

May 2023

# VEAES NEWS

Elect your 2023-2024  
Executive Committee

Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 16, 2023 @ 4 pm

Van Dusen Botanical Garden  
Peggy Gunn Woodland  
Hall A & B  
5251 Oak St. Vancouver

Social to follow the AGM  
Please RSVP to [hitomi@veaes.ca](mailto:hitomi@veaes.ca)



# Table of CONTENTS

Annual General Meeting Agenda – Page 2

Presidents Message – Page 3

Supporting Financial Documents – Page 4

Motions to the VESTA AGM – Page 5,6 & 7

2022–2023 Executive Committee Nominees – Page 8,9,10 & 11

## AGM AGENDA

VEAES gives thanks and recognizes that this meeting takes place on the stolen, unceded joint territory of the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm (Musqueam), Səlilwətał (Tseil Waututh), and Ṣḳẉx̣ẉụ́7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

Truth and Reconciliation – Call to Action

1. Adoption of Agenda

2. Approval of Minutes – May 17, 2022

3. VEAES's President Report

4. VEAES Bylaw Changes

5. Budget

6. Election of Executive Committee & Alternate Local Reps for 2023/2024

7. Honourary Life Membership

8. Recognition of Executive Committee Members

9. Announcements

10. Adjournment

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Jody Polukoshko**  
**VEAES President**



Colleagues,

I'm so proud to be writing to you as the President of the Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators Association. This union has always been a place where many of us feel belonging, connection, a sense of safety, and a supportive community. Over the years that I have been in and out of this local office, it has become increasingly essential that this union continues to be driven and directed by members. It's also become clear that our diverse identities need to be woven integrally into the way we organize. We are members with disabilities, Indigenous members, parenting members, members of Colour, menopausal members, members who care for elder parents, queer and transgender members, members experiencing income and housing insecurity, and newcomer members, among a myriad other identities. Each of these identities must be part of our relationship with our employer and our colleagues. Each of these identities is also connected to our collective agreement rights, must be protected, and are an integral component of how we organize.

We are at a crucial crossroads in the global labour movement. We have seen the strong and united efforts of our colleagues in the United States pushing back against right wing legislation, austerity funding, and the rise of white supremacy. These efforts can only be successful when the members of organizations are in dialogue, building not just capacity, but a sense of unity, and a shared vision. I want to be clear – this does not mean we have to agree all the time on all matters – healthy debate and disagreement are what makes us strong!

The kind of unity that is, in my view, the most important part of union organizing, is the understanding of the union as belonging to the members. VEAES has never aspired to be a service-provision union, where experts solve problems for members. Instead, we believe members' experiences, creativity, and initiative hold the solutions to the challenges we face. We strive towards a transformational union, one which changes our workplace and the world for the better. Just like those old "I am the BCTF" buttons from 2005, the members are VEAES. And it's more important than ever that members take ownership and responsibility for our work in the world.

Not all members will participate or contribute in the same way, but there are so many ways to shape the direction of your union. Joining a committee that speaks to your passion may be accessible, but participating in task forces, sharing your opinion with your staff rep, helping to convey information, reaching out to struggling colleagues with support, decolonizing in your classroom and your school, being a mentor, reading emails, developing relationships with families, connecting your work to your working conditions ... these are all important contributions to a strong and sustainable union.

In the lead up to the next round of bargaining, it's more important than ever that we build strong communications and connections with one another and our allies and potential allies. Our success at future bargaining tables will only ever be due to our commitment and solidarity. We know that the existing working and learning conditions, including class size and composition, non-enrolling ratios, are insufficient, and teachers desperately need respite. There's an old saying among bargainers, "You don't get what you want – you get what you bargain" and this speaks to the fact that strong collective language is the only defense against untenable working conditions and protection of our rights.

As we continue to move through the COVID era, please consider the central role of your union in improving, enforcing, and defending your rights, and your place within that union. The union belongs to you. You are VEAES.

In solidarity,

Jody

# Motions to the VEAES AGM

Executive Committee Motions to the VEAES AGM May 16, 2023

## Supporting statement

This by-law amendment addresses the errors of omission in the current by-law, that only makes reference to elementary schools, district positions, and Adult Educators. We know that there are VEAES members who work in PR, itinerant, and secondary schools, and this amendment better allows VEAES to represent members in these roles, as well as ensuring clarity for new members and our partner groups.

## **Bylaw II - MEMBERSHIP**

**1 (a)** Active Members: All BCTF members in elementary schools, and adult education centres in Vancouver. Active members also include BCTF members working in district positions, itinerant positions, Provincial Resource Programs, and secondary schools. Only Active Members shall be entitled to vote and to hold office. All BCTF members working in Vancouver adult education centres are also members of the VEAES Adult Educators' Sublocal.

## Supporting statement

This by-law amendment simply changes the language to reflect the current BCTF policy and procedures. The reference in by-law and III 1(d) refer to obsolete language and this makes our by-laws consistent across local and provincial unions.

## **Bylaw III - OFFICERS & EC - COMPOSITION**

**1 (b)** The Table Officers of the Society shall be a President, the Vice-President(s), a Secretary-Treasurer, Local ~~Association~~ Representatives to the BCTF, and the Immediate Past President. The Adult Education President shall be considered to be a VEAES Vice President. For clarity, no person shall hold more than one of these roles.

## Supporting statement

See above

## **Bylaw III - OFFICERS & EC - COMPOSITION**

**1 (d)** The Executive Committee may appoint an alternate or alternates for Local ~~Association~~ Representatives. For clarity, no person holding a role listed in (b) above shall be appointed as alternate.

## Supporting statement

The President does not chair the Executive Committee, and hasn't, for about 20 years. The current practice is to build capacity and train various EC members in chairing and to rotate that work among EC members throughout and across years. This amendment makes it consistent with current practice and does not change other aspects of the role of the President.

## **Bylaw III - OFFICERS & EC - DUTIES**

**2 (a)** The President shall be the presiding Table Officer of the Society and ~~Chairperson~~ of the Executive Committee. The President shall be a member ex officio of all Standing Committees and of all Sections of the Society. At the Annual General Meeting, the President shall report on the activities of the Society for the preceding year. The President shall conduct and have charge of the correspondence, both internal and external, of the Society, and shall issue notices of meetings. No notice of the activities of the Society shall be binding and official unless issued over the President's signature.

# Motions to the VEAES AGM

Executive Committee Motions to the VEAES AGM May 16, 2023

## Supporting statement

This amendment should be read with the proposed amendment to Bylaw III 7. The effort here is to ensure that all EC members and officers of the union are currently working and an active member of the bargaining unit. The majority of the former Bylaw III -7 has been imported here for clarity, as this bylaw speaks to requirement to participate and absences, as well as the process to fill any vacancies created by EC members taking positions outside of the bargaining unit or lack of consistent attendance at meetings. This is to ensure fair and informed membership on the Executive Committee and to the BCTF.

## **Bylaw III – OFFICERS & EC – POWERS**

**3 (b)** Whenever any vacancy shall occur in the Executive Committee or any office of the Society by death, resignation, acceptance of a full time position outside of the local, suspension or expulsion from the Federation or otherwise, the vacancy shall be filled by an Executive Committee appointment until the next Annual General Meeting. If any member of the Executive Committee shall, without reasonable excuse, be absent from three consecutive meetings of the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee shall declare the office vacated. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to fill such vacancies. If any member of the Executive Committee applies for a job in management, the Executive Committee will declare the office vacated. The Executive Committee will be empowered to fill such vacancies.

## Supporting statement

This bylaw amendment is consistent with other VEAES by-laws and policies, including the proposed new bylaw III 5(b) that sets term limits for elected officers. The existing by-law seems contrary to the spirit of union renewal and sustainability, and there is already a process for filling vacant EC positions in our by-laws.

## **Bylaw III – OFFICERS & EC – TERM OF OFFICE**

**5 (a)** The members of the Executive Committee shall be elected for a term of one year and shall take office on the first day of August of each year, ~~but the term of office of all Table Officers shall continue until successors are elected.~~

## Supporting statement

This new bylaw creates term limits for In House Table Officers. This reflects the current practice that has been observed for many years, however, we have yet to put it into our bylaws. This new bylaw will create clear parameters that anticipate elected members holding a variety of roles within the organization, but ensuring that plans for union sustainability and renewal are front of mind. It also ensures that teachers working in the VEAES office have recent teaching experience and helps keep our union connected to the classroom. The goal is also to ensure sustainable turnover of elected officers such that mentorship and support can be ensured.

## **NEW Bylaw III – OFFICERS & EC – TERM OF OFFICE**

**5 (b)** The aforementioned is subject to the following: No VEAES member shall occupy any combination of full time release positions for more than six (6) consecutive years; and, no VEAES member shall occupy the position of President for more than three (3) consecutive years.

# Motions to the VEAES AGM

Executive Committee Motions to the VEAES AGM May 16, 2023

## Supporting statement

Read with the amendments to bylaw III 3(b), this connects the two by-laws to clarify that members on leave or no longer working for the VSB cannot hold Executive Office.

## **Bylaw III – OFFICERS & EC – MEMBERSHIP ATTENDANCE**

~~7 If any member of the Executive Committee shall, resign from office, or without reasonable excuse, be absent from three consecutive meetings of the Executive Committee, or be suspended or expelled from the Federation, the Executive Committee shall declare the office vacated. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to fill such vacancies.~~

Should any member of the Executive Committee take a leave of absence which precludes them from working for the Vancouver School Board, they shall be deemed to be ineligible to hold office.

## Supporting statement

This change, which would result in a lower threshold for constitutional change would make VEAES consistent with the BCTF, who made this same change at the 2023 Annual General Meeting on the advice of legal counsel. This brings us into better compliance with the Societies Act and will allow VEAES clarity and consistency in addressing necessary changes to bylaws and our constitution.

## **By-law IX – AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS**

The Society may in General Meeting assembled amend or alter the Constitution and Bylaws providing that notice of such meeting shall be given fourteen (14) days in advance and shall clearly state the amendment(s) of the Constitution and Bylaws which is/are to be considered. The majority required to amend the Constitution or any Bylaw shall be a ~~three-fourths~~ two-thirds majority of the Active Members present and voting at such a meeting.

# 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



**Jody Polukoshko**

President

Colleagues, I am committed to this local and the work of representing members and defending our collective rights. It has never been clearer how important it is to have our rights enshrined in the collective agreement, and this means both improving, enforcing, and defending those rights. VEAES has always been strong in connecting collective bargaining rights to our members' working conditions, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on this and other emergent matters in the coming year.



**Karine Ng**

Vice-President (10.5 months)

Now, more than ever, is transformative social change needed. What better way to do this important collective work than from within a teachers union? I am honoured and privileged to have been invited into VEAES by welcoming and supportive members. The core principles that guide my work are decolonization, member engagement, and defense for public education. I believe leadership requires equal parts humility, courage, and accountability. With your endorsement, I will strive to make new and deepen existing connections with rank-and-file members, and continue to build relationships with stakeholders such as parents, trustees, and community groups.



**Marjorie Dumont**

Vice-President (10.5 months)

The protocol of introducing oneself to others is vital to my cultural teachings and so, I share this with you. Dini ze, ts'ake ze, skiy ze, Hadih, So'endzin. Gin Tabi honzoo. C'tan sozi. Sne Wila'at endzin. Sbeb Wah tah ghet endzin. N'iwh Dini ze' cho Na'moks endzin (Male chiefs, female chief, sons and Daughters of the chiefs. Greetings, how are you? Today is a great day. My name is C'tan. My mother's name is chief Wila'at, and my late father's name is chief Wah tah ghet. My house chief's name is Na'moks. I belong to the Tsayu Beaver clan of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation. My roots are also Gitksan.

I would like to acknowledge I am a visitor on the ancestral, unceded and stolen territory of the SkWa-wu7mesh, Saailwata?/Selilwitulh and xwma0kwayam Nations. I am grateful and blessed to live and work on the beautiful land and water that they have been stewards of since time immemorial.

I am humbled and honoured to put my name forward again for Vice-President. It is with great privilege and honour to learn and unlearn from the students, parents and colleagues. The stories of the teachers give me strength and courage to facilitate the change needed for a just system for all. One of my most rewarding roles the past year was to infuse some of the Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into everything we do in the Union.

My commitment to the teaching profession, and to representing Vancouver elementary teachers is connected to a number of my values. My elders have told me that I am gifted with the ability to pull people together, to listen, and to know when to speak. As a Wet'suwet'en woman, I bring my deep, lived knowledge and experience with Aboriginal Education in BC to inform my perspective. My contributions also reflect VEAES' commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The teacher shortage, the increasing workload of teachers and post-COVID have generated challenges across the district. It has been very difficult navigating through and coming out of the pandemic. So thank you all for all your efforts to keeping each other safe. I ask for your support to continue my work at VEAES because I believe my lenses and approach have made a difference to the lives of teachers and students.

# 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



**Darren Tereposky**

Vice-President (10.5 months)

I am pleased to put my name forward for Vice-President and to be part of the In-House-Table-Officer and VESTA Executive team. I bring my previous experience doing Union work in-house and 24 years experience in VSB classrooms to advocate for your Collective Agreement rights. In this role, some priorities for next year would include supporting the work of the grievance officer, preparing for the next round of bargaining and building capacity and engagement in the membership. I feel the Union needs to continually advocate for and support members to implement the TRC recommendations in schools, maintain teachers' professional autonomy, improving teachers' health and safety and working conditions, and have adequate staffing and learning resources to support the diverse learners we work with.



**Eric Proulx**

Vice-President (10 months at 0.4 FTE)

Serving as 0.4 FTE Vice President this year has been among the most valuable and rewarding experiences of my life. I am humbled and thankful for the mentorship and guidance I have received thus far from VEAES members, EC members and IHTOs. If re-elected to this role, I would be honoured to continue the work of serving our membership and fighting for public education. My focuses this year have been member support, building relationships in the political sphere, membership engagement and bringing new voices to the table. Whether it be reaching out to UBC student teachers, welcoming new VEAES members to our organization or carrying out the Union Organizing SURT training offered in February, I have felt so lucky to be able to work for our organization.

I thank VEAES for being considered and would be honoured to continue serving VEAES if elected in the role of 0.4 FTE VP.



**Vanessa Lefebvre**

Vice-President - Grievance Officer

I have learned so much in my first year in the VEAES office. Hearing from VEAES members about the struggles at your sites and the untenable working conditions has further motivated me to put my name forward for VP - Grievance Officer. I have been doing grievance support work in the VEAES office for the past 5 years and have a good understanding of the grievance process and structures. It is imperative that we protect and enforce our rights that have been fought for by those strong VEAES members who came before us. We have to carry on that fight for those who will come after us.

I am committed to improving equity in our union and our teaching spaces, which requires us to decolonize our structures & practices. It is hard work, it takes time, it can get messy and uncomfortable, and there is a lot of learning to do, but it is the path forward for public education. The road may be windy and we will definitely encounter some roadblocks, but the only way to get there is by working together and I look forward to continuing that work alongside you all.



**Natasha Burditt**

Local Representative

I have been a member of the VEAES EC since the fall of 2020. I started as a Member at Large as a way to learn more about union structures and how the union supports members. I started co-chairing the meetings in 2021 and have been asked to be part of the Grievance Committee this year. I recognize the importance of making space for all voices and I hope I can continue supporting VEAES in the coming school year. Being an LR this year has allowed me to build my confidence in speaking and advocating for the needs of students and teachers in Vancouver. It has also allowed me to listen and begin to understand the needs of students and teachers elsewhere in the province. I hope that you will consider me for LR again this year.

# 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



**Chloë McKnight**

Local Representative to the BCTF

I look forward to another opportunity to continue as a local representative on behalf of VEAES. I have enjoyed strengthening connections with locals around the province and representing members' voices at the provincial level, and am committed to furthering this work and building capacity.



**Danielle Durant**

Health & Safety Chair

Health and safety is an aspect of our work that greatly interests me. Our sector has some significant challenges that need to be addressed. Our working conditions are more challenging than ever and violence in schools is on the rise. I would like to continue to represent VEAES members at both the District Health & Safety and Emergency Management Committees, to continue to share the important issues and challenges our members face on a daily basis. I have learned a lot since I began to participate in these committees since September 2019 and would like to continue learning in this role.



**Alexander Graham**

Communications Committee Chair

Staying connected, informed, and engaged are essential elements of being a VEAES member. As Communications Committee Chair, the continued promotion and enrichment of connection is the primary concern and focus of the committee moving forward. From making sure that members can access information through VEAES resources, to making sure that the society is connected to members, stakeholders, and the community, I hope to continue the growth and resurgence of the body that exists specifically to consider these issues and ideas. Being in touch with organizing, labour, and the realities of everyday teaching require multiple avenues of communication and engagement, and this committee continues to strive to consider and promote these avenues for all of VEAES membership. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve teachers, the community, and VEAES membership for another year.



**Samuel Couture**

Local Representative to the BCTF

Through the 2022-2023 school year, I have had the privilege of learning through experience the role of Local Representative to the BCTF. I hope to continue learning through union structures and representing the values of VEAES' educators at the provincial Rep Assemblies and at the BCTF AGM to the best of my abilities.

**Madalene Wong**

Social Justice & Solidarity Co-Chair

Social Justice has always been a passion of mine. I would love to be able to share my knowledge, collaborate with, and learn from like-minded educators and work to make schools more inclusive and equitable.

# 2023-2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



**Ramatoulaye Balde**

Racialized Member at Large

Being part of the BIPOC community and a visible minority, I hope to bring additional insight and perspectives to the role. Having four children as well who have and are currently going through the school district, I have many lived experiences where I feel I can lend my expertise.

I believe we have a lot of work to do for significant change to be made and I look forward to not only joining the team, but also supporting the rest of the Executive Committee in their roles in any way I can.



**Kevin McPherson**

TTOC Committee Chair

The Teachers Teaching on Call Committee does important work connecting TTOCs to their union. I hope to do this important work again next year.



**Elaine Ong**

Social Justice & Solidarity Co-Chair

I would like continue to work with teachers in the capacity of Social Justice Co-chair to ensure inclusivity and equity in our work places.



**Japleen Gill**

Member at Large

Social Justice has always been a passion of mine. I would love to be able to share my knowledge, collaborate with, and learn from like-minded educators and work to make schools more inclusive and equitable.