



TEAL News

Spring 2024
www.bctea.org

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

The Lost Issue



The Land On Which We Live, Work And Learn

Members of BC TEAL are grateful to live, work, learn, and be in relation with people from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia. We are honoured to live on this land and are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, Indigenization, and advocating for positive systemic change throughout the EAL community in BC.

bctéal.org/land_acknowledgement

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admin@bctéal.org

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Editor - Karin Wiebe

editor@bctéal.org

Layout Editor - Shawna Williams

Copy Editor - Andrea Szilagyi

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Greetings Members

by Moses Lam

IT IS AN HONOUR to present this year's annual report as the interim president of BC TEAL. First, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our members, supporting institutions, sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers, staff, and board members. As a volunteer organization, our success hinges on your invaluable contributions. Your support has been especially crucial during this exceptionally challenging year. I want to give a special thank you to our office administrator, Crystal Kee, our bookkeeper, Lindi McCormick, and to the current board members especially those concluding their terms this year: Yvonne Hopp, Karin Wiebe, and Hilda Freimuth. Your dedication to BC TEAL's mission and values, and your commitment to enriching the TEAL community, is greatly appreciated.

Highlights of the Year

About a year ago, we initiated regular online professional development (PD) webinars to address specific community needs. Our Communities of Practice groups (CoPs) continued to be well received, with plans to open more groups in the future. We also revamped our website and introduced extended health and dental plans for all members at their request.

Starting in September, BC TEAL hosted various events across British Columbia, including the Kootenays in October, the Fraser Valley in November, and the Tri-Cities in December. We also hosted EAL Week in the Okanagan. In February, we successfully organized the Vancouver Island conference in Victoria. Additionally, we are thrilled to announce that at TESOL 2024, we will be honored with a 50-year affiliation award. In April, we participated in the Decoda Literacy Conference, and our *BC TEAL Journal* published its eighth issue, experiencing a remarkable increase in viewership.

In May, BC TEAL hosted the 55th annual conference, *Integrating Multiple Lenses in TEAL for our Changing World*. This year's in-person conference was a resounding success, with strong attendance and very positive feedback overall.

Challenges

This past year was not without its challenges, the most significant being the early departure of our president, 1st vice-president, and 2nd vice president, followed shortly by our executive director. The transition was extremely difficult, but I am pleased to say our team managed successfully despite many sleepless nights and the significant effort from board members. The most challenging situation was planning our annual conference. I am deeply grateful to the conference planning committee members who worked tirelessly in the months leading up to ensure its success with a special thanks to Janice Penner, our conference planning chair.

Moving Forward

As we move forward, there are areas of priority that I hope the new board will consider:

1. Revisiting Our Mission and Vision: While we have felt the impact of COVID, recent changes in government regulations and the continually evolving landscape highlight the need to stay closely connected with our membership. By understanding their current priorities and needs, we can identify effective ways to provide support. This effort will involve engaging with various sectors of our membership, as well as supporting institutions and sponsors, to find practical ways to fulfill our mission and vision and support the diverse sectors of our EAL community.

2. Board Structure and Operational Model: We have seen drastic changes in our operational model over the past few years. It is crucial to re-establish a cohesive and collaborative board structure that empowers our talented and passionate volunteers. Although we've made significant progress, more work is needed to strengthen our internal infrastructure. With that in mind, it may be wise to go small for now, and go big down the road.

3. Financial Sustainability: The impact of COVID-19 significantly affected our membership numbers. Moving forward, we need to re-evaluate our financial strategy to avoid operating at a loss. The recent motion to raise membership fees is a small step in this direction, but a comprehensive long-term strategy is necessary. The various grants we have applied for, if successful, could increase revenue but must be carefully managed to avoid over-extending our capacity.

4. Regional Representation: The lack of regional reps this past year has affected BC TEAL's reach throughout BC. In the coming year, we hope to see more involvement from a regionally diverse group to better connect with EAL communities across the province.

Closing

As this Annual General Meeting concludes my term on the board, I wish the incoming board the best and much success in continuing the organization's mission. It has been an honor to work alongside such talented and dedicated individuals, contributing positively to our EAL community. I look forward to supporting the new board in an informal capacity and to the great things BC TEAL will achieve in the future.

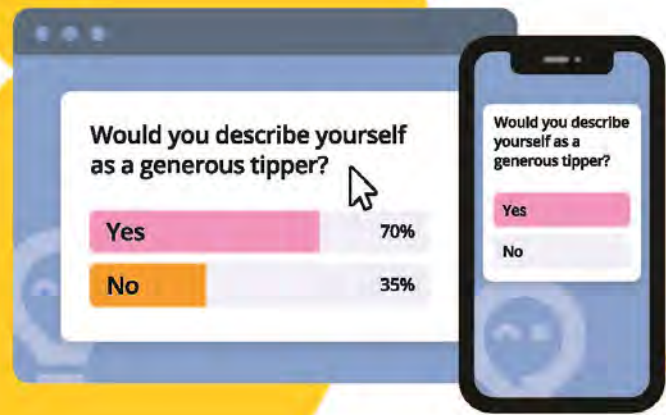
Respectfully submitted,
Moses Lam
Interim President

Would you describe yourself as a generous tipper?

Use Ellii Polls with your English students to engage them in a live and interactive discussion around this or many other topical questions. Check it out!



ellii.com/gather/ellii-polls



HELLO FROM ELLII! Here's a question for you: How much time and opportunity do you give your English students to just talk in class? Providing a controlled and comfortable environment, where students are encouraged to speak up and participate, is so important in a language classroom. But often setting up that opportunity can be time consuming and may not always lead to rich, meaningful interaction between students.

At Ellii, we've always tried to incorporate pair and group activities into our ready-made lessons, where the only way for a student to complete a task is by communicating with another classmate (in English). But we also think that giving students some simple speaking time separate from your actual lesson plan is a great way to help students improve their communication skills. That's why we built a new tool called Ellii Polls where the main objective is to get students to forget that they are even in a language classroom and simply participate in a lively discussion.

So what are Ellii Polls and how do they work? Ellii Polls are session-based activities where teachers can conduct real-time interactive polls in the classroom (virtual or in person) to spark lively discussion, debate, and conversation with English language learners. Teachers choose from a large index of topics, and launch a poll where students participate using their devices to answer questions and state their opinions. The results are broadcasted to the front of the class leading to more discussion and conversation.

The tool is super simple, super engaging, and super fun. You can use Ellii Polls as a warm-up or cool-down activity to start or end any class. Or you can simply use Ellii Polls to introduce a new topic you might already be planning to teach. **Try them out at [Ellii.com](https://ellii.com)!**



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Instantly connect with Canadian doctors for medical care from your phone, tablet or computer – any time, 24/7 at a discounted cost.

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Change4Life® is a free online portal designed to support (and encourage!) healthy life choices by providing tools, resources and health information tailored to your specific needs. You'll earn points for your activity that can be used for chances to win great rewards, including gift cards from major retailers.

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Speaking With Ease

by Karin Wiebe

THE ARTICLES AND CORRESPONDENCE that have crossed our BC TEAL desks the past year have demonstrated that members feel comfortable bringing sometimes difficult discussions to the foreground for all of us to consider.

On one level, we can feel proud and count ourselves among a passionate, caring, thinking community of EAL professionals. We never have far to look to find examples of reflective and reflexive practices.

stronger educators. Ashley Johnston and Manveen Kaur Singla discuss the potential for land acknowledgements in EAL education. They explain that beyond language form and vocabulary, acknowledgments offer an inroad to understanding historic and contemporary understandings of relationships between settlers and First Nations, and between people and the land. Belkis Toredi introduces ways that EAL education may benefit from a values-based approach that also aligns with [First People's Principles of Learning](#).



On another level, it is worth (re)considering how we conceive of the skill of speaking in our classrooms. Educators are tasked with providing learning experiences that prepare students for success in their various endeavors. However, this fall, BC TEAL members are thinking beyond language form to consider ways to bring the social into EAL education. This might refer to functional language for social situations, but it seems there is something else emerging here.

One student recently commented that they found classes in British Columbia very different from their previous experiences, explaining, "...it's different here. At home we study with books and we read pages. Here, I don't know, it's like more social or something..."

In this issue, Joyce Martins introduces a student who ultimately informed her teaching philosophy. Her article discusses how student perceptions and expectations can be harnessed to shape

On a final level, we are still left to consider the kinds of conversations our students might need to initiate and participate in. We want our students to have strong connections with people throughout their communities. We want them to live well in this place, and—above all—we want them to feel they can speak with ease.

As ever, I encourage everyone to participate in these conversations through our publications and events. Please submit your articles, questions, or ideas at editor@bctéal.org.



Karin Wiebe, is pursuing her PhD in Inter-disciplinary Studies at UBC's Okanagan School of Education (OSE). She is interested in how EAL is learned in the workplace, and how that can be supported in the classroom. Wiebe works as the EAL Access Initiative Coordinator with the OSE's EAL Programs and is an EAL instructor.

Language of the Land: Enriching EAL Students' Understanding of Their Relationship with the Earth

By Ashley Johnston & Manveen Kaur Singla



Image by [Walt Musekamp](#) from Pixabay.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS can be a great way to open up an event, meeting, or class to recognize and honour the Indigenous peoples of the land on which we are situated. However, these statements are often rushed, denying students the opportunity for meaningful reflection on their significance. Ashley Johnston, a recent UBCO MEd graduate, and Manveen Kaur Singla, a current UBCO MEd student, both became curious and concerned about this. They chose to dive into conversations about how their diverse experiences and identities impact their connection with the Sylix Okanagan people's territory.

After some insightful discussions with colleagues, Ashley began an effort to help people build meaningful and personal land acknowledgments. She explained, that she used to be uncomfortable saying land acknowledgements and felt annoyed with people who just said a scripted one. After speaking with a colleague, she was given a PowerPoint presentation used to help youth create their own land acknowledgments. That's

when she realized that creating a personalized land acknowledgement might be the starting point for fostering meaningful acknowledgements.

Using personalized land acknowledgments in the classroom gives students an opportunity to dig deeper into their significance and helps raise awareness about Indigenous histories, cultures, and land rights. Practicing land acknowledgements is increasingly recognized as a symbolic gesture of respect and reconciliation. Through this practice, we might begin to think of daily practices or actions we can do to give back to the land we are situated on. This is especially important for our international students who have temporarily or permanently settling on these Indigenous lands.

According to Manveen, English as an Additional Language (EAL) classrooms serve as dynamic spaces where individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together

[Continued on next page](#)

Language of the Land continued

to learn English. These classrooms cater to students who speak languages other than English as their primary or home language. Manveen explained that EAL classrooms are not just language-learning environments: they are rich hubs of cultural exchange. Students bring with them a wealth of cultural perspectives, traditions, and experiences, and as EAL instructors, it's integral to acknowledge and celebrate this diversity to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Ashley and Manveen aim to explore how the integration of land acknowledgments in EAL classrooms could potentially increase cultural awareness, as well as foster a more inclusive and respectful learning environment for diverse students.

Ashley highlighted that in EAL classrooms, land acknowledgments can be a great way to open class discussions about identity, community, culture, and lived experience. Land acknowledgments not only help us express gratitude to the respective Indigenous peoples, but they also help us come together as a collective humanity to acknowledge how land gives us gifts. Expressing our appreciation through these statements serves as a reminder for us to embody daily practices that contribute positively to our land.

Integrating land acknowledgments into EAL education serves as a foundational step in decolonizing and cultivating cultural awareness within language learning. Manveen explained that by incorporating these acknowledgments, students not only grasp new language skills but also engage with the cultural subtleties that influence language usage. This holistic approach fosters empathy, encouraging students to embrace diverse perspectives embedded in language and culture. As students explore the significance of acknowledging Indigenous lands, they develop open-mindedness and a profound appreciation for cultural diversity. Consequently, this holistic learning experience equips students to navigate a globalized world with heightened cultural sensitivity and respect. Thus, land acknowledgments stand as a gateway, enabling students to understand the intricate relationship between language, culture, and the broader socio-cultural landscape.

This approach to teaching allows educators and students to consider how our unique identities and lived experiences intersect with the act of acknowledging Indigenous lands. By understanding how our identities and lived experiences impact the way we fulfill our responsibilities as settlers on this land, we aim to cultivate a more meaningful and introspective connection to the practice of land acknowledgment. Our students leverage their unique cultural experiences to bring intercultural perspectives to understanding their connection to the land they are currently on, and how that fits with their connections to their homeland.

Ashley and Manveen reiterated that personalized land acknowledgments allow students to explore how their primary language and home cultures express a deeply rooted connection with the land. As EAL teachers we are regularly asking ourselves: *How do we support our students' relationship with the land? In what ways can we encourage leadership roles in our students to help them advocate for better environmentally ethical choices? How do we foster student agency and voice that allows them to pursue ecologically sustainable policies at UBC? (and) How can we as EAL instructors provide our students with the necessary language skills to allow them to participate in these critical conversations about the land they are visiting?* While Ashley and Manveen continue to explore answers to these questions, they recognize that educators have the responsibility to teach ecologically ethical choices. They believe in fostering a community where students make mindful choices and engage in practices that contribute to making a sustainable environment more of a reality.

Ashley and Manveen encourage deep introspection regarding identity, and how that identity impacts our bond with the land and the broader worldview. It's a crucial pause to question whether our cultural perspective perceives the land as an entity for us to take from, or as something to give back to. This self-reflection begins with understanding our own rapport with nature. As EAL instructors, it's incumbent upon us to guide students in forging meaningful connections with their new environment and nurturing practices that sustain ecological balance. By equipping them with vocabulary and fostering critical thinking about their identities within the context of Canada's Indigenous history, we empower students to engage in complex conversations, contributing to the imperative process of decolonization.

Manveen and Ashley concluded that as educators move forward, may our classrooms echo not just with language but also with the resonating call to honour, protect, and cherish the sacred bonds between themselves, other members of our communities, and the land we walk upon.



Ashley Johnston is a Sessional Lecturer at UBC Okanagan's School of Education (English Foundation Program). She has recently earned her MEd and her BC TEAL Certificate. Drawing on her academic expertise and dedication to Indigenous pedagogies, Ashley is committed to decolonizing EAL education through outdoor learning experiences that foster student engagement with the environment.

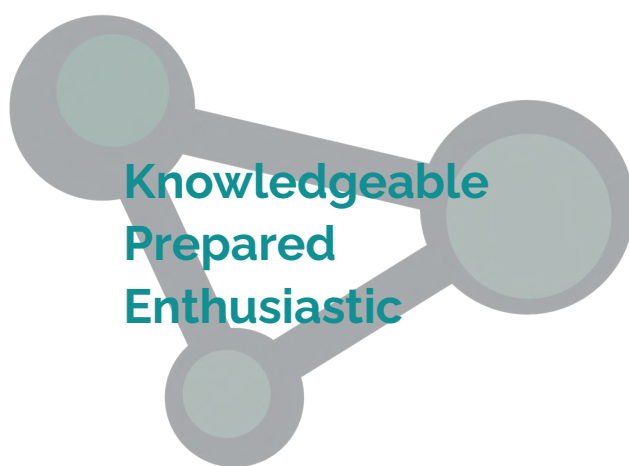


Manveen Kaur Singla (she/her/hers) is an educator with over a decade of experience in both Indian and international educational settings, with degrees in Education (with English as a major) and Computer Engineering. She is passionate about teaching and having also worked as an IELTS and PTE instructor, she brings a versatile approach to EAL teaching.

A Transformative Ternary

By Joyce Martens

EARLY ON IN MY EDUCATIONAL CAREER, I had an intriguing conversation with a young EAL student, whom I'll call Yari, that profoundly impacted my journey toward excellence as a teacher. As we walked out the door into the warm sunshine on a beautiful July day, I asked this newly arrived student in Canada how his language learning experience was going. His eager anticipation of the immersion experience was obvious. The young man commented on the differences in teaching styles he was encountering, but as he continued, I could sense that he was searching for words to express both his disappointment and expectation. I had some extra time, so we sat down across from each other at a picnic bench nearby. As we spoke, I had no idea that this conversation would profoundly affect how I would later approach my own classroom. During our discussion, we came up with a trio of words that described the kind of educator Yari was looking for. The teacher that would satiate his desire for the very best guidance in developing his language learning skills would be knowledgeable, prepared, and enthusiastic.



Recently as I participated in a thought-provoking and informative EAL workshop, I realized that as we implement the ever-evolving educational innovations and navigate the increasing unpredictability of the EAL classroom, the adage *the more things change, the more they stay the same* really is true.

Knowledge is the key to any discussion of learning and “can be understood as the way in which individuals and societies apply meaning to experience (IXL Learning, 2023).” Knowledge has always been foundational to effective teaching. A knowledgeable teacher not only conveys information but also provides opportunities for learners to conceptualize, critique, and synthesize. In this fourth industrialized revolution of unceasing information, this skill is as relevant today as it was all those years ago—more so maybe as the subject matter increases in complexity. This then seemed a reasonable choice to jot down as a first consideration. We both agreed a knowledgeable educator is essential to effective learning.

Preparedness is the clear and precise scaffolding that makes knowledge accessible. This includes not only a well-structured lesson plan but also the anticipation of a variety of learning

styles and the unique needs of each student. It also means keeping abreast of new developments in methodology, pedagogy, and technology. Preparedness brings a relaxedness to the classroom that builds confidence and trust. From that perspective, it was quite easy to see why preparedness was the second word we settled on to help this young man in his search. I agreed that preparedness is a hallmark of an outstanding educator.

I was puzzled for a minute as Yari attempted to communicate the final attribute he was longing for. How could we describe the educator that transcends the ordinary? I probed him more. Do you want a teacher that is happy? No, it was more than that. He wanted more than a cheerful instructor. When I finally caught what it was that he was trying to express, I realized Yari was describing enthusiasm in the classroom. Enthusiasm is expressed through lively, energetic engagement in the process of sowing seeds of thought to foster curiosity that leads to discovery.

Over the years, I have often reflected on the conversation I had on the lawn that summer day long ago and on the silent commitment I made to myself to become the kind of educator Yari envisioned. I often ask myself as I am on the way into the classroom, “Have I taken the time to refine my understanding of today’s topic? Have I organized my subject matter into a structure conducive to learning? Can I transmit a passion that enriches the learning environment today?”

I have come to understand that in any era, an educator committed to entering the classroom knowledgeable, prepared, and enthusiastic can pave the way for transformative learning.



Joyce Martens, holding a master's degree in TESL/TEFL from the University of Birmingham, has passionately taught English as an additional language since 1997. Joyce has also written curricula for a community EAL program aiding Syrian refugees, and an online IELTS preparation program. Beyond the classroom, Joyce enjoys travel, walks, and coffee with family and friends.

References

IXL Learning. (2023). Accessed at <https://www.vocabulary.com/>

How ChatGPT Can Transform Business Writing Lessons into Thought-Provoking Discussions

By Pamela Flagel



Image by gerald at Pixabay

IT HAS BEEN JUST OVER A YEAR since chatbot artificial intelligence programs gained attention in the mainstream media and public consciousness. During this time, these programs have become widely utilized, and it is anticipated that many employers will be expecting their employees to know how to navigate and utilize products like ChatGPT. With this in mind, I incorporated an AI component into my lesson plan for the practicum portion of my Teaching English and Additional Languages (TEAL) post-baccalaureate certificate. One of the focuses of the course was to assist adult EAL learners with developing their English skills for use in the workplace. We decided it might be beneficial if I created a language learning experience that included how to use ChatGPT to create a cover letter.

As part of my lesson plan, I developed an activity where students would be provided with a cover letter that I had written and a cover letter that ChatGPT had written. Both

cover letters were based on the same job posting and utilized information from the position description and my résumé. Each student was given a copy of the two letters, one printed on a blue piece of paper and the other printed on a yellow sheet of paper. They were not told which letter was written by me or ChatGPT. The students were placed into groups and asked to discuss each letter and determine which letter was created by me, and which was created by ChatGPT. I had budgeted about 25 minutes in my lesson plan for this activity; however, the discussion lasted for over an hour with everyone in the room engaged in the conversation. The analysis went far beyond whether each cover letter was written by a human or artificial intelligence program and became a discussion about tone and underlining meaning in business writing. Over a month later I am still thinking about this experience and have provided a summary of the key components of this conversation below.

[Continued on next page](#)

How ChatGPT Can Transform Business Writing Lessons *continued*

From the first sentence of each letter, the class was almost equally split on their preference of tone. ChatGPT's opening statement was, "I am writing to express my strong interest" whereas, mine started with "Please accept my application." Half the class preferred the phrase "strong interest" as they felt this demonstrated confidence. One student felt that they would immediately discard any cover letter that started with the word "please" because it was too weak. Other students thought that "please" sounded polite. One group recognized my voice through the use of the word "please." They argued that although it may sound "soft" compared to the opening of the ChatGPT letter, they liked the use of "please" as it sounded like me and provided the potential employer with a picture as to who I am as a person.

One student raised the topic of the use of the word "I" and how one letter had almost double the amount of use of this pronoun. He felt that this was an example of writing that was less effective than that of the other letter. When we eventually revealed which letter was written by ChatGPT and which letter was written by me, we were able to discuss this further. We talked as a class about how this type of analysis was helpful to me as I continue to work to be a better writer. It also enabled me to talk about how habits can form. I indicated that I have been using the same style and tone in my cover letter for a number of years, as I have obtained employment using this format. This discussion and comparison with the ChatGPT letter created a very good opportunity for me to see how formulaic my cover letter has become over time.

When I was reading the cover letter that ChatGPT had created for me for the first time, I was particularly impressed with the following sentence it created, "My key skills, such as project management, public speaking, and team building, will enable me to contribute effectively to the diverse responsibilities of this position." I thought this sentence provided a very effective

and friendly summary of some of the skills I might bring to position. This sentence was also flagged by one of the groups as "sounding very human." So much so that this group changed the letter they decided was mine and ChatGPT's, and based on this sentence decided I had written the letter. Later on, in the class one of the participants in that group even stopped to talk to me about how good this sentence was. I admitted to the student that I had been very impressed by this sentence as well, and I felt inspired by this discussion about writing.

Throughout this exercise all the students were highly engaged, and I think that the involvement of ChatGPT played a large role. I suspect that this is because many of the students are already using tools like ChatGPT to generate their cover letters and other text, and they have a personal stake in determining whether the text that has been produced is going to be effective and correct in the various contexts in which it might be applied. During the class discussion one of the students raised some questions about some recommendations that ChatGPT had provided for an email that he had written. The majority of the students indicated that they were using ChatGPT to some extent, and they were interested in whether it was generating text that was culturally appropriate to a Canadian audience. While computers are trying to determine if a user might be a robot through the CAPTCHA test, I believe that this class exercise reflects an increasing interest in ascertaining if the text we are reading, the images we are viewing, or the telephone customer service agents to whom we are speaking are products of AI.



Pamela Flagel works at UBC's Okanagan School of Education as Assistant to the Director. She is currently completing her Teaching English and Additional Languages (TEAL) Post-Baccalaureate Certificate.

Resources

bctea.org/resources-grid-v3b.phb

BC TEAL is proud to provide a variety of resources for our audience. These include both freely available materials and some that are for members only.

Member Resources

(Members Only Resources)

BC TEAL offers a host of member provided resources. This includes resources for special interest groups and popular EAL categories.

OER Resources

(Free Resource)

One of the main advantages of OER Resources is they are free. However, they are also an essential part of an open pedagogy and can be used to create a powerful learning experience for your students.

TCF Resources

(Free Resource)

The TCF Awards were established to promote the teaching and learning of English as an additional language. The TEAL Charitable Foundation funded these outstanding teaching and learning materials.

Conference Recordings

(Members Only Resource)

BC TEAL maintains an archive of its annual conference sessions as well as a variety of workshops. These can be accessed by any member who attended these events.

Navigating an EAL Class Through a Values-Based Approach

By Belkis Toredi

"The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole." (Block, 2018. P.1)

AS PART OF EAL WEEK in the Okanagan, I had the honour of delivering a presentation based on a section from my capstone project, which I designed and implemented as part of my MEd at UBC Okanagan's School of Education. I facilitated conversations with EAL instructors about our personal and professional values in both personal and EAL contexts. Values represent what is important to us as they help us make choices and navigate our lives. It is critical to understand that people

values may impact their expectations of their classmates and their teacher.

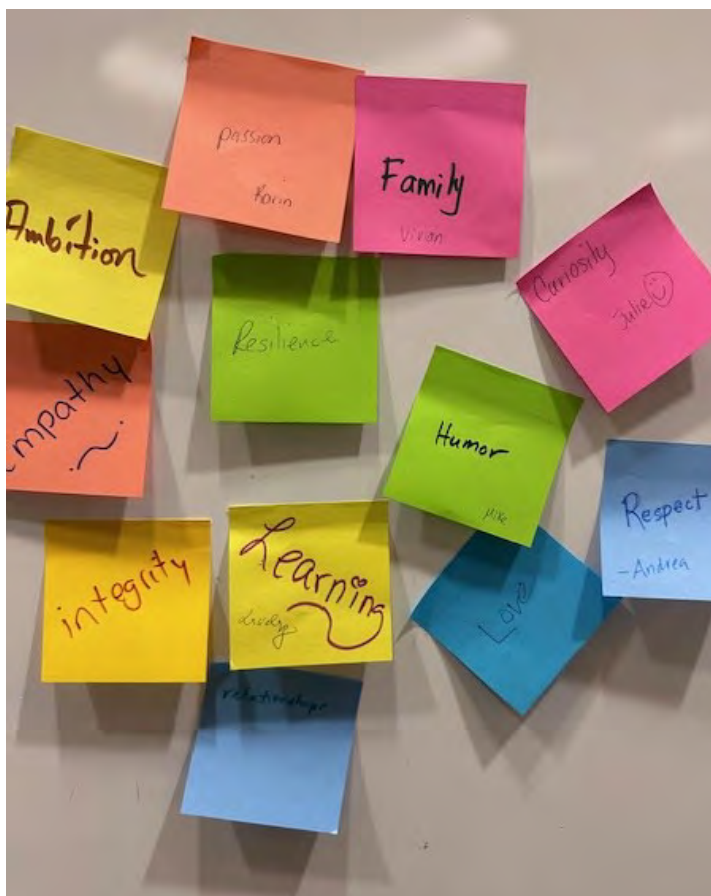
Becoming aware of our values is an important step in recognizing how our values impact our lives and the learning experiences of our students. As such, I ask that you please take a moment to think about how your guiding values play a role in your lesson preparation, class management, assessment, and interaction with students.

- Do you value critical thinking in preparing your tests?
- Do you value collaboration in class management
- When you prepare your lesson plans, do you prioritize activities that feed student creativity?
- Do you think there should always be fun in your classes?
- Is compassion an outstanding value for you in your interaction with students?
- Which of your values support you in having smooth, lively, and productive EAL classes?
- Are there any values that hinder your performance in your EAL classes?
- What kind of values employed in EAL classes would support sustainable ways of living?

Taking on a values-based approach to education is important because it allows us to think about how we interact with the living and non-living things in our environment and community. The problems our world is facing—climate change, environmental disasters, rising violence, wars, isolation, and economic collapse—require that we, humankind, need to evaluate our prevailing ways and adopt new ways that are aligned with sustaining our planet's continuity. When we consider sustainability, we should turn to the original stewards of this land: Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge systems can teach us how to live reciprocally and in harmony with the land.

Many North American Indigenous communities use a values-based approach in educating new generations. For instance, the Circle of Courage is a North American Indigenous values-based approach in education that consists of the following: belonging,

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Participants' personal and professional values.

prioritize different values depending on the context they are in. For instance, an individual may prioritize fun at home or in social settings, whereas they will prioritize professionalism in work settings. On the other hand, some values transcend time and place. For example, a person who has *connection* as their core value can honour it in all kinds of settings. My presentation allowed EAL instructors to identify their core values and consider how their values may impact their classroom environment, as well as consider how their students' core

Navigating an EAL Class continued



Belkis presenting (left) and Dr. Scott Douglas taking notes (right)



Group shot of all participants at EAL Week event in the Okanagan.

mastery, independence, and generosity. Based on their research, Brendtro et al. (2019) suggest that honouring these values in education will help youth with resilience and a purposeful life. Belonging refers to relationships of trust, and when it is honoured, young people feel they are loved. Mastery is described as opportunities for learning, and young people feel they can succeed if the adults around them honour the value of mastery. The value of independence corresponds to building responsibility; and in an environment where this value is honoured, the young feel they can control their lives. Generosity relates to helping others, and when honoured, the young feel they have a purpose in their lives. The most critical thing about the meaning of honouring the Circle of Courage values in educational settings is the fact that Brendtro et al. suggest that honouring all these values support the young with the development of resilience.

Upon reflection of my capstone, I see the following connections with each value from the Circle of Courage. Asking

learners what is important to them, seeing their lives from a holistic perspective, and paying attention to their needs honoured the value of belonging. Tasking students with setting personalized goals and realizing them in the scaffolded ways of coaching supported the value of mastery. The theme of making decisions supported the value of independence by improving their decision-making skills based on their authentic ways. Creating an assignment about how they could contribute to the sustainable development goals in a way that aligned with their values honoured the value of generosity.

I believe as educators we should be willing to incorporate a values-

based approach and promote the Circle of Courage values in our educational settings. Even though a community may not support a certain value, it is still possible to promote it through our teaching practices. For example, giving learners options for assignments would honour the value of independence through building responsibility. This would not disrupt the cultural ways of that community, even if their cultural norms do not support independence in young people.

You may wish to consider this: How would your specific context and content welcome the Circle of Courage values as a way of building learner resilience?



Belkis Toredi, (MA, MEd, PCC) is an EAL/EFL teacher, ICF-accredited professional coach, and the founder of Agena Academia Education Consulting. Agena Academia offers tailored coaching programs that support the development and success of international students. Belkis believes coaching has a great potential for decolonizing EAL education and integrating care ethics into curriculum.

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TESOL 2024 Reflections

By Amber McLeod & Karin Wiebe

The 2024 TESOL International Convention and Expo was held March 21 to 23 in Tampa Florida.

Two BC TEAL members share their reflections on their participation at this year's convention.

BC TEAL is proud to be an active member of the Affiliate Network of the TESOL International Association.

AMBER'S REFLECTIONS: As a first timer to an international TESOL convention, it was both amazing and overwhelming. It was great to go with colleagues and be situated in the beautiful Marriott hotel next to the convention center in Tampa Bay. Wow—there were so many sessions to choose from at each hour of the day, so I needed to go over my itinerary the night before and say no to five other sessions happening at the same time, pace myself, and plan when I was going to eat the next day. Thankfully, the conference was situated right next to a nice river walk with cafes, and it looked like a *malecón* (a waterfront esplanade).

With such a range of sessions, needless to say, it was difficult to choose. Attendees jumped in and out of sessions. I particularly enjoyed one session on AI which talked about digital wellness in terms of how to use AI, how to build awareness, how it can support us, and how to avoid the downsides.



Anita Veal and Amber McLeod at opening plenary of TESOL 2024.
Photo by Amber McLeod

When there was a little bit of downtime, I was looking for crocodiles but didn't see any, so I felt safe. We jumped on a trolley car just outside the hotel, and it took us to another area called Ybor City that was full of eateries and restaurants. What a great adventure.

I hope to see you next year in Long Beach California for TESOL 2025!



Mural in Ybor City. Photo by Amber McLeod



At the affiliates booth with fellow BC TEAL members: (left to right) Belkis Toredi, Karin Wiebe, Anita Veal, Scott Douglas, and Amber McLeod. Photo by Amber McLeod

KARIN'S REFLECTIONS: 2024 TESOL was a vibrant, exciting event with fellow EAL academics and educators from all over the world. You really have to pick and choose your priorities at this event—there were opportunities to meet colleagues, discover new ways of thinking about EAL and new ideas to use in the classroom, check in with special interest groups at receptions, and see the surrounding community. I took a lot of notes about everything: people I met, conversations, lectures, things I saw and experienced. It takes time at home to really process it all, sort through the experiences, and find the nuggets worth sharing and using.

For example, one presentation, Designing English for Occupational Purposes Courses: IT, Automotive, and Tourism

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2024 TESOL Reflections continued



Karin Wiebe and Scott Douglas at the Affiliates Booth holding BC TEAL's award for 50 Years of Affiliation . Photo by Amber McLeod

months. How did you solve that problem? Students interview each other using both future imagining language and past tense solutions, then write about their interviews.

On another note, in BC we are developing ways of thinking about Land Acknowledgements at the start of EAL events and presentations. In my experiences, I am witnessing a kind of experimenting with how to conduct an acknowledgment and discussions within the EAL field about what the key features could be. At TESOL 2024, I witnessed a larger inclusion of land acknowledgment styles and efforts that demonstrated a growing awareness of the value and importance. What an exciting time to be in this field!

Overall TESOL 2024 was an amazing, positive experience. If you haven't been, I recommend you try one out. Next year, [TESOL 2025](#) will be in California.

See you there!



Scott Douglas at the TESOL Affiliates Reception holding BC TEAL's award for 50 Years of Affiliation. Photo by Scott Douglas

looked at language and work skills programs at three universities in Mexico. In these programs, EAL educators constructed the curriculum for online modules that could be drawn on by the content educators. The program asked student teams to create a lesson plan template for the course, then vote on a winning submission that educators would use. For me, this was a new level of including students in co-constructing their learning. I am excited to try it! During this presentation, I also learned that (in Mexico) soft skills are now called professional skills. This was a small but amazing point because it demonstrates the importance of including these skills in EAL for workplace contexts. I also paid attention to presentation styles and to how key points were discussed. In this regard, one of my key takeaways was that if I am presenting an EAL program, I need to specifically demonstrate changes to students' language and communicative skills. This way the audience has an idea of the kinds of changes they can expect if they adopt the ideas into their teaching contexts.

It is always a pleasure to attend a National Geographic Learning session. This year, John Hughes provided examples of how core academic competencies like critical thinking, collaboration, and communication can support EAL learners in post-secondary studies and in their future work. For example, Hughes explained that educators can activate higher order thinking and deeper engagement with activities that call for creative solutions by asking students to write three questions about a photo or an animal, then work with a partner to ask them to respond to the questions. Hughes also discussed the intersection of language and learning strategies, suggesting that an activity aimed at future thinking can build students' writing skills through problem solving. For example, students think up a problem they might have, then imagine themselves in six

Amber McLeod is a lecturer at UBC Okanagan's School of Education. She has been an EAL instructor for over 17 years as well as lived abroad in Mexico and Guatemala. Amber enjoys collaborating with others around curriculum development, assessments, and classroom resources. She invites intercultural awareness and communication to transpire through respectful environments in her classroom.

Karin Wiebe, is pursuing her PhD in Inter-disciplinary Studies at UBC's Okanagan School of Education (OSE). She is interested in how EAL is learned in the workplace, and how that can be supported in the classroom. Wiebe works as the EAL Access Initiative Coordinator with the OSE's EAL Programs and is an EAL instructor.

BC TEAL Interview With Dr. Jodie Martin: The Problem with Presentations



With four new articles published in 2023, Dr. Jodie Martin has agreed to this interview with BC TEAL. Dr. Martin is an educational linguist with a wide range of research interests including academic writing, language analysis in research, grammatical constructs in academic Sciences and Arts, and innovative processes and forms for assessment.

Her recently published article [“The Problem of Presentations: An EAP Lecturer’s Approach to Teaching Presentations Skills”](https://doi.org/10.14288/bctj.v8i1.539) is available in the *BC TEAL Journal* (Volume 8, 2023) at doi.org/10.14288/bctj.v8i1.539.

Dr. Martin’s core areas include applied linguistics, educational research, systemic functional linguistics, academic and disciplinary discourse, and scientific language.

What experiences, people, or events have been your inspiration to work and research in the field of EAL?

Like many, I came to English teaching from studying other languages: I studied French for 17 years and Spanish for four and had half an idea to teach English to support my other languages, only to fall in love with linguistics. It was a way to explain the things I implicitly knew about language but never could name. And the more I learnt about linguistics and

language and education, the more EAL became a great space for working with that knowledge. I do believe everything I teach would benefit L1 English speakers, but EAL provides an opportunity to explore so many aspects of language that I might not have considered with other demographics.

For the specific topic of this paper, I’ve always been interested in presentations and always tried to include at least one lesson where I teach students how to present before I assess them—inspired by my family who taught me how to speak up, how to project my voice, and how to use a microphone among other skills. When I started working with international students and saw their struggles with presentations at a student research conference, I realized they really needed more time to develop presentation skills. I was lucky enough to have the freedom in my curriculum to focus a 13-week term on presentations, which I have since refined into 6–7 weeks. Throughout it all, I tried to make presentation skills not about confidence, or talent, yet seeing my students year after year get more confident makes it worthwhile.

What are some things you are excited about in EAL? For example, is there something you are eager to try out like new materials or apps, strategies, learning experiences or perhaps a new understanding about how additional languages are learned?

It’s not exclusive to EAL, but I have been really interested in the last year or so with how to understand and support neurodivergent students. So many of my friends have been diagnosed in their 30s and 40s with ADHD and autism and have shared how difficult studies were at times for them; I really want to try to help my students to avoid the stress and trauma that so many have been through. At the same time, EAL students can be particularly vulnerable: they may not have diagnoses nor understandings of neurodivergence that are supportive, and they may be experiencing additional challenges through the loss of the mechanisms that worked for them in other languages, cultures, or contexts. I have learnt so much myself, as a neurotypical person, about how I work well and what I need to be productive based on my friends’ strategies, and I want to pass that forward.

At the same time, from what I’ve learnt so far, so many of the strategies that support neurodiverse students are also ones that support all EAL students. Things like having structure with

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flexibility around due times, providing information through both speech and writing at multiple points, providing access to materials (slides, lecture recordings, transcriptions) for review; all of these help all students—they will just help EAL and neurodiverse students a little more. I'm excited by emergent understandings of best practices because it often comes down to good pedagogy.

You have recently published your work in *BC TEAL Journal*. What are some practical implications of your research? How can educators bring it into their classrooms?

I really hope my paper can be applied in the classroom—that was the whole point of writing it! And already my three beta readers said they were stealing ideas from it for their own teaching, so that's promising. I tried to provide a holistic perspective of why and how and what I teach with presentations so there are different entry points. Educators could use the Teaching and Learning Cycle to plan a series of lessons on presentations, or maybe they add Pecha Kucha presentations as a pedagogic activity, or maybe they incorporate some of the concepts I write about like point-form grammar, or steal the rubric I included! I like to think of it as a menu: I've provided a range of options, but it's up to readers to identify what might work for them, their context, and their students. If I had to suggest one thing in particular, I would recommend including two presentations. My colleague, who adopted my curriculum last year, recently commented on the value of repeated presentations, to give students the opportunity to receive and incorporate feedback rather than struggling in isolation. Ultimately, I hope educators realize how complex presentations are, and at the same time find simple strategies for improving students' confidence and skills. I hope to make presentations less boring for all audiences, and helping teachers is one way to achieve that goal!

Is there anything else you would like to share? Have you had an interesting experience in a classroom or as a researcher? Or perhaps you have an unanswered question or new idea that our experienced BC TEAL members can share their thoughts on?

To be honest, I have been struggling a lot this term with how students use technology—not only artificial intelligence for both writing and editing, but also translation and paraphrasing websites and apps. On the one hand, these technologies provide fantastic assistance and accessibility; on the other, they have the potential to fundamentally change the paradigm of language teaching. My students do not intend to “cheat”: they are deeply aware of their own perceived weaknesses and they grasp at anything that will help them. They (like so many) prioritize writing as a product over writing as evidence of learning and, in the process, inadvertently avoid opportunities for growth. One of my main character students (you know the sort—they're the ones you'll remember in years to come irrespective of their grades) told me last week that in high school she had not been good at English or writing, and she had used a translator in the first classes with me because she was worried. And she mentioned how I talked about being brave: the picture on my slides and on my learning management system is a boulderer climbing a big rock outside, surrounded by three people with their arms up to catch him if he falls, as a metaphor for taking risks within a safe and supportive community. And so she chose to be brave. She asks questions when confused, comes to office hours, volunteered to be a student representative with more readiness than those who struggle less to talk. So I guess my question to the community is this: How do we empower our students to be brave without technology, so that one day they can use technology to help them? I don't think I have answers, and I don't even know if I'm asking the right question yet. But at the end of a particularly long term, this is what I'm thinking about.



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