
Surrey teachers work on the unceded traditional territories of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Qayqayt and Semiahmoo First Nations. As part of meaningful reconciliation work, we reflect on the impacts of colonialism through self-education in order to be accountable to Indigenous people and pay attention to our students of Indigenous ancestry, providing them the tools for their success in the future. We are all on a path to learn more and understand the role of each of us as educators in healing the broken relationship with the First Peoples of this territory. We thank those who still live on and care for the land.



STA Connection December 7-11, 2020

Frustrations over re-organization

We know many teachers are concerned as reorganization is being contemplated in some schools, because some students are returning to face-to-face learning from the blended model. We have heard different reports from different schools around the district about various actions that are being considered. For example, some teachers may be being asked to prepare one or two kids to leave their room. It's really difficult to think about having to let go of students we have been working with since September, and to feel concerned about the impact of this change on them. The efforts we have been making to help our students feel safe and supported during these unprecedented times makes saying good-bye that much harder. Some teachers have said that they would prefer to take extra students and go into (or further into) remedy rather than disrupt their classes.

However, individual members or school staff committees cannot agree to things that violate the collective agreement (such as having a class go into remedy if that could be avoided through a reorganization.) The collective agreement, co-created and agreed to by the district (employer) and the STA (union), outlines limits for class size and composition that are really important for teaching and learning conditions. We bargained hard and made sacrifices - including striking in the 90s and a 14-year legal battle - for these provisions. While it is a difficult time of transition, the bigger picture - compliance with class size and composition limits - benefits all of us and our students. The district and the union share an obligation to

abide by the Collective Agreement.

The STA protested the original organization of elementary schools this year when the blended cohorts were created. We asked that space be left in the F2F classes for potential return. The district did not comply with our request, presumably for financial reasons. Now we see the unfortunate consequence-disruption to the F2F cohorts from a January reorganization.

While it is not the responsibility of STA members to try to figure out a way to accommodate more students coming into our already full classes, there are some things we can do, at the school level, to help ourselves and our colleagues through this transition. In discussions about class reorganization, we can provide information about which students might be more vulnerable to being negatively impacted by a mid-year transition. We can also consider ways of maintaining connection with students who may be moved from our classes. We can do our best to keep meeting the needs of our kids.

The STA hears your concerns about the challenges of reorganizing classes. We continue to advocate on your behalf during regular meetings with district leadership. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss the situation at your school.

Red4BC Ed Campaign

Last Friday, the STA launched a REd4BC Ed campaign to build advocacy and awareness around issues impacting our staff, students and community during this pandemic. To show we need some changes, please consider **wearing red** in solidarity on Fridays.

Your reason for **wearing red** might be:

- to urge for the same safety measures to apply to all other indoor public places.
- to create more action regarding limited sick days and how they can run out quickly, especially given the exposure rates in some schools.
- to raise awareness of the consequences of failure to fill and having to give up prep time.

What is your reason for wearing red? Remember - **wear red** this Friday to show your support for safer schools!

Masks and Shields from your union

As you know, we have purchased masks and shields, and each STA member is entitled to one STA mask, one STA shield, and one BCTF mask. While we currently do not have any additional STA masks, we have (finally) received a large shipment of BCTF masks, which are similar to the STA ones. Some of these masks have already been distributed. If you or your colleagues have not yet received your BCTF masks, please submit your name, school, number of masks required and courier number to sta@surreyteachers.org. We have just enough for every member to receive one mask, so if you have already received yours, please refrain from requesting more.

Microsoft Teams and Confidentiality

A reminder to be careful if you use the school district's Microsoft TEAMS platform for union business and meetings. Although Teams is efficient for holding large meetings, be sure about who is in the meeting, do not record the meetings, do not use the chat feature (which could leave a permanent record of comments), and ask members to have cameras on to ensure discussions are being held confidentially in solidarity with each other. It is also easy to use Zoom instead.

Additionally, a recommendation from the BCTF is to refrain from using the school district email to communicate with the union about issues such as grievance, etc. Please remember to use your personal email account when contacting the STA about confidential matters.

Ad Hoc Covid 19 Action Committee needs members

The STA Executive Committee struck an action committee to address concerns about Covid. If you are particularly energized into action by the problems we face as teachers in this pandemic, please submit your name to be appointed to this committee. Please submit your name and [CV form](#) to Stamata at reception@surreyteachers.org to be appointed to this committee.



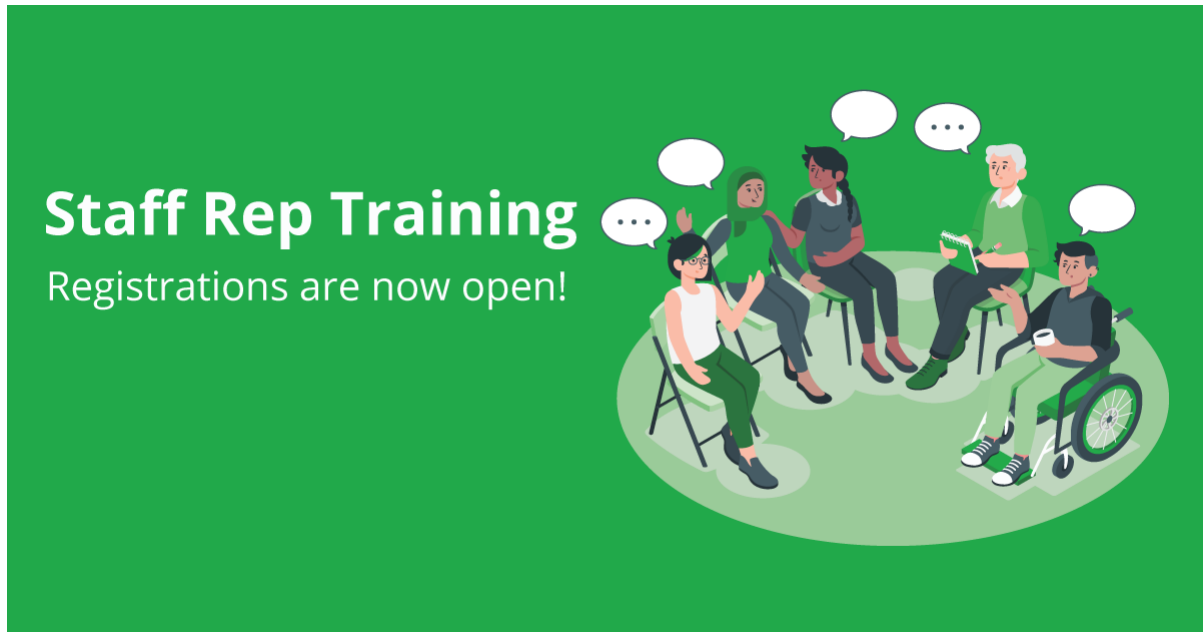
Reps, please mark your calendars to attend our last STARA of the year, Dec. 16th. Part of the meeting will be a reconvened AGM just for the purpose of adopting our audited financial statements. If you have not yet registered, [sign up](#) for this year's links. You will receive your voting keys and the meeting package before the meeting. All members are welcome.

January 31 qualifications deadline reminder

In order to be shortlisted for jobs that require certain qualifications in Rounds 1 and 2, teachers need to be listed in the District Qualification Book. Teachers who are interested in changing their assignments to such positions need to apply to the Human Resources Department (courier #481) by **January 31, 2021** to have their qualifications evaluated. The evaluation will be completed by March 31. (CA, Article E.28.1). Information regarding job descriptions and evaluation forms can be found on [The Hub memo](#).

Gender Neutral Bathrooms

Last week the STA Connection contained information on how school Health and Safety Committees are being asked to ensure that gender neutral bathrooms are available for staff and students. Many committees have begun to address the issue, and a common question was where to obtain appropriate signage. The district can provide signage: it can be ordered through facilities. Options are available through the catalogue and can be ordered by administrators through office staff. Nicole Curtis, the Inclusive Practices Helping Teacher - SOGI | Anti-Racism (curtis_n@surreyschools.ca), has offered to support teachers who would like assistance on approaching administrators about this issue.



This winter we will be having two sessions of Staff Rep Training. **Reps can sign up for one out of two SURT topic training sessions.** Here are your choices.

Staff Rep Training: Understanding and Advocating for Public Education

- to develop a local understanding of Public Education in the 21st Century.
- to consider ways in which we can work to achieve the conditions necessary for a vibrant public education system.
- to invite a conversation with stakeholders.
- advocacy tools.

Select one of the following sessions and sign up: <https://staffrep2021-publiceducation.eventbrite.ca>

- Friday, January 8, 2021
- Monday, January 11, 2021
- Friday, January 15, 2021
- Monday, January 18, 2021

Staff Rep Training: Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Our Schools and Communities

- to develop a firmer understanding of the challenges faced by members of equity seeking groups.
- to delve deeper into the issues and barriers around equity and inclusion.
- to develop an action plan to advance equity and inclusion in our communities.

Select one of the following sessions and sign up: <https://staffrep2021-inclusion.eventbrite.ca>

- Friday, January 22, 2021
- Wednesday, January 27, 2021
- Monday, February 1, 2021
- Friday, February 5, 2021

Covid Solidarity

Teachers, you are essential. This pandemic has taught us to recognize what works, what doesn't and how to best support everyone and their fundamental needs. But how much are you taking care of yourself and your needs? In times of crisis, we can feel more isolated than usual and feel that we are the only ones having a hard time in our working conditions. However, if there is anything this pandemic has shown us it is that we are not alone. How conscious are you of the various pressures and challenges your colleagues are also experiencing? Now more than ever is a time to come together as a collective and turn to colleagues for support. Although we are staying 6ft apart, it is important for us to work more closely and collaboratively. What can you do for both yourself and for others? In the weeks and months to come, let us not only consider student learning but teacher well-being rooted in compassion, generosity, and respect.

STA delegates to 2021 BCTF AGM

Each year over 750 delegates from around the province attend the BCTF AGM. It is a great opportunity to see how the BCTF operates, to hear new perspectives on important issues, meet colleagues from other parts of the province, and to have a voice in the decisions made by the union.

The 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held virtually and will begin on **Saturday, March 20, and conclude on Tuesday, March 23**. The Federation will be using a new online platform that will greatly enhance the virtual meeting for all participants. However, for the optimum user experience, every delegate will need to have access to a **desktop or laptop computer**.

Delegates will be elected at the **Virtual Special General Meeting on January 20, 2021**.

Elected delegates and alternates are **expected to attend all virtual training sessions** leading up to the AGM.

Sessions are as follows:

- February 8 – Rookie AGM Delegates training 8:30 am to 3:00 pm – virtual zoom training session.
- February 16 – AGM Delegates training 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm – virtual zoom training session.
- February 22 – AGM Delegates training 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm – virtual zoom training session.
- March 3 – AGM Delegates training 8:30 am to 3:00 pm – virtual zoom training session.
- March 8 – AGM Delegates training 4:00 am to 6:00 pm – virtual zoom training session.

If you are interested in becoming a delegate and can commit to the preparation meetings, please email your name and a brief statement to sta@surreyteachers.org by **Friday, January 15, 2021 (4pm)**. Remember, your chances of being elected as a delegate are much better if you have a written statement! It is also possible to nominate yourself from the floor at the meeting. If you have any questions about the BCTF AGM, or the process of becoming a delegate, please contact Jatinder Bir at 2vp@surreyteachers.org.

The Looking Glass

The commitment to anti-racism and decolonization is an active and ongoing process. Creating an environment that acknowledges the diverse identities of students and continuing to have high expectations of them all can significantly change a racialized student's experience with schooling. A guide to allyship and being an inclusive educator is acknowledging difference in a way that eradicates colour-blindness, re-learns history and promotes a way forward towards healing and reconciliation.

A proactive way to support students is to begin with educating ourselves so that we can model being agents of social change and addressing systems of inequity. The University of Alberta offers a free online 12-module course called Indigenous Canada that explores Indigenous histories and contemporary issues from an Indigenous perspective. To register, please visit [Coursera](#).

Petition to the House of Commons in Parliament

Please consider signing this petition created by STA honorary life member Karen Kilbride in support of a national prevention plan to address relationship violence. Petitions serve a valuable purpose in enacting social change and showing the numbers of people interested in the cause. We encourage you to participate and [sign in solidarity](#).

Petition e-2881

"We, the undersigned, citizens (or residents) of Canada, call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to develop a national prevention plan that includes a media campaign on healthy relationships and the consequences of relationship violence and to proactively address educational goals and societal change to establish a society with healthier and happier relationships."



An appeal from your STA LGBTQ+ Ad Hoc Committee

Survey

Thank you to the additional 20 members who responded following our general meeting last week. We are now at 55 responses. Ideally, we would have more than 600 survey results. We want every member to be safe and feel safe in every site. The survey is anonymous and intended for any member to complete. We know this is a challenging time, but please take a couple of minutes to make a difference to our LGBTQ2IA+ community. Your response to this survey will help us to develop plausible action plans to further support staff and students.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/sogista>

International Solidarity Committee coffee draw

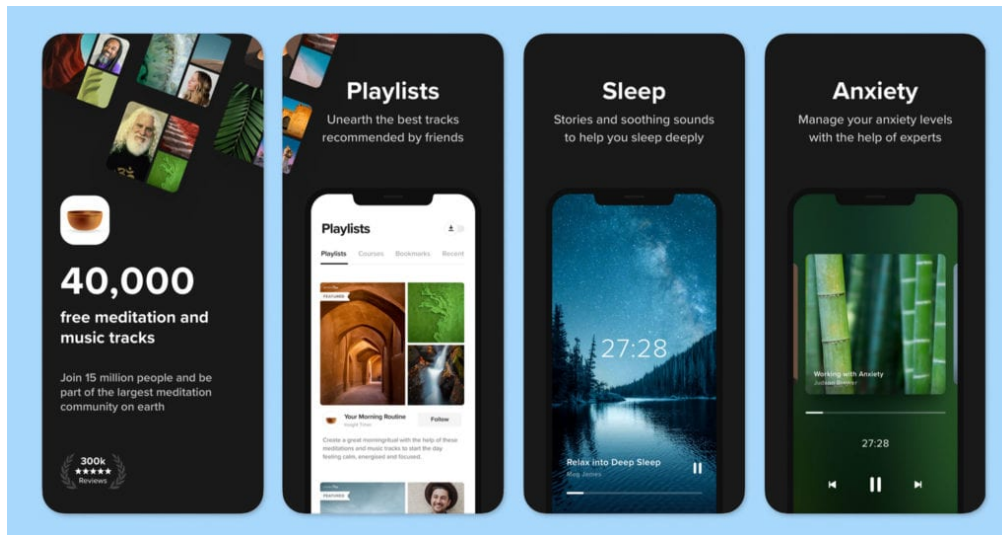


Our International Solidarity Committee purchased coffee and chocolate from Café Ético to help lift the spirits of STA members in this difficult time, and to encourage their awareness of café ético! **The results of the draw will be shared at the STARA (STA Rep Assembly) meeting on December 16, 2020.** If you are interested in submitting your name for this draw, please send your name and school to ISC committee member Marilyn Ricketts-Lindsay at ricketts_m@surreyschools.ca. **The deadline to submit your name is December 11, 2020. All STA members are welcome to enter the draw; you do not need to be in attendance at the meeting to win.**

Status of Women: Wellness Project 2020

Our "Wellness Tip of the Week" comes from Seda Ünlüçay, Surrey TTOC.

"The [Insight Timer app](#) has thousands of free meditations (and some free courses) for children and adults and is a great resource for teachers and students. I have some courses and free meditations on there as well and find the community to be very positive and supportive."



Do you have a wellness tip you'd like to share with other teachers? Feel free to email any tips to Angela Marcakis at marcakis_a@surreyschools.ca.



STA EVENTS

- December 10 – Mediator Training session
- December 10 – Labour Affairs Committee
- December 15 – Convention Committee
- December 15 – International Solidarity Committee
- December 16 – STARA and Reconvened Annual General Meeting
- January 8 – [Staff Rep Training](#)
- January 11 – [Staff Rep Training](#)
- January 15 – [Staff Rep Training](#)
- January 18 – [Staff Rep Training](#)
- January 20 – General Meeting
- January 22 – [Staff Rep Training](#)
- January 27 – [Staff Rep Training](#)

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

- December 10 – Human Rights Day
- December 18 – International Migrants Day