

VEAES WEEKLY

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



[VEAES Member Portal](#)

To access the portal, go to the [VEAES website](#). On the menu, scroll down to [Member Portal Log In](#). When you click on it, there will be a prompt for you to register. After much consideration, we have chosen to use members' VSB employee numbers as the username, as it allows us to verify members. So, you will have to have your VSB employee number ready in order to register for the portal.

Once your registered and verified, you can access the portal menu, which is located on the left sidebar, under Member Portal. We encourage all members to sign up. If you have any issues with your registration, please email lori@veaes.ca

Table of CONTENTS

May 23 Day of Reflection - Tk'emlups te Secwépemc - Page 2

Canadian Jewish Heritage Month - Page 3

BCTF Bargaining Conference - Page 4

Seamless Day - Page 4

SPACES software - Page 5

Class Size - Page 5

COPE Townhall series: The Schools We Need - Page 6

Upcoming Celebrations - Page 6

Cell Phone Legislation - Page 7

Joy as Collective Action Symposium - Page 8

May 23 Day of Reflection - Tk'emlups te Secwépemc

Taken from Tk'emlups te Secwépemc Facebook post

On May 27, 2021, it was with a heavy heart that community of Tk'emlups te Secwépemc confirmed an unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented by the Kamloops Indian Residential School. With the help of a ground penetrating radar specialist, the stark truth of the findings came to light — the confirmation of 215 anomalies were detected.

The community of Tk'emlups te Secwépemc offices will be closed Thursday, May 23 in honour of these findings.

For many, this announcement has been a stark reminder of a painful chapter in history. It serves as a starting point for many to learn more about the dark realities of residential schools and the lasting impacts they have had on Indigenous communities. While the number "215" has become a symbol of the children lost at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, it's important to recognize that it represents far more than just a numerical figure. It stands for the countless spirits of children who never had the chance to return home from residential schools all across Canada. It signifies the enduring connections they had to their communities and the profound impact their loss continues to have across generations.

Chief and Council of the community of Tk'emlups te Secwépemc are designating this day May 23, as a Day of Reflection. We urge everyone to set aside time for introspection, learning, and being with loved ones. As the community pauses to reflect and honour the memory of Le Estcwicwéy (the missing) and all those affected by the residential school system, it is also a time to recommit to the ongoing work of reconciliation and healing. On this day of reflection, I'd like to ask that colleagues join the community of Tk'emlups te Secwépemc with a moment of silence.

Canadian Jewish Heritage Month

by: Darren Tereposky

Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, every May, is an opportunity to “recognize the important contributions that Jewish Canadians have made to Canada’s social, economic, political and cultural fabric” as proclaimed by the Federal government in 2018. The federal Minister Kamal Khera recently issued a statement on May 1st you can read [here](#).

Jewish Canadians have a long history of overcoming adversity and thriving despite numerous challenges. From the early 20th century, Jewish immigrants brought with them a strong tradition of social justice and community solidarity. They have contributed to the Canadian labour movement through various organizations. Beginning in the 1930s, activists in the Jewish Labour Committee worked to fight racism within Unions, combat workplace discrimination for all workers and advocate for fair employment practices in Canada.

It is important to acknowledge that Canadian laws have historically allowed discrimination and antisemitism. This included restrictive immigration policies between 1919-1947. In 1939, Canada refused entry to the [MS St. Louis](#), a ship with over 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Germany, of whom about a third perished in the Holocaust on their return to Europe. There were also quotas in Canadian universities to limit the number of Jewish students, and Jewish workers faced both employment discrimination and social exclusion in various professions and organizations. There has been an ongoing rise in antisemitic incidents in Canada. As educators and VEAES members, we need to challenge all forms of intolerance and actively promote inclusivity and respect in our classrooms and school communities.

While much information can be found online, the Vancouver/Lower Mainland area, home to Canada’s third-largest urban Jewish population, offers numerous opportunities to experience and learn about Jewish culture and history firsthand. The [Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre](#) offers on-line resources and school visits. The Chutzpah! Festival, Vancouver Jewish Film Festival, and the Jewish Book Festival are some events where you can explore and appreciate the culture and heritage of this diverse community, and bring these experiences into your classroom.

BCTF Bargaining Conference

by: Jody Polukoshko

Yesterday and today, 8 elected VEAES representatives attended the BCTF Bargaining Conference. There, we jockeyed for the objectives that you ratified at the March General Meeting. While many of our objectives and priorities were mirrored by the desires of other locals, or the BCTF Executive committee, we were able to make significant additions to the list and to ensure that the voices of VEAES members were well represented at the conference.

The bargaining team and the BCTF Executive Committee then pursue the objectives carried by the bargaining conference through the preparation and negotiation of the 2025 Collective Agreement. Negotiations will likely begin in late 2024 or early 2025 and the bargaining team will need all of our support to make the significant improvements required for our members, but also as part of the need to recruit and retain additional teachers to the profession.

The decisions of the bargaining conference will be posted on the BCTF portal in the coming weeks, and we will be reporting out on the process and decisions at the June Staff Rep Assembly. Thank you to Natasha Burditt, Greg Canning, Marjorie Dumont, Xander Graham, Vanessa Lefebvre, Bernadette Milton, Jody Polukoshko, and Jennifer Sebastian for attending and working with our provincial colleagues to bring a strong and inclusive start to the process of provincial bargaining. Rob McGowan also attended for the provincial Adult Education Advisory Committee and VEAES.

Seamless Day

by: Jody Polukoshko

The Seamless Day provincial initiative has only been piloted in one Vancouver school to date, but the plan to provide before and after school care to children in schools, and connected to their classrooms has just been expanded in a few districts in BC.

This program has many benefits, if it becomes widely implemented – the childcare opportunities would be publicly provided, with unionized (CUPE) employees, the childcare providers would be available in the classroom to ostensibly provide additional support in the classroom, and it could help resolve the issue of cross-district enrolment as parent seek childcare outside of their catchment area school.

On the other hand, there have been some concerns raised by BCTF and VEAES about the need for continued provision of SSSWs and other supports for students, the need for clear roles for the CUPE ECE workers in the classroom, protections for teachers' professional autonomy, and ensuring that our resources and classroom spaces are protected and appropriate funding be provided for additional resources as needed.

We will continue to work with our colleagues in the impacted districts to learn from their experiences and with CUPE to ensure that our relationships and our autonomy are well supported. You can read more about it [here](#)

SPACES software

by: Jody Polukoshko

The district has indicated in a meeting with VEAES and VSTA that they intend to transition from the CSL reporting software to a new program called SPACES, which is a much more portfolio-based tool. This is a program a few elementary schools are already voluntarily working with, and has been available in Secondary already. The district indicated that it would be mandatory for Secondary self-evaluation in fall 2024 and that they intend to roll it out in Elementary the following year.

VEAES has been clear with the district that the rollout of the CSL was problematic and that teachers were deeply frustrated with both the process and the software and that these experiences need to be the foundation of any future decisions the district makes on reporting software. We noted that the increase and changes in reporting requirements has been a significant workload for teachers and a source of great frustration. We also raised concerns that the application of new software will be vastly different between elementary and secondary classrooms, and that the reporting software cannot be the driver of pedagogy or assessment, which is the purview of teacher autonomy.

We will be meeting again with the Board at the end of May to continue the discussions, and hope members will plan to attend the June Staff Rep Assembly to provide feedback and input on any future implementation and timelines.

Class Size

by: Jody Polukoshko

Research is affirming something that teachers have always known – that Class Size matters. Recently the BC Conservative party, in their leadup to the election, declared that they would increase class size to fund other education initiatives. It will be increasingly important that teachers attend to the impact of our participation (and risks of non-participation!) in the upcoming provincial election.

Perhaps even more important than the upcoming election is the 2025 round of bargaining. We know no political party is going to provide the working conditions we need – these have to be negotiated and implemented as part of our collective agreement. It is this document that guarantees our rights, and ensures that they are protected in ways that make sense to teachers. Studies show that there is a direct connection between working conditions and teacher recruitment and retention! It feels good to know that the research supports what we've been saying all along.

The BCTF has produced a (fairly academic) [research review](#) of the impact on class size over time and place, and this will be a good support in talking with parents and community as we advocate for smaller class sizes in bargaining and in the future. Important caveats for this data is that they are provincial averages, and tend not to reflect the significantly higher class sizes we see in Vancouver, as they are an aggregate that includes rural and remote classrooms. This in and of itself is another good reason to keep fighting for full local bargaining!

COPE Townhall series: The Schools We Need

by: Jody Polukoshko & Vanessa Lefebvre

COPE Vancouver, one of the municipal political parties that is represented by Suzie Mah on the Vancouver Board of Trustees has launched [a survey](#) that is open now to solicit feedback from the community on issues impacting public education in Vancouver. VEAES provides feedback and input to trustees through our structures, but should you choose to participate, the survey is open until June 30, 2024.

As part of their outreach, COPE will be hosting Townhall meetings, open to the public, to discuss matters such as:

- Adequacy of provincial funding and VSB use of that funding
- Improvement to educational programs
- Better accountability and transparency from the VSB

We invite members to attend the townhalls and talk with community members about your experiences. VEAES Executive Committee members will be in attendance, helping facilitate small table discussions. This is an amazing opportunity to build community with the public and raise the awareness of the need for increased funding in public education, work together to improve the learning conditions of our students as we build the schools we need.

Trustee Mah has been a fierce advocate at the Board table and has been bringing the voices of workers and the public to those meetings. We are so grateful for COPE taking the lead and bringing the public back into these conversations, as the VSB has been restricting public access to these meetings and creating barriers to participation.

The first event will be held on May 28th at the Russian Hall at 600 Campbell Avenue, Vancouver. We hope to see many of you there!!

Upcoming Celebrations

by: Jody Polukoshko

Committee Appreciation Event June 19th at 4pm at the VEAES Office

All members who participated on an advisory committee or volunteered on behalf of VEAES as a representative to a VSB committee is welcome to attend a social to appreciate your contributions and efforts on behalf of all VEAES members. [Here is a link to register](#)

Retirement Dinner June 24 at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club

All VEAES members retiring this year are invited to the VEAES retirement dinner where we can celebrate your career and the days ahead. If you have not received an invitation but have submitted your retirement, please contact lori@veaes.ca While it's not mandatory, we always invite attendees to speak about a favourite moment in their teaching or union work. We look forward to celebrating this milestone with you.

Retirement Celebration for Lori Liang, VEAES Staff Member May 30 4pm at the VEAES Office

Long time VEAES Staff Member Lori Liang is retiring and we invite you to join us in appreciating and celebrating her contributions to our union and care of our members.

Jane MacEwan's Celebration of Life May 26 at the UBC University Golf Club

Colleagues, family, and friends have the opportunity to grieve and celebrate the loss of our colleague and union leader, Jane MacEwan.

Cell Phone Legislation

by: Jody Polukoshko

Members will be aware that the BC government is implementing cellphone restrictions in classrooms. The impact of this legislation, in our view, has not been well thought through, and appears to be a naïve solution to a complex matter. We know that the use and provision of technology isn't applied equitably across the district, and that while student technology brings challenges to classroom management, intellectual integrity with the advance of accessible AI, and privacy concerns. However, we all remember not too long ago, that the government was pushing a policy of BYOD (Bring your own device) encouraging students and families to provide their own technology at school.

As a result of the trend towards BYOD, we have seen an increasing disparity in available technology in schools as some communities are better able to supplement district technology through PAC fundraising and individual student devices. While BYOD originally was intended to see laptops in the hands of students, we know that cellphones have replaced laptops for many of our students. The challenges of managing student safety on social media and the internet are not the same problem as accessing learning resources and supports online, and in our view, the attempt to restrict student cellphones is not an adequate solution.

VEAES has raised the following issues with the implementation, and while Trustees are working through the problem at their board committees, we will continue to advocate for these points:

- Access to technology is inequitable across the district
- BYOD culture has resulted in reduced tech infrastructure to classrooms, relying on students and families
- Technology is a key component of accessibility for students with disabilities / disabled students, and tech plays a significant role in IEP goals and modifications in the classroom
- Teachers cannot be made responsible for policing student cellphone use, or for devices during the school day
- Different grade levels will be impacted differently by this legislation, and there is a need to be nuanced in its' application

Watch this space for updates, and remember you can always watch the livestream of VSB Board meetings, even after the meeting has concluded, on the VSB website. Agendas and minutes are also available there so you can listen to the debate and be informed about the decisions taking place at that level.



Jody Polukoshko
President
jody@veaes.ca

Marjorie Dumont
Vice President
marjorie@veaes.ca

Darren Tereposky
Vice President
darren@veaes.ca

Karine Ng
Vice President
karine@veaes.ca

Vanessa Lefebvre
Vice President
vanessa@veaes.ca

Eric Proulx
Vice President
eric@veaes.ca

Rob McGowan
AE President
rob@veaes.ca



Joy as Collective Action Symposium

(Excerpted from BCTF Communications)

The BCTF Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Office (ARAOO) will host an anti-racism symposium, Joy as Collective Action, in Vancouver, BC, on November 14–16, 2024, at the downtown Coast Coal Harbour Hotel.

At the symposium, delegates can look forward to conversations that centre voice, agency, and action, while engaging with each other through dynamic speakers, workshops, networking opportunities, and creative activities. The goal is to generate an environment for delegates to expand into the spaciousness of anti-oppressive work, walk away with a sense of community, and be equipped with tools to address anti-racism, including self-resourcing.

The symposium will begin on the evening of Thursday, November 14, and end by mid-day on November 16, 2024. All expenses will be covered, including travel, food, accommodations, and childcare. For more information on the BCTF's expense policies, please click [here](#), and for the detailed guide on driving reimbursement click [here](#).

For more information about this opportunity and to submit your expression of interest form, please visit the BCTF website [here](#). The deadline to submit your interest to attend is Friday, June 14, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Dates to Remember

Social Justice & Solidarity Committee Meeting

May 28, 2024 @ 4 pm
@ the VEAES Office

VEAES

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