

# VEAES WEEKLY

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



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# BLACK HISTORY month

Saturday February 24, 2024 10:30 – 12:30 pm  
4333 Ledger Ave Burnaby, BC  
<https://vdlc.ca/events/honouring-our-heroes/>



“Honouring  
our  
Heros”



Highlighting our Past  
Celebrating our Present  
Inspiring our Future

Enjoy a dance performance by  
Alegria Soy Cultural Society  
“Dancing for Justice”



Have coffee and conversation as  
we congregate to celebrate  
Black Labour Leaders

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: CANDACE KNOLL  
MODERATOR: ASHALEE

James Calbert Best  
PSAC  
Emmanual

Lee Williams  
BSCP  
Eden-Belle

Edward Lloyd  
STA  
Daniel

Jan Simpson  
CUPW  
Jenaya

LIVE INTERVIEW WITH JUDY PHIPPS BCGEU EYP - ZENA

Warren Williams  
CUPE 15  
Jeremiah

Roxanne Brown  
USW  
Andre

Larry Rousseau  
CLC  
Temi



  
[www.JRBAA.ORG](http://www.JRBAA.ORG)  
[www.NWDLC.ORG](http://www.NWDLC.ORG)  
[www.VDL.ORG](http://www.VDL.ORG)



## **Heck yes DPAC!**

by: Jody Polukoshko

The Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council has released a second statement in response to the Vancouver Joint Union Statement on Staffing at VSB schools, this one focusing on the Health and Safety impacts of the staffing shortage, focused on SSSWs, and copied to the Premier and Minister of Education and Childcare.

“We look to both the VSB and the Province, including but not limited to the Ministry of Education and Childcare, to create safer situations for both workers and students going forward by looking to the root causes of the shortages, including but not exclusively due to budget cuts and austerity measures that are unrelenting, illnesses and the unmitigated spread of diseases in our buildings causing stress, injury and absences, and overall job dissatisfaction.”

It also includes a list of Recommendations including:

- “Employ Sufficient Staff – Increase funding to the school-levels of VSB such that enough staff can be hired to fill roles
- Return Janitorial Staffing to Previous Levels – To ensure buildings are clean and free of pollutants
- Monitor Indoor Air Quality – Transparently, in all school buildings, constantly throughout all hours of occupancy and utilize tools which allow us to quickly ventilate and consistently clean indoor air.
- Ensure that students with IEPs and physical disabilities are not having their staff poached to cover the absences of classroom teachers. – Students who require direct attention must have staff dedicated to their care, and unavailable to be used for other purposes within a school.
- Collect and share data about what happens in schools in an open, transparent and unaltered way that includes absences, leaves, and failures to fill. – This will ensure parents and caregivers and those related to people working in schools will understand the needs of public systems as the province heads into an election.
- Allow and enable staff and students to stay home when ill, and send staff home when they are unwell. – The culture of working while sick is one that causes domino-effect spread of contagious diseases further than they might otherwise.”

It is affirming to see the perspectives of teachers reflected in those of parents, and validating that our voices are united in support of our students and their learning needs.

## **New Teacher SURT and Welcome to VEAES**

by: Eric Proulx

This year, VEAES is holding its annual Welcome to VEAES Ceremony in tandem with a New Teacher School Union Rep Training (SURT). Teachers within their first two years of teaching are invited to join, with a limit of 30 participants. The New Teacher SURT will begin at 9am with a light breakfast and will include lunch. This will be followed at 3pm by a Welcome to VEAES induction and social with some after school snacks being served.

[Click here to register!](#)

If you are an Early Career Teacher, or new to the VSB, this union training event will help you learn to navigate the ins and outs of working at the VSB, connect you to the larger union/labour movement and introduce you to the wider world of the BCTF. If you are interested in learning what your provincial union (BCTF) and your local union (VEAES) can do to support those new to the teaching profession and how to engage in the struggle for improved working and learning conditions, then this is the perfect event for you!

Early Career Teachers attending the event will also have access to a free one-year membership to a Provincial Specialist Association, paid for by the BCTF. Wow!

The VEAES office is located at 410 - 2238 Yukon Street. Please note that parking is limited in the area surrounding the VEAES office and it is advisable to take public transit if possible.

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## **New SOGI DRT, Lee**

Hello VEAES members!

I am the new SOGI DRT. My name is Lee, my pronouns are they/them and as of Feb 20, I moved into this role after 25 years in student-facing classrooms, primarily in Secondary settings as a Social Studies teacher. I would like to connect with the SOGI leads and allies at all sites, and to add your name(s) to the VSB SOGI TEAMS channel to build community and share supportive resources.

I'm available if you are looking for information or support on implementing SOGI curriculum, creating inclusive PHE curriculum, or would like me to work with you and your students on creating healthier and safer classrooms for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff. I can also provide support on district policy such as starting GSAs, access to universal washrooms and change rooms, inclusive language and practice, and more. Here are some links for [VSB Administrative Procedure](#) and [Policy 17](#) on supporting queer and trans students and staff.

I can also meet with staff at lunch for updates, information and Q and A.

Here is a link if you would like to request a classroom visit: <https://forms.office.com/r/djgqzabdjE>.

Please message me at [dplee@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:dplee@vsb.bc.ca) to be added to SOGI Leads and Allies TEAMS



## **Vancouver & District Labour Council's (VDLC) Restore the Living Wage Campaign**

by: Eric Proulx

*Letter-writing tool and Living-Wage Campaign Town Hall Support Efforts to Recertify Vancouver as a Living-Wage Employer*

In 2015, the City of Vancouver decided to become a living wage employer, meaning the workers they employ began to receive a wage allowing them to live in Vancouver proper. With the election of Ken Sim in 2022, the majority ABC city council repealed this policy in 2023.

It is no secret that the cost of living in Vancouver is spiralling out of control, and we as teachers are struggling to make ends meet. We can only imagine then the impacts of this policy choice on the hundreds of workers, as well as their families, whose labour is necessary to keep Vancouver running.

Such policies also have direct impacts on us as teachers in Vancouver. As the cost-of-living increases, workers move to more affordable regions and withdraw their children from VSB schools. Teachers are also aware that parents finding themselves needing to work excessive hours or multiple jobs has a direct impact on their child's learning, as it becomes increasingly difficult for them to take an active role in their child's academic progress.

For these reasons and many more, the VDLC has begun a campaign to recertify Vancouver as a living wage employer. Teachers who would like their voice heard on the topic [can use this letter-writing tool](#) and send a message to city hall asking that Vancouver pay its workers enough that they are able to live in the very city they keep running.

If teachers are interested, the [VDLC is hosting a Living Wage Vancouver Townhall](#) on February 26th from 7:30-9:00PM at the Maritime Labour Centre.

## **Registration is now open for April's district-wide Pro-D “(Un)Learning: Embracing Education Outdoors”**

by: Jacey Gibbs

We're back with our second annual Pro-D focusing on outdoor learning! Spend the morning at one of several Vancouver-based sites, learning from the land and from other passionate educators—followed by an afternoon at Tupper Secondary for lunch, a sustainability Swap Meet, and additional workshops. Space for each field experience/workshop is limited, so [register soon here!](#)

## **Provincial Budget process begins**

by: Jody Polukoshko

While VEAES advocacy on the VSB budget is underway, with the first stakeholder meeting taking place yesterday, the Provincial budget process begins today. As always, the BCTF represents BC Teachers at the provincial budget, and produced an Education Brief focused on Recruitment and Retention and Inclusion.

The following is a summary of the BCTF Recommendations to the Provincial Government regarding the 2024 budget. You'll find that the recommendations are consistent with VEAES' position in the media and in our conversations with the Board. Please read the full document at the link above.

A robustly funded public education system generates social and economic benefits for BC communities, including enhanced student learning outcomes, greater equity and social mobility, reduced poverty, better physical and mental health, stronger employment indicators, improved public health and safety, and greater civic engagement and stability. Only a long-term systemic fiscal strategy can resolve the demoralizing and damaging effects of BC's current teacher and funding shortages. To anchor that recovery, the BCTF is recommending targeted envelopes of additional operational funding over the next three years (2024–2027) to address teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and special education needs.

**Recommendation 1:** Provide a targeted teacher recruitment funding envelope to relieve current K–12 staffing shortages and fill projected labour needs.

**Recommendation 2:** Provide a targeted teacher retention funding envelope to enhance retention of the current work force.

**Recommendation 3:** Provide, at a minimum, funding for special education staffing and services that fully covers what school districts actually spend on inclusive education.



# 8 ways to support disability justice and counter ableism

By: Jody Polukoshko

As teachers, we're often in the position of advocating for full inclusion of our students, and our work necessitates and understanding of disability in terms of accommodation, modification and adaptation, but it's also essential that we question the ways that our beliefs and understandings about disability. There are ways that unconscious ableism permeates our thinking and can have an impact on how we conceptualize and respond to disabled people / people with disabilities, or to the work of inclusion and accessibility.

Importantly, it's essential that we also recognize that students and members with disabilities experience the world differently based on other parts of their identity. When we work towards accessibility and disability justice, our work needs to be intersectional and recognize that racism, queer- or trans-phobia, Indigeneity, sexism, poverty, family status, or other experiences of marginalization must be central.

Please take a look at these three articles, written by disabled folks, about microaggressions and harm that comes from incomplete understandings of disability and, in some cases, paternalistic or deficit-based approaches. The work of disability justice is so central to our work as teachers, and the learning is ongoing. Disabled people / people with disabilities are providing leadership and, as with any allyship, it's important that this leadership informs and changes our practices and beliefs, and our working and professional relationships with colleagues and students.

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/186060-13-microaggressions-people-with-disabilities-face-on-a-daily-basis>

<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/what-is-disability-justice>

and one more article on recognizing and countering ableism:

<https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2024/02/01/Support-Disability-Justice-Counter-Ableism/>

## Intersectionality and Disability

The experience of each disabled student is unique, depending on the experiences you bring with you. We each have complex identities, and our experience of disability can change depending on the identities we carry.

Some of us have different experiences of disability depending on our gender identity, sexuality, or whether we've experienced racism. The ways that these identities interact with each other is called intersectionality.

Students' experiences can also vary if they have visible or invisible disabilities, or if their disability is newly acquired.

Some of us may have difficulty asking for the support we need because our needs are filtered through racism, sexism, and other forms of marginalization.

If you are a student navigating multiple identities in placement it's important to find people who can support you through this process. Having the support you need will help you to perform at your very best.

For additional resources please read:

Magana, Sandy, Ben-Moshe, Liat. 2014. An introduction to race, gender, and disability: Intersectionality, disability studies, and families of color. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 2 (2): 105-14

Mingus, M. (February 12, 2012). "Changing the Framework: Disability Justice." <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/>

Saxe, A. (2017). The Theory of Intersectionality: A New Lens for Understanding the Barriers Faced by Autistic Women. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 6(4), 153-178. <https://doi.org/10.15352/cjds.v6i4.386>

REFERENCES

Abes, E. and Wallace, M., 2018. "People See Me, But They Don't See Me": An Intersectional Study of College Students With Physical Disabilities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 59(5), pp.545-562.

# **BC Teacher Council Elections**

By: Jody Polukoshko

Every three years, teachers elect representatives to the BC Teachers' Council. The Teachers' Council has impact on our work in many ways, including overseeing university teacher education programs, member certification, disciplines, and reviewing Teacher Professional Standards.

For the last three years, Vancouver Coastal has been so well served by Marjorie Dumont, C'tan, VEAES VP, who oversaw the review of the UBC Teacher Education Program and facilitated the addition of Professional Standard 9 on Indigenization / Reconciliation. Marjorie's term is up and we thank her for her work, insight, and courage working with Ministry and partner groups for a stronger public education.

VEAES has endorsed **Jelana Bighorn**, a Vancouver Secondary Teacher and Member at Large on the BCTF Executive Committee, for Vancouver Coastal Zone. Following the BCTF's extensive process, Jelana has also been endorsed by the BCTF, along with **Shanee Prasad**, the president of the Burnaby Teachers' Association for Fraser Zone.

## **Vote for the region where you live:**

The election zones correspond with the [five regional health authorities](#), and certificate holders can **only** vote in the **zone where they live**. Most VEAES members will vote in either Vancouver Coastal or Fraser Zones.

The elections will be held in March 2024, with voting open March 6-20, 2024. Voting is online and open to all certificate holders. Please watch your email (including your junk folder) for an invitation from BC Teachers' Council, which will be sent on February 22. Candidate profiles and information will be posted on the [elections page](#) in late February.

In order to ensure you are able to participate, the BCTF recommends that members ensure their contact information, especially your email address, are up to date in [Your Account](#), which is accessed using your BCeID login. Call 604-660-2355 if you need help logging in to your BCeID account.





## Pacific Blue Cross Vote

By: Jody Polukoshko

Reminder! February 27 and 28 are the dates set for our membership vote on whether to retain our local benefits plan or join the provincial benefits plan.

We will be holding an electronic vote by secret ballot with an online platform called Simply Voting. Please check your email, including your junk or spam folders after **11:00 p.m. on Monday, February 26, 2024**, for your personalized voter package from the **British Columbia Teachers' Federation (Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society)** with the address [vote@simplyvoting.com](mailto:vote@simplyvoting.com).

That email will include a link specific to you as an eligible voter. Once voting officially opens, you just need to click that link and vote. You don't need any other information. The link is already personalized for you. **Your personalized link will not work until voting opens.** You can cast your online ballot from 7:00 a.m. (PST) on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, to **7:00 p.m. (PST) on Wednesday, February 28, 2024**.

When you click your personalized link, you will be taken to your electronic ballot where you can vote on the motions. Once you vote, you will then be asked to confirm your selection. If you want to change your vote, click "change." If your selection was correct, click "confirm." You will then receive a receipt confirming that your vote was received.

If you share an email address with another member, then that single email address will receive an email for each individual member with a personalized and unique link.

What if I don't receive an email link?

First, please check your junk or spam folder. If you still don't have the email with your voting link by **12:00 p.m. on February 27**, please call the VEAES office at 604-873-8378 or email [jody@veaes.ca](mailto:jody@veaes.ca)

Please see the [updated comparison chart](#) and the powerpoint summary of last year's conversation with [PBC](#) which outlines a lot of relevant information about the process, how we bargain improvements to the plan, and some of the relative strengths between the two plans.

It's important not to simply look at the numbers on the chart to make your decision. There are some significant improvements in the provincial plan from what we have in the local plan, AND, there are many aspects of our local plan that are superior to the provincial plan.

Here are some of the key considerations:

- The [provincial plan](#) uses a pay-direct card, which increases efficiency, but the "[Blue Rx](#)" formulary significantly limits the number of medications that are covered.
- In the [local plan](#), you are covered for medications prescribed by your doctor, without having to comply with an approved list.
- If you are currently on a medication, on the [provincial plan](#), you will be required to try cheaper alternatives
- The [local plan](#) has "unlimited" benefits for some paramedical services. This is subject to PBC's Reasonable and Customary Limits, which can be exceeded with a doctor's note.
- The [provincial plan](#) has dollar amounts for paramedical services that are higher than the local plan in some instances (i.e. Naturopathy), but those dollar limits will not change when providers increase fees, and the limits cannot be exceeded with a doctor's note.
- The [provincial plan](#) has seen improvements in areas where our plan has not, such as vision care, acupuncture, hearing aids, psychology, fertility treatments)
- The [local plan's](#) deductible is \$1000 per family before expenses are reimbursed at 100% reimbursement, the provincial plan is \$1000 per family member before expenses are reimbursed at 100%.

If we vote to stay in the [local plan](#), nothing changes.

If we vote to join the [provincial plan](#), there will be a transition time, and we cannot go back to the local plan at a later date.

## **Dates to Remember**

### **Social Justice & Solidarity Committee Meeting**

February 27, 2024  
@ 4 pm  
VEAES Office  
410 - 2238 Yukon Street



**Jody Polukoshko**  
President  
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## **Hoobiyee 2024 – Reclaiming Our Spirit**

By: Marjorie Dumont

Nisga'a Ts'amiks Vancouver Society is the official host of the Hoobiyee T'samiks Editions, featuring the Nisga'a Ts'amiks Traditional Dancers.

Hoobiyee (pronounced "ho-bee-yeah"), the Nisga'a Nation's new year, will take place at the PNE Forum in Vancouver. Hoobiyee is a celebration of the waxing crescent moon, during the latter part of winter, each year. There will be dance performances as well as drumming and singing. There is also a market area where many community organizations and vendors have Indigenous art, jewellery, clothing and other artisan goods for sale.

The event is free and open to all to attend. We shall see you at the PNE Forum (2901 East Hastings, Vancouver, BC) on March 1, 2024 from 10:30 am – 9:00 pm, and March 2, 2024 from 10:30 am – 6:00 pm.



Photo credit: Ben Nelms/CBC

VEAES

The Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.