

# British Columbia Exchange Teachers' Association

June 2017

BCExchangeTeachers.ca

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Victoria Spring Conference was a success! We had 8 exchange teachers and their families join us for a weekend of school tours, visits to the Ministry of Education and the BC Parliament buildings and a guided walking tour of some of the better known Victoria sights. Please see the [write up and pictures of the weekend here](#).

It was particularly satisfying to meet this year's exchangees who travelled from Kelowna, Courtenay, Nanaimo, Delta/Surrey and Port Simpson! The teachers are having some interesting and varied experiences on their exchange year.

Some of our attendees are on their final month of teaching in Canada and will be travelling home in a few short weeks.

We hope you had an amazing year and will stay in touch with our Association!



## The current executive for the BCETA is:

President/Communications Chair:

Catherine Gagnon – [bcexchangegeteachers@gmail.com](mailto:bcexchangegeteachers@gmail.com)

Past President:

Kulwant Toor – [ktoor@shaw.ca](mailto:ktoor@shaw.ca)

Vice-President

Martin Wheeler - [wheeler\\_m@surreyschools.ca](mailto:wheeler_m@surreyschools.ca)

Treasurer

Pearl Wong – [pearlw576@gmail.com](mailto:pearlw576@gmail.com)

Secretary

Leon Jensen – [Leonj1@hotmail.com](mailto:Leonj1@hotmail.com)

Members at large - Mel and June Caldwell

## About Us

The BC Exchange Teachers' Association 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>

## GETTING INVOLVED

At this time, the Executive and activities of the BC Exchange Teachers' Association are mainly located in the Lower Mainland. The Association would like to improve on that by bringing information sessions to various areas of the province.

To this end, we would welcome your assistance and involvement. 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 [Catherine Gagnon](#). We would also be glad to make a presentation to a small group at your request.

**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, a 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 [Catherine Gagnon](#).

Newsletter Editor: Catherine Gagnon [cteachr@hotmail.com](mailto:cteachr@hotmail.com)

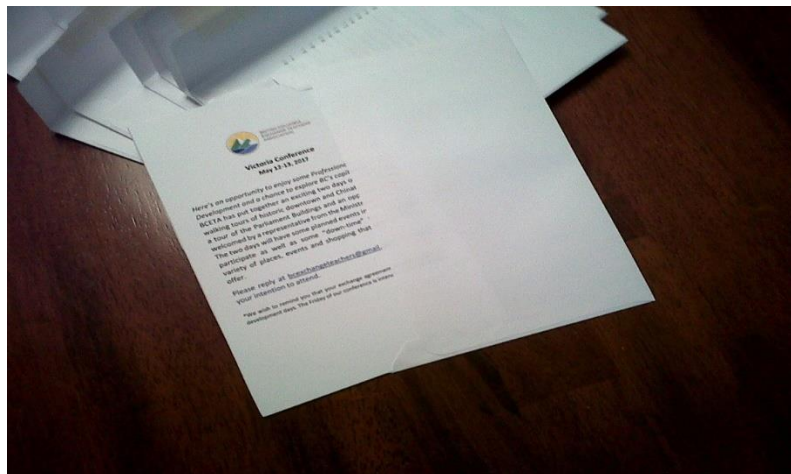
Now available – newsletters from CLEE (Canadian League for Education Exchange) and other Australian International Teaching Fellowships <http://feb122010.wordpress.com>

## Coming Events

<b>Sept</b>	Fraser Valley Day and BBQ
<b>Oct</b>	Information session – Lower Mainland Halloween celebration
<b>Nov</b>	Information session – Vancouver Island
<b>Dec</b>	Traditional Christmas dinner/ farewell to our Southern Hemisphere teachers
<b>Jan</b>	Welcome to Southern Hemisphere Exchangees/Welcome Back Canadians
<b>April</b>	Potluck dinner Lower Mainland Ski Whistler
<b>May</b>	Victoria Conference Weekend Info session Surrey School District
<b>June</b>	<b>Australian Alumni Reception</b>
<b>July-Aug</b>	No events planned. Have a wonderful summer holiday!

## Suggested Activities

- Visit the Fairmont Empress – One of the best known landmarks in Victoria. Their high tea is renowned. Prices vary by season, so you might plan a visit in the fall or winter months. [Tea at the Fairmont 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.](#)
- Check out a Farmer's Market or a Night Market held all over BC starting as early as May. Find a market close to you [in this directory.](#)
- Living on the island? [Consult this guide](#) for a list of festivals and events.
- Kelowna has some [amazing activities all year round.](#) It's not always about wine you know!
- Are you into ComicCon? How about Powerlifting? [Prince George has a variety of events happening this spring and summer.](#)
- Kayaking, Surfing, White Water Rafting? [Nelson](#) has all the watersports for you.
- Don't forget that Canada is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year! [Parks Canada passes are free!](#)
- This year is the YEAR to celebrate Canada Day! Celebrations occur all over the country. [The party starts early in Victoria.](#)



## BCETA VICTORIA SPRING CONFERENCE May 12-13<sup>th</sup>

By Fiona Leslie (Australia-Kelowna)

Victoria was the perfect place to hold the exchange conference with our lovely hosts Catherine and Leon. We started off the morning with an insightful tour of 2 local schools, Strawberry Vale Elementary and Parkland Secondary. I enjoyed a tour of the school given by a lively group of boys from a grade ¾ class. It was great to see the pride they had in their school and how much knowledge they had about the plants and natural features of the school. Being an environmental and nature based school, it was fantastic to explore all of the outdoor learning areas the students had access to. We had the opportunity to visit a Kindy room and another grade 4 classroom before joining the staff for morning tea. The school environment had such a colourful, creative and welcoming feel to it, that we all enjoyed our visit immensely.



After stopping off for lunch and enjoying a food truck experience we had a tour of the spectacular parliament buildings and learnt a lot about the notorious architect Francis Rattenbury who incidentally was murdered! This was followed by a presentation by the department of Education, on International students and teachers. Some interesting facts were presented and contacts made for those of us who were interested.



Tour of Parkland Secondary – L-R: Principal Lizanne Chicanot, Stuart James (Australia-West Kelowna), Emma Wemelbeke (France-Surrey), Clem Desmettre (France-Delta), Andrew Roome (Switzerland 2016)

A pleasant evening was spent eating, drinking and dancing at the Bard and Banker with some social butterflies staying out until 1.30 in the morning! This was a great way to get to know each other and talk of our exchange experiences of which some were extremely interesting. Living near the Alaskan border on a remote reservation where you have to catch a ferry to Prince Rupert every 2 weeks just to buy your groceries is what I call interesting! ([continued](#) next page)



Touring the parliament buildings.



Above: Emily Carr statue in near the Empress Hotel  
Below: the totems behind the Royal BC Museum,  
Saturday morning.



**(Continued)** Saturday was spent pleasantly with a tour of old town Victoria, another lovely old pub and tour of Chinatown. By this time we were all relaxed, happy and feeling so lucky that we have been given this fantastic opportunity of spending a year working in a job we feel passionate about in one of the most spectacular countries in the world. Thank you for organising this weekend for us. It was wonderful to meet everyone and hear about all their adventures. I still haven't seen a bear yet

This year's group included Emma and Clem from France, Melanie, Fiona, Stuart and Janice from Australia and Julie from Scotland.

## Memories of Canberra

*Canberra* - I would go back there in a heartbeat (we all would- my kids ask weekly when we can go back) and I want to have a little fantasy match of my own, that we could exchange next year and go there again! We are all ready to go back. Anytime. Just say the word...

So I didn't have much of an expectation of Canberra when I went, knowing very little about it other than "it gets cold" and "not much happens". The part that people don't seem to get is the phenomenal experience of living in a truly planned city. I didn't understand what they meant by "the bush capital", because in Canadian, "bush" is a derogatory term, denoting from the country and unsophisticated. I assumed that's what they meant about Canberra. But I discovered that they actually mean that it is a city fully incorporated in nature. It is the most beautiful and restful place to live. Because it is so well planned, you are spared the visual pollution of urban sprawl and subconscious stressors of traffic, congestion and density. Instead, you travel on roads which are bordered by green. All the time. Everywhere. You hardly see buildings. There is no traffic, you can get anywhere in 20 minutes, and you have all the amenities- MORE than the amenities- of a big city and a capital city. The best museums (FREE), art galleries, restaurants, performing arts, shopping, coffee, convenience, science center, programs, libraries, stunning botanical gardens (with the best outdoor movie festival EVER), a fascinating arboretum... and on and on. And it is all SO EASILY ACCESSIBLE. That just can't be overlooked. When you are only in a place for a year, the easier it is to access the cool things the city has to offer the more likely you won't spend all your time working.

And then I discovered the hiking. And the bike paths. The city is planned- all the outlying areas, the "suburbs", are connected so that you can travel for 30, 40, 60 km and never ride on a road. Right through the city. I had a 25 minute drive to work from one end of the city to the other, which I could do on my bike in about 55 minutes, riding along the shores of two lakes, and through paths that never went on the road, and were almost exclusively through parkland and greenways. No matter where you live, you can walk out your door and connect to this network. Which, if you have kids, is amazing, because it makes getting out as a family so easy. Just ride from the house. Or walk. The playgrounds were stunning, and one of the first things we noticed: the public spaces are incredibly well funded and well designed.

And then there was the proximity of the little New South Wales towns all around. Weekend getaways were so much fun, with so many places within easy distance to explore. The countryside was stunning to drive through. The coast seemed far away until we got to Canberra and realized that it was a two and a half hour drive through incredibly beautiful countryside, rather than a two hour highway journey. The drive was a pleasure and I did it to visit friends on the coast sometimes for a day at the beach, and often for a weekend.

The hiking was very accessible- the Brindabellas were not far as again, the drive was so rewarding. We went to Tidbinbilla a lot, and it is one of the things I miss the most about living there. When we lived in Brisbane, I never saw a kangaroo except at the Australia Zoo. In Canberra, I saw them every single day on my way to work. Dozens. At Tidbinbilla we regularly saw platypus and emu, too. In the wild, while walking.

And when we wanted to go, Sydney was an easy three hour ride up a super fast highway. We went there several times over the year, so that we felt very at home there, and got to see everything we wanted, and get a good feel for the city. (We were always glad we didn't have to navigate the traffic there every day in order to go to work!)

Our kids had a fantastic experience at Curtin Primary- they loved the whole year. Great teachers, great community, great programme. The sports they participated in were all well organized and easily accessible: again, because it is a fairly small city, but with all the big city amenities. All in all I couldn't imagine a better place to have an Australian experience for the year, because there is so much around to see and do, and the day to day living is so pleasurable. It was eye-opening to see what an effect it can have on the quality of life, when the city is planned to maximize it.

We miss Canberra, and would heartily recommend anyone choose to go there. Especially with kids. It was an amazing place for the family.

SO, like I said, if you need us to: WE'RE IN!!! Sign us up!!!!"

*Meghan Enga :) (Exchanged from Vancouver to Canberra)*

## Australian Alumni Reception – June 15, 2017

For the second year, the Australian High Commission has hosted an Australian Alumni Reception to promote networking between Australians and Canadians who have a connection to our countries either through education or work.

We took this as a great opportunity to invite Mardi Vassella (Sydney-South Surrey 2017) along to join us for the evening. The room was filled with a number of Canadians who have either studied in Australia or Australians who are currently studying and/or working in Canada, such as exchange teachers.

Kevin Lamb, Post Manager and Honorary Consul, highlighted the particular importance of teaching exchanges as perhaps the oldest and deepest connection between our two great nations. He expressed the hope that we will be able to continue these exchanges for many years to come.

The Honorary Consul encouraged everyone to keep up with the activities of Australian Alumni at [canada.embassy.gov.au](http://canada.embassy.gov.au).



I-r: Mardi Vassella (on exchange in South Surrey), Kevin Lamb, Catherine Gagnon (President BCETA) and Janna Fabris (Graduate Student at UBC)

The [Australia in Canada facebook](#) page is another way to keep informed on events relating to the Australian High Commission.

## There's more online!

If you follow Facebook, you'll find pages for some great groups and blogs –

- [CEEF Discussion Group](#) – for Canadian exchange teachers and potential exchanges, this group was set up to allow interested parties to ask and answer questions about their exchange year and preparation leading up to it. Very rich in information. If you've been on exchange from Ontario, BC or the Maritimes, you have worked with the CEEF. Just ask to join.
- [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 and BC. The blog also has stories and links for teachers currently exchanging to BC. Many new links have been added from teachers currently on exchange. Wonderful inspiration!
- **Under construction** – [BCExchangeTeachers.ca](#), our own blog about all things relating to BC teaching exchanges.



Highland Games Parade – Victoria Conference Weekend