

May 2024



VEAES NEWS

Elect your 2024-2025
Executive Committee

Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 @ 4 pm

at **Soundhouse**
33 West 8th Avenue

Social to follow the AGM
Please RSVP to hitomi@veaes.ca



AGM AGENDA

1. Acknowledgement

VEAES gives thanks and recognizes that this meeting takes place on the stolen, unceded joint territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Selílwitlh (Tsleil Waututh), and S_kwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

2. Adoption of Agenda

3. Approval of Minutes, May 16, 2023

4. VEAES's President Report

5. Local Bargaining Objectives

6. By-law Changes

That VEAES Bylaw V.4.i. be amended to read:

TTOCs shall be represented by four staff reps to be determined by the TTOC standing committee. TTOC staff reps hold three voting cards each.

That VEAES Bylaw XIII be amended as follows:

Meetings of the Society shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules of Order adopted by the BCTF with the exception that the motion to table requires a two-thirds majority vote

7. Finance Report – Secretary Treasurer

8. EC Financial Recommendations:

- a) That Achieve CPA Chartered Accountants be retained as the auditor for 2024 /2025
- b) That the audited financial statements for the years ending July 2023 be accepted.
- c) That the staffing allocation for the VEAES office in 2024 / 2025 be:

- President - (11 months)
- Vice-President - (11 months)
- Vice-President / Grievance Officer - (10.5 months)
- Vice-President - (10.5 months)
- Vice-President - (10.5 months)
- Vice-President - (10 months at .0.4 FTE)
- Adult Educators Sub-Local President (up to 0.25 FTE)

d) That the fee for the contract members be 0.88%.

e) That the fee for the TTOCs be 0.71%.

f) That the 2024 / 2025 budget in the amount of \$1,839,300.00 be adopted.

9. Election of Executive Committee for 2024/2025

10. Recognition of Executive Committee Members

11. Announcements

12. Adjournment

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jody Polukoshko
VEAES President
and
Marjorie Dumont
VEAES Vice-President



Jody: “Marjorie, VEAES members have been through it this year. It’s been a tough year for many folks whether they’re new or experienced, and yet they continue to bring their gifts to this work.

Marjorie: “The members are amazing. Courageous and resilient. We raise our hands in honour and respect to all they have done this year.

Jody: “What are some of the incredible things that you’ve seen teachers doing this year? I’ve seen so many bold and creative ways of responding to challenges, and so many incredible learning opportunities despite our desire for better working conditions.

Marjorie: “Even though it feels like we’re constantly doing more with less, teachers are still fighting for meaningful support for students. It shouldn’t be falling on teachers to solve all of these problems.

Jody: “My favourite part of this job is going out to schools and seeing the beautiful and diverse artwork in the hallways, the relevance that teachers are bringing to the work of Truth and Reconciliation, and the strength and passion of our students who are also envisioning a better world. My favourite of all time is a student illustration of a dragon saying “I see your hard work” in the hallway of one school. I wish all teachers knew that their work is seen and appreciated.

Marjorie: “One of the things we hear from teachers every day is that violence in schools is an ongoing concern, and that this and other difficulties are impacting teachers’ physical and mental health. It is so important for teachers to document this in Our Health to ensure accountability, and to prioritize their safety needs and those of their students. It makes me feel sad when teachers come to work even when they’re not well. I hope all members know about the BCTF Health and Wellness Program.

Jody: “I love the Health and Wellness program. It’s so great. I’m really proud of our membership when we set good boundaries about work-life, and when we insist that our rights are followed. Self-advocacy is a big part of that, sometimes, but the union is here to help.

Marjorie: “Yes, but sometimes members don’t understand what the union can do for them. We’re just some teachers working for other teachers to make sure their rights are upheld, the Collective Agreement, and we’re also here to listen as a caring colleague and help problem solve!

Jody: “Yes! The union is about defending rights, but it’s also about building community and lifting the weight of struggle off of individuals and finding ways to work in solidarity. We also try to bring support and joy to the work. It’s like that old feminist saying about Bread and Roses – we need to have sustenance and rights, but we need beauty and love too.

Marjorie: “That reminds me of a conversation I was having, and I think the union needs to also be about belonging. It’s our job as a union to represent all members in the way they need representing – the union needs to be a safe place to heal – but it also has to be led by members, that means members stepping up and taking union leadership too.

Jody: “We’re coming up to bargaining, and that’s really the most direct and effective way to change our working conditions. Our members have been getting ready and letting their needs be known through our surveys, we’re so grateful to be learning from the on-the-ground experiences so that we can advocate for improvements all across the membership. I know a better world is possible, and it’s time for public education to get the support and funding needed for success.

Marjorie: “I agree, Jody! Our voices matter, and the more we hear from members, the stronger we will be at the bargaining table, and in all aspects of our work! Let’s get to it.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Marjorie Dumont

President (11 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, (Male chiefs, Female chiefs and their children) Hadih, So'endzin. (Greetings/hello, how are you?) jeen Tabi honzoo. (This is a beautiful day) C'tan sozi (My name is C'tan, also known as Marjorie Dumont) Sne Ts'ake ze Wila'at endzin (My mother's name is Wila'at also known as Sue Alfred) Sbeb tsitni'in Dini ze Wah tah ghet endzin (My late father's name was Wah tah ghet, also known as Henry Alfred). N'iwh Dini ze' Na'Moks endzin (My house chief's name is Na'Moks, also known as John Ridsdale). I belong to the Tsayu (Beaver) clan. My late father's clan is Laksilyu (Small frog). I am from the Wet'suwet'en First Nation and my roots are also Gitksan.

I would like to acknowledge I am a visitor on the ancestral, unceded/stolen territory of the SkWa-wu7mesh, Saiilwata?/Selliwituh and xwma0kwayam nations. I am grateful and blessed to live and work on their beautiful yintah that they have been stewards of since time immemorial.

I am humbled and honoured to put my name forward for President. I would like to raise my hands in honour and respect to you for having the confidence in me as the Vice-President for the last three years. I am here because of you and for that I hold so much gratitude to you. Your stories continue to give me strength and courage to advocate for improvements in the public education system. I also want to highlight the great work you all are doing to decolonize our work sites and our union.

My dedication and commitment to the teaching profession, and my role as a representative for Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society are rooted in several core values. The wisdom and teachings passed down from my elders has emphasized my natural ability to pull people together, to listen and to when to speak. Furthermore, my contributions align with VEAES' continued support for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The members are still facing challenges due to the shortage of teachers, the growing workload of educators, and the impact of the post-COVID situation. Navigating through these difficulties has been quite challenging, so thank you for all for all your efforts to keeping each other safe. I kindly request your support to continue my work at VEAES because I believe my lenses and perspective have made a difference to the lives of teachers and students.



Xander Graham

Vice-President (11 months)

Being involved with an organization such as VEAES, at the Vice-President level, offers the opportunity to serve VEAES members, students, and the community as a whole. In my past years of experience as an Executive Committee member and committee chair, I have had the opportunity to engage with the multi-faceted ways in which we as a union act as an essential support for teachers and schools. I believe that being in touch with organizing, labour, and the realities of everyday teaching are necessary aspects of the role, and are elements best seen through an equity and social justice lens. It is with just such a mindset that I hope to continue challenging VEAES to be the very best organization that we can be. I am committed to bringing both the utmost care and the deepest effort to the Vice-President role, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue supporting VEAES members in the future.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Vanessa Lefebvre

Vice-President (10.5 months)

I am putting my name forward to continue the work of Grievance Officer for 2024-25. I've learned so much in the past year working to enforce our Collective Agreement rights and supporting members through the grievance process. I appreciate the support of the membership over the year as I took on this role as a new grievance officer and am grateful for the mentorship from my in-house colleagues.

As we begin a new round of bargaining, I am excited about the opportunity to improve our working conditions and am committed to supporting our local and provincial bargaining efforts in any capacity. The work we have done this year to collaborate with the other union groups to bring issues to the media is the groundwork for increasing public support in this next round to address the erosion of teachers' working conditions & students' learning conditions due to the underfunding of public education.

As an In-House Table Officer, I am committed to increasing member engagement, supporting newly elected table officers, and working to improve our internal VEAES data management systems for future elected officers and members. As our organization evolves, so must our systems!

I am committed to the ongoing work of increasing equity in both union and teaching spaces. The path forward involves decolonizing structures and practices, sitting with our discomfort, being willing to doing things differently, and listening to our Indigenous leaders and colleagues. I am proud of the efforts of our organization in bringing these conversations to our meetings and look forward to continuing this work with you all as we build a more inclusive and equitable public education system. Thank you for your trust and support.



Karine Ng

Vice-President (10.5 months)

Our strength lies in our solidarity, our commitment to equity, and our unwavering stance against oppression in all its forms. As I embark on the journey of running for re-election, I affirm my dedication to upholding these values.

Solidarity is the cornerstone of our union. It binds us together, amplifies our voices, and empowers us to achieve meaningful change through collective action. In the spirit of solidarity, I pledge to continue to build capacity by inviting and mentoring interested members into union work. As we move into a bargaining year, I'm ever more committed to foster members' engagement with working and learning conditions, and to defend our professional autonomy.

Oppression has no place in our union. I am against all forms of discrimination and injustice. My practice is anchored in the affirmation of each member's value and place in the union, and the firm belief that change is possible through education and reflection. Driven by our passion for justice, VEAES has decolonized our own policies and practices, as well as some terms in the collective agreement. I aspire to continue this honourable legacy of justice and anti-oppression.

As a member of VEAES, I hold myself to a high standard of integrity and accountability. I recognize that our actions have far-reaching implications for the future of our union and the well-being of our members. Therefore, I commit to upholding these values of solidarity, equity, and anti-oppression in all aspects of my work.

Together, we will strive to grow a union that reflects the diversity of our membership, honors the principles of justice, and serves as a beacon of hope and progress. Thank you for your dedication to our shared values and vision.

In solidarity, Karine Ng 吳珏穎 (she/佢)

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Greg Canning

Vice-President (10.5 months)

I have been fortunate to receive a great deal of training from both VEAES and the BCTF over the years. In all training the the goal is to provide support to the membership and to improve the profession as a whole. Early mentors of mine always told me that it is important for all teachers to leave the profession in a better place than when they started. We have made gains over the years and teaching has been a wonderful career but I still have concerns. I am concerned that the profession is not attracting new people due to the complex nature of our classes and the lack of supports provided. Teaching is a demanding job and we all work very hard to provide a safe and caring environment. If there is anything I can do to make our jobs as teachers a little easier you can count on me to be there for you. Everyone benefits from a well funded and well resourced public education system. With bargaining set to begin next year it's another opportunity for us to make improvements. I am committed to improving our working conditions and ask for your support as I run for one of the Vice-President positions. Thank you. Greg Canning



Eric Proulx

Vice-President (10 months)

It has been amongst the greatest joys and honours of my life to have served two school years as the 0.4 FTE VP at VEAES. As we approach the next round of bargaining, I would seek to continue my work of bringing in as many members to the work as possible, as our union is made stronger through increased union participation. If reelected, I hope to continue supporting members in taking on union work, whether it be in solving issues and protecting the Collective Agreement at the site level, taking on VEAES committee work or participating at the BCTF level. This year, I have found rolling out the VEAES Failure to Fill Survey, increasing VSB union collaboration and building our media strategy to be particularly rewarding work. Through our union, we struggle to defend public education from austerity and I am proud to work alongside so many amazing educators! Thank you for your consideration and to the many who have mentored me!



Jody Polukoshko

Secretary Treasurer

It has been a pleasure to work as a member of the VEAES Finance Committee, stewarding our organization's finances through such a financially unpredictable and challenging period, and creating a balanced budget in each of those two years that saw no reduction in service or support to members. I have really loved working with the finances of our organization through the lens of our values. Like bargaining, finance wasn't something I ever imagined to find exciting, but I believe this is one important way that I can continue to support the organization's sustainability and renewal in the year ahead. I would be proud to continue this work in conjunction with the Finance Committee and the In House Table Officers, should I be elected.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Natasha Burditt

Local Representative to the BCTF

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 a part of the grievance committee since 2022. 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 for the last two school years 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.



Khaled Shawwash

Local Representative to the BCTF

My practice has, since the beginning, been focused on centering the voices of those that are marginalized. More recently, seeing the deteriorating working conditions has motivated me to be a part of the process to make meaningful change. I also know many of the members on the current EC and my core values, beliefs, and work ethic aligns strongly with them. The combination of these three aspects makes me a strong candidate for Local Rep. I am driven by hearing and addressing the concerns of members with social justice related issues; racism, misogyny, transphobia, body positivity, and disability, to name a few of the very many. I am also determined to be a voice for the working conditions of both enrolling and non-enrolling educators, and I am eager to hear and learn about the experiences of educators in the diverse roles of our membership. Having already been to several VEAES EC meetings, and having worked with many of the current members, my integration into the EC will be smooth as possible. I am proud to be a part of this union local and it would be a privilege to represent you.



Bernadette Milton

Local Representative to the BCTF

My name is Bernadette Milton. I am from the Gitksan Nation, who speaks fluently in Gitksanimax and English. I have been EC member with VEASE for two years. I am presently at the Xpey Elementary School, which is an Indigenous Focus school. Other positions I have held were a Resource Teacher, Prep-Teacher, Teacher in Charge, and a Grade 6/7 Teacher. I feel that I hear those who have concerns about positions held in the schools, I understand what they are sharing for better outcomes. During my time as an EC Member, I have attended monthly General meetings/Staff Rep assemblies. I have learned what it means to represent membership in a governance role that provides guidance and directions with the IHTO's, and in turn be a VEAES and organization. Which have led to me to attend AGM's presenting recommendations that a team has worked together to compose, so that our voices are heard. Not for us as teachers but also for support workers, to promote "Lifelong Learning" in the schools. I believe we must have some respect for space, honesty when speaking, equity in all roles as an educator, and know that working together as a team adds strength when making decisions.

I have been a teacher since 2009 which gave me the honor to have been a teacher from grades K-7 since I received my B. Ed. Degree. I am presently working towards my master's with UBC Vancouver (Master of Education in Indigenous Education). I am learning alongside a great Cohort which are learning how to unlearn and relearn. I have worked with other organizations and education institutes to work on getting a positive learning environment and gathering resources. I believe that I do have some knowledge to share to make sure we, as teachers and support workers, have a voice.

Other positions I have held through my years were: Teacher librarian (District 82), Acting Principal, School Co-ordinator, Special needs teacher, TTOC (District 82), Leader for organization for the Gitsegukla Gidahmes Dancers, assisted with Youth Group activities.

I would like to continue my commitment as an existing EC member for the year 2024-2025 to support teachers and help keep VEAES relevant, connected to members at large, and respond to the VSB and broader issues in public education.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Chloë McKnight

Member at Large

My first role on the executive committee was member at large in 2013, and after filling various other roles on the executive committee since then I'm looking forward to an opportunity to return to this role and offer support to my fellow executive committee members and the rest of the membership. I'm excited to continue to work on our union's goals towards decolonizing and bringing an anti-oppressive lens to the work we do



Deborah Tin Tun

Member at Large

I am a non-enrolling teacher, specializing in music and I aim to gather the perspectives of my colleagues and bring them to EC. I am passionate about divesting our pension from fossil fuel companies, and believe it is an important and responsible step towards ensuring a livable future for our students in this time of climate change.



Japleen Gill

Member at Large

I would be delighted to serve on the VEAES Executive Committee again this year as a Member at Large. My passion lies in amplifying the voices of those who are marginalized, whether they are students or staff. I am committed to learn how to best support members navigate the colonial structure of our education system through continuous involvement in BIPOC groups in our union and the VSB. My work with the union has led me to chair staff committee and VEAES meetings at my school site. I hope to continue to deepen my understanding of our union structures to best support our members.



Elaine Ong

Social Justice & Solidarity Chair

I would like to continue to work with VEAES teachers in the capacity of Social Justice and Solidarity chair to ensure inclusivity and equity in our workplaces.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Jennifer C. Sebastian

Aboriginal Education Chair

My name is Galdukw- Jennifer C. Sebastian.

I am a daughter and granddaughter of teachers. My mother has a 30-year teaching career, my grandfather taught Indigenous art K-12 for years; and my grandmother was an Indigenous knowledge teacher.

My mother is Axgii'gii' y, Lucille Stoney. My father is Perry Sebastian. I am a granddaughter of Hereditary Chiefs. My maternal ye'e (grandfather), Victor Mowatt, was the former Osimmlahax of Wilp Giskaast, a Fireweed Clan. My maternal grandmother, Sadie Mowatt, was the former Axgii'gii'y of Wilp Delgummukw, Lax Seel, a Frog Clan. I am from the Wilps Delgummukw, House of Delgummukw, Gitxsan First Nation.

I am honored to put my name forward to be re-elected as the Aboriginal Education Chair. I have years of experience as the Aboriginal Chair. I have attended EC meetings, General meetings, and Zone meetings as my experience for being re-elected. My goal for next year is to build capacity in the Ab Ed committee and to spend more time in schools meeting our teaching body more directly. I am proud to be a witness and to sit at the table of our EC where great change takes place. I have gained experience and I feel that I am ready to use my voice for teachers supporting indigenous education.

I am committed to bringing together my strong beliefs and practice in decolonizing and anti-oppression to the Executive Committee, and to work with and lift up Indigenous teachers and Indigenous Education. It is through our solidarity that we are strong.



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.