

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Season of Change



Image by Joshua Woroniecki from Pixabay

A Scholar Practitioner Recharge: 2024 EAL Week page 7 ChatGPT and Thought-Provoking Discussions Page 8 TEAL Charitable Foundation is Reaching New Heights! page 11

The Land on which We Live, Work, and Learn

Members of BC TEAL are grateful to live, work, learn, and be in relation with people from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia. We are honoured to live on this land and are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, Indigenization, and advocating for positive systemic change throughout the EAL community in British Columbia.

bcteal.org/land_acknowledgement

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A Message from the BC TEAL Board

From the 2024-2025 Board of Directors



THE FALL SEASON brings great change around us, reminding us of the Eastern philosophical concept that everything is temporary. All over our province, nature displays the beauty of change. The leaves turn bright colours on the trees, geese start their grand migration, and salmon make the journey home to spawn. Whereas summer is a time of relaxation and abundance, fall signals a need to collect and gather resources in preparation for the future. There is great flurry of movement in natural things, and these rapid movements lead us to reflect on the cycles in our own lives, how we prepare for change, and how we find grounding when we are in times of flux. Change can leave us scattered and loose-ended, but it can also be where we find our greatest resources.

In times of great shift, it is easy to look inward and think about ourselves as individuals instead of a collective. However, this sort of individualism leads us to a sense of worldlessness (Holloway, 2022), isolation, and fewer resources for dealing with change. Looking towards nature for wisdom, we can see how complex ecosystems like forests survive even the harshest of climates. Peter Wohlleben writes in *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2016):

"there are advantages to working together. A tree is not a forest. On its own, a tree cannot establish a consistent local climate...But together, many trees create an ecosystem... And in this protected environment, trees can live to be very old. To get to this point, the community must remain intact no matter what. If every tree were looking out only for itself, then quite a few of them would never reach old age...Every tree, therefore, is valuable to the community."

What we learn here from our forest friends is that coming together as a community leads us all to greater resources than standing alone. But how do we define our community? Who can we look to around us to stand together in times of change and hardship? There is no universal definition as a community is defined by the beings that make up its parts. A forest is defined by a collection of trees, a herd is defined by a collection of elk, and a flock is defined by a collection of birds.

A Message from the BC TEAL Board continued

At our recent board meeting, the BC TEAL Board of Directors pondered our own definitions of being in community with each other that we'd like to share:

Community Means Supporting Each Other

- Sharing, discussing, supporting, and hearing from others in a welcoming, safe, constructive and professional environment.
- Community is a group who wants to support and build each other up, and as a result, create an environment where successes and difference are celebrated.
- Sharing in both times of happiness and challenges. Supporting and uplifting the best in each other.

Community Means Helping Each Other Grow

- To share similar values and interests and have opportunities to share and grow.
- A safe space where everyone is welcome to share, learn, and encourage growth.

Community Means Belonging

- A sense of belonging. The realization that we are all connected. It is a space where I can be of help to others and others may help me too.
- Seeking to connect and interact with a group of people who share common work, values, or practices.
- It's a group of people who help you feel like you are not alone in your endeavor, whatever it may be. It's a group of people you can approach in a space (digital or in-person) and not feel intimidated.

Community Means Being In Relation

- Building authentic relationships and shared experiences with others that share similar values, and those that don't!
- It means equitable, respectful, and joyful connection.

- The end goal is to develop strong mutually beneficial relationships.
- Eating yummy food together :)

Engaging in healthy community also depends on honest communication. As our LINC Sector Chair Janice Campbell says:

"Honest communication takes time. It is through honesty that authentic relationships are built, and honesty underlies most of nature."

Honest and healthy communities offer us so much in terms of support, growth, belonging, and relations, but they can also be exclusionary. As our Private Sector Chair, Garima Yadav, shares:

"While communities can be inclusive and welcoming, they can also be exclusive. This dual nature arises because communities often form around shared values, goals, professions, or financial standing. Those who don't align with these traits may find themselves excluded, despite the community's openness."

We sometimes exclude others from our community if we don't see our shared traits. However, according to UBC Forest Ecology Professor Suzanne Simard, the strength of a forest is in its biodiversity. When a forest is replanted with a single species, those species are most vulnerable to the elements. A strong forest depends on differences to survive while living in respectful relation one another (Harvey, 2020). Therefore, we end here with an invitation. We invite you to join our community, whoever you are, whatever your standing. We invite you to reach out to us if you are looking for support, for growth, for a sense of belonging, or a new relationship. We welcome you to our community and make space for you to find these things with us.

References

Harvey, N. (Host). (2020, Oct 20). Forest Wisdom, Mother Trees and the Science of Community: Suzanne Simard [Audio podcast episode]. In *Bioneers*. https://bioneers.org/forest-wisdom/

Holloway, T. (2022). How to live at the end of the world: Theory, art, and politics for the Anthropocene. Stanford University Press.

Wohlleben, P. (2016). The hidden life of trees: What they feel, how they communicate: discoveries from a secret world. Greystone Books Ltd.



Join BC TEAL and become a member of BC's EAL professional community.

BC TEAL members enjoy reduced rates at the annual conference, regional conferences, and professional development workshops. Members are eligible to apply for the many TEAL Charitable Foundation awards and scholarships. Best of all, members can connect with a network of like-minded colleagues across the province.

BC TEAL annual regular membership costs \$62.43. There are discounts for 2-3 year memberships, students, retirees, low income earners, and BC TESOL (BCTF K-12) or ABEABC members.

Visit bcteal.org/become_a_member_to sign up.

THEBOARD Meet the BC TEAL Board of Directors, 2024-25

The BC TEAL Board of Directors is pleased to represent BC TEAL as the language teaching profession continues to grow and develop in B.C. If you would like to get more involved in your professional organization, please contact us at <u>info@bcteal.org</u>. For information regarding previous BC TEAL Board of Directors, please look at past issues of <u>TEAL News</u>.







JENNIFER CUMMINS | President (2024-2026)

Jennifer has been a professional in the field of English language instruction since 2007. She has worked in a variety of capacities, including private, non-profit, and post-secondary institutions. She has many years of leadership experience in a variety of roles, and is a full-time faculty member at Vancouver Community College. Jennifer holds a Master of Education and is a PhD student at Simon Fraser University in the Faculty of Education. In her free time, Jennifer likes to hike, cycle, do yoga, cook, read, and spend time with her family.

BITA REZAEI | First Vice President (2024-2026)

Bita has 20 years of teaching and training experience. She holds a master's in TESOL and Applied Linguistics, a master's in business administration, and certificates in EDI and organizational coaching. A certified coach and dedicated advocate for social change and anti-oppression practices, Bita has chaired committees focused on advancing the profession through advocacy and policy. She is committed to representing the profession of teaching EAL at all levels of government and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for all BC TEAL members.

MATTHEW LEVAN | Second Vice President (2024-2025)

Matthew has a passion for adult education which started in 2008 with his first job in the EAL world teaching English to Mexican migrant workers. Taking this experience and a desire to pursue a career teaching adults, Matthew completed a Master of Adult Education in 2012. While pursuing his studies, he began his career within LINC, getting inspiration teaching amazing students from around the world. Upon moving to the west coast in 2015, Matthew joined MOSAIC. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the BC TEAL board and is excited to continue the work of supporting EAL teachers.

GREGORY MOSKOS | Treasurer (2024-2026)

Gregory has taught English language classes both in Canada and abroad for the last 20 years. He became a LINC instructor at S.U.C.C.E.S.S in 2014 and later took on the role of site/program manager in 2019. His university studies in Sociology have informed him on group dynamics across various cultural, national, and language backgrounds in the classroom. Apart from his career, he maintains an active life with his hobbies in both music (piano and accompanying) and DJ performance.

ALYS AVALOS-RIVERA | Secretary and Membership Chair (2023-2025)

Alys has a PhD in English from Oklahoma State University and is currently working as a lecturer in the Academic English Program at UBC Vantage College. Her current research interests include novice writers' intertextuality, the affordances of engagement in EAP instruction, and the effects of multi-modal feedback.

GORDON MOULDEN | Professional Development Chair (2024-2025) Gordon has been an ELT professional for over thirty years, teaching university students, adults, and K-12 students before becoming a teacher educator. He currently teaches in the School of Education at Trinity

Western University, where he has been teaching courses in research methods, assessment, and leadership. His professional passion is training and encouraging teachers in their professional development both in the classroom, through his professional blog, and at conferences. He also enjoys writing about topics concerning research and assessment. This is his 12th year as a member of BC TEAL.

Meet the BC TEAL Board continued







LEILA GHODRAT JAHROMI | Social Media Chair (2024-2026)

Leila has dedicated over 12 years to ESL education, holding a bachelor's in English Language and Literature from Iran and an MEd in TEAL from Simon Fraser University, where she focused on teacher emotion and identity. After completing CELTA and Cambridge TOT, she began training teachers in Iran for two years. Her professional development is highlighted by participation in various workshops, enhancing her passion for teaching. Since 2016, Leila has also been creating educational content as a YouTuber and Instagrammer, leveraging social media to expand her educational reach and influence.

ANDREA SZILAGYI | Chair, Publications (2024-2026)

Andrea, who holds a master's in TESL, has been teaching EAP and composition courses at UBC since 2005 and has been working with English language learners since 1998. She also has a background in communications/publications management and is a certified editor and past volunteer for Editors Canada's Certification Steering Committee. Andrea is excited to put her experience and skills to work for the BC TEAL community.

DANIEL FROLICK | Chair, Regional Representative (2024-2025)

Daniel is an English Language Learning Specialist at the Douglas College Learning Centre in the Lower Mainland, and has over 10 years of experience working with linguistically diverse students both in the private and public sectors. Currently, he is working towards his Master of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language at the University of British Columbia, where his research focuses on self-regulated learning in adults. Daniel is honoured to be a part of the Board of Directors for BC TEAL and is excited to find out what lies ahead for the 2024-25 year.

JANICE CAMPBELL | Settlement Language Chair and LINC Representative (2023-2025)

Janice is a dedicated English language instructor. She has taught classes at a variety of levels from LINC 1 to LINC 8 and has been an advocate for incorporating a broad range of community speakers in the LINC classroom, especially online during Covid. Her classes are vibrant and full of relevance to the needs of her students. She enjoys bringing creative solutions to the classroom and other situations in the work-place. Janice is consistently dedicated to all of the tasks in which she becomes involved and she puts the same level of dedication into BC TEAL.

GARIMA YADAV | Private Sector Representative (2023-2025)

Garima is a young professional with nearly four years of experience as an educator in the private sector. She has been a member of BC TEAL since 2018 and can be seen at various events happily volunteering. Garima was a member of the social media committee and worked on various campaigns including mental health and well-being of educators, annual conferences in 2021 and 2022. She also contributed to the BC TEAL blog. Currently, she's working as the Manager of English Language Centre at Acsenda School of Management, a private business school in Vancouver.

DENISE LO | Post-Secondary Representative (2023-2025)

Denise has been an active member of various professional TESL associations including ATESL and CATESOL. She worked with the board members in ATESL when she was co-managing the ATESL 2021 conference. She has been teaching in the EAP sector for the past 15 years and has built a strong working relationship with the various post-secondary institutions she had previously been employed at.

VANESSA VALERGA | Member-at-Large (2024-2025)

Vanessa has a BA (linguistics and German) from UBC; an MA (linguistics) from UBC, and an MEd from Universidad Villanueva in Spain. She taught EFL at a private K-12 school for girls in Peru for 10 years. She returned to Canada and was a stay-at-home mom to her four children. She is currently enrolled in the TESL program at Douglas College and hopes to re-enter the field of TEAL upon completion.

EALWEEK A Scholar Practitioner Recharge: 2024 EAL Week

By Karin Wiebe

RECHARGE, this year's BC TEAL Okanagan event was held at UBC's Okanagan campus on Thursday November 14, 2024. Our Okanagan Regional Rep, Amber Lavoie organized an interactive panel discussion aimed to explore the key ingredients for passionate EAL teaching and learning. Panelists included Amber Lavoie, EAL Programs Coordinator and Instructor at UBC's Okanagan School of Education, Alana Turigan, Coordinator and Instructor at Language Instruction

for Newcomers to Canada, and Karin Wiebe, PhD Candidate at UBC's Okanagan School of Education. I was excited to participate in this event because I knew it would be an opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues, find

"Do you know who was the first fulltime ESL instructor of adults in B.C.? Al Stusiak thinks he was. In 1967, he taught five hours a day, five days a week in the basement of the old King George High School in a federally funded program. His room was perfumed by the scent of the pigeon dung outside the grimy windows!" (Ashworth & Wakefield) theme that seemed to run through each discussion at my table was the interest everyone had for combining proven teaching approaches together with new ways to increase learner engagement. In this way, there seemed to be a collective set of taken-for-granted teaching practises that underpinned everyone's conversation while they talked about newer ideas and practises that have become normal for them. One of my "aha" moments came while listening to a colleague explain different,

creative ways that

she would change

up an activity and

engagement. I was

amazed at how

easily she could flip the focus on

learning tasks to

She didn't need a

book or article to

explain this, she

just took whatever

the activity

creativity.

was

increase

spark

student



Slide from Karin's PowerPoint presentation.

out what kinds of success and challenges they were experiencing in the classroom, and gather some new ideas for use in my studies and teaching practise.

One of the most valuable lessons of the evening came from a decision to separate and integrate the panelists with the attendees at tables. In this way, a thought provoking question was posted on a slide at the end of the room, then panelists took turns discussing the question from a seated position at a table. Once all three panelists had spoken, the discussion was turned over to the tables for attendees to discuss. My takeaway was that facilitating a group discussion from a seated position created a levelling where everyone was valued as an expert, not just the panelists. Rather than having speakers and an audience, we had a full-on engaged discussion where everyone contributed their opinions and experiences.

The discussion was guided in part by comments drawn from *TEAL: The First Twenty-Five Years.* This allowed us to reflect on early experiences of teaching EAL in British Columbia, consider what has changed and what has stayed the same. The table I had joined was a balance of newer members of the field and some people with extensive experience. One ongoing

and turned it upside down. For example, rather than writing comprehension questions after a reading for students to answer, why not give them the answers and ask them to write the questions. I loved it!

The final discussion revisited the overarching aim of the event, asking what attendees thought was their secret ingredients for passional EAL teaching and learning. Attendees explained that teachers could be recharged through travel, social activities outside of their normal routines, volunteering, connecting with EAL colleagues, and making time for hobbies and interests.

Overall, this year's *Recharge* has inspired me towards two New Year's resolutions: first, I will reorganize my presentations for 2025 to include discussion embedded in them, and second, I'm gonna start flipping those learning activities in fun ways!



Karin Wiebe, is a doctoral candidate at UBC's Okanagan School of Education (OSE). She is interested in how EAL is learned in the workplace, and how that can be supported in the classroom. Wiebe works as the EAL Access Initiative Coordinator with the OSE's EAL Programs and is an EAL instructor.

References

Ashworth, M. & Wakefield, P. (1991). TEAL: The first twenty-five years. Pacific Educational Publishing.

LETTERTOTHEEDITOR ChatGPT and Thought-Provoking Discussions

By Pamela Flagel



Al-generated Image by Freepik

IN DECEMBER 2023 I wrote an article about using ChatGPT to foster a discussion about cover letter writing in an English as Additional Language classroom. My article described the class exercise but did not explore the ethics or pitfalls of using ChatGPT to generate cover letters or other documents. As noted in a letter to the editor from a BC TEAL member, there are some ethical considerations that were not discussed in my article. I very much appreciate and agree with the comments provided by this member, and I acknowledge that English as Additional language students might very well be selected for an interview based on a cover letter written by ChatGPT and then not perform as expected. While I was happy to see the engagement in a discussion about writing my ChatGPT exercise inspired, I believe that overall these types of programs will lead to a decline in writing and critical thinking



Resources

bcteal.org/resources-grid-v3b.phb

BC TEAL is proud to provide a variety of resources for our audience.

Member Resources

(Members Only Resources)

BC TEAL offers a host of member provided resources. This includes resources for special interest groups and popular EAL categories.

OER Resources (Free Resource)

One of the main advantages of OER Resources is they are free. However, they are also an essential part of an open pedagogy and can be used to create a powerful learning experience for your students.

TCF Resources (Free Resource)

The TCF Awards were established to promote the teaching and learning of English as an additional language. The TEAL Charitable Foundation funded these outstanding teaching and learning materials.

Conference Recordings

(Members Only Resource)

BC TEAL maintains an archive of its annual conference sessions as well as a variety of workshops. These can be accessed by any member who attended these events.

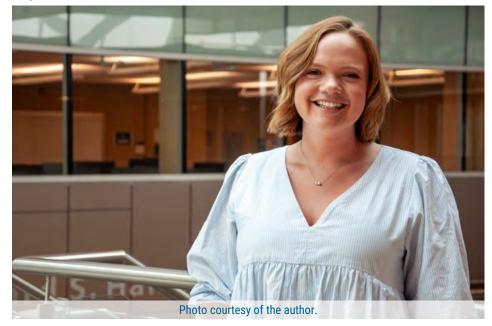
skills for all who use them. My fear is that the use of ChatGPT will continue to increase as the presence of AI grows. This can be demonstrated by the cover letter example, as many companies are stating to use AI programs to screen and shortlist applicants. Most job seekers will almost be required to use ChatGPT to meet the criteria these algorithms have been designed to look for, in order secure an interview. While thinking about this issue, I became curious about what ChatGPT might offer, and I typed in the following question on my ChatGPT app: "What is your opinion of English as a second language students using ChatGPT to write cover letters?" Within fractions of a second ChatGPT supplied a list of potential pros from language support, confidence building, and service as a learning tool to cons ranging from overreliance, lack of personalization, and limitation of language development. For me this seemingly logical and informed answer provided by ChatGPT highlights my ultimate concern of its power to shape thoughts and discussion. I don't know where this is all heading and wanted to respond to this member's letter to the editor, in the hopes of opening up a wider conversation amongst BC TEAL newsletter subscribers.



Pamela Flagel works at UBC's Okanagan School of Education as Assistant to the Director. She is currently completing her Teaching English and Additional Languages (TEAL) Post-Baccalaureate Certificate.

ANUNDERGRADUATEPERSPECTIVE The Role of an Undergraduate Teaching **Assistant in the English Foundation Program**

By Frances Radford



IT ALL STARTED in September 2023...I was excited yet nervous as I was beginning my new role as an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant with the English Foundation Program (EFP). What I did not know was how this job was going to change my life. As someone who from a very young age had always dreamt of being an educator this opportunity felt like the start of that dream coming true. I have now worked as an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant with the EFP program that is housed in the Okanagan School of Education at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) for three semesters. The experience and connections that I have created have enriched my life and I am ending my time as an undergraduate student feeling incredibly grateful. I firmly believe that as educators while we all have something to teach to our students, we have even more to learn from our students. Not a day has gone by in the EFP classroom where I have not learned something new from my students. The environment encourages this connection. It always leaves me speechless looking around the room and

seeing how diverse our classroom is and how much we have to teach and learn from each other. As educators it is our responsibility to guide this experience, and I was able to have a firsthand experience into how the EFP program truly thrives off this connection.

As an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant my role consists of teaching weekly labs, working in the classroom daily alongside the instructors, working one on one with students, hosting events for students with my fellow teaching assistants, and guiding the students through the EFP program and the new country and cultural environment they are in. While I've brought in maple syrup and pumpkin pie to share, my students have brought me Japanese candy from home, they've made guacamole their traditional way from Mexico for everyone, and they've told me how to properly eat hot pot. They've also reminded me to continue to be more grateful for all of the beautiful nature that we are so lucky to have surround us in British Columbia through our walks during a lab on the Mission Creek Greenway. As I took 15 students who have never skated before ice skating Downtown Kelowna on a beautiful January day. I went home and thought to myself how much I truly loved my job. After I'd heard 15 "thank you's" from students for sharing this experience with them I felt like I was the one who needed to thank them. I'll never forget those laughs on the ice rink as they supported each other and

Continued on next page



Photo courtesy of the author.

The Role of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant continued



courageously tried something new. I have had the opportunity to take the students to visit the Indigenous Atlas event that is put on by Indigenous Programs and Services here at UBCO every semester. Teaching them about Indigenous history on this land, the impact of residential schools, and how to move forward with processes of decolonization and reconciliation in this nation was encouraging. Watching them grapple with the truths, have conversations, and ask questions gave me hope.

As those experiences left an impact on me, it was the little moments that felt like they mattered most. It was encouraging a student before they had an exam, having a moment to chat with a student because I knew they were struggling and needed someone to talk to, it was the stories they told and guiding them through trying to figure out how to cite a source and write an essay.

One moment I'll never forget was on the last day of the semester in April 2024 when a student looked at me teary eyed

and explained that this class had felt like being with your family. The student stated while although he was away from his actual family to be able to study in Canada, through the EFP he was able to have this family. He stated, we will always have that. As I write this it still gives me goosebumps today, to know that through education and language learning we have been able to provide that safe, encouraging and welcoming environment for our students. This has to be one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

So often now when I am on campus, I run into a previous student of mine, we have a chat, they tell me something new, and they always remind me how much the EFP positively impacted them. They share how they are so grateful to have been in the program. I nod, smile and send them on their way. What those students may not know, is how much they have impacted me.

What has been created with the English Foundation Program is captivating, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunities that have been provided to me by the program. Graduating from my undergraduate degree feels bittersweet, while I am excited about what is to come, I will greatly miss this program. As my student said, this program feels like a family and a community, and I am so grateful for the time I have been able to be a part of it.



Frances Radford is an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant with the English Foundation Program in the Okanagan School of Education. Frances has plans of pursuing a Bachelor of Education degree in the near future to contin-ue to fulfill her lifelong dream of being an educator. Frances is passionate about making classrooms welcom-ing, inspiring, and supportive environments for all..

SFU SIMON FRASER **UNIVERSITY**

SFU's MEd/MA in Teaching English as an Additional Language program is currently open for applications!

This program is designed for working professionals and is well-suited for those already working with English learners in school or adult learning settings in BC, or those with experience teaching English as a second or foreign language in other contexts, as well as those with experience and interest in EAL education in settings like language institutes, colleges, immigrant/refugee settlement services and related organizations. Both domestic and international applicants are welcome. Most applicants will have a minimum of two years of full-time teaching experience or equivalent related experience.

Applications will be accepted until January 15, 2025. For more information, visit www.sfu.ca/education/programs/graduate-studies/masters/teal.html

TCF TEAL Charitable Foundation is Reaching New Heights!

THE TEAL CHARITABLE foundation (TCF) revived the "Climb for the Cause" fundraising event on the weekend of September 21st and 22nd and raised an impressive \$4,440! Three locations, the Lower Mainland, Kelowna, and Victoria organized climbs/hikes with eight teams and 23 individuals participating. The award for the top fundraising team went to the Camosun College Climbers.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the TCF, this is a charitable foundation that raises funds to support EAL educators and students. Each year, the TCF distributes around \$40,000 in awards and scholarships.

November 1st is the deadline for applications for the Educator awards. If you have a great idea for curriculum development, plan to present at a provincial, national, or international conference, or are furthering your education in the field of EAL, take a look at the opportunities for support from the TCF. The website is www.tealcharitablefoundation.ca.

Also, if you are currently working with EAL students who are refugees, there are a number of \$4,000 scholarships available to support their post-EAL education, so please share and promote this information to your students. The student awards applications are open early in the new year.

For questions about the TCF, the awards, or opportunities to volunteer, please contact: tcf@bcteal.org.







Victoria Climbers for the Cause 2024



Kelowna Climbers for the Cause 2024

Can you see yourself here? Submit your article to BC TEAL!

Articles for <u>**TEAL News</u>** and the <u>**BC TEAL Blog**</u> are submitted by volunteer authors who work, volunteer, and/or study in British Columbia. Past authors have included LINC instructors, EAL program administrators, academic program students and instructors, TEAL Charitable Foundation winners, language learners, and volunteers.</u>

All voices are welcome and valued here!

Members have indicated they would like to see future articles on the following subjects. Perhaps you will find something on this list you would like to write about, or maybe it will inspire you to submit an article on something you think our members would like to read.

- Transition challenges to online learning, then back to face to face
- Things that make my life easier. I have very few hours in the day and am paid for even fewer. Give me tools.
- · More topics related to LINC or settlement language sector
- · Newcomers' experience in learning English as well as how to fit the new community

Find more information and the submission portal on our website, <u>bcteal.org/be_a_contributor</u>. Submit articles, ideas, and questions for *TEAL News* to <u>editor@bcteal.org</u> and BC TEAL Blog to <u>socialmedia@bcteal.org</u>.

