

British Columbia Exchange Teachers' Association

July 2016

BCExchangeTeachers.ca

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first BC Exchange Teachers' Association newsletter in a long time. The new Executive plans to send out a newsletter quarterly.

This September, we will be welcoming 6 exchange teachers from Scotland, France, Switzerland, and Australia. These exchange teachers join the 12 Australian teachers who have been working in the province since January. The BC Exchange Teachers' Association hopes that these teachers have a wonderful professional and personal experience while in British Columbia.

As well as welcoming the exchange teachers, we have a new Executive. The following have volunteered to serve on the Executive for the 2016-2017 school year:

President – Rick Mulholland
Past President – Kulwant Toor
Vice President/Communications chair – Catherine Gagnon
Treasurer – Pearl Wong
Secretary – Bob Cunningham
Members at Large – Leon Jensen, Martin Wheeler

As an Executive, our main objective this year is to promote the exchange program across the province. This will be done by hosting a number of information sessions in various locations. At this time, we are working on a Lower Mainland event during the October PSA weekend, one in Kelowna (either in October or February) and one on Vancouver Island in early November. We are hoping to reach out to the other areas of the province in the near future.

We are looking into hosting events for both former and current exchange teachers to attend. After a very successful weekend in Victoria last May, we intend to repeat this event in 2017. (continued on right)

The current executive for the BCETA is:

President:

Rick Mulholland – conri@shaw.ca

Past President:

Kulwant Toor – ktoor@shaw.ca

Vice-President/Communications Chair:

Catherine Gagnon – cteachr@hotmail.com

Treasurer:

Pearl Wong – pearlw576@gmail.com

Secretary:

Bob Cunningham – roibeard@shaw.ca

About Us

BCETA is a volunteer organization dedicated to hosting information sessions and social activities with the intent to make the year an exciting and memorable one for exchange teachers and their families.

<http://BCExchangeTeachers.ca>

Welcome to BC! Our association is made up of former exchange teachers who are delighted to share their experience with current exchangees. We welcome any questions or comments you might have regarding all matters related to your teaching exchange.

This is the inaugural issue of BCExchangeTeachers.ca. I hope you will enjoy the information and stories about teaching exchanges happening throughout the province. Please submit your own pictures, links and stories to me at cteachr@hotmail.com.

Newsletter Editor: Catherine Gagnon cteachr@hotmail.com

Now available – newsletters from CLEE (Canadian League for Education Exchange) and other Australian International Teaching Fellowships <http://feb122010.wordpress.com>

(continued) Events that are currently being organized include a scavenger hunt around the Fraser Valley, Christmas potluck dinner, and a provincial selfie contest.

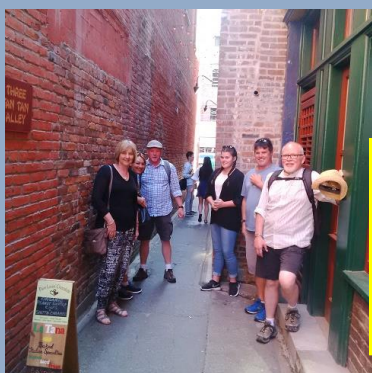
We will be launching a new website in the near future. This will provide members and potential exchange teachers a place to view the activities of the association. Remember to bookmark <http://www.bcexchangeteachers.ca/>

At this time, I would like to thank Larry Kuehn, BCTF and the International Solidarity Committee for their funding support for the upcoming school year. Without this funding, many of the above activities would not occur.

Rick

Coming Events

- Sept** Fraser Valley Day and BBQ
- Oct** Information session – Lower Mainland & Kelowna Halloween celebration
- Nov** Information session – Vancouver Island
- Dec** Traditional Christmas dinner/ farewell to our Southern Hemisphere teachers
- Jan** Welcome to Southern Hemisphere Exchangees
- Feb** Welcome Back Canadians
- April** Potluck dinner Lower Mainland
- May** Victoria Conference Weekend
- June** Farewell to Northern Hemisphere Exchangees



Fun times in Chinatown during our Victoria Spring Conference May 2016

GETTING INVOLVED

At this time, the Executive and activities of the BC Exchange Teachers' Association are mainly located in the Lower Mainland. The new Executive would like to improve on that by bringing information sessions to various areas of the province. We are planning to hold sessions in the lower mainland, on Vancouver Island and Kelowna in the upcoming months, following a training session with Carol Wilkins from CEEF. Once the Executive has the "expertise" to host meetings, we are looking at having others involved across the province. If you are interested in presenting an information session in your area, either a weekend/evening/after school or a Professional Development Day session with your local union, contact [Rick Mulholland](#).

Help us plan our calendar of events - Do you have an idea for an activity that exchange teachers might be interested in and could travel to without too much difficulty? It could be a skiing event in the interior over a long weekend, winery tour, whale watching, hiking trips, corn maze, hosting a BBQ or potluck, or even a walking tour of your town or city. We are open to all suggestions. If you have an idea and would like to help out, please contact [Rick Mulholland](#).

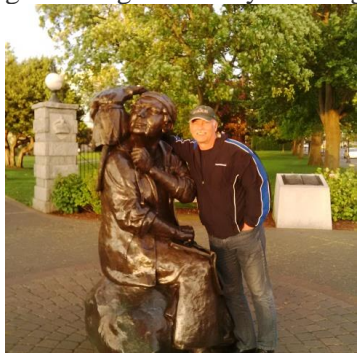
Suggested Activities

- Visit the Fairmont Empress – One of the best known landmarks in Victoria. Their high tea is reknown. Prices vary by season, so you might plan a visit in the fall or winter months. <http://www.fairmont.com/empress-victoria/dining/tea-at-the-empress/>
- Stanley Park is the iconic outdoor destination in Vancouver. Explore the seawall on foot or cycle, the First Nations' totems are always a great photo-op and don't miss the Aquarium. [Download a self-guided tour here.](#)
- BC is well known for its wildlife and outdoor adventures. [Here is a list of ideas to help you plan.](#)
- Get ready for some harvest fun at one of the many festivals and markets around the province. You might enjoy [the Okanagan Fall Wine Festival](#), or discover your own local farmers' market such as the [Langley Community Farmers' Market](#) held every Wednesday afternoon from late May to October.
- If you love airplanes and loud noises, don't miss the Abbotsford Air Show in August. <http://www.abbotsfordairshow.com/>

BCETA Victoria Conference May 6-7, 2016

Last weekend, a group of exchange teachers from Australia attended the BCETA Victoria Conference. Rick Mulholland (Scotland, 2014) organized the events which included school visits on Friday morning, a guided tour of the Parliament Building (BC Legislature) with a presentation from the Assistant Director of International Education Branch, Grant Sheppard, and two walking tours of the city (conducted expertly by Rick and his partner Bob). Being a native of Victoria, Rick was able to highlight the many heritage buildings in the city, including Customs House, St. Ann's Academy and the Rogers' Chocolate shop. Chocolate sampling had been conveniently arranged too!

One of the highlights of the weekend for me was visiting Parklands Secondary School. Principal Lizanne Chicanot showed us around the school with stops in the Drama room, the Tech areas with their impressive woodworking and boat restoration programs, student services where I learned a great deal about the international student program thanks to Mr. Choo and finally, an opportune meeting with Lukas Fischer, a current exchange teacher from Switzerland. I was glad to have brought some homemade business cards to pass out to some of the teachers interested in an exchange. I can't say enough good things about my exchange experience!



Leon getting to know Emily Carr



l-r: Debbie (NSW), Brad (WA), Lukas (Switzerland), Lizanne (Parklands SS)

The weekend was also a great opportunity to get to know some of the current exchangees. The ones who attended the conference were exclusively from Australia. Jeannine, who is working in Courtenay, is from Echuca, just north of Bendigo, where I exchanged in 2011. We naturally had lots to talk about. Brad and his family are currently living in Campbell River and come from Geraldton, Western Australia. Everyone envied Helen (exchanging to Campbell River) who normally lives in the Margaret River area. We all promised to visit her some day and try those fantastic wines! Debbie Robinson and her family are living in Surrey, so we had the chance to meet them at our potluck earlier this year. Graeme, her partner, had some interesting details on his current volunteer work with the RCMP and their restorative justice program for youth. I envy so many of these teachers as they are on their second exchange. Lucky them!

The sun shone all weekend. We couldn't have had better weather to tour this lovely city and provincial capital! Thanks to BCETA for providing an opportunity to make new friends and share our exchange stories.



From top left: Rick conducting our morning tour, St. Ann's Academy, tour of the Legislature, International Education Presentation, Tour of the Legislature

Exchange experience in BC – 2016

(Debbie Robinson, Graeme Atkins, Joel and Mikhayla)

Eleven years ago, my family and I had such a positive experience moving from the Blue Mountains (west of Sydney) on an exchange to Ontario, that we jumped at the chance to do it again. Whilst the first instance was a double teaching exchange, with both my husband and I teaching humanities in secondary schools, this time it is just myself in a counselling role. Apart from being chief family travel agent, my husband has also been involved in volunteer work helping young offenders in a Restorative Justice program run by the RCMP. Our 15 year-old daughter is attending Grade 10 and just finished the now obsolete English 10, Math 10 and Science 10 exams! Our 19 year-old son, who is on a gap year, was able to find work at Sportchek, which is most apt as he will study Sport Science at university when he returns home.

I am working in a secondary school in Surrey, about 30 kilometres southeast of Vancouver. The counselling role is similar to that back home as it typically involves individual counselling, psychoeducation and family support. However, there have also been some challenges as the role in this school district also includes course planning and post-secondary advice and some of the issues have been higher-level and more complex than those presented in a more regional setting back home. On all fronts, my colleagues have been very gracious with their time and support in answering my questions and ensuring I don't mess up too much! Additionally, my exchange partner had arranged for me to attend some post-secondary institutions to get me up to speed with relevant information. The bottom line is that I still enjoy going to work each day, which says it all.



The Atkins family in Whistler

Another very exciting part of an exchange is being able to immerse oneself into the local environment and culture and explore the surrounds. We felt very fortunate scoring British Columbia, as we did not get to see much of this beautiful part of Canada the previous time.

In Spring break, we were able to ski in Whistler on a day that was the sunniest in two weeks according to the locals! We also ventured down across the border to Seattle, grabbing some bargains along the way at an outlet mall. On weekends, we have taken up some local activities: skied and ascended the Grind at Grouse Mountain, cycled around Stanley Park, taken the seabus across to North Van, hiked Elk Mountain at Chilliwack, walked along False Creek to Granville Island and explored downtown Vancouver, Steveston, Fort Langley, Buntzen Lake and Sasamat Lake.

Thanks to BC Exchange Teachers' Association, a number of exchangees were able to explore Victoria over a long weekend in May. An organised school visit allowed us further insight into BC schools and tours of Parliament buildings and historic Victoria and Chinatown were both informative and enjoyable. There was also the opportunity to share exchange stories at optional lunches and dinners. In our spare time, we toured the spectacular Butchart Gardens.

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Debbie, MikHayla & Graeme at Butchart Gardens

A bonus to our already invaluable experience is that one local family has virtually adopted ours and made us welcome to family events including upcoming Thanksgiving and a shared holiday on Salt Spring Island. We feel very fortunate that Canadian hospitality has been so inviting and interested in sharing life experiences.

To kick-start our summer holiday, we took to the road to the Okanagan. We dropped into Princeton and Osoyoos as we made our way to Penticton to enjoy the Canada Day fireworks celebrations on Okanagan Lake. We then took in the scenic lakeside mountain views as we drove to Kelowna and Kamloops. And of course, we were able to take home some local produce – big cherries, juicy peaches and some great wine!

In a few days, we will return to Ontario to join friends in a cottage holiday on Georgian Bay and see Niagara Falls once again so that our daughter can remember her last experience when she turned on the multicoloured night lights onto the Falls.

As we do not get the chance to be in the Northern hemisphere often, we will also venture over to Europe for a couple of weeks, visiting some of the major cities.

After summer, we have a number (eight, to be exact!) of Aussie friends and family dropping in so it will be a busy second-half of our stay. To finish off, we will make our way to Sun Peaks to celebrate a white Christmas.

So, all in all, a jam-packed year full of new experiences, both professional and personal, is made possible with this education exchange. And it's not just the exchangees who benefit as immediate family, visiting family and friends and Canadian friends are also exposed to a new experience through their connections in the exchange network.



Debbie & Mikhayla among the totems at Stanley Park

There's more online!

If you follow Facebook, you'll find pages for some great groups and blogs – [ITA](#) – for exchange teachers to Victoria, AU (past and present)

[Turning my world Upside Down](#) – read my own exchange adventures and find links to newsletters from other teaching exchange organizations.

CLEECanada has [website](#) and [blog](#) for exchange teachers in Ontario. The blog also has stories and links for teachers currently exchanging to BC.

And coming very soon –

BCExchangeTeachers.ca, our own blog about all things relating to BC teaching exchanges.