

STAFF REPRESENTATIVE HANDBOOK



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About Us

OUR BACKGROUND

The Surrey Teachers’ Association has been in existence since 1941 and is a union of professionals representing 5800+ public school teachers and associated professionals in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada. All public-school teachers in Surrey belong to the BCTF (British Columbia Teachers’ Federation) and the STA.

Public Education System

Employer	Union
Ministry of Education BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA)	British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF)
Board of Education Administration	Surrey Teachers’ Association
Collective Agreement	

OUR OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Surrey Teachers’ Association are

- To foster and promote the cause of education
- To promote the professional development of teachers, and
- To represent its members and to regulate relations with their employer through collective bargaining of terms and conditions of employment.

The Surrey Teachers’ Association works to promote the welfare of members and recognizes that all members need to be involved in pursuing these objectives in order to seek needed improvements to the working and learning conditions in our school communities.

TABLE OFFICERS

There are 10 Full-Time Table Officers, who work to support the over 6700 members in Surrey. They are there to answer any questions you may have and provide support you may need. Officers are members who have been elected and released from their teaching assignments to serve full-time in the union office.

Work-site union reps are: Pro-D Rep, Health & Safety Rep, Staff Committee Chair, Social Justice Reps, and Staff Reps.

QUICK FACTS

- The Surrey Teachers’ Association bargained its first collective agreement in 1988.
- The Surrey Teachers’ Association is governed by its Executive Committee — comprised of the President, 2 Vice-Presidents, 3 Grievance Officers, the Health & Safety Grievance Officer, the Accommodations Officer, the Professional Development Officer, Professional Support Services Officer, 5 Local Representatives to the BCTF, 1 Adult Education Local Representative to the BCTF, 3 Members-at-Large, 1 Aboriginal Member-at-Large, 1 Person of Colour Member-at-Large, 1 2SLGBTQ+ Member-at-Large, the Secretary-Treasurer, and the Teacher-on-Call and Early Career Representative.
- Surrey Teachers’ Association members provide professional educational services to the more than 74,000+ students in Surrey.
- Schools can have 1 Staff Rep for every 15 STA members (or major portion thereof) at their site.

Reps Are An Important Part of Our Democratic Union Local



GENERAL MEETINGS

A General Meeting is the highest decision-making body in the STA. General Meetings receive recommendations from STARA and the Executive Committee, and can accept them, amend them, or defeat them.

All members can attend to hear news, give opinions, participate in processes such as approving the annual budget and elections.

General Meetings are held 3 times per year. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in the month of May each year. Special General Meetings (SGMs) are held every November and January.

SURREY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY (STARA)

Staff Reps from all schools attend to bring school concerns to the attention of reps from other schools and hear news on local and provincial issues to bring to their staffs.

STARA Meetings are held every month.

SCHOOL REPS

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC)

The Executive Committee is made up of 24 members who are elected into their roles each year.

Executive Committee meetings are held bi-weekly.

10 FULL-TIME TABLE OFFICERS

14 OTHER ELECTED ROLES

AD HOC COMMITTEES CREATED BY EC

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR SCHOOL STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

Just as the President and the Executive Committee are the head of the union, and the general membership is the heart, the school union site-representatives are the legs of the union. No policy, action plan, or communication vehicle will be brought to life in a school without the onsite skills, knowledge, and analytical capabilities of school union site-representatives. Every school in Surrey should have site-based union representatives who support teachers in a variety of ways.

The Staff Representative is the school-level go-to-source for any questions that teachers may have, particularly about union-related information, such as our collective agreement. Reps can also accompany you in any meeting with administration.

WHO ARE SURREY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION MEMBERS?

We work at more than 133 sites! The term "Surrey Teachers' Association member" as used in the Collective Agreement means all Board employees hired as:

- Teachers,
- School psychologists,
- Speech/Language pathologists,
- Teachers Teaching On Call (TTOC),
- Adult education teachers falling within the certification held by the BCTF,
- Summer school teachers,
- District Behaviour Specialists,
- District Social Workers.

Reference: STA Constitution and Bylaws

The Role of the Staff Rep is enshrined in our Collective Agreement

The Collective Agreement is a shared agreement between the employer (Surrey School District) and us, the Surrey Teachers' Association!

It contains provisions governing the terms and conditions of employment of all workers, the privileges and duties of the employer, union and employees and a grievance procedure for resolving disputes.



AS PER THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

ARTICLE A.29 SCHOOL STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

A.29.1 At the beginning of each school year, Surrey Teachers' Association members in each workplace shall elect a staff representative(s) in accordance with Surrey Teachers' Association practices.

A.29.2 The staff representative(s) shall advise the Principal / Vice Principal of their election.

A.29.3 Where a Principal / Vice Principal and a staff representative agree to convene a meeting pursuant to Article A.26.1, during instructional hours, the staff representative will be relieved of instructional duties with no loss of pay in order to provide the Surrey Teachers' Association member concerned with representation at the meeting.

ARTICLE A.26 RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

A.26.1 A representative of the Surrey Teachers' Association will attend a meeting between a Surrey Teachers' Association member and an administrative officer if the meeting is discipline-related, or if the Surrey Teachers' Association member or the administrative officer has reasonable cause to believe a representative of the Surrey Teachers' Association should be present.

A.26.2 Should a meeting between a Surrey Teachers' Association member and an administrative officer become disciplinary, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as a representative of the Surrey Teachers' Association is able to be present.

A.26.3 In the event that it is not possible to hold a meeting pursuant to Article A.26.1 because a Surrey Teachers' Association member refuses to have a Surrey Teachers' Association representative present, the administrative officer will convey written notice of his/her concerns to the Surrey Teachers' Association member, with copies to the President and the Human Resources Department.

A.26.4 An administrative officer will not determine which Surrey Teachers' Association representative will attend any meeting.

ARTICLE A.28 SURREY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION'S ON-SITE RIGHTS

A.26.1 Bulletin Boards

The Surrey Teachers' Association shall have the right to post notices of activities and matters of Surrey Teachers' Association concern on staff bulletin boards in each workplace at which Surrey Teachers' Association members are employed.



AS PER THE STA'S CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The Representative Assembly of the Association, (hereinafter referred to as "STARA") shall consist of:

- a. Executive Committee members;
- b. Staff representatives duly elected by the staff of each public school in Surrey on a representative basis of one (1) delegate for each fifteen teachers or major fraction thereof, but with not less than one (1) delegate;
- c. Representatives of those teachers not assigned to schools, on the basis of groupings as determined from time to time by the Association, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, as in (b) above;
- d. Representatives of teachers on call, not to exceed the number of representatives of the largest school; and
- e. A representative of each standing committee or alternate, duly elected by the committee.



AS PER THE STA'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE SURREY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (REVISED September 2017) 5.G. STARA REPRESENTATIVES

POLICIES: NONE

PROCEDURES:

5.G.02 THAT STARA representatives attend all STARA meetings.

5.G.04 THAT STARA representatives have the responsibility to bring forward the views of the staff. They shall not, however, be bound by decisions of the school staff but shall be free to exercise individual discretion according to debate on the floor.

5.G.06 THAT STARA representatives report to the staffs they represent, by means of meetings or written reports, the business discussed at the STARA meeting.

5.G.08 THAT all communications from the STA go to each STARA member.
Amended AGM-2003.05.07

5.G.10 THAT the STARA representatives and alternates shall be elected no later than the first staff meeting of the new school year and prior to the orientation workshop.

5.G.12 THAT at each STARA meeting, school reps sign in to indicate that their school is being represented.

5.G.14 THAT STARA representatives from the school of TOC's as per 2.J.05 be elected at the first meeting of TOC's and those names be submitted to the Association.

EXEC-2001.10.02

Five Simple Truths

1. The staff rep is the **peer of the principal** in matters related to the interpretation and application of the Collective Agreement in the school.
2. The rights and responsibilities of the staff reps are firmly **grounded in the Collective Agreement, in statute** (Labour Relations Code, School Act, Employment Standards Act, Workers' Compensation Act, Industrial Health and Safety Regulations) and **in arbitration jurisprudence** (case law, court decisions.)
3. The Collective Agreement was not imposed by the union on the employer, but **represents the mutually agreed to terms and conditions of employment** for teachers in the district.
4. The union has a legal obligation to **fairly represent** the members of the bargaining unit.
5. The grievance procedure represents the **most appropriate and least disruptive** way of resolving disputes between employees and employer.



Role of the Staff Representative in Collective Agreement Enforcement at school-sites

- Is familiar with the collective agreement and/or provide STA contacts info for further information how to purchase service after leaves
- raises staff awareness of contract provisions
- ensures that all parties **abide by the collective agreement**
- attends to problems identified by staff members
- determines whether problems are collective-agreement related
- communicates problems/potential grievances to local union office
- keeps staff informed on the development of grievances (except when inappropriate, such as personnel grievances)

Know Your Collective Agreement

You can download a PDF version of the Collective Agreement from the STA website:

www.surreyteachers.org/forms-resources/collective-agreement

Teacher collective agreements in British Columbia are divided into sections that deal with specific areas of the employment relationship. They have provincial articles which would apply to every local in the province as well as local provisions which affect only certain locals. Each section is then divided into more specific articles.

OUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT



Appendix 1: Provincial Matters and Appendix 2: Local Matters

This is an agreed upon split of issues that lists what can be bargained provincially or locally. The simplest way to determine if it is a provincial or local issue is if it costs money. If it does cost money it is a provincial issue.



Section A: The Collective Bargaining Relationship

Deals with the working relationship between the employer and the union. It recognizes the union as the representative for the workers and how it will function and resolve disputes.



Section B: Salary and Economic Benefits

Deals with compensation issues such as salary, allowances and benefits.



Section C: Employment Rights

deals with employment rights such as the process for resigning and how seniority affects apply for positions



Section D: Working Conditions

deals with the school calendar specifying bookends for the school year and number of hours in the school day. It also will specify the number of minutes that teachers are entitled to preparation time.



Section E: Personal Practices

deals with providing a non sexist environment and a harassment/sexual harassment resolution procedure. It could also include appointments, transfers, post and fill procedures. Evaluation procedures and personnel files.



Section F: Professional Rights

deals with professional issues such as curriculum change, professional development and professional autonomy.

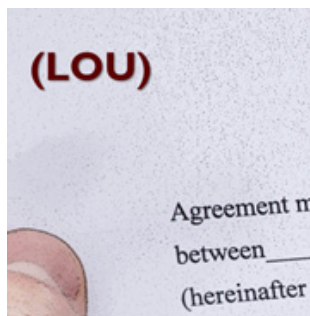


Section G: Leaves of Absences

deals with the many types of leaves that are available to teachers. They would include: sick leave, compassionate care leave, maternity leave, bereavement leave, discretionary leave, leave for union business and other leaves with or without pay.

The Collective Agreement is grounded in statutes, regulations, and provisions including

- Collective agreement provisions
- Letters of Understanding (LOU's)
- Local union and district policies
- WCB regulations
- Human Rights Code
- Employment Standards Act
- BC Labour Code/WCB regulations
- School Act



LOU stands for Letter of Understanding

A Letter of Understanding is a formal text that sums up the terms and understanding of a collective agreement which mostly has been negotiated up to this point only in spoken form. It reviews the terms of an agreement for a service, a project, or a process and is often written as a step before a more detailed article is incorporated into the collective agreement. There are numerous LOUs contained in the back of our collective agreements.

We also have other agreements with the employer that add to or clarify the Collective Agreement. They can be found at www.surreyteachers.org/forms-resources/collective-agreement/negotiated-agreements

Tips for Being An Effective Rep

OBJECTIVES OF THE STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

- Try to develop a cohesive, positive and productive school team. Ask questions and gather all relevant facts.
- Support each other in your roles.
- Develop a plan at the school level for school union reps to communicate about and coordinate their work.



WHAT TO DO WHEN A COLLEAGUE IS CALLED INTO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

If an administrator wants to see a teacher for a potential discipline issue, they should always have a staff rep of their choice with them. Staff reps are advocates who are present, an information source, a legal authority, a recorder, a witness, an accompanier, and a defender. If they are not comfortable, they can call us at the office at (604) 594-5353. One of our Full-time Table Officers will provide support.

ADVOCACY TIPS

- Plan your meeting strategy before going into any meeting with an administrator.
- Ask questions and gather all relevant facts.
- Be watchful that the member does not jeopardize her/his rights. Intervene when necessary.
- Remember that advocacy is not the same as problem solving.
- Watch your body language.
- Build a paper trail. Take clear notes!
- Keep the Local President informed
- Refer issues you are uncomfortable with to the local office.
- Know your limits - Be the information connector when members ask you to function beyond your role such as peer conflict and being able to say "Have you considered the Mediation service?"



Keeping a file of notes from meetings and incidents is key if an issue becomes a grievance

NOTE TAKING

Date _____

Time from _____ to _____

Location _____

Meeting initiated by _____

Reason for meeting _____

Present _____

Notes taken by _____

Notes _____

Surrey Teacher's Association (STA) Services



PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support is a joint initiative between the STA and the Surrey school district. It is based upon the successful BCTF model and is designed to provide direct support to teachers who request assistance with their teaching (self-referral) and to teachers who are on plans of assistance.



MENTORSHIP

Many teachers find supportive, understanding colleagues at their schools, and to help support and formalize those relationships, the STA and the School district sponsor a Mentorship Program. Mentor36, is a wonderful opportunity for new teachers to benefit from the expertise of a more experienced colleague, someone with a sympathetic ear, and someone who will be there to answer their questions.



JOB SHARE

Job sharing refers to two (2) employees who elect to share a full-time position. Normally, the position will be shared 60/40 or 50/50 but other splits are possible. The STA holds a meeting every spring to provide teachers with a continuing contract information about the job share process and assistance finding a partner.



MEDIATION

Mediation is a carefully designed process that brings people together in conversations, with mediators present, to help them reach a resolution to a dispute. The Mediation Service is a team of volunteer STA members, trained and experienced as mediators, who work with teachers and others to help resolve workplace conflicts. Any STA member is eligible to make a request for assistance. We can also do mediations between STA and CUPE members.



SCHOLARSHIP & BURSARIES

The STA grants \$76,500 in Scholarships, Bursaries and Social Justice Awards each year. The Surrey Teachers' Association Awards Committee is elected each year at the June STARA meeting. The committee will meet in September and in the spring to select award recipients. The awards to STA members' children will be presented at the October STA General Meeting.



SUNSHINE FUND

Throughout our teaching careers, teachers celebrate births and sometimes suffer tragedies, illnesses, injuries and deaths in their families. The STA has responded with flowers, fruit baskets or a donation whenever we have been informed of celebrations or hardships. We are asking the Staff Reps at the school site to contact the STA. Please provide all the important information required so that we are able to respond quickly. We hope in times of need, we can be of some support to our members.

You can learn more about STA services by visiting the STA website:

www.surreyteachers.org

British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Services

WHAT SUPPORT CAN I RECEIVE FROM PENSION AND BENEFITS?

The BCTF has full time staff dedicated to providing information regarding your teachers' pension and group benefits including MSP, Extended Health Care, Dental Care, Life Insurance and BCTF group RRSPs. Assistance can be provided on a variety of topics, such as:

- how your pension is accrued
- how to purchase service after leaves
- what pension options are available upon retirement
- what happens to your pension in the event of a marriage breakdown
- transferring service from another teachers' pension plan or public service pension plan
- Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement
- optional life insurance available through the BCTF and your school district
- optional BCTF group RRSPs with payroll deduction.

WHAT IS THE BCTF HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM?

Following the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation that applies to all workplaces, the BCTF Health and Safety Program provides support and advice to local officers and members regarding:

- fundamental health and safety rights
- potential hazards and risks
- processes to follow in reporting hazards and incidents
- training program for health and safety representatives

WHAT IS THE SALARY INDEMNITY PLAN?

The BCTF operates a Salary Indemnity Plan that provides benefits to members who are prevented from working due to illness or injury. This plan is funded by BCTF member contribution and provides benefits beginning the day after the last day of paid work or sick leave. However, if the injury or illness is work-related the member must file a Workers' Compensation Board claim. If anyone is almost out of sick days, they should contact Income Security at the BCTF, to request a short-term SIP package.

WHAT IS THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM?

The Health and Wellness Program, operated through the Salary Indemnity Plan, is a rehabilitation program to assist members who have medical conditions or disabilities to return to work as early as possible. The program is also available to members who are having difficulty maintaining their teaching assignment because of medical conditions. Support for individual members is available on a voluntary basis, through the Health and Wellness Program. The BCTF has rehabilitation consultants throughout the province who provide these support services to members which includes the following:

- working with teachers in their own communities
- co-ordinating and plan individualized treatment and wellness interventions in consultation with health care providers
- working with employers and unions to support a return to work that is durable and sustainable
- knowledge of the work that teachers do and the workplace environment.

WHAT IS LIVING WITH BALANCE?

Living with Balance is a group wellness initiative exclusively for members. Developed and piloted in 2009, the program consists of a series of workshops to provide strategies and skills for living a healthier lifestyle and managing the stressors that exist at home and in the workplace, including:

- improving personal well-being
- understanding our problems and learning to restructure our thinking
- defining work-life balance and boundaries
- attaining goals toward wellness
- understanding the importance of social connections.

WHAT IS THE BCTF WCB ADVOCACY PROGRAM?

Following the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation that applies to all workplaces, the BCTF WCB Advocacy Program provides support and advice to members regarding:

- fundamental health and safety rights
- processes to follow in reporting injuries or occupational diseases
- advocacy in appealing WCB claims which have been denied or are inaccurate in the compensation.

WHAT IS TEACHBC?

The BCTF has launched TeachBC, a website and online database for BCTF members to share teaching resources relevant to the BC K-12 curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to help us build this resource by uploading your teaching materials, lessons, and research.

Looking for a lesson plan, learning activity, or teaching resource you can use in your classroom? TeachBC may just be the resource you need. With hundreds of entries, it's the BCTF's resource-sharing website and online database created to help teachers find teaching materials and research relevant to the BC K-12 curriculum.

You can search by subject, grade, or type of resource and download any item for free. We only ask that you please help build this resource by uploading your teaching materials too.



HOW CAN I BOOK A BCTF WORKSHOP?

There are workshops available to your staff (Pro-D days, for example) through the BCTF. They are free to book as long as you have minimum 15 participants. For more information, please visit the BCTF's workshop page:

<https://bctf.ca/pd/workshops.aspx?id=233053>

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics states general rules for all members of the STA/BCTF for maintaining high standards of professional service and conduct toward students, colleagues, and the professional union.

1. The member speaks and acts toward students with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities.
2. The member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give it only to authorized persons or agencies directly concerned with their welfare. The member follows legal requirements in reporting child protection issues.
3. A privileged relationship exists between members and students. The member refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological, or other advantage.
4. The member is willing to review with colleagues, students, and their parents/guardians the practices employed in discharging the member's professional duties.
5. The member directs any criticism of the teaching performance and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. If the member believes that the issue(s) has not been addressed, they may, after privately informing the colleague in writing of their intent to do so, direct the criticism in confidence to appropriate individuals who can offer advice and assistance. *It shall not be considered a breach of the Code of Ethics for a member to follow the legal requirements for reporting child protection issues.
6. The member acknowledges the authority and responsibilities of the BCTF and its locals and fulfills obligations arising from membership in her or his professional union.
7. The member adheres to the provisions of the collective agreement.
8. The member acts in a manner not prejudicial to job actions or other collective strategies of her or his professional union.
9. The member neither applies for nor accepts a position which is included in a Federation in-dispute declaration.
10. The member, as an individual or as a member of a group of members, does not make unauthorized representations to outside bodies in the name of the Federation or its locals.



You can download a PDF version of the Code of Ethics from the STA website:
<https://www.surreyteachers.org/about-us/governance>

Professional Standards for BC Educators

Effective: June 19, 2019

The BC Teachers' Council sets the professional standards for certified educators and has revised the Standards for B.C. Educators based on feedback from certificate holders, teacher candidates, education partners, students, parents, and the public.

1. Educators value the success of all students. Educators care for students and act in their best interests.

Educators have a privileged position of power and trust. Educators are responsible for the physical and emotional safety of students. Educators respect and value the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities, inclusive of First Nations, Inuit and Metis, and other worldviews and perspectives. Educators foster students' positive personal identity, mental and physical well-being, social and personal responsibility, and intellectual development. Educators engage students in meaningful participation in their own learning. Educators treat students equitably with acceptance, dignity and respect. Educators understand the importance of confidentiality, and protect student privacy, unless disclosure is required by law. Educators do not abuse or exploit students or minors for personal, sexual, ideological, material or other advantage.

2. Educators act ethically and maintain the integrity, credibility and reputation of the profession.

Educators are role models. Educators are held to a higher standard and are accountable for their conduct on duty and off duty. Educators understand the law as it relates to their duties. Educators' individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators know and recognize the importance of the Professional Standards for BC Educators.

3. Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development.

Educators are knowledgeable about how children and youth develop as learners and social beings. Educators demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and needs. Educators recognize the importance and connection of cultural identity, ways of being and worldviews to student learning. Educators use this knowledge to inform decisions about curriculum, instruction and assessment. Educators work to create a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment to best meet the diverse needs of students.

4. Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and communities in schools.

Educators understand, respect and encourage the participation of families and communities in student learning and development. Educators consider the perspectives of parents/guardians regarding their children. Educators communicate effectively and in a timely manner with parents/guardians.

5. Educators implement effective planning, instruction, assessment and reporting practices to create respectful, inclusive environments for student learning and development.

Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for students, including learning experiences that reflect individual contexts and local environments. Educators value collaborative practice. Educators recognize and understand the interconnectedness of all aspects of teaching and learning and employ a variety of instructional and assessment strategies. Educators communicate effectively in either English or French. Educators know when to seek support for their practice and for students.

6. Educators demonstrate a broad knowledge base and an understanding of areas they teach.

Educators understand the curriculum and methodologies of areas they teach. Educators teach curricula from Canadian, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and global perspectives. Educators build upon student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect. Educators cultivate the values, beliefs and knowledge of Canada's democratic and inclusive society.

7. Educators engage in professional learning.

Educators engage in professional learning and reflective practice to support their professional growth. Educators recognize and meet their individual professional needs through various learning opportunities. Educators develop and refine personal philosophies of education, teaching and learning that are informed by research, practice and the Professional Standards for BC Educators.

8. Educators contribute to the profession.

Educators honour the profession by supporting, mentoring or encouraging other educators and those preparing to enter the profession. Educators contribute their expertise in a variety of ways, including opportunities offered by schools, districts, school authorities, professional organizations, post-secondary institutions and communities. Educators contribute to a culture of collegiality.

9. Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments.

For more information on the Professional Standards for BC Educators, please contact the BC Teachers' Council: BCTC@gov.bc.ca

