

## Truth and Reconciliation in Action in Burnaby

by Meagan Innes

### Why is reconciliation important?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states that Indian Residential Schools are a part of our shared history, a history that is not well understood by many. Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people has suffered as a result of the Indian Residential School system. Healing and repairing that relationship will require education, awareness, and increased understanding of the legacy and the impacts still being felt for everyone involved in that relationship.

During this dark chapter in Canadian history, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools. The cumulative impact of residential schools is a legacy of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation and has had a profound effect on the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

### Personal reflections/experiences in Reconciliation

Reconciliation is complicated. As a SD41 Aboriginal Enhancement teacher, I see it as my job (and, incidentally, my luck and my absolute pleasure) to deliver Aboriginal curriculum content when given permission and guidance on how to do so by the appropriate authorities (elders, artists and other experts of Aboriginal descent). What has been most exciting and rewarding, is the complete reversal in approach. Where our schools once attempted to deliver a Eurocentric curriculum to Indigenous peoples, I am now attempting to have Indigenous peoples deliver their curriculum to Burnaby students. I certainly hope this can lead to connections, bridges of collaboration and other important ties between our educational system and Indigenous

communities.

This is of particular importance given the context of Canada 150. It is important to remember and remind our students that Indigenous Peoples' occupied Coast Salish Territories long before the British North America Act of 1867. Many people are rejecting the official celebrations and instead highlighting indigenous resilience. As a district we need to come together to think of meaningful, reciprocal, inclusive ways to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' survival. We need to look to the truth and avoid glossing over the real history of Canada and move towards building meaningful relationships that are based on an exchange of truth, respect, understanding and a want to move forward in a new way.

It is the collective effort from all peoples that is necessary to revitalize the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadian society – reconciliation is the goal. It is a goal that will take the commitment of multiple generations but when it is achieved, when we have reconciliation - it will make for a better, stronger Canada.

### Reconciliation in Education

"Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out" -Honourable Senator Murray Sinclair

Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Hon. Senator Sinclair has been vocal about how education is the key to walking on this journey of reconciliation. He argues that teachers in particular have a sacred responsibility to ensure that all their students, regardless of their heritage, are able to think about four key questions throughout their education: where do I come from, where am I going, why am I here, and most importantly, who am I? Our education systems should be designed to give a child answers to these very basic, yet profound, questions.

As one step in moving towards Reconciliation, it is important to educate students on local Indigenous communities. Using knowledge to inform learners that Indigenous Peoples' are not "people of the

past" and instead people thriving throughout our communities today. This is done by creating inclusive dialogue instead of "othering" Indigenous Peoples' through increased knowledge and information, as well as inquiry in the classroom. Through the guidance of the redesigned BC curriculum, students have begun to see parallels among themselves and their families and Indigenous peoples and communities. As we continue to educate, learners will begin to see how traditional techniques and knowledge are very much alive in society today as we have built upon these traditional teachings.



*Roberta Price our own SD41 District Elder*

SD41 district Elder Roberta Price says; "like many of my colleague Elders out there, that first we must hear the Truth before we can move towards reconciliation & by doing this together, we may have healing across this entire nation".

Moving towards reconciliation means that educators must address the truth. Shying away from the truth and not addressing the cultural genocide, the physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuses inflicted on Indigenous Peoples' in Canada cannot be withheld from our students. Indeed we need to work together to create grade appropriate resources that reflect what we as a community are doing to address truths and rebuild a relationship. The federal government has tried to hide the truth about our shared history and that truth needs to be addressed. This truth has been missing from our narratives, from our textbooks and from our educational system. The truths about the

intentional genocide that has affected generations of Indigenous Peoples' and Canadians need to work together in the process of reconciliation, which will eventually create a renewed relationship that is based on mutual understanding and respect.

In working alongside one another we are given the chance to exchange stories in a reciprocal manner, to sit and to listen to the truths of residential survivors and to include the missing narrative in our classrooms.

Jackie Timothy Elder, master carver states; "as Indigenous Peoples we have never been given fair time or consolation on anything that affects our lives on the past and present." Timothy believes "reconciliation is a word used to bring peace to both sides not just to make one feel better about their relation to themselves. Surviving residential school has led me to a path of healing that includes having love of a whole complete family peace of knowing there is nothing to worry about the joy of grandchildren and their grandchildren never have to experience the terrible ghosts of the past history and the happiness knowing we never have the need to want anything life again because we have reconciled."

### Reconciliation in SD41

There are a number of Burnaby teachers working with colleagues, elders and community members to incorporate reconciliation in their classrooms. Their goal is to start to rebuild a broken relationship. These are only examples and there are a number of Burnaby teachers not mentioned doing amazing things in their classrooms around reconciliation.



*"Guided Story Baskets" created to explore technology through local histories by Jessica Methven.*

### Edmonds

John Nanson has been working alongside Elder Jackie Timothy to revitalize the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society at Edmonds Community School. Nanson received a Canada 150 Grant and with this would like to focus on reconciliation at his school "by creating a new Welcome Pole to acknowledge reconciliation and the many meanings that reconciliation holds here, on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Nations."

Nanson is working with the teachings from the SD41 Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement on a project that will focus, "on the ability of our children to learn about the traditional realm, as well as the urbanized realm in which Burnaby is situated". This notion of walking in two worlds is part of everyday life within the community of Edmonds. Here, many newcomers, who have rich traditions and experiences of their own, have come to learn and to settle. With many people being new to Canada, the community felt it important to acknowledge and engage learning about what it is like to walk in two worlds. Thanks to the artist Jackie Timothy and to the SD41 Aboriginal Enhancement Teachers, this dream is becoming a reality.



*John Nanson, Myself and Elder Jackie Timothy planning for community/healing pole.*

### Burnaby Central

At Burnaby Central, Michael Shumiatcher has been working alongside our family members in the North in a project called; "Hidden Histories" which is based on the notion of the significance of the stories that define who we are, their importance in teaching our values, our knowledge and our histories. Another significant point is the danger of our stories being lost.

To approach this multi levelled and complex topic, we have organized first a series of workshops based on various stories that journalist, curator and director Drew Ann Wake has collected over the years. These range from stories told by Gwich'in, Dene and Inuvialuit elders to the Berger inquiry in 1975-76, to the stories of Civil Rights activist Leon Bibb and his experiences growing up in the segregated southern US, to Joy Kogawa's story of evacuation and internment in Canada during the Second World War.



*Michael Shumiatcher from Central with Elder Agnes Mitchell learning how to sew with porcupine quills.*

In the meantime, students have recorded stories from their own elders and are in the process of creating animations to go along with the voices of their elders.

One of the things we have noticed is that, in the North, when Drew Ann has students listen to a recording of an elder, it is a history that all the students share, and they all listen with intensity. Here in the south, not only do students share no such common background, but often even their parents, let alone grandparents, are still living overseas. Without this common history, we believe that it is more difficult to draw the students out. They are reserved and self-conscious of appearing different from each other.

### Works Cited

*Canada Celebrates 150 but Indigenous Groups Say History Is Being 'Skated over'.* [www.kairosCanada.org/murray-sinclair-education-key-reconciliation](http://www.kairosCanada.org/murray-sinclair-education-key-reconciliation).

*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC),* [www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=905](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=905).





*Coast Salish Welcome Figure carved by students at Burnaby Central.*

## Implementing Indigenous Perspective into the Curriculum:

The Burnaby Teachers' Association offers a grant up to \$500.00 to support school based Truth and Reconciliation events. You can submit a request to [bta2@bctf.ca](mailto:bta2@bctf.ca). Please include the name of your school, a brief overview of the plans for the event, a personal email and phone number for the contact person.

The BCTF offers many valuable resources to assist you with your initiatives towards reconciliation and the implementing of indigenous perspectives into curriculum. A few of these are as follows:  
Many Burnaby students have and continue to engage with *The Project of Heart* (<https://bctf.ca/HiddenHistory/>), please know that the wooden tiles for this project can be purchased economically directly from the BCTF.  
Many BC educators have and continue to

contribute to developing and facilitating workshops for our collective Professional Development. Consider approaching your school pro-d committee with the suggestion of hosting one of the many BCTF workshops for school/staff pro-d activities. A few of these are listed below: (Please peruse the BCTF website for more details on available workshops.)

*Beyond Words: Creating Racism-free Schools for Aboriginal Learners*

*BC Blanket Exercise: Exploring Historical Relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples*

*Aboriginal History and Culture, Part 1 and/or Aboriginal History and Culture, Part 2: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.*

*Infusing Aboriginal Content K-7.*

## The Heart of Reconciliation Project

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Byrne Creek unveiled the Heart of Reconciliation tapestry. This has been a collaborative project in the works for years involving staff, students, parents and community members. Pictured here are Lyn Daniels (former District Vice-Principal of Aboriginal Education in Burnaby) and her mom Elder Lillian Daniels.



## Moscrop's Truth and Reconciliation Day

Moscrop held its annual Truth and Reconciliation day on January 18<sup>th</sup>. The theme this year was Working Together to Move Forward. The purpose of the day was to acknowledge formally that we are living, learning and teaching on unceded territories here at Moscrop, and to acknowledge that reconciliation is needed within education. Workshops throughout the day included: Powow dancing, Indigenous plant knowledge and lip-balm making, Blanket Activity, Drumming, Metis Weaving, Indigenous Law, Paddle Necklace Teachings, and Salish Weaving.



*"Fancy Shawl" Dancing*



*Pat Calihoo: Paddle art with students*



*Gitxsan Elder Michael Harris with the Moscrop Heartbeat of Mother*

- Photos by Leanne Sjodin

## Taking a Look at Housing and Homelessness in Burnaby

James Sanyshyn, BTA Social Justice Chair, recently had the opportunity to interview Robert Willmot, the Vice President of the Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby. The following is an abridged version of his responses:

### **What are the statistics regarding the homeless population in Burnaby?**

Burnaby is BC's 3rd largest city yet has no shelter, no transitional housing, few permanent homes and minimal services for the homeless. There is an extreme weather overnight shelter operated by Lookout Housing and Health Society which provides for sheltering spaces to be made available when weather is severe enough to pose a dangerously high risk to homeless people. Unlike several other municipalities in the Lower Mainland that make community centres and other spaces available, there are no warming places in Burnaby where the homeless can go during daytime hours during the coldest times of the winter. In the absence of a 24 hour shelter, Burnaby's homeless who wish a roof over their head need to access already overstretched resources in New Westminster and Vancouver. Homelessness in Burnaby is growing. The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count identified 69 individuals being homeless, with 49 being unsheltered: staying on the streets, in vehicles or couch surfing. Due to the count being conducted on a particularly cold night last March, and the Extreme Weather shelter being open, another 20 people were in shelter. Otherwise, they too would have been on the street or elsewhere due to the lack of a shelter in Burnaby. The Homeless Count reports Burnaby has the 4th highest number of unsheltered homeless persons in Metro Vancouver.

Though the number 69 may appear to be low, Point-in-Time homeless counts estimate the number of people who are homeless during a 24-hour period only. The methodology is most effective at counting one segment of the homeless population that is sometimes referred to as the "visible" homeless, those who tend to access homeless supports and services and, using the metaphor of an iceberg, the visible homeless represent just the tip of the iceberg. It is a well

acknowledged that a large proportion of the total homeless population is not enumerated during the Count.

Burnaby has seen a 64% increase in homelessness since 2005, and a 19% increase in the number of people counted as homeless since 2014. By comparison between 2011 and 2016 Burnaby's population has increased by 10.1% so what we are seeing is that our homeless population is increasing at a rate twice as much as the increase in the general population.

Equally disturbing about the increase is that much of it is within those populations most at risk: 28% of Burnaby's homeless are women, the highest rate for all Metro Vancouver respondents; 27% are homeless youth under 25, the 5th largest youth population in Metro Vancouver where the average was 16%, and 32% are seniors over the age of 55.

Homelessness is life-threatening. We have tracked that 49 individuals from Burnaby have died as a result of the long term effects of homelessness and extreme poverty. 15 deaths occurred in the last year. Homeless people die between the ages of 40 and 49. The average age of death of a homeless person in Burnaby is 42.

Though the number of homeless in Burnaby is not as great as Vancouver or Surrey, and our homeless population not as visible as in other communities, we still have serious issues, primarily the lack of any significant service, particularly around housing. Despite being a wealthy municipality and having commitments from the provincial government to create a shelter and/or dedicated housing for the homeless, there is not any new social housing for the most vulnerable.

### **What supports are available for the homeless and under-housed here in Burnaby? Who funds these?**

Through our partnership with Progressive Housing Society there are Outreach Workers who connect with the homeless at our Outreach Resource Centre, via their Mobile Van program and other Outreach options and assist where possible including providing rent supplements to support people transitioning from the street to homes, but there is a tremendously inadequate supply of affordable housing and long term rental supplements. Progressive Housing receives funding from the Federal and Provincial governments, Fraser Health, Metro

Vancouver and multiple community and faith based groups.

Lookout Housing and Health Society operates the Extreme Weather Shelter funded by the Province of BC.

Due to the extremely limited resources in Burnaby for the homeless, the Outreach Resource Centre (ORC), was opened in 2005. Now operated by our Society, the Centre is open every Thursday morning at Burnaby's Southside Community Church. The ORC provides a welcoming non-judgmental atmosphere where people without housing or living in extreme poverty can access a nutritious lunch, donated clothing, hygiene items and transit tickets to get to critical appointments. All items distributed are donated and are in limited supply.

We connect people to Outreach workers from Progressive Housing Society who assist anyone needing assistance with housing or obtaining government services and seasonally Fraser Health nurses provide immunizations. With the exception of the Outreach workers and nurses, all of our services and programs are delivered through a dedicated, trained and large volunteer contingent. At least 21 volunteers provide the support and assistance to serve up to 120 people weekly at the ORC.

We also run three special events: Outreach Summer BBQ, Burnaby Homeless Connect and Outreach Christmas throughout the year to meet basic immediate needs while providing extra activities that address health and safety needs, including feeling respected and heard.

The volunteer led 2017 Summer BBQ attracted between 150 and 180 attendees. Burnaby Homeless Connect occurs every October and this year 135 people accessed free services typically unavailable to those with very limited financial support to afford haircuts, massage therapy, podiatry services, chiropractic, nursing and dental care alongside information, referral and direct services. This year's Outreach Christmas delivered a festive celebration to 175 people who deal with homelessness and extreme poverty. Participants received a pancake breakfast and turkey lunch, had access to a clothing table, photo opportunities, entertainment, games and of course Santa provided presents for all.

We do not receive funding from the Federal, Provincial or municipal government and depend on fundraisers, donations and small grants to keep our services available.



### **Are these supports adequate?**

As important as these services are they are far from adequate. Burnaby needs a 24/7 shelter with multiple integrated resources focused on the complex barriers many of the residents are likely to experience. We also need transitional housing, affordable housing, enhanced and expanded mental health and addiction service. In addition a provincial poverty reduction plan needs to be in place along with a comprehensive housing strategy that engages and involves all levels of government working in collaboration with housing and service providers.

### **What does your organization need from each level of government to be successful in housing all Burnaby residents? municipal, provincial, federal.**

Burnaby's homeless need tangible and concrete support from each level of government. The Federal National Housing Strategy is welcomed though it needs to put money to work immediately to address homelessness and also to move quickly on commitments to build 100,000 units of new affordable housing.

Action by the provincial government to immediately invest in building affordable rental housing, enhancing rental subsidies to low income renters, strengthening rent control legislation and making crown land available for the building of rental housing are several ways the BC Government can help solve the homeless and housing crisis. We are hopeful that the province and the municipality will soon reach an agreement to provide temporary modular housing as is currently underway in several other communities and that land, owned by any level of government, be identified and construction begin immediately. Having the City make land available to a non-profit society focused on housing the homeless and advocating to senior levels of government to build and pay for the operation of that housing and easing of rezoning requirements; developing bylaws and policies that protect affordable housing – e.g. rent controls, one-for-one replacement policies and maintenance by-laws; by-laws that encourage the building of new housing that is affordable to those living on low fixed incomes would be very helpful.

Other opportunities for the municipal government to deal with the housing crisis include the dedication of city owned land for

social housing, the creation of by-laws that require developers make a meaningful percentage (25% or more) of new housing to be affordable and requiring developers to direct community amenity funds into creating affordable housing units.

### **What impact if any does the current approach to density zoning and rebuilding have on the housing supply for low income residents of Burnaby?**

We are interested not only in creating solutions for people who are homeless, but preventing others from becoming homeless for whatever reason. The crisis in Burnaby is exacerbated by the loss of low rental housing around Metrotown particularly, which reduces the access and creates barriers to housing for people living on low fixed incomes and can only lead to an increase in homelessness.

Using a recent rezoning of a site on Sussex street as an example, it is our understanding the rezoning will result in 64 households living in these 3 apartment buildings being evicted and losing their homes.

We understand the proposed development includes a separate building with 125 units of non-market housing, however it is extremely likely the rents for these units will be at a higher rate than rents being paid by current tenants and it is reasonable to believe they will become at risk of homelessness. For example, it is estimated that the rent for a 1 bedroom apartment will be around \$1,400 per month and the subsidized rent rate will be around \$900, which, because the building will operate under BC Housing rules, means residents will have to have incomes of \$2,700 per month to qualify for even the subsidized units. Costs for 2 or more bedroom units will be of course significantly higher meaning many, if not all, of the current families living there will not be eligible for the subsidy and will be placed at risk of homelessness.

### **2018 is a municipal election year. What would be an informative question to pose for a city councillor or mayoral candidate regarding housing policy in Burnaby?**

Appropriate questions for a mayoral or city councillor candidates would include: what have you specifically done to address homelessness during your term in office (for those seeking re-election) and if elected, what will you specifically do to provide housing for the homeless?

In the past 10 years, BTA members have collected thousands of clothing items, cash and toiletries for our annual Sock it to Poverty Drive. Film nights have been hosted with local documentaries and Wanda Mullholland as guest speaker. We have sent volunteers to Homeless Connect. The BTA fielded a team for the Coldest Night of the Year last year and will do so again this February. Question -What can Burnaby teachers do to continue to help the homeless in their community?

We appreciate all the support BTA members have provided to the Society over the years, because without the donation of clothing, socks, toiletries and cash our capacity to provide service to Burnaby's most marginalized would be even more precarious than it is.

We also value your participation in the Coldest Night of the Year Walk. Last year the walk provided a net profit of \$40,000 which was shared between Burnaby Community Services and our Society. This year's walk will be on February 24 and we look forward to having one, or more, teams of teachers walking with us.

Please carry on with your donations. Please continue to educate our children around issues of poverty, inequality and homelessness. Please continue to inform students that the homeless deserve to be treated with respect and not feared and please consider advocating with elected officials at all levels to make housing a right for all and to lead us forward to ending homelessness in Burnaby and elsewhere.



*In response to demovictions and the housing crisis in Burnaby, residents have responded with collective actions to oppose the demolition of affordable/social housing.*

# SOGI Support

by Bryan Gidinski and Dan Adrian

## Bryan's story

In 2011, Burnaby was actively engaged in drafting Policy 5.45, what has since become its Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity policy. During the process a group of parents, The Burnaby Parents' Voice, expressed concern and opposition to the policy. They rallied and protested and were a vocal group whose voices dominated the local papers for a number of weeks as the Burnaby School Board revised, debated, and consulted over the policy.

I grew up in Burnaby, attended Burnaby schools and have spent my career teaching in Burnaby. In both roles, as a student, and as a teacher, I've struggled with how to address or respond to homophobic commentary or behaviour that escalated to homophobic bullying. I grew up in an environment where being out was dangerous, and people rarely addressed hateful comments directed at sexuality, or perceived sexuality.

As a teacher, I was conflicted about responding to those situations. I didn't want to draw attention to myself, or draw criticism for taking a position. For most of my career, it seemed like addressing homophobic behaviour or introducing sexual orientation as a topic in the classroom was, in itself, coming out, an admission of my sexual orientation, and a forwarding of the "gay agenda." I really wanted my career to be defined by my accomplishments and to avoid becoming dismissed as the "gay teacher."

My perspective changed significantly in light of the public response of the Burnaby Parents' Voice. I suddenly felt an obligation to provide students with a different perspective than was being reported. It wasn't because I felt personally attacked by the dialogue that was taking place, but I was genuinely concerned about any student who sat in a classroom questioning his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. I worried that they'd hear the negative messages and the contempt with which certain words were used and not feel like they could respond or that support was available. I nervously raised the topic and took tentative steps towards opening the classroom dialogue, well aware of the potential for controversy. I was surprised to discover that I didn't have to say much and that students were relatively comfortable voicing their views and responding to each other. They

engaged in respectful conversation and posed questions that indicated their genuine curiosity. Our local policy, and now an expectation from the B.C. Ministry of Education that all B.C. school districts include Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity in their codes of conduct, has encouraged me to do more.

In my new role as the SOGI Support Teacher for Elementary Schools, I help teachers to recognize the importance of including SOGI content to create safe, inclusive learning environments. I help them access tools to start SOGI conversations in their classrooms. I support them to integrate SOGI content into their classrooms, becoming aware of subtle, relevant connections in a variety of curriculum contexts than can easily enhance existing lessons plans or units of study, and expand opportunities for students to see themselves and their families represented in the curriculum. Teachers can start those conversations in classrooms by using relatable anecdotes, and by sharing some picture books, read alouds, videos, and novels that depict LGBTQ characters, but that can often be linked to other curricular objectives, so that SOGI content is embedded in their practice rather than a distinct, separate curricular topic.

Within our district, I have the privilege of working with and supporting SOGI initiatives at our elementary schools. I also have the benefit of collaborating with, and working alongside, Dan Adrian, who provides leadership at the Secondary level.

## Dan's Story

My journey with SOGI education began over eight years ago. It was my second year working for the Burnaby School District, teaching English at Moscrop Secondary. A student approached me after school one day and asked if I would help start up a GSA at the school by being the sponsor teacher. My immediate reaction was to say no. At the time, I was not out at work and was fearful of being outed through this role. While I was confident in my skills as a teacher, I wasn't confident that my sexual orientation would be openly accepted by my peers, students, and administrators. Torn between doing what may be best for me personally, and what was best for the students at my school, I said yes. Forming a GSA wasn't about me, it was about the students at my school who needed it. A club that I wish had been available to me when I was in high school.

Looking back at this moment I am reminded how much fear and anxiety I had about being myself at work. It's not that something specific happened to make me feel this way, rather it was something unspoken. It's this same unspoken fear that others, just like me, still feel at school, be it colleagues or students. And it is precisely because of this fear that we as educators need to ensure that we actively work to make our classrooms and schools safer and more welcoming places for all students, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, identity, race, religion, or background.

When people ask me about what I do in my role as a district SOGI support teacher, my answer always hinges on a few basic principles. First, I support students. Sometimes this is helping with conflict mediation, other times this is one-on-one conversations when students need personal support. Second, I support staff. A major part of my job is providing education and building capacity within colleagues about SOGI education. Oftentimes I help with offering curricular connections and giving teachers the tools and knowledge they need to make their classrooms safe and respectful spaces for all. Finally, I support the district. Through providing education, running district events, and shaping district policy, the work done at the district level is equally important. What has made Burnaby so successful with championing SOGI education can be summed in a few key steps, which are affectionately referred to as the Burnaby model.

## The Burnaby Model

### Step 1: SOGI Policy

In June of 2011, the Burnaby School Board unanimously passed Policy 5:45 – its Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Policy. While the policy itself was contentious, sparking debate about its importance, it started an important conversation. A conversation about protecting LGBTQ staff and students. A conversation about respecting and acknowledging diversity in all classrooms. A conversation about making our schools safer, for all.

### Step 2: SOGI District Committee

We all recognize the importance of policy. But, without action, policy simply becomes another document collecting cyber-dust on a website. Luckily, Burnaby did not stop at

simply creating a policy – it acted. With the inception of the policy, a joint district committee was formed, with a seat at the table for all of members of the educational system: school board trustees, an assistant superintendent, a director of instruction, elementary and secondary administrators, representatives from BTA and CUPE, secondary and elementary teachers, DPAC representatives, and students.

### Step 3: SOGI District Support Teacher

A few years after the formation of the committee, the district invested even more resources into SOGI education. In 2014, the district hired Sarah Larsen into a 0.2 fte position dedicated exclusively to doing SOGI work across the district. The following year her position increased to 0.4 fte. In 2016, the district added to Sarah's position by hiring a second district SOGI support teacher, exclusively at the high school level, allotting 0.29 fte. This is the position Dan was hired into. Finally this year, the district increased my position to 0.57 fte while committing to a three year term for both roles. As of now, Burnaby is the only district with two SOGI district support teachers – one at the elementary and the other at the secondary level. This is one of the greatest successes of the Burnaby model. Not only is there a full 1.0 of dedicated fte time to SOGI work, but the shared knowledge of an elementary and secondary educator is invaluable. To have another person to collaborate with, to share responsibilities with, to bounce ideas off of, and learn from truly contributes to the momentum that Burnaby is building with regard to SOGI leadership.

### Step 4: SOGI Educator Network

Without question, one of the most invaluable keys to the success is being a part of the SOGI Educator Network. Last year Burnaby was one of nine districts participating in the pilot project. This committee of SOGI district leads met once a month to share successes, collaborate on provincial goals, and to deepen our own learning and knowledge of SOGI education. Members looked forward to the meetings, and left feeling energized and refuelled to work harder after each one. One of the biggest takeaways from the network was the SOGI 1 2 3 Learning Module Videos and presentations that were created at SOGIeducation.org. This was a project that all involved were passionate about accomplishing.

Through the generous funding of the ARC Foundation, a series of six learning burst videos, and four learning modules were created. The videos all focus on a different SOGI education topic, and include the voices of everyone who was part of the pilot project last year. Now, these resources have become the standard for all members of the network in educating and training staff across all districts – the building blocks of SOGI education.

### Step 5: SOGI District Initiatives

The final key to Burnaby's success, are the district initiatives we have undertaken. Specifically, there are three key events we host to directly support the students in our district. Our longest running event is our student breakfast for the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHAT). This year will mark our fifth IDAHAT breakfast – each one growing in size. The purpose of this event is to give students an opportunity to come together across the district in a show of solidarity and support against homophobia and transphobia. In addition to the delicious breakfast, students get to hear keynote speakers share their stories, engage in team building activities, and deepen their understanding about LGBTQ+ topics. Our second district event was added just last year: our Diversity Dance. While the dance is sponsored by our high school GSAs and our district SOGI committee, it is a cross-district dance that is open to all high school students (8-12) who support diversity of all students. Organized almost entirely by students, this event truly is unlike any other. The final event is our district's participation in the annual Vancouver Pride Parade. For the last four years, Burnaby has been active in this event, submitting a float that shows its dedication towards inclusivity and respect for all. The float is organized by our district SOGI committee and includes all of its members. It is through these events that Burnaby actively supports its students with pride.

## Diversity Dance 2018

by Trina Moulin

Last year, the Burnaby School District proudly followed in the footsteps of Surrey when it hosted its first PRIDE Dance. The dance was held at Byrne Creek Community School, and all students in the District from grades 8 to 12 were welcome. The dance was a collaborative effort and would not have been possible without the efforts of our secondary schools' GSA & SOGI clubs, teachers, parents, the Board of Education, VIBE Productions, community businesses, and the BTA. Financial support from the BTA's Social Justice Committee funded the very popular mocktail stand. Much appreciated! Thank you.

Who was on the dance floor? LGBTQ students, international students, special needs students, lots of folks with good dance moves, including some teachers and parents! The event was so much fun that Burnaby will be hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual DIVERSITY Dance this year. It will take place at Byrne Creek Community School on March 7<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 9pm, and this year's theme is SPACE. The dance is once again being organized by Dan Adrian (our District's SOGI lead who teaches at Moscrop) and Byrne Creek's GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance), and all Burnaby high school students are invited. Special thanks to Sunny Qui, a talented student at Moscrop who designed the art for this year's poster.

If you would like to volunteer to set-up, supervise, or clean-up please contact Dan at [Dan.Adrian@burnabyschools.ca](mailto:Dan.Adrian@burnabyschools.ca). Thank you, and we hope to see you there!







## Program for Quality Teaching (PQT)

### Working Together to Enact Truth & Reconciliation in Our Selves & in Our Classrooms

by Leanne Sjodin

As educators working in a complex system that places increasing demands on our expertise and energy it is no surprise that finding the time to delve into theory and ideas to improve our practice can be daunting. It is clear to me that we are keen to explore new ideas and to welcome supports and information that enrich our practice. The most effective supports are those that respect our autonomy and promote meaningful collaboration between us. We are our most valuable resource.

Working with BCTF facilitators, Celia Brogan and Joanna Larsen, a collective of eight Burnaby teachers are currently engaged in a PQT action research project exploring our roles and connection to Truth and Reconciliation. It seems that one of the most challenging aspects of action research is to come up with a guiding research question. The BCTF facilitators have proven to be invaluable for this step. Each member of the PQT group has now developed an individual research question and is exploring our topics collaboratively.

Here are a few: How can I use a social justice lens to teach Truth and Reconciliation in my secondary French classes? How can I deconstruct/disrupt dominant colonial narratives within the Canadian ELL classroom? What are my personal stories that connect to colonialism and how can I share them with critical intention and activate social emotional learning to engage students with the topic of Truth and Reconciliation? This PQT group will provide a final report and presentation upon completion of our

individual and collective projects. Stay tuned for news on where and when. PQT grants are available from the BCTF and can be topped up with BTA and District Funds when approved. These funds provide the benefit of release time and BCTF facilitated support for teacher led inquiry. If you are thinking about a topic that you would like to explore and would like some assistance in getting started please feel free to call the BTA office for support.

(See: <https://bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx>).

## Pipeline Safety Protocol in Burnaby Schools

by Terry Callender

Recently, the news headlines have been dominated by the government of British Columbia's plan to restrict the amount of diluted bitumen along the coast. This in effect would prohibit the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. The premier of Alberta reacted to this by announcing a ban on B.C. wine. In response, many activists and Burnaby teachers showed their support for local business and the government's announcement by purchasing even more B.C. wines.

Burnaby teachers have been involved in this pipeline proposal for some time now and held intervenor status during the last National Energy Board Review. The BCTF and BTA oppose this pipeline expansion due to its impact on First Nations communities, the environment and the economy for residents of B.C. More specifically, Burnaby Teachers are concerned about ensuring that there exists appropriate health and safety protocols in the event of an oil spill, fire or off-gassing from these pipelines, the tank farm or the marine terminal. For schools in North Burnaby most affected by these possibilities, this is especially unsettling. The pipelines carry various products at different times, each product having a different protocol for an emergency response. Some of the gasses from leaks or spills settle at ground level, some rise up into

the atmosphere and all are subject to the current air movement.

Kinder Morgan (KM) currently has no intention of informing schools in the vicinity of a spill or leak of the event, and even if they did, the correct response to ensure the safety of students is unclear as the local employees of KM often do not know what the pipeline involved is currently transporting. If the oil spills into a waterway (there are a multitude of creeks in the vicinity of the pipelines), the risk increases greatly, not just due to the airborne toxicity of the gasses, but due to the possibility of fire as well. Many of these gasses are extremely flammable as well as deadly to breathe.

The City of Burnaby has stated that they cannot participate in responding to a fire at the tank farm located on Burnaby Mountain due to their lack of appropriate equipment to fight a fire of this magnitude. The addition of the proposed new tanks reduces the distance between the tanks, increasing the certainty that a fire in one tank will become a fire in all. Burnaby's Deputy Fire Chief brings extensive experience working in the oil patch to Burnaby. If a fire were to break out at the tank farm, all nearby roads would be impassable and schools could not be reached, including SFU up the hill.

A washout under Gagliardi Way above the Forest Grove neighbourhood two years ago resulted in a pipeline along Gagliardi being left hanging in the air for the week the reconstruction was taking place. A crane place on Gagliardi held the pipeline up. Surprisingly, the oil flow in the pipeline was never shut off. This resulted in serious safety concerns in the neighbourhoods below, including Stoney Creek Elementary and Burnaby Mountain Secondary.

Up until now, the Burnaby Board of Education has only been able to put in place a safety protocol of shelter in place, due to the lack of information and direction from Kinder Morgan.

So what can we do to ensure our students are kept safe? At the school level, teachers can work through their staff reps who will communicate with BTA table officers around concerns arising at the school level. The table officers' will continue to advocate on behalf of the safety of staff and students. Stay tuned for any developments or actions!