



TEAL News

Spring 2020
www.bctéal.org

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE



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(2019-2020)**

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Greetings Members

by Karen Densky

20/20 Vision

by Scott Douglas

HELLO BC TEAL COMMUNITY!

I'm writing to you from isolation in Victoria today. I feel grateful to be living in such an amazing part of the world as I contemplate the 20/20 Vision theme of this issue of the BC TEAL Newsletter. I'm sure that we're all wishing for the crystal ball that will tell us when life will return to some version of normal. In the meantime, enjoy reading about the work of our colleagues.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, your Board has been working on ways to support members. We decided to share professional development opportunities through social media channels (thanks Laura B!) and we are looking into ways we can support those who are impacted by COVID-19. Watch for updates after the AGM on April 25th.

Since hindsight is 20/20, we would love to hear from members in terms of your needs. Are you looking for webinars? Will you scream if you get one more email promoting a webinar? Would you like to have opportunities to present your work in a virtual space? Are you missing the social interaction you get from TEAL events and would like virtual networking opportunities? Let us know.

Respectfully (from 2 metres away).

Karen Densky

Karen Densky, PhD
BC TEAL President, 2018-2020

IT SEEMS LIKE we started to put together this issue in a different place and a different time. As we now grapple with physical distancing and adapting English as an additional language teaching and learning to alternative modes of delivery to protect the health and wellbeing of our students and the wider community, we offer this issue of *TEAL News* to our readers as a moment of respite from the isolation and disconnection we may be feeling. As always, this issue is free and open-access to everyone interested in the work of BC TEAL.

Our theme for this issue is "20/20 Vision." Basically, 20/20 vision means that if you are 20 feet away (just over six metres) from the vision chart in your optometrist's office, you can read those small letters in the third row from the bottom of the chart. This ability is considered to be an indicator of having average visual acuity. That is, objects of this size from 20 feet away are sharp and clear.

Reading through the articles in this issue, I can see that our authors have this acuity when it comes to our field. Our authors look at the ins and outs of medical and dental coverage for members, recount the Vancouver Island Regional Conference, outline a process for putting together quality presentations, describe an innovative bridging program bringing together high school and university students, showcase a new major donation to the TEAL Charitable Foundation, report on the Decoda Literacy Conference, and reflect on an online learning experience for EAL learners. With this issue, we can take a moment out of our day to see teaching and learning through these authors' eyes and think about what their vision means for our own teaching and learning.



Photo by master1305 from freepik.com



Karen Densky, PhD, is an Associate Teaching Professor at Thompson Rivers University. She has been working in the field of English language teaching and teacher education for 30 years. Her current areas of interest are in teacher identity and the impact of professional development. Karen is the current president of BC TEAL.



Scott Roy Douglas is an associate professor in the University of British Columbia's Okanagan School of Education. His focus is on English as an additional language teaching and learning. He is the BC TEAL Publications chair and the editor of the BC TEAL Journal.

NOTICE OF THE 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*In light of the circumstances regarding COVID-19,
we will be holding our 2020 AGM online via [Tutela.ca](https://www.tutela.ca).*

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE GIVES NOTICE OF ITS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD:

Online via [Tutela.ca](https://www.tutela.ca)

Saturday, April 25, 2020 | 12:30 – 1:30 pm

A complete AGM package will be available for download on the BC TEAL website prior to the AGM. An email notification will be sent to the membership.

We ask that only current BC TEAL members attend the AGM.

RVSP for the AGM at [bctéal.org](https://www.bctéal.org).

20/20 Vision
BC TEAL Annual Conference
The Image Conference
April 23-25, 2020
Douglas College
 New Westminster, BC

POSTPONED

[bctéal.org](https://www.bctéal.org)
[theimageconference.org](https://www.theimageconference.org)
[#bctéalimage2020](https://twitter.com/bctéalimage2020)

Keynote Speakers

Kieran Donaghy The School for Training, Barcelona
Visual Arts Circle

Sylvia Karastathi Ionian University, Greece
New York College, Athens

K. David Harrison Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania
National Geographic Fellow

the image CONFERENCE | BC TEAL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE | DOUGLAS

Did you know... BC TEAL has a YouTube Channel!

Check out recordings of past webinars, conference key notes, and other interesting content. Just search for BC TEAL in YouTube's search bar:
www.youtube.com

Did you know... BC TEAL has a Blog!

Check out summaries of #CndELT chats and other musings from the BC TEAL community
[bctéal.wordpress.com](https://www.bctéal.wordpress.com)

Did you know... BC TEAL is on Twitter!

Follow @[bctéal](https://twitter.com/bctéal) and use the hashtag #[CdnELTchat](https://twitter.com/CdnELTchat) to connect with EAL instructors across Canada.

You Asked, We Answered

By Tanya Tervit



YOU ASKED

Has BC TEAL considered offering Medical and Dental Coverage for members?

WE ANSWERED

Great question. In fact, the BC TEAL Membership Committee has spent the last several months researching this question. Here's what we have learned along the way.

Medical and Dental Coverage is only part of what is called Group Benefits, which are a variety of insurance products packaged together such as vision care, travel insurance, term life insurance, or disability insurance. When an organization or company buys insurance as a group, the insurance provider assesses the likelihood of members claiming against the insurance by considering factors which are strongly related such as age, family status, and income. This allows the insurance to offer the same insurance at the same rate to all the members of that organization.

So, can BC TEAL offer Group Benefits to members? We asked a couple of insurance providers, and came up against these hurdles. First, members in BC TEAL have a great amount of diversity—a source of pride and strength—but not helpful in considering insurance for a group. The benefit needs of one member may be inappropriate for another. Secondly, we would have to collect personal information from our members—such as health information, age, and income. We feel uncomfortable with this and think it goes beyond our current mandate. Finally, the administration of Group Benefits is costly

as many organizations have employees whose sole job is dealing with the invoicing and paperwork required to make it work effectively. For this volunteer-run non-profit organization, these additional costs are prohibitive.

Well, how do other organizations offer these benefits? We looked into this and found that some professional organizations did this based on their relationship with an external partner or brokerage which enabled them to offer a discount price on an insurance product tailored to your personal situation. Other groups with a large member base having certain known traits, such as a university alumni organization, are able to negotiate a discount based on volume. BC TEAL doesn't have the volume to get this discount and developing a partnership with a broker does not guarantee we could provide any actual savings to members.

The good news is the same discounts we might be able to offer are already available to you. Insurance products have expanded greatly over the last few years, and discounted group benefits are available as part of many of the groups you are already part of—club stores, community organizations, even your local grocery rewards programs. The Membership Committee encourages you to explore your options and would love to hear your feedback on this issue.



Tanya Tervit (MA TESOL) is a BC TEAL Board Member and an instructor in academic writing at UBC Vantage College. Recently, she has been designing curriculum and materials and thinking about one-on-one instruction supports, when she isn't in the garden of course.

Vancouver Island Regional Conference: Creativity, Collaboration, and Critical Thinking

By Laura Hadwin

The **BC TEAL** Vancouver Island Regional Conference took place in the Centre for Health and Wellness (CHW) at the Interurban campus of Camosun College in Victoria, BC on Saturday, February 22, 2020. Over sixty attendees from Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and other regions of British Columbia attended. These attendees included instructors from colleges, universities, private language schools, federally funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, and K–12 teachers. The conference was co-chaired by Camosun English Language Development faculty members Lisa Robertson and Laura Hadwin.

The conference was opened with a traditional territorial welcome and song from Brianna Bear. Heather del Villano,

Associate Dean of the School of Access, then gave a heartfelt welcome. She first acknowledged the role that English played in colonialization, and then went on to discuss the positive role that educators have in shaping the future. Dr. Li Shih Huang, an associate professor of applied linguistics from the University of Victoria, delivered the plenary session, and she addressed the role of standardized testing in contemporary English language education, as well as outlined a variety of limitations that these standardized tests present.

There were thirteen inspiring and engaging workshops, and in addition to the broader conference themes included indigenization, pronunciation, project-based learning, additional online certifications, technology PBLA, coaching, and BC K-12 education abroad. These presentations reflect the diversity of our membership, and it was wonderful that there were so many engaging workshops to choose from.

Overall, this conference highlighted the importance of providing a time and space for professionals to share and learn together, and it was a very informative and enjoyable day.



Conference co-chairs, Lisa Robertson & Laura Hadwin at the Vancouver Island Regional Conference



Laura Hadwin is an instructor at Camosun College in Victoria. She has taught in South Korea, Spain, the UK, Turkey, Qatar, and Mexico. She is interested in teacher training and development, as well as teacher beliefs and identity. She also enjoys volunteering, and has worked with wonderful local and international organizations. Visit her website at auroraenglish.wixsite.com



Join BC TEAL, and become a member of BC's EAL professional community.

As a BC TEAL member, you can enjoy reduced rates at the annual conference, regional conferences, and professional development workshops. You are eligible to apply for the many TEAL Charitable Foundation awards and scholarships. And, you can connect with a network of like-minded colleagues across the province.

BC TEAL Membership costs less than \$50 per year, and there are discounts for students, the unemployed, retirees, and BC TESOL (BCTF K-12) members.

Visit bctéal.org/membership to learn about the many benefits and to join.

Fantastic Presentations and Where to Find (and Create) Them

By Anthony Caldwell



Photo by geralt at pixabay.com

AS LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS, we assist our learners with making effective presentations on a regular basis. Presenting lessons in the classroom is usually quite a different experience than presenting to our peers though, with our peers often a much more demanding audience. Only the most engaging presentations are remembered after a conference is done and everyone is heading back home wherever that might be across the province or country.

The importance of engagement is why several years ago the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), as an organization, decided to create a process to help presenters represent themselves—and ISANS—well at regional and national conferences. Much is at stake: not only do these presentations help presenters build their professional reputations, but they also increase the visibility of our organization and its programs on a broad stage.

Our presentation preparation program has five steps:

1. presenting locally,
2. selecting ideas,
3. submitting proposals,
4. vetting by communications, and
5. reviewing by management.

Step 1: Presenting Locally

Before ISANS sends presenters to a regional or national conference, they must have already successfully presented at one or more local conferences (provincial or municipal level). This step is essential to make sure that everyone who steps onto the bigger stage to represent themselves and ISANS is professionally ready to do so.

Step 2: Selecting Ideas

We are all engaged in all kinds of interesting work: it is why we do what we do! Unfortunately though, conferences cannot accommodate all of us, so we must use a selection process to decide which parts of our work we can showcase. We use a double-anonymous process to eliminate bias. A double-anonymous process is one where neither proposal submitters nor assessors are known to each other. Staff members submit proposals from which names and other identifiers are removed. A committee then selects presentations based on the content of the proposals. When we go through this process, we are looking for three things:

1. How does the proposed presentation fit the theme(s) of the conference?
2. How does the proposed presentation reflect ISANS' core values and mission?
3. How does the proposed presentation reflect ISANS' innovative work?

Based on these criteria, the conference vetting committee scores the proposed presentations and then invites the creators of those with the highest scores to present as representatives of ISANS.

Step 3: Submitting Proposals

The proposals we send to regional and national conferences are just as reflective of us as professionals as the presentations themselves. Therefore, we give our staff a deadline ahead of the actual conference proposal submission deadline to ensure there is time to make revisions (if required). Prospective presenters send their proposals to supervisors for review and suggested

Continued on next page



revisions, after which supervisors return them to submit to the conference. Proposals that are selected by the conference vetting committees move on to step four.

Step 4: Vetting by Communications

ISANS is a large organization liaising with programs and institutions across Canada. In order to ensure that everything coming out of ISANS maintains a consistent branding and style, our communications team vets the slides and other supporting documents of every presentation for external audiences. This involvement also makes it much easier for the presenter, as they have: a) a pre-formatted template for the presentation provided by the communications team all ready to fill with their content, and b) less stress around revision and correction of language, as we can lean on the communications team's editing skills to assist.

Step 5: Reviewing by Management

Whenever we speak at external presentations, we are representatives of ISANS and all those that work within it, so we want our presentations to be as good as they can be. The managers' final review of the presentation itself—not just the supporting materials—gives the presenters a great opportunity to practice in front of a live audience before the big day. This practice run

also gives them the chance to showcase to our senior leadership the great work they have been doing! For their part, managers have the opportunity to ensure that the presentation's message is consistent with our work and values. Finally, this step makes sure that presentations are prepared well in advance of the conference itself—not that any of us would ever leave this kind of important preparation to the last minute!

Following these steps allows ISANS to maintain a high level of quality for presentations at regional and national conferences, ensuring that our hard and innovative work is shared with as many of our colleagues as possible across the country. At the next BC TEAL conference, come to one of our presentations and see for yourself!



Anthony Caldwell has been working in the EAL field for twenty years in Canada and Japan. He is currently Supervising Team Lead, Language Services with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).

Bridging to the Future: Lessons in Intercultural Communication and Transitioning to University

by Chieh-Tai Hsiao, Joe Dobson, and Karen Densky

CHALLENGES can arise for English Language Learners (ELLs) during their studies in Canada. To better ease their transition from secondary school to university, the **Mind the Gap Project** at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) was launched as an initiative to support secondary school ELLs by providing them with the opportunity to learn directly from university professors and interact with university students. This initiative contributes to ELLs' development of intercultural communication skills, their adaptation to the diversity of Canadian education, and to simply help them feel more comfortable and welcome on campus and hopefully more likely to pursue post-secondary education in the future.

Since the project started in 2015, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT) has partnered with Thompson-Nicola School District #73 to create opportunities for K-12 students to participate in university classrooms across TRU. The first iteration of the Mind the Gap project for ELLs was funded by CELT in 2018 and led by Joe Dobson from TRU and Lori Nelson from SD73. Following the success of the 2018 initiative, the project received additional funding and was launched again in 2019, with Dr. Karen Densky joining as a co-investigator. This article discusses the activities associated with the 2019 project.

In September 2019, a kick-off event was hosted at the Henry Grube Education Centre for secondary school ELLs to participate in an exchange with teaching English as a second language (TESL) students. The ELL students in this project are children of immigrants and refugees or of post-secondary



ELLs participate in a class exchange with university students



ELLs participate in a class exchange with university students

students rather than fee-paying international students and were from many countries of origin, including Ghana, China, India, Romania, Syria, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and more. Dr. Karen Densky and Joe Dobson from the TRU faculty, along with Amy Paran from Kamloops Immigration Services, joined efforts with SD73 ELL resource teachers, Lori Nelson, Becky Webb, Meghan Simpson, and Elizabeth Webber, in

[Continued on next page](#)

Bridging to the Future continued



Dr. Karen Densky explains the "Mind the Gap" project to ELLs



Cliff Robinson's information session about transferring into university

event to explain the project, coordinate icebreakers, and exchange activities between the ELLs and the TRU TESL students. Over a pizza lunch, ELLs participated in interactive activities led by TESL students to share their challenges related to studying in Canada as well as discuss different strategies to overcome their cultural barriers. For TESL students, this event afforded them the opportunity to interact with and learn about ELLs from a variety of backgrounds.

A few weeks later, two different groups of ELLs (divided by grade) were invited to the TRU campus to participate in class exchanges with students studying in the English for academic purposes (EAP) program. Individuals were exposed to the university culture and experiences first-hand through the lives of university students in the EAP program. Under the guidance of EAP instructor Janis Goad, ELLs joined university students in an Intermediate Oral Skills class and participated in class exchanges by bringing light to their experiences living among different cultures. Additionally, both ELLs and EAP students were able to promote their cultures, learn from other cultures, and celebrate the diversity of their Canadian experience.

Followed by the class exchange, TRU counsellor Cliff Robinson, presented a workshop for ELLs to compare and contrast secondary school and university life. Students were also encouraged by the counsellor to highlight examples of poor university student behaviours and develop strategies to help them overcome barriers to achieving success in a university setting. Meaningful discussions engaged ELLs to think beyond their current studies and how they could be successful in post-secondary education.

Following their campus visit, ELLs were given questionnaires to express their overall experience of this project. The majority

of the students articulated the significance of their experiences, and that it prepared them to think about their interest in pursuing a university education. Some students even confirmed their desire to study at Thompson Rivers University because of this initiative. Overall, this project was successful in supporting secondary school ELLs from different backgrounds to gain perspectives about the possibility of future post-secondary education as they learn with and from university instructors and students.

Read more about the Mind the Gap Project at
www.tru.ca/celt/faculty-learning/k-16-mind-the-gap.html



Chieh-Tai Hsiao is from Taiwan. He has a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and has recently completed his Master of Education at Thompson Rivers University. He considers himself an English Language Learner, and he enjoys researching art education and creative leadership.



Joe Dobson is an Associate Teaching Professor at Thompson Rivers University where he teaches EAP, TESL, and Coordinates the Graduate Programs in Education Success Centre. He previously served as President, BC TEAL, and his main area of expertise is in educational technology.



Karen Densky, PhD, is an Associate Teaching Professor at Thompson Rivers University. She has been working in the field of English language teaching and teacher education for 30 years. Her current areas of interest are in teacher identity and the impact of professional development. Karen is the current president of BC TEAL.

Reunión: A Virtual Classroom Becomes a Re-Connection Space During Crisis

by Karin Wiebe

My computer screen showed the face of a female student, approximately 17 years old. She was riding on a public bus while watching Skype from her phone. She had white ear buds with a microphone built into the thin white cord, and she lifted it to her mouth when she spoke. I asked her if she was waiting for class to start. She smiled and blushed, and replied “I wait for Rodrigo.” I watched buildings and business signs of Mexico City fly past a large, clean bus window next to her head.

IN MARAVALLE, a community on the outskirts of Mexico City, Rodrigo Cervassi’s* roles as both an English Language Teacher and an MA student in Distance Education have placed him at the centre of a busy online teaching schedule. I recently participated in one of his online classes as a guest speaker and was able to observe both students and the teacher. His school had previous experience with Dexway, a platform specifically designed for language learning. Cervassi explained “My school previously leased Dexway software and this made everything possible. In addition, I could train teachers for this adventure. Unluckily the platform does not include web cam, so we have to make use of FaceTime, Skype and WhatsApp for speaking activities.”

Cervassi sent me an invitation link for Skype to begin at 11:00am. This chat space was called *Reunión* and implied a coming together of people who have been dispersed. Fifteen minutes before class time, Cervassi appeared at the centre of the screen and greeted me. I asked how big today’s class would be and he replied, “I don’t know for sure; it’s supposed to be a hundred.” He moved in and out of the camera view, preparing things for his class.

A young man whose face was in a small box on my screen suddenly asked me, “What books do you like?” I replied “science fiction and romance” because I didn’t know his

language level and thought these were common genre names. He surprised me by saying “I have a book recommend for you” and held up a large copy of *Pieces of Shadon: Selected Poems of Jaime Sabines*. He asked how to pronounce “pieces” (I told him)

and told me he liked this book and recommended it for me. I said, “I’m surprised you are reading poetry. Poems are hard for people who are learning English.” Cervassi returned to his microphone and explained that the student was “very smart, very intelligent and hard-working, and that his English was very good.” The student looked down shyly as Cervassi explained this.

The audio quality was strongest from Cervassi. His voice was comparatively loud and clear with balanced bass. Unfortunately, the audio from students was generally quieter and filled with background noises. This meant that students could hear and understand Cervassi, but he would sometimes have trouble

hearing students speak. For example, there was suddenly an uncomfortably loud noise like a dog barking from the computer speakers, and I couldn’t understand what a student was saying to me. I still wasn’t sure what the other participants were hearing, so I told Cervassi about the noise. He leaned forward to his screen, pressing buttons on the keyboard and the noise stopped.



Classrooms waiting for students to return

Continued on next page

Reunión: A Virtual Classroom continued

I was waiting for some signal of commencement of the class. It was 10 minutes to 11:00 and I had a variety of conversations with students already underway, with Cervassi moving in and out of the screen. I asked him if we were waiting for ten minutes to start. He replied “it starts whenever people show up. It doesn’t work to set an exact time because students don’t understand instructions or there’s problems logging on.” A theme of casual attendance continued for the duration of the class with students logging on and off while Cervassi or I were speaking. I found it distracting because I was listening and watching the screen to understand student’s questions and comments while revolving icons with initials and headshots appeared, disappeared and repositioned. Cervassi provided the continuity to the group conversation and seemed at ease with the pace of student traffic.

There is an element of personal on this particular platform. The computer screen showed students’ faces clearly and in real time, in the context of home. I could detect interest, engagement, incomprehension or boredom clearly and adjust what I was saying. Cervassi’s group of 16- to 17-year-old students surprised me with their topics: they asked about immigration to Canada, racism, classism, disability, Indigenous language preservation, cultural differences, and social values. A three-way communication system emerged where a student would ask a question, and Cervassi would insert a comment on how it applied to Mexican culture. His mediation cued me to the language level and the appropriate answer I could provide.

In mid-sentence, I was summarily cut off from the virtual space at exactly 60 minutes after I logged on. I could still read and type comments on a sidebar but was excluded from visual and audio. Further, the button to “join” that had been on the screen previously, had disappeared. I typed to Cervassi that I couldn’t re-enter the classroom and possibly I had timed out. He replied that yes that was possible.

In British Columbia, English as an additional language (EAL) teachers are experiencing common issues as they work to draw students back into virtual classrooms and maintain their progress towards program completion. For example, one BC TEAL member currently coping with the COVID-19 crisis explained “I am really swamped right now. Working from my kitchen 12 or more hours a day. Working online with students on various platforms and devices, and variable access to technology AND in different time zones with both synchronous and asynchronous connection.” EAL teachers are situated at the nexus point of technology and students where they must act as designer, facilitator, moderator, trainer, and teacher. Cervassi’s issues this spring revolve less around technology. He explained, “for me, the most difficult part is setting instructions because students don’t always follow them

and (they) have different needs. Another important issue is that learning doesn’t occur in the classroom only, it can take several ways.” He adds, “motivated students can do miracles.”

In the race to relaunch class, a variety of software platforms are being used, including **Zoom** and **GoToWebinar**. This means that the act of logging on and participating will not be equal across the board. Further, the divergence of teaching platforms during this crisis may ultimately play a role in inconsistent lesson delivery and program completion.

As I typed notes from Cervassi’s class, a sidebar kept popping up on my screen updating me with student comments from the *Reunión* classroom. Cervassi uses the same space at different times for each group and even with Skype closed I was able to observe conversation threads. It occurred to me that there is no real security for this learning environment. Within the virtual classroom, students don’t have the privacy of only fellow class members observing them. In *Reunión*, a student’s participation is observed and commented on by people who may only be loosely connected to the group, such as friends, family members, and in the case of the girl on a bus, anyone who can see her screen. Further, this platform allowed me to observe children in portions of their homes and environments. What if a young student, using a public computer at a library, failed to log out before leaving?

Conclusion

There is hopeful news for English Language instruction as I check in with friends and coworkers around the world. Teachers by definition, adore learning, and are rising to the challenges of adopting new technologies. Our students are not forgotten at home, but rather the impetus for a new kind of learning space where they will gather again to draw encouragement and practice from each other. EAL instruction in spring 2020 will be one to celebrate for human ingenuity, flexibility, dedication, re-connecting people with each other in every kind of classroom.

**Many thanks to Rodrigo Cervassi for permission to write about my experiences as a guest speaker in his online class.*



Karin Wiebe is pursuing her Master of Arts at UBC’s Okanagan School of Education. She is interested in Canadian immigration in second and third tier communities, specifically intersections of language learning and employment. She currently works as an on-call instructor with LINC in Kelowna.

Decoda Literacy Conference 2019: Literacy for a Better BC

by Linda Peteherych

THIS PAST NOVEMBER, Decoda Literacy Solutions brought together leaders and front-line practitioners of community-based literacy programs in British Columbia for a conference of professional learning. The conference was packed with a wide range of useful learning sessions within a relaxed and friendly environment. The event spanned three full days and consisted of: a pre-conference offering a choice of three full-day workshops; 45 workshops spread over the following two days, two keynote addresses, two plenary speakers, and a fun social event that included a poutine bar and dancing to a live band. What drew me to this conference was the broad range of topics covered by the learning sessions, keynote addresses, and plenary speeches. Having attended many conference workshops pertaining to classroom instruction over the past twenty-five years, I took this opportunity to broaden my horizons and learn about the bigger picture of literacy in British Columbia.

The Pre-conference consisted of three full-day workshops: *Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) Facilitators Training*; *Train the Trainer for Plain Language Writing Workshops*; and an *Introduction to Tutor Training*. Since I am very interested in teaching adult English as an additional language (EAL) and non-EAL learners who have low literacy, I took part in the Introduction to Tutor Training workshop. It provided me with a clear overview of how Literacy Outreach Coordinators (LOCs) arrange and train volunteer literacy tutors to work with adults who have literacy issues.

The 45 learning sessions covered many topics such as: language instruction, learning disabilities, clear language design, family literacy programs, trends in literacy education, administrative

issues, Canadian culture, and financial, legal, computer, and science literacy. I chose to venture into unknown territory with the following workshops:

- *Working with Local Government*, presented by Heather Deal (former Vancouver Park Board Commissioner and former Vancouver City councilor) was informative and straight-forward in encouraging us to form relationships with local government in order to gain support for our literacy projects.
- UBC biology researchers and science educators Analise Hofmann and Connie Leung conducted a workshop called *Science is All Around Us*. This interactive workshop led participants in noticing examples of science in our everyday lives, recognizing the interconnectedness of the different scientific disciplines, and discussing why science literacy is important.
- Helping newcomers understand Canadian culture is an area of interest for me, so I enjoyed learning about the Tri-Cities Adult Literacy and ESL Working Group project called the *Learn About Series*. Ann Johannes, the Tri-Cities Literacy Coordinator, spoke about the development and implementation of this series of information sessions about aspects of Canadian culture such as: civic responsibility, home safety, fraud prevention, hiking, and elections.
- *Writing a Winning Grant Proposal* was another very useful workshop. The expertise and helpfulness of the presenters was very much appreciated. Margaret Sutherland (Executive

[Continued on next page](#)



The audience for Alexandra Samuel's keynote address



Decoda Literacy Conference 2019

Decoda Literacy Conference 2019: Literacy for a Better BC continued



Keynote speaker, Alexandra Samuel



Linda Petaherych's conference session

Director of Decoda); Gail Hanney (Director of Fund Development at Decoda); and Carmen Ryujin (Manager, Community Investment with the Royal Bank of Canada) provided us with detailed and practical advice that made me feel more confident about writing a grant proposal.

- *Board Governance* was the last workshop I attended. Prior to this conference, I had never considered learning about how Boards work—or don't work. Once again, the presenter, Rebecca Beuschel, was very knowledgeable having been a director on the Literacy BC Board and then President when it became Decoda Literacy Solutions. This extended session gave participants a detailed overview of how Boards work, particularly in the context of not-for-profit literacy organizations.

I conducted a workshop called *Teaching Reading and Writing to Adult Literacy Learners*. My interactive workshop explained the principles, methodologies, and teaching activities that have led my LINC 1 Literacy students to: begin speaking with correct structure, read an average of 125 high-frequency words, and write an average of 35 words from memory—so far.

With the variety of learning session topics at this conference, there was something for everyone. I would have liked to have attended a number of other presentations such as: *Update from the Ministry of Education*; *Creative Leadership and Dynamic Decision Making: Balancing Perspective with Process* (I liked the presenter's statement "In this session, participants will engage with the question of how to balance decorum and a safe meeting environment with a constant need to raise the bar on candid expression."); *Symbiosis: Learning STEAM as a Community*; and *Fish Don't Climb Trees: A Whole New Look at Learning Challenges*. Links to the full conference program and downloadable workshop presentations are available at: www.decoda.ca.

As with the learning sessions, the keynote and plenary talks covered a range of topics.

- Dr. Bjarni Tryggvason, a retired Canadian astronaut, test pilot, engineer, and UBC professor, gave the first keynote address. He spoke about our education system and expressed concern over what he sees as a decline in education system standards.
- Alexandra Samuel is a technology researcher, speaker, and writer. She gave an entertaining and informative plenary about how parents can help their children navigate the digital world.
- Chief Robert Joseph gave a moving keynote address about reconciliation and hope. Chief Robert Joseph helped found Reconciliation Canada; he sits on the National Assembly of First Nations Elders Council; and he chairs the Native American Leadership Alliance for Peace and Reconciliation.
- And lastly, Greg Moore, a former Mayor of the City of Port Coquitlam, gave an emotional plenary speech about what it's like to live and learn with dyslexia after revealing that he has dyslexia.

As a LINC instructor, I always enjoy conferences that help me improve my teaching. However, I found the November 2019 Decoda Literacy Solutions Conference valuable for learning about the bigger picture of adult literacy in BC and for expanding my knowledge in very different areas. The conference was stimulating and enjoyable, and I would encourage EAL professionals to consider attending the next Decoda Literacy Solutions conference.



TEAL Charitable Foundation

"Promoting the teaching and learning of English as an additional language."



Linda Petaherych is a skilled Literacy instructor. Her success with low literacy learners is largely due to her training in the principles and methodologies of Reading Recovery. She has 27 years of experience teaching LINC, a TESOL Diploma from VCC, TESL Canada level 2 Certification, and adult EAL literacy certificates.

Charitable Giving that Makes a Difference

by Michael Galli

ON NOVEMBER 15, 2019, at the 5th Annual Tears to Smiles Fundraiser for Refugee Scholarships, the TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) received the single largest private donation in the history of the foundation, and with this generous gift, we have been able to establish a third endowment for a new annual refugee award. This new award will be substantially greater than our previous two.



advance their education. In the world we live in where some seek to create division and disparity, Nick stands out as one person committed to bringing us together in pursuit of a common goal.

A New Refugee Award

With Nick Collins’s donation of \$125,000, we have established the “Nicholas Collins Founders Refugee Award.” This award is the third financial award offered to help students with refugee experiences cover the cost of their post-secondary studies. This generous gift is a matching donation. Nick has always led by example, and he has called on the TCF and all of its supporters to match his \$125,000. The goal is to create a \$250,000 endowment, which will produce a significant annual disbursement and enable a young

student who came to Canada as a refugee to cover a large part of their tuition for post-secondary studies in British Columbia.

As many BC TEAL members know, because of the incredible support we have received over the past decade (both from members and non-members), we reached our previous goal and have been able to create two \$100,000 endowments. Over the past several years we have continued to raise funds and, as a result, had approximately \$70,000 ready to be put towards the matching fund. After the 2019 Tears to Smiles event, we had close to \$200,000. We don’t have far to reach our goal!

On behalf of the TEAL Charitable Foundation, I wish to thank all of you for your support, and I ask you to join me in thanking Nicholas Collins both for his years of service and his inspired philanthropy.

Our Benefactor

Nicholas Collins has been a longstanding supporter of BC TEAL, contributing in a variety of ways for the past four decades. His list of roles include those of President from 1981 to 1985 and Past president from 1985 to 1989.

He has also chaired a number of local and international TEAL and TESOL Conferences and held the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, and President of TESL Canada.

In 1986, Nick was one of the founding members of the TEAL Charitable Foundation and chaired the committee for three terms. A remarkable fact is that the TCF was the first charitable foundation in the world to be established by an English as an additional/second language teaching professional association, due in large part to Nick’s vision and dedication.

Over more than three decades, the TCF has paid out over half a million dollars in awards. What started with a mere \$5,000 endowment, has grown to a combined endowment of over one million dollars.

It is fair to say that Nick has touched the lives of many people during the 40 years that he has been involved in language education, and this new award in his name will continue in perpetuity to help students who need financial assistance to



Michael Galli was BC TEAL’s President from 2007 to 2012, and is now the Chair of the TCF. His work in EAL transitioned to international development at BCIT in 2014, and currently he is the Manager of International Recruitment and Admissions with BCIT International.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

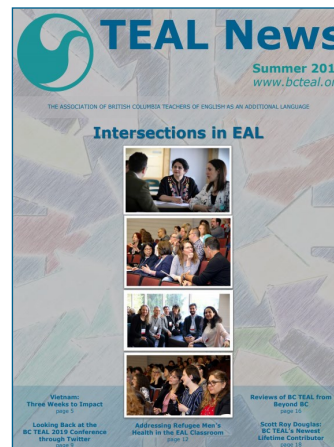
TEAL News

TEAL News is the platform for BC TEAL members to share their work, ideas, and innovations with a wide readership. The main goal of this publication is to shine a spotlight on work done by and for EAL teachers in British Columbia. New issues are distributed to institutions across the province and online through **BC TEAL's website**, with selected articles shared through **BC TEAL's blog** and **social media** outlets.

TEAL News invites submissions for the Fall 2020 issue with the theme "Supporting Learners and Teachers." Newsletter articles are usually 500–1000 words in length. The deadline for submissions to the next issue of TEAL News is July 1, 2020. Please contact the editor, Scott Douglas, with your submission ideas at editor@bctéal.org.

We're looking for:

- articles about your research projects,
- descriptions of classroom activities,
- anecdotes and stories about your experiences,
- book or article reviews,
- reports about talks, seminars, or conferences that you've attended,
- reflections on English language learning,
- and, any other creative work BC TEAL members should know about.



BC TEAL Journal

The *BC TEAL Journal* is your peer-reviewed scholarly publication. The journal exists to promote scholarship related to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in British Columbia, with articles reflecting and making connections to the varying contexts and settings of BC TEAL's members.

The journal invites the submission of original previously unpublished contributions, such as research articles or theoretical analysis, classroom practice, opinion essays, and book reviews. Manuscripts are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

For more information about writing an article for the journal, as well as details about the submission process, please visit the journal's website at <https://ojs-o.library.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ>.