



# TEAL News

Spring 2025  
[www.bcteal.org](http://www.bcteal.org)

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

## Supporting Our Community



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## 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 British Columbia.

[bctéal.org/land\\_acknowledgement](https://bctéal.org/land_acknowledgement)

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### Contributors:

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# Supporting Our Community Through Recent Changes

From the 2025 Board of Directors



The BC TEAL Board at the 2025 Annual Conference

Dear BC TEAL Members,

We are writing to you at a time of significant challenge and uncertainty for many in our community. The recent cuts to LINC program funding have left countless newcomers to Canada without vital language support and have resulted in job losses for many talented and dedicated teachers. At the same time, the introduction of inter-national student caps has had a profound impact on both private and public post-secondary institutions, leaving students and educators alike facing instability and uncertainty.

These changes have created confusion, fear, and disruption for students, teachers, and institutions across the sector. At BC TEAL, we want you to know that you are not alone. We stand with you, fully committed to supporting our members and the broader settlement and education communities during this difficult time.

Our role as advocates for English language education and professional support is more important than ever. We recognize the critical role educators play in creating opportunities and fostering connections for newcomers and international students in Canada. These policy changes not only impact teachers and institutions but also deeply affect the lives of students who rely on these programs to build a new life or further their education in Canada.

While we acknowledge the complexities of this situation and the negotiations underway in both the settlement and post-secondary sectors, we believe it is crucial to express our unwavering support for those affected. Now is the time to come together as a community, to share resources, and to amplify each other's voices to ensure that these challenges are not faced in isolation.

We are currently exploring ways to further advocate for our members and the students we serve. While we recognize that there are limited transition resources available at this time, we are committed to working collaboratively to identify and share any supports that may be helpful. We encourage you to share any resources you have available with your network, including learning opportunities, counselling or employment support services, that may assist those impacted.

If you have questions, need support, or wish to share ideas, please do not hesitate to reach out. As we move forward, we will continue to provide updates and work together to champion the importance of English language education for all.

With commitment and support,  
the BC TEAL Board



## EDITOR'S LETTER

# Letter from the Editor

By Andrea Szilagyi

Dear BC TEAL Community,

With this final issue of the traditional newsletter format, we turn the page on an era of tradition and step into the future. *TEAL News* has long served as a cornerstone of connection and knowledge for English language educators across British Columbia, and now we're adapting to meet the demands of an increasingly digital world.

The move to an email and mobile platform in the coming months is more than a format change—it's a chance to ensure BC TEAL remains agile and accessible, ready to engage in new ways and respond to the challenges of an uncertain landscape. The strength of this community lies in its ability to adapt and innovate, and this transition is a reflection of that resilience.

Thank you to the many volunteers who have made this publication possible by contributing their time, ideas, and expertise over the years. Our volunteers have written thought-provoking articles, shared practical teaching strategies, and brought the BC TEAL community closer through their hard work and dedication. Without your efforts, the newsletter wouldn't have become the resource it is today. Your contributions have been the heart and soul of the newsletter, and your commitment has shaped its legacy.

As we close this chapter, we carry forward the mission to inform, connect, and support educators in British Columbia. Thank you for being part of this journey and for continuing to shape the future of BC TEAL.

We would love for you to be part of this next chapter. If you have ideas, insights, or experiences to share, we invite you to contribute to our new digital newsletter. Whether it's a short article, teaching tips, or reflections on current challenges and opportunities, your voice is invaluable. Your input will help keep the BC TEAL community informed and connected as we navigate this next phase together.



**Andrea Szilagyi**, BC TEAL Publications Chair and Editor of *TEAL News* oversees article submissions and editing. *TEAL News* is the platform for BC TEAL members and industry affiliates 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 B.C.



## BC TEAL Joins IATEFL as an Official Associate!

We're delighted to announce that  
**BC TEAL is now an official Associate of IATEFL**  
(International Association of Teachers of  
English as a Foreign Language)!

IATEFL is one of the most recognized and respected global organizations in the field of English language teaching, bringing together professionals from over 100 countries. Becoming an Associate strengthens BC TEAL's commitment to fostering professional growth, connection, and global engagement in the ELT community.

### What does this mean for our members?

As a new IATEFL Associate, BC TEAL is now part of an international network of ELT organizations. This relationship offers meaningful opportunities for our members, including:

- **Access to Discounted IATEFL Membership:** BC TEAL members are eligible for a substantially reduced IATEFL membership fee. IATEFL membership opens the door to a wide range of benefits, including webinars, special interest groups, publications, and networking with educators from around the globe. If you're interested in joining at the discounted rate, please contact [membership@bcteval.org](mailto:membership@bcteval.org) to learn how.
- **Opportunity to Apply for the Wider Membership Scheme (WMS):** The WMS supports ELT professionals in financial need by offering subsidized IATEFL memberships. BC TEAL members may be eligible to apply for this initiative and benefit from enhanced access to international professional development.

We're proud to be aligning with IATEFL and taking this important step in connecting our local community with global expertise and perspectives. Stay tuned for more updates and opportunities to get involved through this exciting new partnership!



# A TEAL News Retrospective

By Shawna Williams



I loved doing layout for the Winter 2017 issue of *TEAL News* edited by Scott Douglas.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST MEMORIES** of *TEAL News*? With so many members spanning the decades, it'd be fascinating to hear everyone's story. My first memory is from about 20 years ago. I wanted to volunteer with BC TEAL and my first task was to stuff envelopes with black and white photocopied booklets of the newsletter circa 2005. This was in the days that BC TEAL had a bricks and mortar office location and was leasing a photocopier for in-house printing of newsletters and conference programs. Fast forward twenty years and so many more memories of *TEAL News* come to mind...

I became editor of the newsletter in 2007. I recall sitting down with Marina Crawford, who'd been guest editor of the previous

issue, to walk me through ins and outs of the newsletter, but what I remember more than anything is how she taught me to click on an image and drag from the corner to resize and not lose aspect ratio. As editor what was challenging then—and I suspect challenging today—was soliciting articles that members would want to read. More than once, I recall asking folks to re-write their grad school academic assignments into newsletter-friendly formats. I could always count on Marti Sevier to write a review of a new book. And I had a trusty crew of copy editors who would read, revise, and correct submissions before they were put into print format. Back in those days, we even had an advertising manager! In previous editions, we'd often have a variety of ads of different sizes. I remember the Vancouver Art Gallery's advertisements for the ESL Education programs, the SFU bookstore in Harbour Centre, and other publishers and schools. Nowadays the ads are usually from supporting institutions.

One feature I recall quite well is "One Topic, Three Takes," which was the brainchild of Jennifer Walsh Marr. We would ask three prominent members of the professional community to respond to the same set of questions on a particular topic, then we'd publish their answers anonymously, being edified by their responses and curious to match the personas to actual people (of course, as editor, I knew who they were). I wish I could look back at previous issues and

rediscover what the topics were. I'm curious if they would still resonate today and how similar or different the three takes would be.

At some point in my early years as editor, there was some kind of controversy. I can't recall exactly what it was, perhaps an article that the board didn't want published. I felt put into a strange position not being privy to the board discussions and suggested that the newsletter editor should also be a member of the board, given that *TEAL News* was--and is--a key modality for the board to communicate with members. It made sense that the editor be part of the board. Thankfully the board

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# TEAL News

The Association of B.C. Teachers of English as an Additional Language Spring 2009



Remembering  
Nesta Mary Ashworth  
1923 – 2009



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# TEAL NEWS

The Association of B.C. Teachers of English as an Additional Language

SPRING ISSUE 2010



Traditional Welcome Dance at Opening Ceremonies (Alan Klein)

Global English - Cambodian Style

by Dr. Alan Klein, UBC and Layne Kriwoken, UBC

When Westerners think about Cambodia the majestic ruins of Angkor Wat and the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime are often the first ideas that come to mind. However these images, though crucial to understanding the country's past, do not give a full picture of its present-day reality. Cambodia today is a vibrant, developing nation of over 14 million people, many of whom use English as their lingua franca for global communication.

Over the last six years the annual CamTESOL conference, sponsored by the Australian organization IDP, has played a vital role in improving the quality of English teaching in Cambodia. The conference has now developed to a point where key positions and responsibilities lie in the capable hands of Cambodians who have been mentored to take over leadership roles. Looking out over the enthusiastic participants at the conference's opening session, we felt very fortunate and honoured to be part of this flourishing Cambodian English education movement.

This year's conference in late February, "One World: World Englishes," hosted over 900 Cambodians and 300 international participants in Phnom Penh. It also attracted well-known international plenary speakers such as Andy Fitzpatrick, who spoke on viewing English as a hybrid 'multilingual' language and the implications for Southeast Asia. The majority of workshops would fit into any TESOL conference, such as Joann Crandall's presentation, "What's in a Word?"

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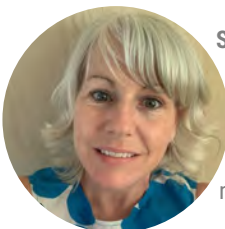
agreed. Now we have the Publications Chair who represents both the newsletter and the *BC TEAL Journal*.

Print copies sent to members stopped several years ago. I'm not sure when. The newsletter would be sent out in its current format either as an attachment or a link to a PDF. For several years though, high-quality print copies were be sent to all the supporting institutions, in the hopes they'd be placed in instructor gathering places and might compel folks to join BC TEAL. I know there were conversations dating back at least fifteen years to transition to an e-newsletter format, but for whatever reason, it never happened. Alas, now in 2025, the newsletter will shift its format. The next issue will be in an e-newsletter format. I'm excited to see what that looks like.

At the same time, I am sad to say goodbye to my current volunteer gig with BC TEAL: layout editor. My EAL career shifted about seven years ago when I moved to my college's teaching and learning centre. My professional community shifted then, too, but as a BC TEAL lifetime contributor and long-time board member, I was happy to be able to serve my favourite professional association. Being layout editor, I was able to keep on top of current trends, member contributions, and—of course—controversies in our field. I would also enjoy the meditative quality of formatting articles, selecting images, and getting issues ready for publication alongside the guidance of the many editors I've worked with: especially Scott Douglas, Natalia Balyasnikova, Karen Weibe, and Andrea Szilagyi. I am grateful to have had so many years contributing to the newsletter: as layout editor, as editor, as association president.

One lament is that the newsletters haven't been properly archived. Wouldn't it be fascinating to go back to issues from our fifty-plus years as an association and reprint articles from the past? Who were the contributors? What were they writing about? As a volunteer association, we're often focused on the here and now and the months ahead and sometimes forget to file away the artefacts of our association: newsletters, conference posters and programs that are rich with our history.

The current website has issues going back to 2012. If readers have copies—print or digital—that predate this, I would implore you to send them to the editor ([editor@bctcal.org](mailto:editor@bctcal.org)) in the attempts of compiling those artefacts into an association archive. We have a rich history to share, and wouldn't it be cool to have it all collated and accessible somewhere?



**Shawna Williams** is a lifetime contributor to BC TEAL. She served as editor of *TEAL News* before joining the board in a variety of roles, including president from 2012 to 2014. While no longer in the EAL sector, she has enjoyed volunteering with BC TEAL as layout editor of the newsletter.

# Reflections on the 2025 TESOL Conference: Long Beach, California

By Vanessa Valerga

**ATTENDING** the annual TESOL convention for the first time, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew it would be an opportunity for professional growth, but the reality exceeded all my expectations.

The keynote on Wednesday was delivered by Missy Testerman, the 2024 National Teacher of the Year. Her presentation was incredibly inspiring. As the only ESL teacher in her school district, she shared her experiences teaching students from diverse countries, ranging from kindergarten to grade 8, all within one building. One key point she emphasized was the importance of collaborating with other teachers to provide a well-rounded approach and ensure that her ESL students received the support they needed. The stories she shared were both candid and deeply moving. Missy reminded us that her role as an ESL teacher wasn't confined to the classroom. She advocated for her students, ensuring they were well-served by the community. Her impact extended far beyond the classroom, as many of her students helped bridge the gap between their families and the community. Missy's message resonated deeply with me: meaningful learning happens only through personal connections, and true fulfillment comes from being invested in our students' success. Leaving that theatre, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the teachers who have supported me throughout my journey, making me feel seen and valued. I walked away humbled, reaffirming my belief that connecting with each student as an individual is the key to helping them reach their goals.

On Thursday, Debra Suarez, TESOL's 2024-2025 President, delivered the Presidential Plenary titled "The Joy of TESOL: Voices Uplifted." She spoke about how few teachers start out as ESL teachers, a sentiment I can relate to as a linguist turned ESL educator. I also resonate with her belief that many of us find a deep sense of purpose and mission in the ELT field. Debra discussed how joy sustains us in this work—a joy that comes from within, one that remains strong even in the face of challenging world events. Her words felt especially timely. She encouraged us to cultivate a pedagogy of joy, fostering creative spaces for professional development, and reminded us that teaching is the most important profession because without it, no

other professions could exist. That thought had never occurred to me before! By the end of her speech, I was filled with pride in the work I do and eager to share the joy of teaching with others.

The various sessions I attended were not only informative but a true reflection of the creativity, dedication, and resourcefulness of educators. It was enriching to hear from professionals across North America, Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa, making the experience feel truly global.

Attending the conference as BC TEAL's affiliate representative provided me with a unique perspective. I had the opportunity to participate in affiliate sessions, learning firsthand about the efforts of other organizations like ours to promote English language initiatives and support their members. One key takeaway was the unwavering commitment these affiliates show to the field—whether through advancing professional development or advocating for equity and social justice.

So, what did I take away from this experience? Missy's presentation reminded me to be more mindful of the impact I have on my students and to treat my role as both a responsibility and a privilege. Inspired by Debra's words and encouraged by the director of the language school where I work, I plan to spread the joy of TESOL by facilitating a professional development workshop for my colleagues who teach literacy students. I look forward to sharing the knowledge and resources I gained from the adult literacy sessions I attended at TESOL 2025.

As Canadians, we were warmly greeted with phrases like, "Thank you for coming!" and "We are so sorry for what's going on between our countries." It was heartwarming to see that, no matter where we come from, teachers across the globe share the same commitment to their students' best interests. TESOL 2025 gave me a glimpse into the global ELT community, and I walked away with a renewed sense of hope. Amidst the uncertainties of the world, the passion, generosity, and dedication of teachers gives me great optimism for the future.



**Vanessa Valerga** holds an MA in Linguistics from UBC, and an MEd from Universidad Villanueva in Spain. She spent 10 years teaching English as a Foreign Language at a private girls' school in Peru (K-12). In 2024, Vanessa earned her TESL certification from Douglas College and is now working as a LINC instructor at New Directions English Language School in Langley.



# TESOL 2025:

## A Journey of Learning and Reflection

By Beth Konomoto

**UPON RECEIVING** notification of being granted the BC TEAL/TESOL award, I felt a budding excitement to learn new things and connect with new people at the TESOL 2025 Convention in Long Beach, California. However, heading south of the border made my mentor/travel partner, fellow BC TEALer, and Lifetime Contributor, Karen Densky, and I wonder how the border guards would receive us and what our American and international colleagues were feeling in this uncertain and disruptive time in the English as an Additional Language field. Given the recent memo from the American government listing a travel ban for 41 countries, and colleagues throughout the EAL world losing funding to attend conferences, we expected stories of loss. We were prepared to share stories of language programming cuts and international student permit caps across Canada and our local experiences in British Columbia.

We anticipated difficult conversations but felt compelled to participate while emboldened with the “We’re in this together” message, which was the theme at the Vancouver Island BC TEAL Symposium on March 15 and part of Debra Suarez’s final presidential message. Despite constant doom and gloom discussions of current U.S. politics, we found comfort in the presence of colleagues, old friends, teachers, students, and other EAL professionals from around the world. This emotional and charged atmosphere made advocacy a central topic in both plenaries and hallway conversations. The Affiliates Reception provided another wonderful opportunity to connect with colleagues. I met Catherine Njau who travelled all the way from Tanzania to Long Beach. TESOL’s international connections are so powerful and important to continue through all these ups and downs.

TESOL 2025 had over 3000 participants, which is on the smaller side. However, making choices about what sessions to attend was similar to the bigger times and the intense decision-making processes. Peak times throughout the conference had up to 47 concurrent sessions to choose from. The three keynote presentations by Victor Zea, Missy Testerman, and Debra Suarez were standalone sessions in the enormous Long Beach Conference Centre Terrace Theatre. Victor demonstrated how hip hop can be used to revitalize traditional language and culture. Missy shared her warm appreciation for language learning as a journey, noting that teaching creates all other jobs. Debra focused on joy, reminding us to reflect on why we entered this field in the first place.

In the TESOL Master’s Student and TESOL Doctoral Research forums, the hot topic was technology and more specifically artificial intelligence and virtual reality. As a third-year PhD student, I was particularly interested in how these topics might relate to my own research on EdTech language assessment. My interests were also piqued with topics including ideology, policy and planning, motivation, teacher and student identity, and translanguaging. Several sessions I attended were systematic literature reviews with only preliminary results. This is to be expected, as current students may not have completed their data collection and analysis. The packed one-day schedule of current research of the forums helped me think critically about my own work.

On Thursday I attended the Research Professional Council’s research-mentoring workshop session, which focused on the emerging educational technologies section of TESOL’s Research Directions document [www.tesol.org/professional-development/publications-and-research/research-and-standards/research-directions/](http://www.tesol.org/professional-development/publications-and-research/research-and-standards/research-directions/). Various aspects of artificial intelligence literacy, responsible AI use statements, and how methods are being adapted were discussed in a smaller group. TESOL’s RPC could be an important and dynamic space in the next while for language learning and education more generally.

Overall, TESOL 2025 was a success in my book. The snacks were great. The sunshine was a needed hit of vitamin D. Swan paddle-boating in front of the conference hotel was a good reminder to have fun with your colleagues. The beach walk was long and wonderful. We may never fully adapt to the constant change in our field, but this conference reconfirmed for me that we make it through adversity when connected and in community.

TESOL 2026 will be in Salt Lake City. The landscape for EAL and international travel may be different by the next convention, and I hope more connections can be cultivated leading up to and beyond the next TESOL convention.



**Beth Konomoto** is a well-known face in BC TEAL, having been an active member since 2012 and serving on the board in various positions. Beth is a Doctor of Social Science student at Royal Roads University and also serves as an English Language Instructor at Camosun College.



# We're All In This Together ... Who's Listening?

Compiled by Karen Densky & Beth Konomoto

**ON SATURDAY, MARCH 15TH**, forty BC TEAL members from all sectors came together during the Vancouver Island Symposium. The culminating event of the day was a panel discussion that highlighted the effects of current changes in immigration and settlement supports for refugee, immigrant and international students. The panelists from different sectors asked the group what they would like to say to various leaders (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; the Federal Immigration Minister; the BC Provincial Government; and the BC TEAL board) regarding the changes to EAL programs across the province. While the concerns of all sectors were heard, the group focused mainly on the Settlement Sector during a brainstorming session.

## Immigration, Refugee, Citizenship Canada (IRCC) & Federal Immigration Minister

The group felt strongly that "language services are a right and should be designated and supported," and that "by accepting immigrants, it is the government's responsibility to support them to integrate into society."

The group had questions about the rationale for cutting vital programs and increasing class sizes, which is demonstrated in the following questions:

*Why is IRCC cutting funding of LINC? What is the rationale for cutting Stage 2? Why are instructors not paid more if class sizes are going to increase? Why are we doing drastic cuts to the number of refugee admissions through private sponsorship?*

In addition, the group raised questions about how their students will be supported amidst the changing policies which is seen in questions like:

*How will existing immigrants be supported? How can the transition downward be made smoother?*

Some comments were solution-focused:

*Could needed vocations...get free education credits for working in these professions or in remote locations? Can you cut the amount of reporting, decrease management, and increase instruction? If the issue is money, can we not create a small fee for courses to alleviate costs?*

## BC Provincial Government

Participants acknowledged that the "provincial and federal governments should work together to sustainably support language services." The group acknowledged that "we have untapped student potential who need fast tracks to their careers."

Also, there appears to be a disconnect at the government level in terms of the need for workers in various sectors: "if we need more medical workers and many newcomers work in this field, how will they be able to communicate if they can only receive basic level English"? One solution that was proposed asks whether "non-English speaking health care workers could include free English lessons"?

The long-term effects of decreasing access to language instruction were acknowledged as discriminatory and may "force more people into despair and homelessness."

## BC TEAL

The message to the BC TEAL board is to take a Team Canada approach and listen to "collective concerns within all sectors and advocate on our behalf" and "work with other provincial TESL organizations to create dialogue with the government."

This was a productive session that gave all participants an opportunity to voice concerns and solutions while supporting each other during a challenging time of upheaval in our profession. Coming together through a day of learning validates the professionalism of the BC TEAL community.

Compiled by Beth Konomoto and Karen Densky with thanks to participants and panelists of the 2025 Vancouver Island Symposium.

# BC TEAL at the UVIC Applied Linguistics Fair

By Beth Konomoto

### Connecting Students to Opportunities

Students and professionals in the EAL field need to have opportunity to share current research and make connections. Three BC TEAL representatives took part in the University of Victoria's Annual Applied Linguistics Fair on Feb 11, 2025: Karen Densky, Cathy Ebert, and Beth Konomoto were at the BC TEAL table to answer questions and participate in dialogue with the students and colleagues.

### A Room Full of Possibilities

The event featured tables set up around the room, allowing students to engage directly with representatives from institutions such as UVic's English Language Centre, UVic's COOP program, Royal Roads University, Global Village, EF Education First, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS), and British Columbia Teachers of English as an Additional Language (BC TEAL). These organizations offered information on language programs, work and study opportunities, and pathways for further education and professional development.

### Showcasing Student Achievements

At one end of the room, students had the opportunity to present their work in an informal and supportive environment. The atmosphere was celebratory, reinforcing the importance of student contributions to the learning community.

### A Celebration of Community and Growth

It was a welcoming space for students to feel comfortable engaging with guests and peers. The small group of student

attendees, about 30 people at any given time, were welcomed with snacks, cake, and door prizes throughout the event. At the BC TEAL table, we provided information about BC TEAL and the benefits of membership emphasizing that students receive a discounted membership rate.

### Impact and Takeaways

For some, this event opened doors to new academic and career possibilities, while for others, it served as an affirmation of their language-learning progress and professional aspirations.

From an educator's perspective, witnessing students confidently share their work and network with professionals was incredibly rewarding. The event reinforced the importance of creating spaces where students can practice communication skills, build connections, and explore future opportunities in a supportive setting.

### Looking Ahead

This event was a testament to the power of community, collaboration, and the impact of creating opportunities for students to thrive. As educators, institutions, and organizations continue working together, we can ensure that students are supported in their language learning journeys and professional growth.



**Beth Konomoto** is a well-known face in BC TEAL, having been an active member since 2012 and serving on the board in various positions. Beth is a Doctor of Social Science student at Royal Roads University and also serves as an English Language Instructor at Camosun College.

Become a member of BC's EAL professional community! Visit [bcteal.org/become\\_a\\_member](https://bcteal.org/become_a_member) to sign up.

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# Reflections on the International Conference on Psychology, Language, and Teaching in Toronto

By Arash Hassanpour

**A FEW WEEKS AGO**, I had the opportunity to attend the International Conference on Psychology, Language, and Teaching (ICPLT) in Toronto, organized by IIERD. It was an incredible experience that brought together educators, psychologists, and researchers to discuss the connections between language, learning, and human behaviour. I have always been interested in how language shapes the way we think and learn, and this conference gave me a chance to dive deeper into that topic with experts who share the same curiosity.

One of the most fascinating discussions I attended focused on the psychological effects of language learning. Researchers explained how the language we speak influences the way we process information, solve problems, and even perceive the world around us. For example, studies have shown that bilingual individuals often develop stronger cognitive flexibility because their brains are constantly switching between languages. This ability to shift between different language structures improves problem-solving skills, creativity, and even decision-making.

Another interesting concept that came up was how emotions are tied to language. Many of us assume that words are just tools for communication, but they actually shape the way we feel and express ourselves. Research suggests that people experience emotions differently depending on the language they are using. A bilingual speaker might feel more emotionally detached when speaking in their second language because it does not carry the same deep associations as their native tongue. This has major implications for education, especially when working with students who are learning in a second language. If students struggle to express themselves fully, it can affect not just their academic performance but also their confidence and emotional well-being.

One of the sessions explored how psychological stress affects language learning. Learning a new language is not just about memorizing words and grammar rules. It is a deeply psychological process that can be influenced by anxiety, self-esteem, and motivation. Many students feel self-conscious when speaking a new language, which can create a mental block that prevents them from fully engaging in conversations. This is why creating a supportive and low-pressure learning environment is so important. If students feel safe making mistakes, they are more likely to take risks, experiment with language, and improve over time.

Outside of the formal sessions, some of the most valuable moments came from talking with other educators. Many teachers from international schools in Toronto shared their experiences working with multilingual students and how they address the psychological barriers to learning. One idea that stood out was the importance of identity in language learning. Students who feel that their native language is respected and valued tend to be more engaged in learning a second language. This highlights the need for inclusive teaching strategies that celebrate linguistic diversity rather than treating it as a challenge to overcome.

The conference also touched on the role of technology in language learning, particularly in addressing psychological barriers. Some educators shared their experiences using AI tools and language apps to provide personalized learning experiences. These tools can help students practice in a low-pressure environment, allowing them to build confidence before speaking in front of others. However, there was also discussion about the limitations of technology and the need for real human interaction in developing meaningful language skills.

Looking back on my experience at the ICPLT conference, I feel incredibly grateful for the chance to learn from experts in the field. It reinforced my belief that language is more than just a way to communicate. It is deeply tied to our psychology, emotions, and identity. As educators, we need to be mindful of the emotional and cognitive challenges that come with language learning and create environments that support students both academically and psychologically.

I left the conference with a fresh perspective on how to approach language education. Whether it is incorporating more strategies to reduce anxiety, using technology in thoughtful ways, or simply being more aware of how language shapes thinking, I know that what I learned will have a lasting impact on my teaching. I am excited to apply these insights in the classroom and to continue exploring the fascinating connections between psychology, language, and education.



**Arash Hassanpour** is an author, English teacher, and YouTuber. He is enthusiastic about history, linguistics, and cultures. He teaches EAL at Bayswater in Vancouver.

# Scholar-Practitionership in EAL Teaching: Engaging and Strengthening the Field

By Scott Roy Douglas



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**ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE** (EAL) teachers are scholars, with the act of teaching itself an act of knowledge creation. When EAL teachers are in the classroom, what they do in that classroom impacts students, and how students are impacted informs what teachers know about learning. New knowledge is gained about the additional language learning process, theories are tried out and tested, and practice is adapted to the needs of students in the moment—all hallmarks of scholar-practitionership. However, there is no one way of being a scholar-practitioner. Being a scholar-practitioner is a bricolage of different activities and multiple ways of being (Jenlink, 2005; Macintyre Latta et al., 2017). Yet, through that bricolage, there is a shared commitment to growth, exploration, and wellbeing (Macintyre Latta et al., 2017).

Scholar-practitionership in EAL teaching and learning underscores how it is a field of scholarly endeavour. There is an epistemology that is associated with what teachers know about how additional languages are learned, how they obtain that knowledge, how they share that knowledge, and how they know it is reliable. What teachers know is connected to topics that are related to the classroom, language skills, language learning, language characteristics, and the craft of teaching (Crookes, 2009; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015; Thomas, 2009). In building this

epistemology, EAL teaching and learning draws on the field of applied linguistics, with its research into practical language-related issues that are grounded in the real world (Brumfit, 1995). However, the field of EAL teaching and learning is more than applied linguistics. There is a focus on the educational endeavour, an embracing of a scholar-practitioner identity, and a blurring of the lines between knowledge, theory and practice (Douglas, 2021).

To be a scholarly field, Ding and Bruce (2017) have suggested that identifiers include a research- and theory-informed knowledge base as well as scholarly publications, organizations, activities, and engagement. The field of EAL teaching and learning has all of these, and more. For example, recent research has shown that students benefit from principle-informed teaching materials (Scott, 2024), and it has been theorized that English for academic purposes (EAP) and critical pedagogy can be brought together to realize student potential (Walsh Marr, 2021). The field also has the publications (e.g., *BC TEAL Journal*), organizations (e.g., BC TEAL), activities (e.g., the annual BC TEAL Conference), and engagement (e.g., BC TEAL's regular email communications) that are the markings of a fully fledged scholarly field. By contributing to

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## Scholar-Practitionership in EAL Teaching continued

theory building, knowledge creation, and transformative practice, EAL teaching and learning is part of the wider academy that includes other fields such as Engineering, Chemistry, Political Science, Indigenous Studies, Education, and more (Douglas & Landry, 2021).

Scholar-practitioners have a commitment to research defined broadly as “spirited inquiry and systematic investigation” (TESOL Research Agenda, 2014, p. 1). It is part of scholar-practitioners’ continuous professional development. They are curious and involved in teaching and learning. They know that practice is important, and they ask questions about that practice to understand their learners and how they learn (Maley, 2016). However, original and traditional modes of research aren’t needed to identify as scholar-practitioners (Kupo, 2014). Instead, scholar-practitioners can read and keep abreast of developments in the field to encourage and strengthen student learning while using evidence to inform their practice (Dlouhy-Nelson et al., 2023; Kupo, 2014). By doing so, scholar-practitioners can take the initiative and be at the steering wheel of their profession. Through the embodiment of scholar-practitionership, scholar-practitioners assert their leadership, inform decisions related to the classroom, take charge of the gaining and sharing of knowledge, question and investigate their own practice, and have the lead in contributing to the professional knowledge base (Scrivener et al., 2016). By asserting their agency in the field, scholar-practitioners themselves can address the challenges within their wider educational and societal contexts to promote intentional and informed decision making led by the people who understand EAL

teaching and learning over reactive decisions carried out by others. This leadership can build understandings around the value and legitimacy of EAL and underscore the field’s rightful presence within the wider field of Education (Whong, 2023).

To embody the identity of a scholar-practitioner and have the potential to be educational leaders that are listened to by others, EAL educators can embrace the hyphen of the scholar-practitioner and live within the nexus of research, theory, and the classroom to ask questions, improve practice, and share their ideas with others (Borg, 2009; Macintyre Latta et al., 2017). Some of the key steps nascent scholar-practitioners can take include joining their local professional organization, attending events, volunteering to help, socializing with colleagues, collaborating on projects, scheduling time for professional development, reading newsletters and journals, asking questions, teaching in the classroom, mentoring new teachers, presenting at conferences, creating materials, sharing ideas, reviewing articles, writing for publication, studying for new credentials, travelling for conferences, submitting papers, advocating for students and the field, and encouraging others. By embarking on these steps, scholar-practitionership can become a defining quality of the field of EAL teaching and learning and a source of strength for the profession.



**Scott Roy Douglas** is a Professor and the Director of EAL Programs in the University of British Columbia’s Okanagan School of Education, where he pursues ideas and asks questions related to the field of EAL teaching and learning in adult and post-secondary contexts.

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# Marketing Meaning: Using IELTS Band Scores to Develop Test Prep Curriculum with a Global English Language Teaching Framework Field

By Daniel Frolick



Photo by Martin Polo from Pixabay.

**STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE TESTS** have been customary to evaluate English language users' readiness to study or immigrate to English-speaking countries. One popular standardized test is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which, as of 2024, is recognized in over 140 different countries (idp IELTS, n.d.). Since its conception, the IELTS has shifted from a test on English for specific purposes to a test that expands on various academic subjects. This shift happened partially due to the belief that shifting away from English for specific purposes would provide better indicators on users' proficiency levels (Davies, 2007). Eventually, the IELTS developers created a general training module that included more practical and vocational topics, aimed at helping those who want to work in English-speaking countries (Reed, 2022). As this test becomes more popular, not only has its validity been questioned, but also whether it is congruent to acknowledging English as a lingua franca (ELF). ELF is the situational concept of L2 English users who communicate with other L2 English users. It has developed from the rise of the World Englishes paradigm: that is, distinctive styles of English that are becoming more commonly practiced as L2 English

users interact more in multilingual settings (Galloway, 2024). As more English speakers use it as a lingua franca, advocates have criticized that standardized language tests such as the IELTS do not account for World Englishes (Jenkins & Leung, 2019). However, when considering the band scores needed to enter post-secondary education, the descriptors in the IELTS speaking and writing rubrics support the diversity of ELF users while ensuring they have sufficient language proficiency levels for their studies.

Because the IELTS band descriptors emphasize communicative meaning regardless of accuracy, they can act as a good foundation when designing an IELTS test preparation (test prep) class. Whether the IELTS itself honours the ELF phenomenon or not, test prep teachers can change students' perspectives on the test by highlighting that accuracy in their output skills serves to develop meaning and communicative abilities and not native-like imitation. This can be done by developing an IELTS test prep curriculum around Global English Language Teaching (GELT). GELT is a framework

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## Marketing Meaning continued

stemming from the ELF phenomena. It involves teaching methods that prepare English users to communicate in multilingual and multicultural settings, specifically by challenging the notion that the highest caliber of language proficiency is the native speaker (Reyhan & Zekiye Özer, 2024). One aspect of GELT curricula is encouraging ELF strategies in language learning (Galloway, 2024). With that idea in mind, I'm interested in how an effective IELTS test prep curriculum would emphasize how the test's band scores allow ELF users to succeed on their tests and thrive in their studies. Using a GELT framework when developing these test prep courses would encourage developing communicative meaning rather than linguistic accuracy.

Part of incorporating the World English paradigm is to use a GELT approach for teachers to become more critically aware of English's plurality (Hall et al., 2022). To do this, curriculum developers and teachers could incorporate GELT practices into an IELTS test prep curriculum by using the 6 and 7 band scores as templates for standard language (SL), highlighting making meaning and leaning away from fixing inaccuracies if the 'slips' and 'mistakes' do not impede communication.

Setting goals and objectives for the students happens in the primary stages of curriculum development. Often what is seen in IELTS test prep courses is a focus on the types of tasks the candidate would encounter and test-taking strategies, such as top-down processing and speed-reading techniques (Scrivener, 2011). While test-taking strategies have a place in test prep curricula, they should be a feature and not an emphasis. Ideally, a test prep course should mostly focus on general language development instead of drills (Scrivener, 2011). This will not only help students receive better test scores, but will also help with their proficiency levels, and further, their success in their studies (Heidari Vinchek et al., 2024). Additionally, teaching students to use the band descriptors by using Isaacs and Rose's (2022) notion of the SL perspective rather than native-like

imitation helps set a standard for effective communication in ELF settings. Educators can use a GELT model by framing the 6 and 7 band descriptors with an SL lens, emphasizing creating meaning, which will support learners in an ELF environment.

GELT models for test prep curriculum development would help with a more modernized approach to language development and better prepare students for the post-secondary environment. Furthermore, it would contribute to the GELT proposals on innovating curriculum and providing a useful framework for educators (Galloway, 2024). In harmonizing this with general language development, the goal of the curriculum should be how to function in multilingual situations (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). Incorporating this idea into a test prep curriculum predicates that students will often communicate in a multilingual context: and therefore, they should develop their output skills for effective communication rather than native-like accuracy. The highlighting factor should be that the IELTS teacher focuses on teaching communicative competence for the speaking and writing modules, signifying that one can use authentic ELF skills without risk of embarrassment or failure. As Galloway and Numajiri (2020) point out, with a GELT framework, the learner has the agency to use any "languages they have at their disposal and to be creative with language, given that they are likely to adapt it to suit their purposes of communication in the future" (p. 122). This would allow students to practice their paraphrasing skills should they need to borrow lexis from their L1. Successful paraphrasing is a fundamental skill for attaining a higher band descriptor in the output skills.



**Daniel Frolick** is an English Language Learning Specialist at the Douglas College Learning Centre in the Lower Mainland, and has over 10 years of experience working with linguistically diverse students both in the private and public sectors. Currently, he is working towards his Master of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language at the University of British Columbia.

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# Land Acknowledgements Through the Eyes of an Immigrant EAL Educator

By Manveen Kaur Singla

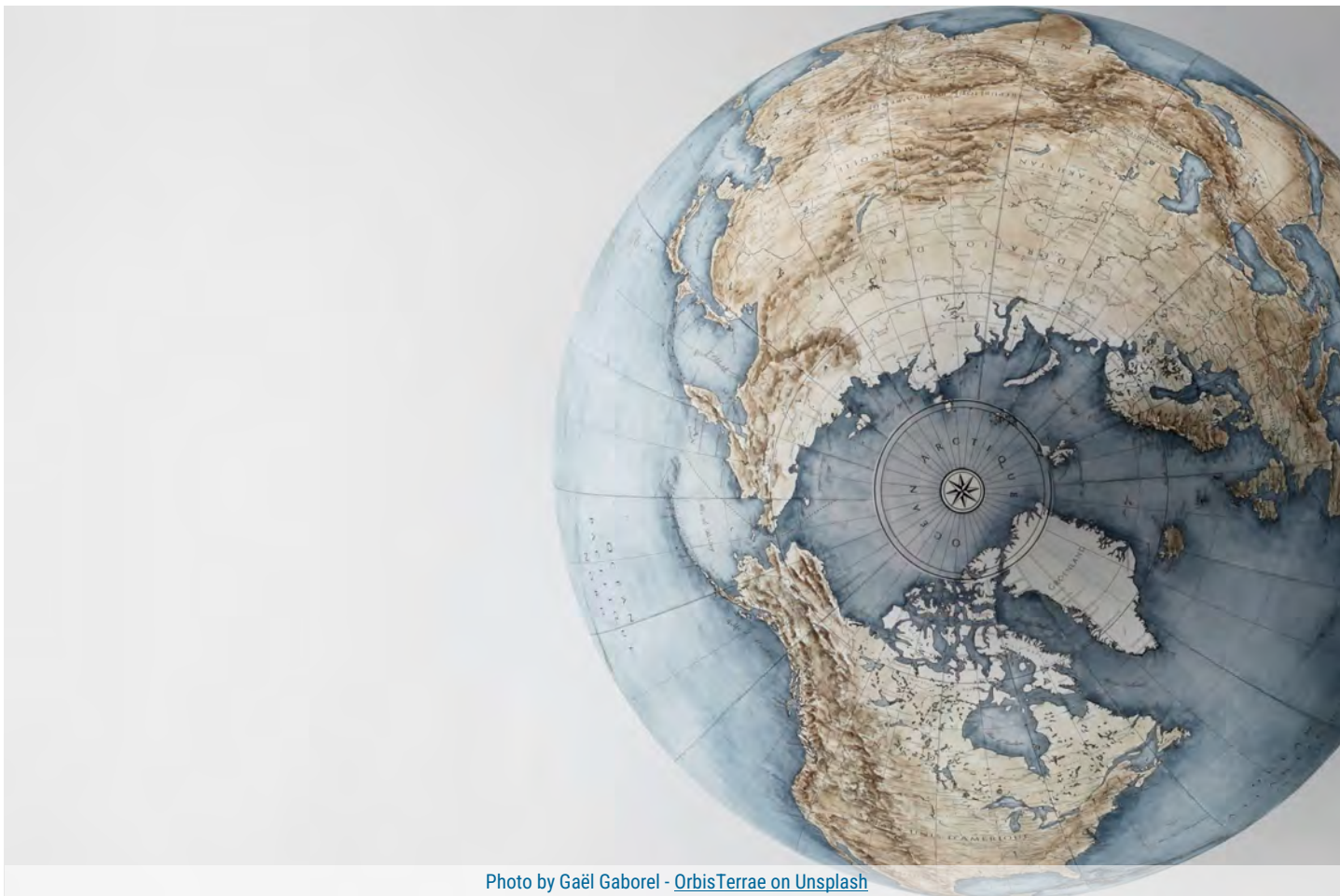


Photo by Gaël Gaborel - [Orbis Terrae on Unsplash](#)

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** have been an integral part of educational and professional spaces across Canada, recognizing Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the land. They serve as reminders of Indigenous presence, contributions, and the ongoing work of reconciliation.

Being an immigrant, I first heard a land acknowledgment a little more than two years ago. I listened attentively, curious about its meaning but unsure of my connection to it. A year later, I was invited to present one at a TEAL conference. Preparing for it pushed me to think more deeply, not just about the words, but about my own role as a newcomer on this land. That reflection led to my first article on the topic for the *TEAL News*, but the process of understanding didn't stop there. The more I engaged with land acknowledgements, the more I realized how layered and evolving they are. Each experience has deepened my perspective, leading me to keep exploring and questioning.

As an immigrant educator, acknowledging land goes beyond geography. When I offer a land acknowledgment, my first instinct is to recognize the land I come from, the land where I was born and the story of that land. This forms the first layer of my acknowledgment, as it shapes my identity and personal history. Next, I express gratitude to the colleagues, friends, and neighbours who have helped me settle, work, and build a life here. They are an essential part of my journey, as they have guided and supported me in navigating this new country. This includes my workplace, my son's school, the surrounding community, and the place of worship where I go every Sunday. However, I also recognize that these individuals, many of whom are Canadian, are themselves settlers on unceded Indigenous territories. This realization adds another layer to my understanding of land acknowledgements. After recognizing those who have supported me, my next priority is to acknowledge and honour the Indigenous peoples to whom this land rightfully

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## Land Acknowledgements continued

ly belongs. My approach to land acknowledgment follows a different order than that of many other settlers, shaped by my personal experiences as an immigrant and my journey toward understanding my place in Canada.

Teaching in an English as an Additional Language (EAL) classroom adds another dimension to this perspective. My students, many of whom are immigrants, refugees, or international students, arrive in Canada carrying their own histories of migration, displacement, and settlement. Some have experienced forced relocation, conflict over land, or colonial histories in their home countries. For them, the concept of land acknowledgements may be unfamiliar at first, but it often resonates in unexpected ways. When we discuss land and belonging, many students recognize similar struggles in their own backgrounds. This shared understanding allows me to connect with them in a way that is deeply personal. I, too, have navigated the complexities of settling in a new land while seeking to honor its original inhabitants.

Many newcomers arrive with little knowledge of Indigenous cultures or histories, and incorporating land acknowledgements into classroom discussions provides a meaningful starting point. Rather than treating these statements as routine formalities, I encourage students to think about their own migration stories. How did they come to be in Canada? Who helped them along the way? Who was here before them? In answering these questions, they begin to see the connections between their own journeys and the broader conversation about colonization, displacement, and reconciliation. It allows students to understand that these statements are not just about the past, they are about the present and the responsibilities we carry in our daily lives.

However, these discussions can be deeply sensitive for EAL students. Many learners have been uprooted due to economic hardship, while others come from regions where land ownership and historical injustices remain sources of trauma and ten-

sion. As educators, it is crucial that we approach these conversations with empathy and mindfulness, ensuring that students feel safe exploring these topics.

In EAL classrooms, where students are actively navigating their identities in a new country, land acknowledgements serve as a reminder that their arrival is part of a larger historical continuum. They invite students to recognize that just as they are finding their footing in Canada, Indigenous peoples have been engaged in their own long-standing struggle for recognition, rights, and reconciliation. This parallel is not about equating experiences but about fostering an awareness that history is layered, and our presence here carries responsibilities.

As educators, we must ask ourselves: Are we using land acknowledgements as mere symbolic gestures, or are we integrating them into meaningful learning? Are we making space for students to engage with these discussions in ways that are relevant to them? How do we ensure that land acknowledgements in EAL classrooms do not just acknowledge the past but also inspire action and deeper understanding? And perhaps most importantly, are we even prepared and equipped to support students for whom these discussions may trigger past trauma, bringing up deeply personal and painful memories?

As I reflect on these questions, I realize that land acknowledgements empower students to think critically about their place in Canada, not just as language learners, but as individuals shaping and contributing to the country's evolving story.



**Manveen Kaur Singla** is a committed educator, researcher, and advocate for inclusive teaching. With over 10 years of experience in English language instruction and academic literacy, she brings a unique blend of technical and educational expertise. She holds a degree in Computer Engineering, a Master's in Education, and a TEAL Post-Baccalaureate Certificate.



## Resources

[bctéal.org/resources-grid-v3b.php](https://bctéal.org/resources-grid-v3b.php)

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.



# TEAL Charitable Foundation 2024 Educator Award Winners

The TEAL Charitable Foundation is pleased to announce the 2024 winners of the TCDF Awards for Educators.

## Pat Wakefield Scholarship | Susan Abrill



Susan Abrill is an EAL instructor at the English Language Centre, Division of Continuing Studies, the University of Victoria. She traveled to IATEFL in Edinburgh to present on how she uses the migration-themed graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan in her EAL classrooms of all levels. This was her fourth IATEFL presentation, and she presented with colleague Kal Nelson. The title of their talk was Wordless and "Wordfull": Two Graphic Novels That Inspire Classroom Discussions.

Susan is trained in ELT, fine arts, and holds a BC teaching certificate for ESL. In Continuing Studies, she is also a TEFL instructor, pro-d workshop presenter for visiting teachers, and a practicum mentor for UVic students. She has partnered with two SD61 schools to create student-written graphic novels in English and French. A comic artist herself, she has published her own comics in the annual Victoria-based *Kraken Comics* magazine as well as online. Students in her classrooms draw their own comic stories and also read comic stories such as *The Arrival*, which was the topic of her talk in Scotland.

## Mary Ashworth Scholarship | Karin Wiebe



A familiar face to BC TEAL, Karin Wiebe is the 2024 winner of the Mary Ashworth Scholarship. As a PhD candidate with UBC's Okanagan School of Education, with a focus on TESOL, her PhD research is interested in how newcomers to Canada learn English in the workplace, and how to support that in the classroom.

Her scholarship will take her to continue her professional development on the international stage. She sees attending conferences as, "significant learning opportunities on multiple levels ... meaningful engagement with other scholar practitioners in our field provides an insight into the variety of teaching and learning contexts that are contributing to our understanding. The connections made at conferences work as conduits for knowledge and ideas sharing throughout the year, allowing us all to benefit from each other's experiences. Conferences inspire us to try new approaches in the classroom, ask new questions of our research, and ask new questions of ourselves and our roles in the field of EAL."

## Settlement Language Resource Award | Jonny Kalambay



Jonny Kalambay is the winner of the Settlement Language Resource Award. Heading a team from New Directions, a language school based in Langley, British Columbia that provided CLB 1 to 8 classes both online and in-person, Jonny will develop AI-Assisted CLB Levelled Materials to better support the students and teachers. His goal in this project is to help other instructors have easily accessed materials. "It is difficult for teachers to prepare learning material that is accessible to learners of different levels. This project aims to create a wider variety of CLB-calibrated material for LINC teachers to allow them to better tailor their instruction and assessment for each student. New Directions will lead this project and work in partnership with Rosh Technologies Inc. to create a set of level-adjusted material for their teachers. Rosh will provide the AI tool that the New Directions teachers will use to assist with the creation of this material for Tutela."

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## TCF 2024 Educator Award Winners *continued*

### Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award | Brooke Witkowski



Brooke Witkowski is one of two winners of the Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award. Having taught over a decade overseas, her return to Canada has shifted her focus to teaching English to newcomers from various socioeconomic backgrounds so that English could increase their chances of survival and thrive here in Canada. She was selected to join LINC Home Study, an online distance education instruction program for Newcomers who cannot attend in-person classes.

Over the last three years, she has worked in this same program as Instructor Support, where she trains teachers in curriculum, LMS, and digital support. Since teaching and supporting other teachers over the last five years in Canada, she has become aware of the vast need to provide digital accessibility in the resources created for learners. Bringing accessibility to all is one of her passions. She will be sharing this passion at the BC TEAL Conference in May, 2025.

### Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award | Arash Hassanpour



One of the two 2024 winners of the Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award is Arash Hassanpour. He is a valued and respected instructor at Bayswater Vancouver. His reason for attending the International Institute for Technology, Education and Research in Toronto this year was to focus on the theme of "Psychology, Language and Teaching." In his application, he wrote, "I hope to explore effective strategies for integrating culturally relevant content that honors the experiences and contributions of Persian-speaking students. It is crucial that our curricula not only acknowledge but celebrate the diversity of our student population."

### BC TEAL/TESOL Award | Beth Konomoto



The BC TEAL/TESOL Award recognizes graduate students focusing on EAL teaching or Applied Linguistics, with preference to graduate students studying at UBC. The award covers expenses while attending a national or international language conference. The 2024 winner is Beth Konomoto, a well-known face in BC TEAL, having been an active member since 2012 and serving on the board in various positions. Beth is a Doctor of Social Science student at Royal Roads University, also serving as an English Language Instructor at Camosun College. She plans on attending the 2025 TESOL Graduate Student Forum in Long Beach, California in March of this year where she hopes to engage with colleagues old on her topic and emerging research involving the latest insights in education technology, assessment, and teaching methodologies.

### Project Funding Award | The BC TEAL Annual Conference Committee

### Project Funding Award | J.P. Terell, J. Acosta, and L. Hemsworth - LEARN English Podcast

For more information about these awards, please visit [tealcharitablefoundation.ca](https://tealcharitablefoundation.ca).



The TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) was established by BC TEAL in 1986 and is registered as a charitable organization with Revenue Canada. TCF's charitable status enables it to engage in fundraising activities. The Foundation supports the teaching and learning of English as an additional language by presenting a number of annual awards and scholarships each year. The TEAL Charitable Foundation's awards and scholarships are funded through the interest accrued from the TCF endowments which are administrated by the Vancouver Foundation and annual fundraising activities.



# Can you see yourself here?

## Submit your article to BC TEAL!

Articles for [TEAL News](#) and the [BC TEAL Blog](#) are submitted by volunteer authors who work, volunteer, and/or study in British Columbia. Past authors have included LINC instructors, EAL program administrators, academic program students and instructors, TEAL Charitable Foundation winners, language learners, and volunteers.

### All voices are welcome and valued here!

Members have indicated they would like to see future articles on the following subjects. Perhaps you will find something on this list you would like to write about, or maybe it will inspire you to submit an article on something you think our members would like to read.

- Transition challenges to online learning, then back to face to face
- Things that make my life easier. I have very few hours in the day and am paid for even fewer. Give me tools.
- More topics related to LINC or settlement language sector
- Newcomers' experience in learning English as well as how to fit the new community

Find more information and the submission portal on our website, [bctéal.org/be\\_a\\_contributor](http://bctéal.org/be_a_contributor). Submit articles, ideas, and questions for *TEAL News* to [editor@bctéal.org](mailto:editor@bctéal.org) and BC TEAL Blog to [socialmedia@bctéal.org](mailto:socialmedia@bctéal.org).

