

Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

April 2021

The New Westminster School District recognizes and acknowledges the Qayqayt First Nation, as well as all Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded territories we live, we learn, we play and we do our work.

Message from the Team

Dear Principals and Vice-Principals,

With spring in the air and the great weather of recent weeks, we recognize that there is a lot happening across the district and in our schools heading into the last two months of the school year.

We appreciate the work and commitment of staff to their individual and collective journeys around equity and inclusion. On that note, we have an ask from schools for our May newsletter: please share **one initiative** that you are most proud of from this school year with respect to equity work that is occurring at your site. This could be staff and/or student engagement (i.e. lessons, school-wide events, staff Pro-D initiatives) around Indigenous education, anti-racism, SOGI, or a combination of these.

Please send 1 – 2 visuals, in the form of pictures or a video link, along with a short write-up to Rav by Friday, May 14. We would like to share these initiatives across the district in our next newsletter as schools generate ideas and plan for the 2021/22 school year.

The first four schools to submit their initiative will receive one of the following books to add to their professional collection for staff (and perhaps consider as a way to start a book club for the fall): *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act (Joseph)*, *The Inconvenient Indian (King)*, or *How to Be an Anti-Racist (Kendi)*.

Finally, inside this newsletter is information about Asian Heritage Month, the NCCIE Learning Centre, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, as well as some additional parent resources. Given your specific site context, feel free to share specific resources with staff and parents.

Thank you,

Rav Johal (District Principal of Equity & Inclusion) – rjohal@sd40.bc.ca
Connie Swan (Indigenous Education Coordinator) – cswan@sd40.bc.ca

May – Upcoming Dates to Remember

5: Red Dress Day – we are encouraged to wear red as a way to draw attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

12: Eid-al-Fitr (Islam) – breaking of the fast that celebrates the end of Ramadan.

17: Shavuot (Judaism) – Festival of Weeks, commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

17: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia – created in 2004 to draw attention to violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexuals, transgender, intersex people and all other people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics.

19: Buddha's Birthday (Buddhism) – festival celebrated across East Asia commemorating the birth of the Prince Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism.

26: Vesak/Wesak/Buddha Day/Visakha Puja (Buddhism) – Nine day festival marked by fasting and praying to the goddess of energy, wealth, and knowledge.

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May is recognized nationally as Asian Heritage Month, an opportunity to learn more about the contributions and achievements of Canadians of diverse Asian backgrounds. The Government of Canada has [links](#) to further explore organizations and resources commemorating Asian heritage. In addition, [here](#) is a resource developed by the Toronto District School Board and Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario to address anti-Asian racism including conceptual frameworks, an educators' toolkit, and Canadian resources.



The National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education (NCCIE) has developed a [Teaching Resource Centre](#) for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators geared towards K – 12 subjects. It is recognized that resources on this site are not 'one size fits all', with significant diversity amongst First Peoples' cultural practices and knowledge.



May 17 is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. The World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders on May 17, 1990. BCTF has LGBTQ2S+ lesson plans available [here](#).



- [Parents for Diversity](#) is an Ottawa-based group of parents committed to supporting schools and families in their diversity and inclusion journeys. This site provides a [Diversity Library](#), with a range of suggested books, additional [resources](#), and a [blog](#) including recent posts promoting discussion on anti-Asian racism in Canada as well as a periodic table of Canadian Women's history.
- Safer Schools Together has posted a parent guide on [Raising Digitally Responsibly Youth](#). This may be a useful resource to share with your PAC.

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FOR ADMINISTRATORS: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Resources – to complement a list of books, articles, films, and podcasts gathered during Black History Month, the BCPVPA has compiled some DEI resources on one page [here](#).



FOR ALL STAFF: Information and Pro-D Sessions – Communities Embracing Restorative Action ([CERA](#)) was established in 1999 and provides restorative justice services to local communities, including New Westminister. Their Executive Director, Gurinder Mann, is available to provide virtual Pro-D or information sessions to school staff on a range of restorative justice topics. Gurinder can be emailed at gmann@cerasociety.org.



FOR ADMINISTRATORS: Remote Training Opportunities Through Safer Schools Together – SST will again be offering their Restorative Response to Racism & Current Digital Trends [session](#) on May 14 from 9 – 11 am. Please touch base with Rav if you are interested in signing up.

Book of the Month

Duty, Honour, and Izzat (2019) – Steven Purewal



This book takes the form of a “historical scrapbook” and recounts the often untold story of Punjabi soldiers fighting for the British Empire from a Canadian perspective. Steven Purewal is a local community historian whose work has been featured at The National War Museum, municipal venues, and the Prime Minister’s Reception for the Komagata Maru Apology in Ottawa.

