

# VESTA WEEKLY

TOPICS WORTH TALKING ABOUT! PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

## IN THIS ISSUE

Reconciliation Week – Page 2 & 3

Professional Development - Page 4

Anti-Racism Inservice Feedback- Page 4

Mandatory JOHS Ctte Member Training -  
Page 6

Bargaining Timeline- Page 6

Category Change Timelines-Page 6

Mentorship Fund -Page 6

Teacher Workload -Page 6


Foundations Skills Assessment  
- P. 7

Staff Rep Release Time -P. 8

#RedforBCED -P. 8

**TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION WEEK 2021**

CANADA'S  
**HISTORY**

 National Centre for  
Truth and Reconciliation  
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

## **Reconciliation Week**

“This year, we gained a deeper collective understanding of the devastating and ongoing impacts of Canada’s residential school system. The recognition of unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools reopened the wounds that Survivors and their families have been tending for generations. It also sparked a new conversation across the country as more people learn, engage, and reflect. Truth and Reconciliation Week is an opportunity to bring together people from nations and cultures across the country to continue this reconciliation journey. In the week leading up to September 30, Orange Shirt Day, we will honour the children who were sent to residential schools and the many who never came home. We will come together to embrace the hope we see in this renewed conversation as we work to ensure the truth of this country’s history is known. Truth and Reconciliation Week would not be possible without the Survivors, the children of Survivors, Indigenous Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who continue truth-telling to advance reconciliation through education. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation would like to thank all our funders and partners for their contributions.”

This excerpt is from the [Truth and Reconciliation curriculum](#), which can be found [here](#) on the Truth and Reconciliation Week website. There are also accompanying [TRC Teaching Resources](#) available.

Truth and Reconciliation is more than just teaching about Residential Schools. The 94 Calls to Action seek an acknowledgment of the reality of the history of colonialism, compassion for affected communities and a willingness to listen. The discovery of the unmarked graves on Residential Schools across Canada confirm survivor stories about the cultural and physical genocide aimed at Indigenous communities.

Watch this excellent video addressing “[What is Reconciliation?](#)” featuring Pam Palmater, Cindy Blackstock and Indigenous Educators.

“Reconciliation is our chance to learn how not to turn away”

With your class, you can participate in Orange Shirt Day and Truth and Reconciliation Week, envision current and future reconciliation, lead lessons with indigenous content, invite indigenous speakers to your class and get involved in matters of importance to Indigenous communities.

The BC Aboriginal Education PSA has curated a [list of curriculum and resources here](#), and you can find the Timeline History of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia, produced by the BCTF [here](#).

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The BCTF Aboriginal Lens is a guide for those who work in education and are committed to taking up the “Calls to Action on Education” as stipulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This framework is designed to help educators challenge the current, established systems of belief that support Eurocentric practices that have silenced other ways of knowing and being. The lens focuses our efforts and can be used to examine and assess policies and practices. The framework also works to address the needs of the collective and the community, as well as providing common reference for teachers.

The Calls to Action include recommendations about a variety of matters including education.



Remember that September 30 is a new national day for reflection, learning and action on Reconciliation. VESTA suggests reading the 94 Calls to Action and considering ways to decolonize our practice in the classroom and in our communities.

The Aboriginal Education Association PSA Conference on October 22, 2021 entitled “Residential Schools, Truth and Trauma” or book one of ten available Professional and Social Issues Workshop focused on Aboriginal Education through the BCTF for your school staff.





## **Professional Development**

Now that schools are back in full density, the board has clarified that they are returning to their stance that professional development may take place at the school, other schools, libraries or locations other than the members' home.

There appears to be some confusion and some of the messaging from administrators has been mixed. In general, teachers need to report to their Professional Development Committee where they plan to be on Professional Development days. While VESTA advocated for the continued option of working from home on Professional Development days, the District disagrees, and members should not plan to work from home this Friday or other Professional Development days.

Coming up fast, on October 22, the BCTF offers an incredible variety of Professional Development workshops through our Provincial Specialist Association Fall PSA day conferences. You can find out more at [PSAday.ca](http://PSAday.ca) where teacher-led, teacher-focused, not-for-profit workshops are available on a variety of topics including: Tools for Anti-Racist Educators (AEOC), 85 workshops for intermediate and middle years teachers (myPITA), Trauma Informed Behaviour Support (TIEBC), Running a Diversity Audit in a School Library (BCTLA), Listening to the Land, Giving Voice to the Sea: Stories to Nourish Hope and Resiliency (EEPSA) and much more.

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## **Anti-Racism Inservice Feedback**

All staff participated in a mandatory anti-racism inservice training developed and provided by the district on September 7 this year. As always, it's important that VESTA provide feedback to the VSB on their initiatives, especially on topics as important as anti-racism.

Feedback can comment on the content, presentation, timing, structure, format, overall impact, or any other thoughts you have after participating. You can send your feedback as a staff after a group discussion, collect feedback by email and collate for us, or send individual comments to [jody@vesta.ca](mailto:jody@vesta.ca) or [allison@vesta.ca](mailto:allison@vesta.ca)

We will bring the results to the next Staff Rep Assembly in October for review and reporting out to the membership prior to submitting to the Board. Thank you in advance for this important discussion.



# **Mandatory JOHS Committee Member Training**

WorkSafeBC introduced a new Regulation in 2017 creating one day of mandatory training for all "new members" to a Workplace Health and Safety Committee (JOHS).

If you are a new member who has joined your H&S Committee after September 2017 and have not yet attended this training, you are REQUIRED to attend this session. While the registration is on the Pro-D VSB site, this training is mandatory, and therefore inservice.

A "new member" is defined as:

- Someone who has never previously served on an H&S Committee.
- Someone who has served on an H&S Committee in the past, however, has been away from it for over 2 years.

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## **Bargaining Timeline**

VESTA swings into bargaining with gusto, optimism and enthusiasm. Bargaining is one of the key components of our work as a union, and we're getting ready to represent VESTA members at both provincial and local negotiations.

VESTA ratified our objectives earlier this spring after a member survey and General Meeting and VESTA's Local Reps to the BCTF are prepared and ready to represent VESTA member's values and priorities at the Bargaining Conference at the end of October.

This year, the timeline of bargaining will look a little bit different as a result of agreements made in the last round of provincial bargaining. On a trial basis, local tables (Vancouver Teachers and the VSB) will begin negotiations in November with an aim to be completed by March 2021. It is our hope that this will result in more productive discussions at each table and more effective communications with members.

Please see the simplified [bargaining timeline](#) for an explanation of how the two tables work in concert and when key events take place. Remember to ensure your contact information is up to date with VESTA and the BCTF in order to receive updates and opportunities to provide input into bargaining. VESTA members can contact [lori@vesta.ca](mailto:lori@vesta.ca) to update or change their contact information.



## **Category Change Timelines**

Teachers who have completed coursework that results in a category change (30 credits for a Category 5+ or a Masters Degree for Category 6) have two points in the year ONLY when they can apply for and have a category change applied to their salary.

All documentation must be received by the Board by September 30 to be retroactively effective on September 1 of that year, or by January 31 to be retroactively effective on January 1 of that same year.

If you miss the date, you'll have to wait until the next date for your category change to take effect.

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## **Mentorship Fund**

In the last round of bargaining, a provincial fund of \$12 million was provided to locals to support mentorship. VESTA's allocation of that funding allows all VESTA members to access funds for release time including K-7 and Adult Educators, TTOCs, District and Itinerate staff.

You can use release time to: observe in another teacher's classroom; work in a self-identified mentor/peer partnership; and, collaborate with an experienced teacher or an early career peer. You can find the application on the [VESTA Website](#). Funds will be distributed until spent, and the objective is to ensure the greatest number of members possible benefit from this fund. Please indicate on your application the names of both mentor and mentee, or collaborators.

The Committee meets at the start of each month to review applications and will communicate with applicants when approvals are complete. Incomplete applications necessitate a delay in consideration.

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## **Teacher Workload**

The district is no longer offering an Option 4 learning model. As such, it is VESTA's position that teachers are not required to provide remote or online instruction to students whose families choose not to send them to school. Families currently have the choice between in-class learning or registration with Distributed Learning through Vancouver Learning Network.

In an open letter to the VSB this week, VESTA articulated concerns about teacher workload and indicated that while TEAMS was still available and teachers may opt to continue posting assignments online, the requirement to use available software for posting assignments or teaching online is not consistent with the PHO orders for full return, nor any district policy change about remote learning. Our letter also raised the issue of reporting for students who do not attend full time.

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Please let your Staff Rep know if you are being asked to teach online, post assignments online, or provide other remote learning options for students who are not attending school full time.

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## **Foundations Skills Assessment**

This year's Foundation Skills Assessment test communication has been provided by the BCTF. These updated withdrawal letters will comprise part of the BCTF FSA campaign this year along with an advocacy plan surrounding the lack of relevance of the FSA tests. The attached FSA opt out letter and the Parents Should Know documents may be distributed to parents via students or directly to parents on school property. Superintendents in all districts will be notified by BCPSEA of the FSA documents and that the BCTF/BCSPEA protocol agreement regarding distribution of union materials has been completed. VESTA has notified the VSB that teachers are beginning to distribute these letters.

Teachers hand out the materials in sealed envelopes to students to take home to parents. There is no need for envelopes in cases where the materials are provided directly to parents.

You can find the [Parents Should Know](#) and [Opt Out Letter](#) on the VESTA Website. Remember to be careful in your conversations with students about the FSA – discussion about the (lack of) merit of the FSA and the (mis-)use of the results is a conversation for parents. You can focus with your students on what evaluation and assessment you do use in your teaching and reporting.



## **Staff Rep Release Time**

You should have received your Staff Rep Release Time information for September. Please remember the following:

In 2020, a Staff Rep Assembly decision allowed ½ days to be combined to a full day. You can do this with your September and November ½ days. Remember that the ½ day in October won't be available due to the scheduling of SURT.

Any staff, including TTOCs and non-enrolling, district / itinerant staff are entitled to union release, whether or not a TTOC is provided.

During Staff Rep Release Time, we recommend that members be at their worksite. Training sessions are different, in our view and we received confirmation today that there is no district directive for teachers to report to worksites for SURT training in October. Please notify your IHTO contact if you are being directed to report to work for the October SURT days.

If no TTOC is provided, and you are pulled back into your class, then the admin needs to cancel the assignment and the Staff Rep can rebook. If the job is not cancelled, then the funds go to the school flex account for a future day of release time for the school to be provided as per the decision of Staff Committee.

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## **#RedforBCED**

Colleagues – we are entering another bargaining year, with local bargaining opening in November. Bargaining is an important time to work collectively to improve our working conditions and students' learning conditions. VESTA has purchased Red For BC ED shirts that we are encouraging members to wear on Fridays to show our solidarity as VESTA members, because we know that we are stronger together.

We have sizes ranging from M to 3XL. Please check in with your Staff Rep, who can take an order for your school during your next VESTA meeting. If that is not accessible to you, you can send your request directly to [vanessa@vesta.ca](mailto:vanessa@vesta.ca). We would love to see photos of members in shirts, so send them our way to include in a future VESTA Weekly.







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## Dates to Remember

### **Executive Committee Meeting**

September 28th at 4:00pm

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83873548183>

Meeting ID: 838 7354 8183

Passcode: 128684

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada



**Starling**

Build  
Resilient  
Minds.

VESTA

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.