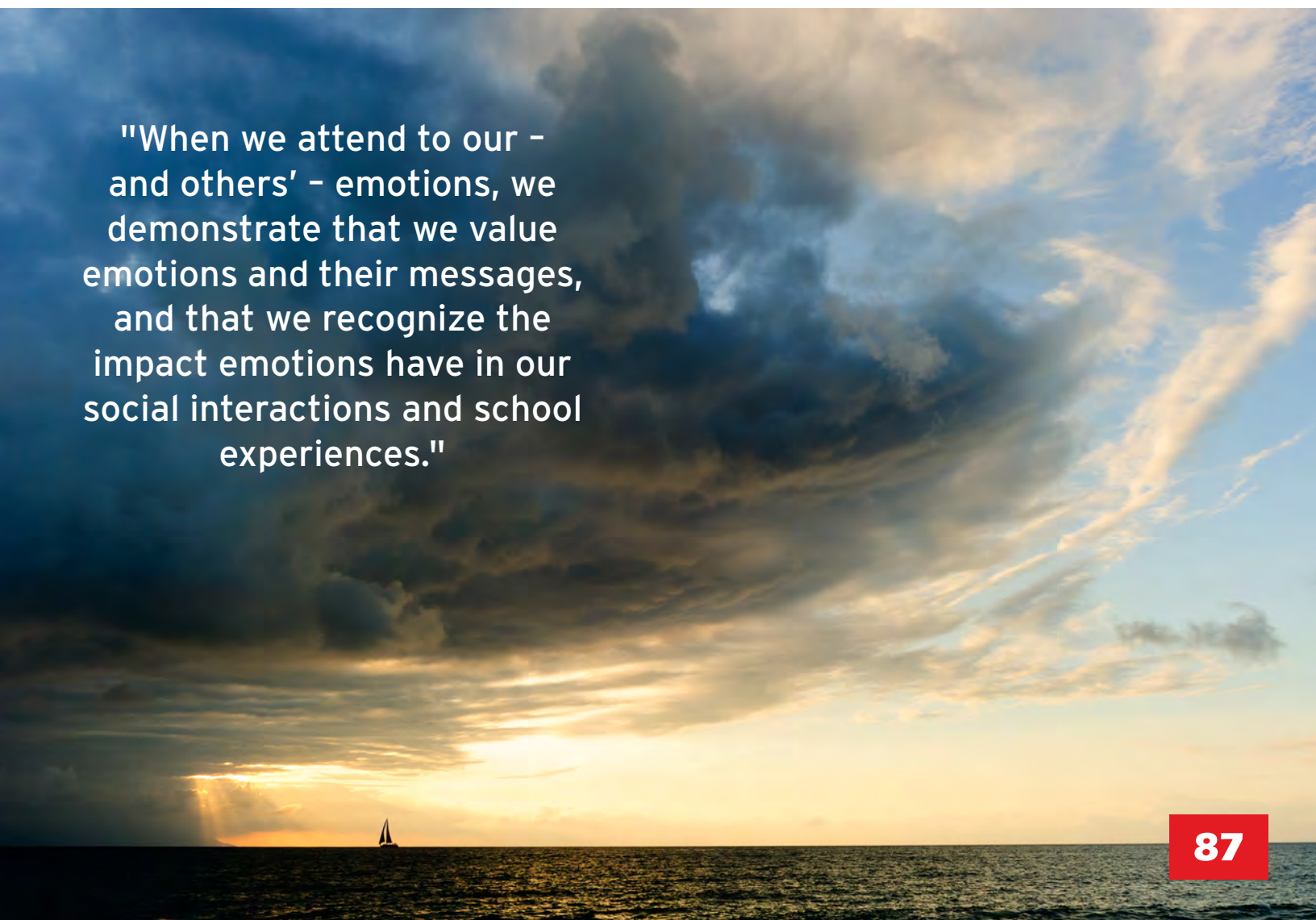
If part of our ‘why’ is to meet the needs of our students so that they might thrive, we need to support our crew, the very educators working directly with students. To do this, we must provide our teachers with resources to face and overcome the challenges they experience so that they might be able to step into their role as compassionate, committed educators (Aguilar, 2018). Principals are uniquely positioned to leverage their role (and responsibility) to shift structures and innovate systems to create the social conditions that promote teacher well-being and support their social-emotional development (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2011).

Besides modeling effective social and emotional competencies and well-being, Principals can also provide frequent opportunities to their teams to practice and apply their competencies (CASEL: Strengthening Adult SEL). This can be through simple, embedded practices like taking a moment to check in with staff and ask them how they are feeling. We can provide spaces (even in the first few minutes of a staff meeting) to notice and name emotions as a way of validating and normalizing our individual and collective experiences. Emotions contain data that communicate important messages about what people need or want. When we attend to our – and others' – emotions, we demonstrate that we value emotions and their messages, and that we recognize the impact emotions have in our social interactions and school experiences. This creates spaces where our teams feel seen and heard, and helps to prevent further burnout.

FIND (ASSEMBLE) YOUR FLEET

Being a school leader – the captain of the ship – is a great honour and privilege, but also an isolating position. When carried alone, the weight of the enormous responsibility can be crushing at times.

Relationships provide a buffer to adversity; without them, isolation and loneliness are bound to occur, and to contribute to burnout. Meaningful relationships are protective, and key in building resilience and job satisfaction. Principals need to be connected with each other, as very few others understand the unique challenges and opportunities their professional position brings. Imagine a ship facing a storm in the middle of the ocean. Now imagine the worried, brave captain shifting their gaze from the towering, stormy waves to meet the eyes of another captain – and another one – as they are not alone, but part of a

A full-page background image showing a sunset over the ocean. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with a bright glow from the setting sun breaking through near the horizon. A small sailboat is visible on the water in the distance.

"When we attend to our – and others' – emotions, we demonstrate that we value emotions and their messages, and that we recognize the impact emotions have in our social interactions and school experiences."

"Resilient leaders continually work to maintain and nurture relationships. "

fleet that is navigating the storm together. Our vision is for BC school leaders to not face the storm alone, but to navigate as a fleet.

NAVIGATING THE STORM TOGETHER

We invite BC educational leaders to join us on a learning journey for transformative leadership by leveraging – and practicing – social and emotional skills and harnessing the power of peer groups.

In this upcoming hands-on series for educational leaders, we will explore and practice research-based tools, to build connection and resilience in our school teams and in our professional peer group. Our goal is to create a safe haven for educational leaders to explore, share, reflect, try new things and receive feedback. The weight of being your ship's captain can be substantial when carried alone. Let's share the weight and push forward together.



@goldberg_hagar
@miriam_e_miller

Miriam Miller is a learner, researcher, teacher-educator, and storyteller, committed to working alongside educational communities to embed social and emotional learning (SEL) and well-being into their ecosystems.

Dr. Hagar Goldberg is a neuroscientist, educational and leadership consultant. She believes that cultivating social and emotional intelligence in our education systems is key to growth and thrive (as individuals and as communities).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How have your values and beliefs acted as a compass point to guide you through a storm?

What have you let go of this year, that allowed for new growth?
What new opportunities have emerged as a result?

What personal and professional lessons have you learned from this past year?
How will you apply them moving forward?

Where have you gathered strength and fostered resilience for yourself and your team?
How will you continue to do this?

Are you interested in being part of a community that continues to learn about social and emotional competencies and well-being for leadership?

Stay tuned for a Spring/Summer series in partnership with the BCPVPA:
**Navigating the Storm Together –
Leading for Connection**

A Positive Mindset

Taking Stock of your Mindset...
With Your *Mind* in Mind!

*A positive mindset gives you power over your circumstances,
instead of your circumstances having power over you.*

by
Rochelle Morandini
Director, Member Health & Well-being
BCPVPA

New Mindset Chapter One

It was a dark rainy
January day, like all
the other days in that
month that seem to
blend together.

It was a dark, rainy January day, like all the other days in that month that seem to blend together.

I was in the car listening to the radio, and the host was taking calls from listeners. It was the 'one year anniversary' of when the world learned of this new virus that would ultimately change all of our lives. The theme from every caller was similar:

"OMG, last year at this time, I was sure everything would be fine by the end of last summer! And here we still are with no end in sight!"

"I can't believe we still have many more months to go in this same situation, I just can't take it."

"Between not being allowed to go anywhere and this awful weather on top of it, everyone is so down".

I switched off the radio in frustration.

How can we possibly move forward, and enjoy the gift of life, if all we want to do is wallow in misery?

The appearance of a global pandemic was not surprising. Before COVID-19, over the past two decades, the global community has experienced a variety of dangerous virus strains that – thankfully – were contained.

I do not know about your previous impressions, but my vision of a potential pandemic was influenced by depictions in Hollywood films, or apocalyptic literature of 'the day in the life of' a catastrophic pandemic. Certainly, my anxieties soared when COVID-19 appeared on far shores. We all watched the news and were shown some of the 'expected' horror of deaths and shutdowns not only in China but in Europe and in my own ancestral home of Italy. It was a fear, but still a distant fear. When it appeared in our country, and then our province, we discovered that while terrible in terms of sickness and death, and the severity of the impact on both vulnerable people and the economy, the 'hell' that movies predicted did not come to pass:

- We did not see population death rates in the 30% range or higher

- We did not see a complete shut down of hospitals, city services such as water and waste management, electricity, internet, courier services, food transportation, gas stations, schools, or even retail.

- We could access our necessities by going to a store and feeling relatively safe by complying with simple safety protocols. Or, we could have whatever we needed delivered to our door.

Many of us were fortunate that we could work from home and continue to receive a paycheck. While this was not necessarily the case in the K-12 sector, it was for some of our partners and families.

Deep down we know that this pandemic could have been so much worse.

There is no doubt that this year has been challenging and – to use the word forever associated with 2020 – 'unprecedented'. I have very deep empathy and respect for our members and their school communities, and recognize the hurdles and losses that people have experienced along with the monumental effort that it has taken to make everything work. The dedication, commitment and continuing resilience of our member population and school staff across the province is immeasurable.

I believe that for our current **and** our future health, we will benefit from fostering a positive, 'adapt as we go' mindset. We – as individuals and as a community – need to find a way to simultaneously take stock of and acknowledge the challenges and efforts, but to avoid getting stuck there drowning in a defeatist mindset. We can be so much more.

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind." - Bob Marley

Foster your well-being through an open, adaptive mindset.

The point is simply this: life is precious, and we can recognize that now more than ever. So is our overall health and well-being which – for many at this time – is fragile.

Our lives have changed over the past twelve months, and those who are surviving – even thriving – recognize that they can let go of the image they believed would be their life at this time, and turn their attention to appreciating their 'now'.

Yes, the pandemic is an inconvenience. Yes, we need to take precautions for ourselves and others. And most of us have done well, and have woven safe behaviours as regular habits into our daily lives.

Healthy people appreciate that *their lives are not on hold* until this pandemic is over. Their lives proceed forward with continued moments of joy, growth, and gratitude.

It is exhausting to carry a mindset that continuously casts a dark cloud over our heads, fraught with the constant pressure from the pandemic and its impact. If we look for a problem, a concern, a worry, we will often find it as that is what our thoughts are creating. You can thank our brains for that scenario, as we are hard-wired and programmed to perceive and address threats whether to our physical being or to our ego. Maintaining these busy thoughts in the deluge of this pandemic is a subconscious burden on top of an already tired mind. *It is also a considerable mental health risk, not only now, but possibly in the future when the imminent risk of this pandemic is over.*

Welcome healing now. Learn to enjoy the story you are actually living and creating. Adopt the mindset that you can create your own reality. Just like those people on the radio show created their own reality, one evocative of being trapped, victimized and stagnant. Create the world you want to experience at this point, with all that you can control. If you are going to create a reality, why not create a positive one?

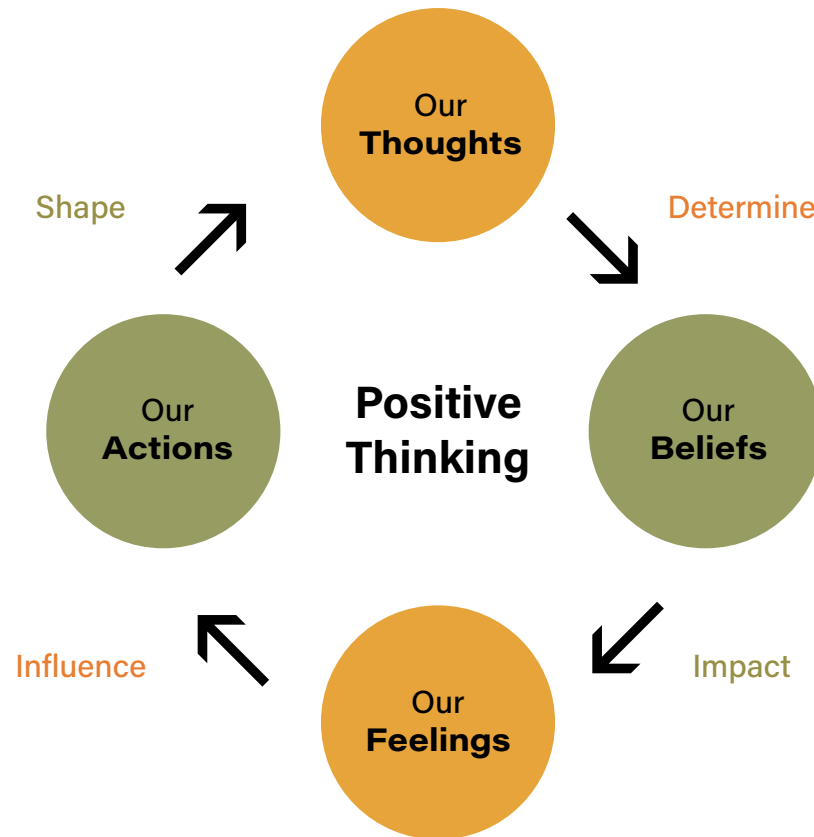
Our lives
become a
product of
what occupies
our minds
the most



How do I adopt this mindset?

Research the power of positive thinking. It really is a 'science' that can have a tremendous impact on both your mental and physical health.

You hold incredible power to truly change your mindset and – ultimately – your life and well-being. Changing or being mindful of your thoughts triggers a cyclical process that determines your beliefs, impacts your feelings, and ultimately influences your actions. With practice, regular positive thinking will override your brain's natural tendency to focus on the bad, and to consider any stressor a threat. This will reduce your mind's and body's tendencies towards anxiety and tension and – instead – encourage increased control and calmness.



And your actions ... change your outcomes!

"Happiness is not
something ready made.
It comes from
your own actions."
- Dalai Lama XIV

When you have a setback, positive thinking helps you navigate and appreciate your blessings both now and on your journey.

Losses and changes may be shocking, and can cause a troubled mental state. Fortunately, positive thinking helps you rise above negative thoughts and facilitates growth.

Positive thinking trumps fear. When we are afraid, we refuse to venture, to discover, and to try new things. A positive mindset can help you to leap over fear. While danger can be real, all fear is illusion-based.

Every situation in your entire lifetime presents you with different options. As they say, it's 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.

A positive mind finds opportunity in everything. A negative mind finds fault in everything.

Other ways to maintain or 'launch' your new positive mindset:

- **Limit your media intake:** watching the news on TV, browsing social media, or listening to the radio. Ask any news anchor and they will tell you the 'recipe' for any story: Start with an opening line that causes fear in the listener; share some scary points to support your opening line, and end with something that gives the reader a level of 'comfort' that they are okay, for now.

- **Seek only what you need to know** from reliable resources – don't dive deep, and continue to ruminate for more dirt, or perhaps something to ease your angst. You are searching because your brain is feeding your anxiety. Learn to let go and focus on the sphere around you.

- **Take responsibility** for speaking and sharing positively to your peers.

- **Practice gratitude** (See BCPVPA's *ReFresh* column from January 13, 2021)

- **Cherish the time** you have with the people around you.

Honestly, it comes down to this: appreciate life. Happiness exists in one place – inside of you, at any given moment, and right now.

Be cognizant of the precious privilege it is to be alive, *and let your body and mind thrive!*



How to Stop RUMINATION

During Stressful Times

by

Tom Walker, MSW, RSW

Trainer & Consultant

Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI)

Similar to the positive, physiological impact of guided imagery — which our BCPVPA members may remember from the ReFresh series last Fall — when you ruminate, your brain believes you are actually experiencing or reliving what you are thinking about. Rumination can negatively impact your emotions, mood, physiology (heart rate or tension), and behaviours.

Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI) Trainer, **Tom Walker**, introduces some strategies for shutting down rumination.

As someone who struggles with depression and anxiety due to PTSD and other life experiences, I know how easy it is to get caught up in rumination. As a trainer, therapist, employee, husband, and father, rumination has brought me more pain than it has ever alleviated. In this blog, I want to give you some ideas on how to disrupt repetitive thoughts.

Rumination occurs when our primary focus is on negative things that are happening in our lives. The focus is on the distress rather than looking for possible solutions. For example:

- ***“I’m going to get sick.”***
- ***“I’m going to get my family member sick.”***
- ***“I will be helpless if I get sick.”***
- ***“I will not be strong enough to get through this.”***

The process of rumination changes our stress response. We can become much more reactive to stress, and that can lead us to an increase in both anxiety and depression. Additionally, if you have the tendency to ruminate like I do, understanding its downsides is essential. Remember, if we are overthinking something, our brain thinks it’s a problem and reacts accordingly. Rumination predicts a heightened stress response in those who are already anxious and/or depressed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some somatic symptoms have been more prevalent than others. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Headaches
- Neck tension



Courtesy Priscilla du Preez - unsplash.com

Without intentionally trying to disrupt rumination, your brain will remain focused on the negatives, which only leads to further stress and anxiety.

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Lack of appetite

All of these somatic symptoms can lead to low energy levels and fatigue. If we focus on our depression and our struggles, we are more likely to remain depressed and anxious. Anxiety and depression often coexist, but research shows that anxiety usually comes first and can be the impetus for depression.

Without intentionally trying to disrupt rumination, your brain will remain focused on the negatives, which only leads to further stress and anxiety.

Rumination increases activity in the part of the brain that controls learning, memory, and affect. This can cause a kind of *learned helplessness*, or what Psychologist Martin Seligman calls “our default.” When rumination occurs consistently, we often get stuck in the thinking pattern. As a result, it becomes easier to remain in a stressed, hopeless, and helpless state.

HERE ARE SEVEN IDEAS FOR SHUTTING DOWN RUMINATION:

1. Talk to yourself rather than listen.

When negative things are happening in your head, change them by saying, “I can do this,” rather than listening to your thoughts that might be saying, “You’re going to screw this up.”

2. Go on an attention diet.

Pick credible sources from which to get news and information. Once or twice a day, listen up and learn what is happening, then shut it down.

3. Practice gratitude daily.

Research shows that using gratitude as an exercise before going to bed can help us shut down the negative thinking that can occur during times like these.

4. Be assertive.

During COVID-19, being assertive can be a matter of staying well or getting ill. If people are breaking the rules around social distancing, it’s okay to calmly say, “I’m not comfortable with how close you are; let’s agree to keep social distancing!”

5. Focus on what you can control.

We can control how careful we are by doing what reliable sources recommend we do to stay safe. We

can be intentional about social distancing, washing our hands, not touching our face, wearing a mask, etc.

6. Move your body.

Ensure that your schedule includes some form of exercise. It can be intense physical exercise, or things like walking, hiking, or enjoying the outdoors.

7. Practice bracketing.

Bracketing is a useful tool if you are struggling with overthinking a problem and need to focus on an unrelated task. It involves setting aside a specific time to think about what you’re concerned about, such as an argument you had with someone, a mistake you made at work, or a stressful call from family.

Practice bracketing by scheduling a time to address the problem. Any time it comes back into your mind, say, “I have scheduled a time to think about this. I am going to work through that later today or tomorrow, so I do not need to think about it now.”

Without intentionally trying to disrupt rumination, your brain will remain focused on the negatives, which only leads to further stress and anxiety. Using the above strategies or an approach you’ve worked out yourself will help you regulate, shift, and break the pattern of negative thinking. When this happens, the brain changes, and it is less likely that you will engage in rumination in the future.

**If you are not able to stop the rumination with these tips,
you may need more support.**

**Reach out to your physician, or a counsellor for support in
breaking the pattern of negative thinking.**

TIME TO GO OUTSIDE

AN INTERVIEW WITH DUNCAN WHITTICK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE COLUMBIA BASIN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NETWORK

The Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) is a not-for-profit society and registered charity dedicated to encouraging environmental stewardship and sustainability in the Columbia Basin by supporting environmental educators. CBEEN has grown over the years to be a large and vibrant network of passionate educators from across the Columbia Basin and beyond. CBEEN was born out of a shared sense of identity, and from the common desire to support and promote environmental education on a regional scale.

What led to the establishment of CBEEN and what partners form your network?

CBEEN is now one of the largest environmental education networks in Canada. It was started by a small group of educators in the Columbia Basin who — at the time — had to travel all the way to the Lower Mainland and other provinces just to access professional environmental learning resources. Eventually, they started thinking to themselves: 'Why are we doing this? We should just come together and create our own initiative in this region'. So, they did.

Our network really started to grow when we brought together teams of teachers, Principals, Vice-Principals, and senior administrators from school districts across our region to our annual Leadership Clinic. We worked together to come up with a plan for better supporting environmental education, which led to mutual trust and a shared understanding and vision. Our network is deeply rooted in partnership and collaboration.

It has been almost 20 years now since CBEEN was born and I've had the privilege of being the

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (EE)?

"...a long-term investment in the general health and well-being of individuals, communities, ecosystems and the planet. Effective environmental education produces ecologically literate citizens who understand and value healthy environments. They understand their connection to and impact on natural environments, and through this understanding become motivated to act as environmental stewards and live sustainable, healthy lives."

— CBEEN

by

Paige Jung

Communications Assistant, BCPVPA

Executive Director for the last decade. CBEEN has grown significantly, and we now have more than 500 members in our network. While we are tied geographically to the Columbia Basin, we are part of a larger network working in partnership with many environmental education organizations across the province and across the nation.

Provincially, we work with all of the partners within the **Classrooms to Communities (C2C)**, a provincial network of key environmental & outdoor learning organizations. Most notably, we work with the Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA), which is a part of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), and with the Kootenay-Boundary Environmental Education (KBEE), which is a committee of the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA). Together we have identified environmental learning as a priority.

CBEEN is made up not only of teachers and Principals, but also of many community educators who come from more than 100 community-based organizations that we work with. Currently, we are working on expanding our Outdoor Learning Store geographically so that we can better support schools across Canada. Our goal is to not just bring learning outside, but also to help educators become stewards

of the outdoors by approaching EE in a citizen-science or civic responsibility way.

How have you seen the interest and focus on environmental education grow in BC, and how has that impacted CBEEN's reach?

The big underpinning of CBEEN's growth was the redesign of the BC curriculum. This caused a major shift in the support for, and availability of, inquiry-based, experiential and real-world learning in the province. This major shift also gave us the opportunity to be more synergistic in our approach to outdoor learning, and to focus more on improving its effectiveness and accessibility for all learners.

Sometimes people think of environmental education as just science but, in actuality, it is interdisciplinary at its core and has the potential to support learning at all grade levels using that lens. There is a real openness amongst education organizations in BC – they not only want to *connect* with us but they want to *collaborate* with us.

Over the years, we've found that when we invest in these collaborative relationships and get to know one another, our impact can go beyond us as individuals, and even beyond our organizations.

"SOMETIMES PEOPLE THINK OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS JUST SCIENCE, BUT IN ACTUALITY, IT IS INTERDISCIPLINARY AT ITS CORE AND HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT LEARNING AT ALL GRADE LEVELS..."



What long-term impacts do you think we'll see on classrooms because of the implementation of more outdoor learning?

I think EE changes the way we view the structure of learning. Over time, our hope is that school leaders will be able to create and facilitate a learning structure that's healthier for them, that's healthier for their students, and that's healthier for their communities. Our hope is that communities would gain a strong understanding of — and connection to — their place, and feel empowered to be able to support their community.

I don't believe we should separate the natural environment from the human environment. It's our environment that we all need to support and maintain as a healthy place for everyone for the future. Through this lens, in the future, we'll have a more empowered group of teachers, learners and school leaders who can better support the health of our world.

"OVER TIME, OUR HOPE IS THAT SCHOOL LEADERS WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE AND FACILITATE A LEARNING STRUCTURE THAT'S HEALTHIER FOR THEM, THAT'S HEALTHIER FOR THEIR STUDENTS, AND THAT'S HEALTHIER FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES."

As we all know, we're facing a number of crises in the world right now. I believe that we need to empower people to not just be responsive to these crises, but to be *proactive*. That's already a part of the culture in BC, but I think we need stronger tools. Giving our leaders and learners those tools is really crucial, and will be incredibly powerful.

When educators and learners have a deeper connection with the outdoors, they are also more empowered to care for and protect their environment.

How has CBEEN been collaborating with Principals and Vice-Principals in BC?

We've really broadened our perspective as an organization over the years. In the beginning, we were focused only on supporting environmental educators. That meant that we could only work with educators who viewed and identified themselves as environmental educators, and this was quite limiting.

We quickly realized that we really want to support *all* educators and the education system as a whole. Currently in our region, we're working with the majority of the schools in our area, and we're starting to see a positive ripple effect take place. Communities across our country are becoming more interested and aware of the enormous potential environmental and place-based learning have.





What are some of the challenges of implementing environmental education in BC?

Before COVID-19, I think the majority of us knew that getting outside was healthier for learners in many respects. Now with the pandemic, it's becoming all the more clearer that outdoor learning is a safer and healthier option that offers both mental and physical benefits.

However, one of the challenges that CBEEN is focused on addressing is the accessibility of EE programs. *How can we ensure that all learners are supported in outdoor learning?* Improving accessibility would benefit not only students with physical disabilities, but also students who may have certain fears or preconceptions about the outdoors. We want to ensure we can support them in this type of learning.

Another challenge we're seeing is the slow transition of investments, from school buildings and structures, to more outdoor learning resources. However, over the years, we've been seeing a lot more interest and uptake in creating outdoor learning spaces.

Lastly, there's often this misconception that by going outside, you're encountering more risk. We believe that it's actually *riskier* to stay inside from a health perspective. If we look at the big picture, our health and well-being as a society will be worse off by not going outside.

For Principals and Vice-Principals who want to introduce more outdoor learning in their schools, where can they start?

There's nothing I love more than when somebody comes to me and says, "*We're looking for this. Where can we find it?*" It's a pleasure for me, and for any of these organizations, to point educators to the right resource. There are a lot of resources available for educators, specifically the C2C network and our CBEEN network.

It's important that we collaboratively come together to address issues, support one another, and affect change in a meaningful way. Just remember that there are real people in these environmental learning organizations who have the capacity and mandate to support you in any of your needs related to environmental education.

I think our BC school leaders have the capacity to create new, healthier learning environments. Beyond just moving desks outside, there are opportunities facilitate outdoor learning spaces that are accessible to learners at all levels. I recognize that it often takes a considerable amount of time and effort to establish these partnerships and routines for outdoor learning, but once they're going – it has proven to be very powerful.

“Educators experience the positive outcomes when they participate in professional development with CBEEN, and that gives them the encouragement to try the lessons with their students. As far as getting outside, the location is easy for us. The wilderness is right outside our doors which makes it accessible.”

- **CARISSA HART (SD5 VICE-PRINCIPAL)**

“In the Wild Voices program, teachers are learning alongside their students and they learn different ideas about how to present the material to their students.”

- **JANET KUIJT (SD5 VICE-PRINCIPAL)**

“Focusing on cross-curricular learning and being connected to the beautiful place in which we live, has been the greatest win for our school. The pandemic and staffing changes put us off our game for a bit – but we’re coming back!”

- **ALYSSAN GAUTHIER (SD6 VICE-PRINCIPAL)**



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OPEN DOORS

FEATURING THE SUMMIT YOUTH CENTRE HUB,
2020 BCPVPA PARTNERSHIP AWARDS RECIPIENT

The **Summit Youth Centre Hub**, also known as the Invermere Valley Youth Centre Society, is a not-for-profit that functions as a drop-in centre for youth in the Columbia Valley (SD #6 – Rocky Mountain). Ranging from 12 to 18 years old, the youth who frequent the Centre come mainly from Invermere, but also from more remote areas such as Canal Flats and Radium. The Centre has been opening its doors to local youth for 26 years, providing a safe space for connections and resources — and for having fun.

The Summit Youth Centre Hub was a 2020 recipient of BCPVPA's annual Partnership Awards. We are delighted to feature them and the important work they have done, and are continuing to do, for young people in the Columbia Valley.

We had the pleasure of speaking with **Alison Bortolon**, Centre Manager as of August 2020, who also has an extensive history of working with youth.



by
Paige Jung

Communications Assistant, BCPVPA

How did the Centre emerge and what is its mission for youth in the Valley?

In 1992, there were a lot of concerned community members in the Columbia Valley who wanted to do something for the youth in their community. They knew that it was a small town and, because of that, there were limited opportunities here.

In May 1994, the doors to our Youth Centre opened. It began as a fully volunteer-based drop-in program that operated out of a basement. Today, we still operate as a drop-in program, but our capacity and reach are much greater.

One of the core values of the Centre is that we are inclusive and welcoming to every youth. At its core, our Centre is a safe place for youth to come and completely be themselves. We have fun activities like pool, ping pong, and video games, but we also have access to different resources and positive role models.

It might just be the video games that initially get the kids in the door, but our hope is that by continuing to come, the youth will be able to build deeper connections with our staff and their peers.

Our Centre is really focused on giving youth access to resources, opportunities, and providing positive support. Our staff is always ready and available to talk with youth about what's really going on in their lives. Essentially, our mission is to offer connection and to inspire youth.

If we weren't experiencing a pandemic, what would a typical day at the Centre look like?

There is no such thing as a typical day here at the Centre! Some days, the activities are a hit, some days they are not. Some days are heavier, some are super light and fun. If something serious has happened, then it's a matter of sitting down, chatting together, and sorting through how to best to go about the situation.

Before the pandemic started, the Centre had more than 50 kids each night, and we'd do all kinds of activities together. Sometimes we would have a dedicated gaming night which included not only computer games, but also different board games. We often have dedicated cooking nights — which have always been a really big hit with the youth. We don't cook *for* the kids — we cook *with* them. From brainstorming ideas for ingredients and recipes, to planning what games we'll play that night, the youth are included throughout the whole process.

We have also done movie nights, gaming tournaments, painting, music nights, and even held a mini-Olympics! During the pandemic, our amazing youth workers had to adapt and be creative. One time, they even delivered painting kits to each of the kid's houses so that we could paint together over Zoom.

What are some of the most notable challenges facing youth right now?

Boredom and isolation, definitely. Even adults are facing extreme boredom and loneliness with COVID-19. For young people especially, boredom and a lack of social interactions can easily turn into deeper mental health concerns.

Additionally, youth mental health concerns are often magnified in the colder months, as they don't have the luxury of riding their scooters, going to the skate park, or going outdoors with friends.

When one is in the age range of 12 to 18, there's already so much change. With the pandemic and social distancing measures, there's another layer added to that change.

They say that the time between the end of school and when kids go home — between 3:30 pm and dinnertime — is the time when you want positive activities to be happening for youth. Unfortunately, it's the most vulnerable window of time for youth to engage in negative behaviours or activities.

Our Centre, as a drop-in after-school program, acts on that opportunity and gives kids a healthy space and time for positive support, creativity and connection.



"OUR CENTRE IS REALLY FOCUSED ON GIVING YOUTH ACCESS TO RESOURCES, AND OUR STAFF IS ALWAYS READY AND AVAILABLE TO TALK WITH YOUTH ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON IN THEIR LIFE."

Lisa Tente (right) presents Kelsey Prichard, former Centre Manager at the Summit Youth Centre (left), the 2020 BCPVPA Partnership Award

How is the Centre partnering with schools in the Valley community?

In pre-COVID times, we opened our Centre to students in nearby schools to come during their lunch break. It would just be a communal space for students to hang out, study or even participate in a yoga and meditation exercise led by one of our youth workers. We want to let youth feel that they can come and go as they please.

We've also connected with schools by building relationships with teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals in the area. We had one teacher who wanted to involve her students in the community more, so on Tuesdays, we arranged for her students to come to our Centre to help with recycling and cleaning, and to participate in planning an activity for other youth for that night. This gave the students some ownership and responsibility in their community.

What initiatives does the Centre hope to explore in the future?

As in many communities, mental health is a huge issue for youth in the Valley. I believe it's so important, especially now, to speak about mental health. Personally, when I was in Grade 7, nobody spoke about mental health. That was a no-no. And now, to have these programs in schools is so cool to see – it's so important. It normalizes having the conversation.

On our 25th anniversary, we decided that a big focus of our Centre was going to be on youth mental health. In 2019, we worked in collaboration with other local agencies to offer the Mental Health Program, a series of workshops focused on building resiliency for local youth by increasing practical skills and knowledge through a proactive, preventative framework. This program allowed us to go into schools throughout SD #6 and facilitate discussions, covering topics



from self-care to suicide intervention. At the end of the program, we wanted youth to be able to define mental health and what it means for them, relate their mental health and wellness to their everyday lives, and recognize warning signs in themselves and their friends. They would learn how to help a friend struggling with a mental health problem, self-care practices and where to access services in their school and in their community. 114 grade 4-7 students from across the Columbia Valley have received the series so far. Many Principals from different schools in the area have reached out and encouraged us to keep running this program.

It's more common than we think for youth to have mental illnesses. Many people often misunderstand youth who are struggling with their mental health, because they can't really see those illnesses and there's a fear of talking about it. My goal is to normalize talking about mental health with youth – not only what mental illness can look like, but also what mental *wellness* can look like. For example, together we could discuss and learn about self-care and how to set boundaries with different people.

I had the privilege of going to a Youth Summit once in the Columbia Valley. The youth that attended were asked to pick a topic they were interested in discussing with their peers. Around 90% of the youth that were there wanted to go to the table that was discussing mental health. This shows that youth are willing and wanting to have these conversations.

We're continuing to shift our focus, financials, and physical energy into supporting youth mental health more. In collaboration with the schools in our region, we developed an app for youth that contains information and resources, so that youth can access a resource at any time. If they need more urgent help, there are direct links to the Kids' Helpline. It has been very helpful at making resources accessible amidst the pandemic. We've also made it a priority for all of our staff to go through Mental Health First Aid training.

"IF YOU REALLY WANT TO INSPIRE, INVOLVE AND EMPOWER YOUTH, THEY NEED TO HAVE OWNERSHIP, FEEL INCLUDED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, AND HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU."

More broadly, what advice do you have for school leaders who want to engage the youth in their school more?

The most important thing is just being there to connect with youth. Being there and listening – that is the first step in building a genuine connection with youth. If I went to start a youth program somewhere, and I didn't know any of the kids, I'm going to have a hard time getting traction. They're probably thinking: *'Who is this person? Why are they here?'* Building those connections and collaborating with youth is huge. You don't need to reinvent the wheel – there are lots of resources out there already.

It all starts with conversation, and then it's a matter of getting started.

It's so important to sit and listen to young people and have them tell you what they want or what they think is best. If you have a bunch of adults talking about what they think kids need and want, well, you might hit some points. But if you really want to inspire, involve and empower youth, they need to have ownership, feel included in the decision-making process, and have a relationship with you. If they know what they want to do, or to see more of, they are naturally going to be more engaged and want to be involved in making things better.



All photos are courtesy of Summit Youth Centre Hub

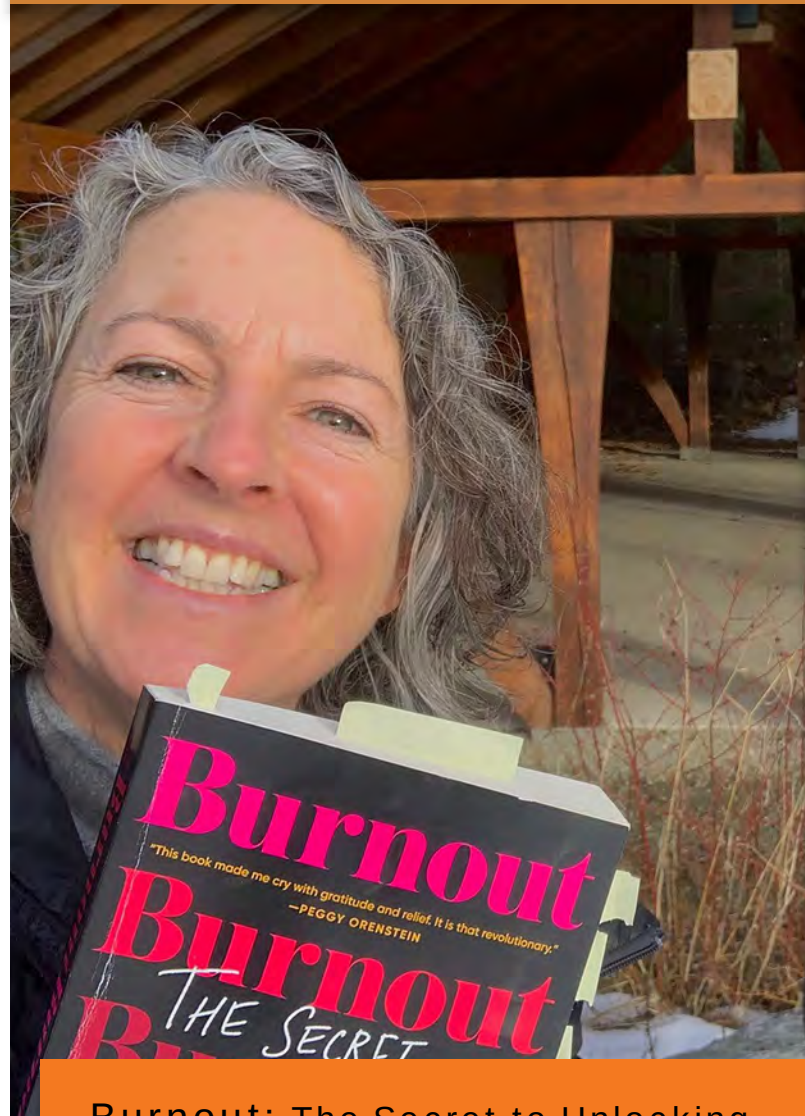


Twins Emily and Amelia Nagoski published *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* in 2019. Emily is a health educator and counsellor, and Amelia is a music conductor. Amelia suffered two extensive bouts of stress-induced medical incidents, and Emily published a book about woman's sexuality where most of the feedback was about the chapter on stress reduction. Between Emily's feedback and Amelia's health scare, this book was born.

Our modern age is exceptional in that the stressors we are exposed to do not naturally work through the critical 'stress response cycle' mammals experience. Instead, humans are left in a chronic state where we must take deliberate steps to work through the missing final aspects of the cycle so we can rest and recuperate.

From their example: A lion is chasing you. Your response is to flee. Your body systems do everything they can to give you the necessary power so you run as fast and as far as you can to remove yourself from this stressor. This means your biological systems shut down processes that are – at the time – unnecessary, including your endocrine, digestive, circulatory, and hormonal functions. Every single body system is focused on getting you out of danger. There are only two outcomes – you will die, or you will live. If you live, you return to your village and celebrate with

Victoria McAllister SD #8



Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle

your community. You tell your story with great fanfare: you act it out, others tell you how brave you were, you may sing or dance or draw a picture of your victory, you may advise others about how to keep safe in this situation, and then you're able

Contribute your book review to the next issue of **Principled**:
you could even collaborate on your review with a friend,
as Victoria and Janene have done!
Contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca to book your spot

Janene Stein SD #8



by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski

to sleep soundly assured you are safe. Your brain understands the danger is over; your body systems begin again to support your good health.

Now, our stressors are not wild predators – instead, they occur via phone calls, from meetings with emotionally elevated others, from deadlines, or from the need for clear, calm, and accurate responses in a high-stakes situation. Often, we cannot respond by fight/ flight/ freeze because the moment requires us to acknowledge the stressor calmly and clearly, and then defer the stress responses until later. Our ancient body systems are programmed to have us complete the cycle completely, but we simply cannot at the time. Additionally, due to the nature of our profession, we have wave after wave of stressors accumulated over the course of a day. This is our work.

Accompanying these aspects is our professional commitment to put the needs of others above our own. As implied in the “A Day in Life of ...” series in this magazine, our days are long and necessitate us to be considering multiple aspects continuously. The authors liken this to a theory put forth by Kate Mann. The theory is that there are two types of humans in the world: ‘Human Beings’, who are obligated to express humanity at its highest form, and ‘Human Givers’ who are compelled to serve ‘Human Beings’ using their brains, bodies, actions, and emotions. Their needs are subordinate to the ‘Human Beings’ and therefore they may not easily put effort into completing the stress cycle. Guess which kind of

people flock to the helping professions? Guess which gender?

The authors have explicitly advised how we can work through the stress response cycle so we can feel safe and be rested. Consider this: if your body does not receive this signal, the chemical, biological, and hormonal systems do not shift out of overdrive and may not return to a healthy state.

Actions to help you complete the stress response cycle include:

- Physical activity: run, swim, dance, sing, jump up and down – do something to make you breathe deeply
- Tense your muscles and shake them out
- Breathe – deep slow belly breaths
- Have a casual, positive social interaction
- Laugh – especially belly laughs
- Hug, kiss, cuddle
- Participate in a spiritual practice
- Engage yourself in a creative outlet

Remember that being stuck in an incomplete cycle is more damaging than the original stressor. The authors use a feminist perspective to discuss the harm to humans due to our society and the constraints placed on women, on people of colour, and on people who identify as LGBTQ. These micro- and macro-aggressions are persistent stressors.

Right now, those of us in the helping professions are being asked to do more than ever. To help ourselves through this time of increased stressors, the authors ask us to turn to each other and engage with your community. They call this your 'Love Bubble'. Those

you trust to support you will help sustain you. If we consider ourselves as 'Human Givers', we in the helping professions – and women in general – are being asked to sacrifice our health. Right now, it does not seem as if self-preservation is the imperative of our society and culture. The authors remind us, "You don't have to set yourself on fire to keep other people warm." Recognizing that the research shows that a resting period helps us more than staying in the constant state of alertness, the authors advise us to get enough sleep. Feeling guilty about sleeping is as unreasonable as feeling guilty about breathing.

Lastly, the authors discuss gratitude. Research into gratitude shows the impact of being grateful not for what you have, but instead for who you have and for your circumstances. They give advice for practicing gratitude in this manner.

Trust your body. Be kind to yourself. Rest. You are enough. Your joy matters. Small changes are victories.

Synopsis

or – as the authors call it – tl;dr (too long; didn't read):

The stress completion cycle leads to the moment when our bodies realize that after facing danger, we are safe. Our modern work means we often need to wait to complete the stress cycle. There are things we can do to give our body the signal that it is safe. If you do not give your body this signal, it will remain in the state of chronic, constant activation that leads to burn out. You can help your body through movement, laughter, breathing and creative play. The secret to living in our modern world is to seek out and connect with others in community. Finding the bigger meaning for our lives helps us live through this time of incredible stressors.

Victoria's Takeaways

from this book (and Brené Brown's podcast with the authors)

Walking home one evening after another long day, I was contemplating incongruous thoughts: I revel in the gift of this work (being a K-12 school Principal), and there is always so much more to do. It can feel demoralizing. Using a strategy from Burnout called 'The Monitor', (discrepancy-reducing / increasing feedback loop) helped me examine where I have control, what I could let go of and how I could reframe some common conundrums. This has made a change in how I more joyfully engage with this work. The entreaty to focus on meaning fits this profession like a glove.

"Emotions are tunnels, if you go all the way through them, you get to the light at the end." I have been sharing this invitation to complete the stress cycle with staff and students. Giving the people we work with more tools to experience and resolve some of their strong feelings helps them feel heard, more in control and empowered. I have posted lists of ways to complete the stress cycle in a few places in our school.

I find myself returning to Burnout as inspiration in our trauma aware school – we need to talk honestly about hard experiences and feelings to stay healthy and connected. The authors recommend "just do a thing" – anything; action as forward momentum is a powerful tool for students to unlearn helplessness and develop agency.

Janene's Takeaways

from this beautiful book

The messages in the book are both affirming and practical. Last June, I found myself existing without emotions as the Spring was so incredibly stressful. It was only during the Summer I was able to return to a state where I could experience joy again. This Fall, I returned to my school knowing I needed to engage each day with the 'Something Larger' described by the authors. This whole experience of successfully leading a school during the pandemic is my 'Something Larger', and I expect it is the same for you. This book helped me affirm those ways that I work through the stress response cycle: time in the garden, time with family and time creating art.

From Both of Us

There are helpful tools throughout the book – great stories and science – and because this book is anchored in our current social structures, it moves the message from the personal to the political.

We love that!

We hope you will enjoy the additional quote highlighted by Brené Brown on the following page.

Victoria McAllister
is the Principal of
JV Humphries
Elementary Secondary School
in Kaslo BC, and
Jewett Elementary School in
Meadow Creek BC, SD 8

Janene Stein
is the Principal of
Hume Elementary School
Nelson BC, SD 8

Victoria and Janene work and live on the traditional territories of the Sinixt and Ktunaxa people

"We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal — other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature. What we have been forced to leave behind we needed to leave behind. What is getting us through is what we will need to take forward, all the rest is up to us. DREAM. While we have so much time. DREAM of the life you want. DREAM of the world you desire to exist in. Look for the places in your new dreams that have parts of the old world and remove them. What is the dream then? From there we can add to the collective weaving of whatever it is that is next. If we are gonna heal, let it be glorious."

Sonya Renee Taylor



HOOKED on a BOOK

Tell us all about it!

Contribute your book review
to an upcoming issue of
Principl(ed) Magazine:

contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca
to find out how.

The Last Word

“Self-care and consideration must be the main priority and prime concern for all school leaders. Leading a school through the changes and challenges that accompany COVID-19 and post COVID-19 will require school leaders who put their own health and well-being first, so that they will be able to help others.

Increasingly, school leaders are managing the emotional responses of others to this crisis including anxiety, frustration, loss, and anger. Consequently, self-care must be a priority for those leading schools at all levels.”

Harris & Jones, 2020



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



@Optimus_Rime

At this time, BC's short-term future is in the hands of health workers, essential service employees, teachers, and school leaders. As a school leader, your experience and training did not prepare you to lead during a pandemic. Nobody has the answers to the current challenges that face Principals and Vice-Principals today, but it has been gratifying to see our members reaching out to each other for assistance, offering support and doing all that they can to stay connected with their colleagues. Part of an important self-care plan when leading during a crisis is to ask for the support and encouragement of others. The ability to talk with others about dilemmas and to ask for assistance when needed will be essential ingredients as we move through these challenges together.

As the provincial body, we have attempted to stay closely connected with our members through our Town Hall series, Coffee Connections, and many other opportunities as we broaden our supports and services to members while advocating for their needs. For me, hearing regularly from our members and better understanding their experiences has reinforced a few core leadership values.

Trust Your Instincts

Leaders understand that authenticity and humanity are at the centre of their work. Hold true to your values, particularly when faced with the myriad of important decisions that you need to make.

The Relationship is the Message

During these challenging times you may be required to share concerning – and perhaps heartbreaking – news with the people you lead. How those messages are received will signal the quality of the relationships you have built with others. Bad news seems less worrisome, and good news more

encouraging, when there is a strong relationship between leaders and staff members.

Solve Problems Before They Become Problems

I have come to believe that problems and conflicts are downriver symptoms. Often, the real problem that needs to be addressed is further up the river. Take the time to deal with downriver problems by investigating and understanding what is happening further up the river.

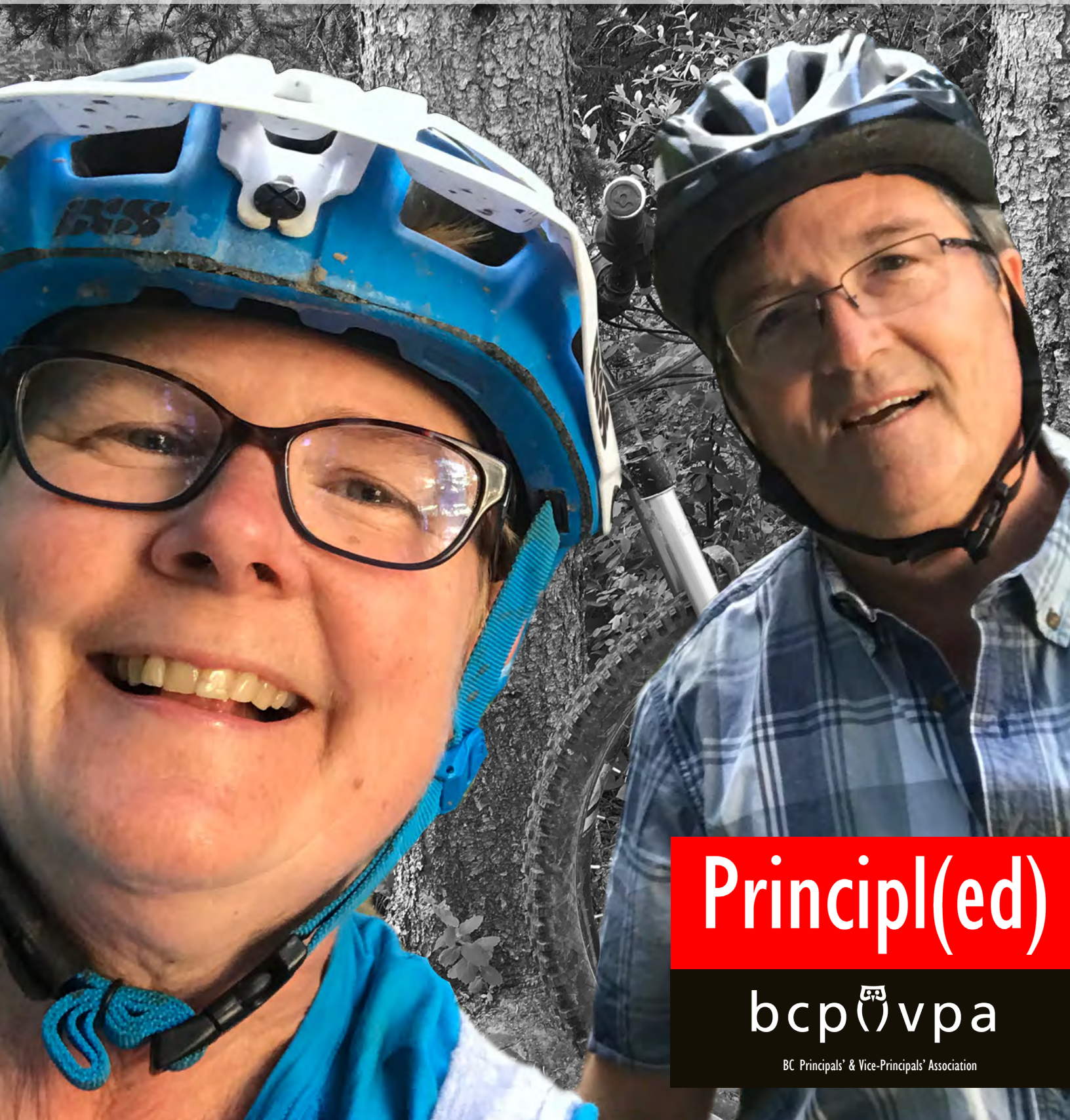
Acknowledge Anxiety, Encourage Resolve

Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President during the Great Depression. In his inaugural address, he assured Americans by sharing his faith in the ability of the country and its citizens to meet the crisis head on, "This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously." Remind your staff members of their ability to face this crisis head on, and why their work matters now more than ever.

Crises – particularly those that are long-lasting – take a toll on all involved. During times of intense turbulence, it is important to keep your finger on the collective pulse of the people that you lead. Accurately assessing the needs of your school community during a crisis means that your leadership radar must be functioning effectively. As we continually strive to make sense of the shifting priorities and challenges, remaining true to our values and leading authentically may help to lift the clouds in our schools. Remaining capable, focused, and effective is a function of both your physical and mental well-being. If you are struggling to maintain appropriate levels of overall well-being, please reach out to the BCPVPA so that we can work with you to address the upriver issues that you may be facing.

Elementary School
Principal
Heidi Grant
Nechako Lakes, BC

Principal Heidi Grant has strong relationships in her community, as an active member of both the local mountain biking association and the Rotary Club. You'll often find Heidi and her husband Dylan — also a local Principal — muddy and exhilarated on the local trails.



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