
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 live on and care for the land.



STA Connection February 8-12, 2021

Masks Masks Masks!

As you know new guidelines came from the Provincial Health Officer to the K-12 schools late last week and we appreciate our Superintendent's communication of the district's continued emphasis on creating a mask wearing culture in Surrey among all staff and students. The new guidelines have some gains for safety; the main improvement is that the phrase "not recommended" was removed from the section about mask wearing among younger children. This should mean that more elementary level students will wear masks. However, it is confusing because we still don't have a full mask mandate requirement, because students and workers can remove their masks while stationary at their desks or work stations.

Nevertheless, the guidelines specify that:

All K-12 staff are required to wear a mask or face shield (in which case a mask should be worn in addition to the face shield in schools – both within and outside of their learning group, except when:

- sitting in (or standing at) their seat or desk/workstation in a classroom or learning space;

- there is a barrier in place;
- eating and drinking; and
- outdoors.

It is clear that masks are an important part of preventing transmission. We are seeing a rise in cases among the 10-19 age group. Also, there are new variants that are reportedly more infectious, and we all need to do as much as possible to protect ourselves. If you have not already done so, request 3-layer masks from the District; you can request several at once.

Since Feb 3, 55 notices of exposure have gone out in our district, and 4 schools have had cohorts sent into self-isolation. This is extremely disruptive to those teachers who once again must switch gears to remote teaching. As well, these notifications of exposures to Covid-19 remind us all of the health threat that is still prevalent in our community. STA table officers have been attending morning staff meetings, and we have noticed that isolations of cohorts are now happening sometimes with just one case in the class, which is a change in practice compared to what was going on in the autumn, perhaps indicating a more aggressive response to control the virus wherever it is present in schools. We are glad to also see the improvements in the speed of the notifications going out to the affected schools.

Review of School Safety

The BCCDC issued new guidelines for schools on February 4, 2021. They include the following:

1. Prevent crowding at all times; pay particular attention at the start and end of day.
2. Avoid close face-to-face contact whenever possible.
3. Assign staff to a specific cohort whenever possible.
4. Stagger recess, lunch and class transition times whenever possible.
5. Ensure that the use of masks does not reduce or replace practicing physical distancing and other prevention measures, for both students and staff.
6. Ensure prevention measures are in place in staff-only areas, including break and meeting rooms.
7. Implement music classes according to the British Columbia Music Educators' Association and the Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia Guidance for Music Classes.
8. Ensure physical activity is delivered in line with the guidance in this document.

If you see that these issues are not being addressed, please bring it to your administration. If you are not satisfied with their response, please bring it to your Health and Safety Committee and make recommendations. If administrators do not follow the committee's recommendations, they are required to provide a written response.

Please take a look at the [new guidelines](#).

Paid leave for people required to self-isolate

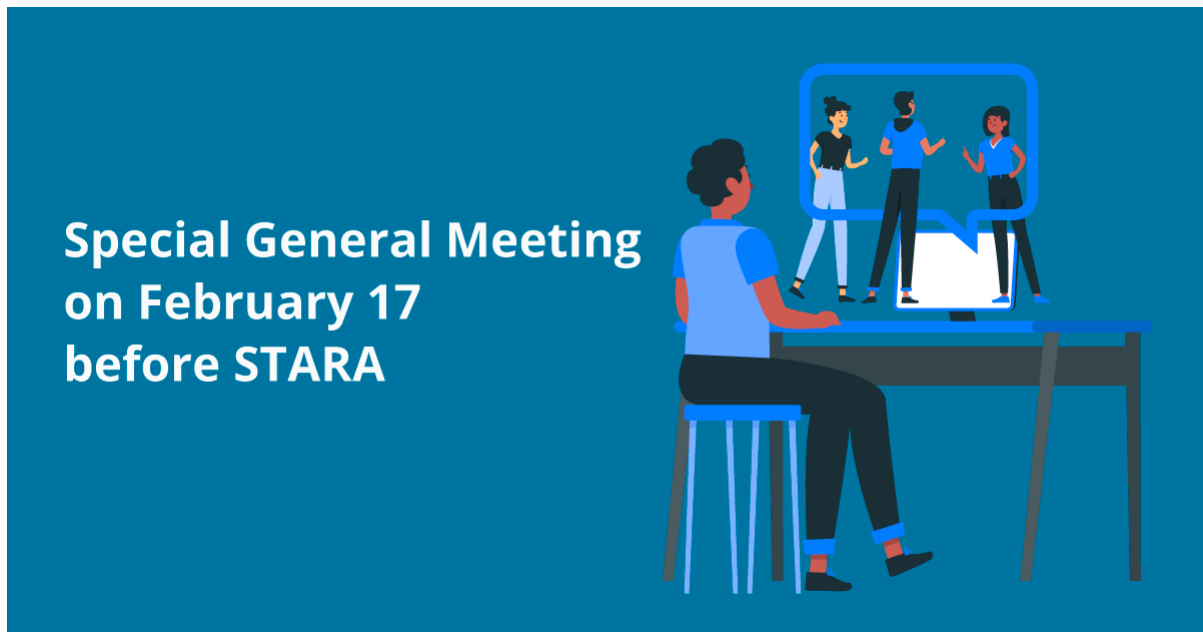
Last week BCPSEA announced that people who have been required to self-isolate by public health (not just 811), and are not ill, will not lose pay or have to use sick leave. (It does not apply to situations where someone's child has been required to self-isolate, but the teacher has not.)

Ideally, they will be able to continue doing their own job remotely. If this is not possible, their administrator will work with them to find some work that can be done from home. Unfortunately, these provisions do not apply to self-isolation before February 1. We are consulting and advocating with our HR department for more clarity on the procedures and processes in all the myriad possible scenarios.

BCTF Rep Assembly report

Surrey Local Representatives took part in the BCTF Winter Rep Assembly held on January 29th and 30th, 2021. Surrey Local Reps were vocal in their concerns about member safety and addressing injustice in education. The motions that we brought forth and were carried include advocating for creating safer (demand rapid testing in the case of variant, request 3-layer masks be provided) and inclusive school environments (ask school boards to adopt a commitment to UNDRIP, develop a workshop on anti-oppression issues for school advisors) and a commitment to solidarity (to state our solidarity with Dr. Amie Wolf of UBC).

If you'd like more information regarding the Rep Assembly or have any questions about the motions, please contact lr@surreyteachers.org.



A short General Meeting will precede the regular STARA meeting on Feb 17th so we can elect further delegates to the BCTF AGM. Do you want to be one of those delegates? Check out the next article!

STA BCTF AGM Surrey Delegation Leaders and Call for Delegates

A reminder that the BCTF Annual General Meeting 2021 will commence on Saturday, March 20, and conclude on Tuesday, March 23. Locals must elect their AGM delegates at local general

meetings. So here is your **last chance** to get involved - please send in your name in advance and/or run off the floor. We still have room for 21 more delegates! Gavin Hainsworth and Marilyn Carr are our delegation leaders this year; feel free to email them with any questions.

Surrey Focus Day Pro-D

Registration is now open for our Focus Day on February 19th, 2021 with keynote speaker Kevin Lamoureux. This keynote presentation will be exploring truth, reconciliation and wellbeing in schools and the role teachers play in this. Please [register on the Focus Day website](#).

STA Convention Call for Workshop Proposals

Do you have a topic that you're passionate to share with colleagues? We know Surrey teachers are doing great work with their students and the STA Convention is now accepting workshop proposals for a wide range of topics. We are also proud to announce Gabor Máté as our keynote speaker this year and be featuring a panel on equity and diversity. If you have an idea you would like to share with your colleagues, please [submit your proposals](#).

Teacher's Pension Plan Educational Offerings

Through the BC Pension Corporation service provider, the TPP is offering online pension courses to understand more about the enrollment in our teacher pension plan. The courses being offered are as follows:

- *Getting to Know Your Pension* is an introduction to the TPP in a 15-minute online course.
- *Making the Most of Your Pension* is for the mid-career member. Take a 45-minute online course or a 75-minute instructor-led webinar.
- *Approaching Retirement* is for members within five years of retirement, also offered as a 45-minute online course or a 75-minute instructor-led webinar.

Further information and registration is on the [teacher pension plan website](#).

District Cyber Security Steering Committee seeks STA members

We invite members to apply for the opportunity to participate in the District Steering Committee dealing with the Cyber Security Training Program rollout. If your interest is piqued and you would like more information, please email Julia directly at 1vp@surreyteachers.org, and then [submit a CV](#) to reception@surreyteachers.org. Deadline Feb 19th.

Attention STA members who live in Langley

For your information, the New Westminster District Labour Council (which we belong to) has endorsed **Stacey Wakelin** as candidate for Langley School Trustee by-election on February 27, 2021. **Holly Dickinson**, STA member who teaches at Sunrise Ridge, is also running. We know teachers are likely active voters in School Board elections, so we wanted to bring this information to your attention.

Winners of the 1st STA Social Event

Congratulations to those of who won the Kahoot game played on February 4, 2021! The winners are as follows:

- 1st Place winner: Angela Marcakis - winner of the \$100 Ultimate Dining Card
- 2nd place winner: Sharon Dhudwal - winner of \$100 Happy
- 3rd place winner: Nicole Hurtubise - winner of \$100 Happy
- 4th place winner: Shannon Ganshorn - winner of \$50 gift card to Amazon
- 5th place winner: Sierra Rai - winner of \$50 gift card to Earl's
- Door prizes went to: Jasvir Sidhu & Chanelle Brown - each received a \$25 Starbuck's gift card

Congratulations to you all! Keep your eyes on the next STA Connection for your chance to win! The next social event will be in the beginning of March, details TBA.

Success Stories for Mask Wearing



The STA Connection is looking for success stories about how you have encouraged or motivated students to wear masks in class. Although we sometimes can't achieve a 100% compliance rate

in our classes, even having some improvement is great. We've love to hear from our membership and exchange tips on how we can work together to reduce the risk of Covid-19.

Below are some effective strategies in a teacher's own words:

"As our school's elementary music teacher, I see over 450 students per week. I'd say 20-30% of students wear their masks to music overall. There are around 2-3 classes out of the 21 divisions that I see which have a near 100% mask wearing culture due to the teachers insisting that their students do when they come to music. The younger divisions (kindergarten / grade 1) have only 1 to 2 students in class who wear masks. I am less concerned about these classes as I have designed my room to always stay 6 feet away from the students and I am speaking into a microphone with my piano and drum set as a physical barrier between me and the children. I wear my mask for every class I teach, and I leave the windows in my room open all day.

The concern came from my Grade 4 and 5 ukulele classes (5 divisions). Very few were wearing masks to music, and I often had to cross my "safety line" to assess students or help them individually. After one of these classes had to self-isolate due to COVID exposure, I set a firm boundary that I will not come within 6 feet of a student if they are not wearing a mask. I've had to remind students often who come up to me with help that they either need to put on their mask or stay further back. This firm boundary setting has encouraged a culture of mask wearing in music for these students. Often, they'll pull down their mask while they talk with friends and work together on their songs, but when they come up to be assessed by me, they'll put back on their mask.

My unrelated concern is how students will bunch together within their cohorts, despite my frequent reminders that we are experiencing a pandemic now. I have taped distanced seating spaces for students to sit on when they come into class or use instruments, but on open ended activities where students can choose where to sit, they immediately bunch up on the choir risers, and choose not to move after I give them kind safety suggestions. It appears many of them feel like there is no risk when they are within their cohort, and I think we could do better to ensure students are more vigilant even when they're in their cohort."

Please share any useful strategies on how you or a colleague have achieved mask wearing in your class by emailing communications@surreyteachers.org. We would like to highlight the active effort of our members to make our communities safer.

Want to Learn More About Territorial Acknowledgements?

Unsure of where to begin with land acknowledgements and want to deepen your connection with the land? Join Ta7talíya Nahanee, Squamish, on February 24th, 2021 to personalize your connection to the decolonizing practice of Acknowledging Indigenous Territories. You may [register on Eventbrite](#).

30th Annual Feb 14th Women's Memorial March

On Sunday, Feb 14th 2020, we will gather at 10:30 am at Hastings and Main streets (Unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and Selilwitulh (Tsleil-

Waututh) territories) where family members speak in remembrance. All COVID-19 protocols are in effect - social distancing and masks are required.

The first women's memorial march was held in 1992 in response to the murder of a woman on Powell Street in Vancouver. Out of this sense of hopelessness and anger came an annual march on Valentine's Day to express compassion, community, and caring for all women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Unceded Coast Salish Territories.

The Women's Memorial March continues to honour the lives of missing and murdered women and all women's lives lost in the Downtown Eastside. Increasing deaths of many vulnerable women from the DTES leaves family, friends, loved ones, and community members with an overwhelming sense of grief and loss. Indigenous women disproportionately continue to go missing or be murdered with minimal to no action to address these tragedies or the systemic nature of gendered violence, poverty, racism, or colonialism.

This event is organized and led by women in the DTES because women – especially Indigenous women – face physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual violence on a daily basis.

The February 14th Women's Memorial March is an opportunity to come together to grieve the loss of our beloved sisters, remember the women who are still missing, and to dedicate ourselves to justice.



Status of Women Committee

A promotional graphic for dance classes. It features a woman in a green shirt and black pants dancing. There are musical notes and a pair of speakers. The background is light green with large circles.

STA Status of Women Committee's
Dance Classes

Wednesdays • 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

February 24 - Bollywood
March 3 - Bhangra

Have you been having trouble getting motivated to work out? Us too! The STA Status of Women

Committee is hosting virtual dance classes on Wednesdays over the next few weeks. Come de-stress and have some fun with other Surrey teachers. You will burn calories and get a chance to learn choreography to a new style of dance every week! Regardless of your experience, join us virtually from the comfort of your home on Wednesdays from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Register:

<https://sow-dance.eventbrite.ca>



Velma Moore, STA Status of Women committee member, is eager to get back to knitting and chatting with Surrey teachers! Grab your needles and some yarn and safely connect with us from the comfort of your home. Open to all levels of knitters, beginners can learn something new, and those with more experience can enjoy the company while you work on your own projects. This BYOB event happens weekly at 7:00 pm on Fridays! For more info, feel free to contact Velma at moore_v@surreyschools.ca. Register: <https://sow-knit.eventbrite.ca>



STA EVENTS

February 12 – [Knit, Chat, and Wine Night](#)
February 16 – AGM Delegates Training
February 17 – General Meeting and STARA

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

February is Black History Month
Feb 17 – [Black history month webinar](#)
February 17–21 – BC Heritage Week

February 19 – [Surrey Focus Day 2021](#)
February 22 – AGM Delegates Training
February 24 – [Surrey Teachers Virtual Dance Class](#)
February 26 – [BCTF New Teacher Conference](#)
February 26 – [Knit, Chat, and Wine Night](#)
March 3 – AGM Delegates Training
March 8 – AGM Delegates Training

February 20 – United Nations Social Justice Day
February 21–27 – Freedom to Read Week
February 24 – [Personalizing indigenous territorial acknowledgments workshop](#)
February 24 – Pink Shirt Day