

Vernon Teachers' Association VOICES

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Have a wonderful summer everyone! Enjoy your time with family and friends, and most of all we hope you enjoy some much deserved R & R.

Speaking for Teachers in the North Okanagan



VTA Year-End Message

Summer 2025

“Thank you. You’ve done more than enough.”

As the 2024–25 school year comes to a close, we want to start with something simple and sincere: thank you.

Thank you for showing up—for your students, your colleagues, and your communities. For navigating what was asked of you, even when it came with limited notice, limited resources, or expectations that blurred the line between reasonable and unrealistic.

Whether you were managing a classroom, supporting complex learning needs, covering prep blocks, or holding space for students and families in difficult moments—you did that work with care and professionalism. That effort matters. It may not always get acknowledged in the moment, but it’s seen. And it deserves real appreciation.

This is also a moment to say something that often gets lost in the pace of the year: **you are allowed to put yourself first.**

Not after the emails are answered. Not once the to-do list is cleared. Right now. Because the work will always be there—but your well-being needs to come first if you’re going to be present for the people who rely on you.

We also want to acknowledge the emotional and physical toll this profession can take, especially when boundaries are stretched. It is not your job to do it all. Holding healthy professional boundaries is not a weakness—it’s a form of leadership. And it’s how we protect the energy and integrity needed to do this work long-term.

With Gratitude

To the **VTA Executive**: thank you for your commitment, insight, and steady leadership through complex and sometimes exhausting challenges. You’ve offered time, clarity, and perspective in ways that have helped guide this union forward, one decision at a time.

To our **Staff Reps**: thank you for being the day-to-day backbone of union representation in your schools. You listened, answered questions, flagged concerns, and made sure your colleagues were not alone. Your role is essential, and it doesn’t go unnoticed.

And to **Desta**: thank you for anchoring the VTA office with care, competence, and calm. You’ve helped keep this organization responsive, consistent, and grounded—even when things got messy. Your work connects everything we do.

As Summer Begins

Please take time this summer to unplug, reset, and reconnect with whatever restores you. Whether that’s a good book, a quiet walk, laughter with friends, or just turning off notifications—we hope you find moments that are entirely yours.

The **VTA office will remain open until July 8**, and will reopen on **August 25**. During the summer closure, president@vernonta.com will be monitored weekly. If something urgent arises, don’t hesitate to reach out—we’ll be checking in.

Until then, rest easy. You’ve done enough.

Have a safe, restorative, and well-earned summer.

In appreciation and solidarity,

Dave MacKenzie

President, VTA

Stay informed!

If you are a teacher, be prepared in September to:

- ✓ check your Blue Cross statements when you make a claim – one recent example was a teacher whose spouse has the same first initial – Blue Cross was making mistakes with the deductible!
- ✓ check your pay statements from the District...there have been mistakes made from time to time! This is particularly true for those of you who are not in 1.0 assignments such as TTOCs and part time teachers.
- ✓ check your pension statements but also go on line with the pension plan to check information recorded about you and your employment record, your beneficiary, your spouse's name and so on. If there are 'gaps' it might be to your advantage to buy back those portions. Also, you might be in a position to get closer to '90' if you took time off to raise children. Check out TPP.CA and set up an account.
- ✓ check your collective agreement (on the VTA or the SD22 websites or hard copy in your staffroom). Some choice topics are seniority, transfers, layoff, recall, TTOC availability, part time teaching, resignation dates, different types of leaves, teaching autonomy, supervision, pay options, evaluation, harassment, staff meetings, and on and on!
- ✓ check your position on the seniority list to be sure it is accurate. For people below the layoff line, it determines the order of recall; for people above the layoff line it may determine who gets transferred out due to declining enrollment in your school.
- ✓ Engage with your representatives of the VTA at the school level for September: staff rep(s), PD chair, OH&S rep, Social Justice rep, Staff Committee.



*We acknowledge that we live, learn, play and
work within the ancestral, traditional, and
unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan People.*

VTA RETIREES

2024 - 2025



KAREN BOUCHARD

My teaching career has spanned 40 years and of those years, all have been in the Vernon School District. I have taught at all schools in SD22 since 1984, including sites that have been shut down or repurposed, as well as Vernon Christian School. I have been a teacher teaching on-call for most of those years, until I received a double lung transplant in 2018, and my compromised immune system made it impossible to return to the classroom,

I completed my Bachelor of Arts at Trinity Western University(1982) in Langley. BC. After a gap year, I finished the Post Degree Professional Program at University of Victoria (1984) . I served on the leadership of the On-Call Teachers Association, The VTA Executive, and represented Vernon at BCTF General Meetings. I enjoyed being welcomed to Pro-D events and staff rooms.

I married my husband, Marcel, in 1984. We raised three children, a daughter, Katrina, and twin sons, Anthony and Bronson. We now have 5 grandchildren. I have learned so many interesting things along the path of teaching. I did summer work at the Historic O'Keefe Ranch and was able to teach, dress up in costume, and meet people from around the world. My hobbies include quilting, knitting, crocheting, and scrapbooking.

Retirement Plans Include spending lots of time with my grandchildren!

It has been a pleasure learning from my colleagues in Vernon. Most helpful have been the school secretaries and EAs! I enjoyed serving as part of the union and learning the politics of the BCTF.

Changing Schools *and* Your PD Funds

PLEASE BE REMINDED that if you are changing schools you **MUST** contact your current PD Rep and ensure that the balance of your available PD funds are transferred to your new school in September.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your

Other Retirees We'd Like to Congratulate!

- ♦ Janet Klausing
- ♦ Cullie Dueck
- ♦ Geordy Cuthbert

CATHERINE LUNDIN

Catherine commenced her career in the late 1980s, during a period when securing full-time teaching positions was exceedingly challenging. She initially engaged in temporary teaching on call (TTOC) for Vancouver and North Vancouver while pursuing continuing education courses to obtain her fifth year in Special Education. Subsequently, she threw caution to the wind by accepting a teaching position overseas in Japan for two years, where she thoroughly enjoyed immersing herself in Japanese culture and exploring the region.

Upon returning, Catherine was employed by Surrey to teach in resource rooms, focusing on students with diverse learning needs. In 1997, she was informed of an opportunity in Vernon for a resource room teacher. Embracing this new challenge, she relocated to Vernon and began teaching at Alexis Park Elementary School. In 1999, Catherine earned her Master's degree in Leadership and Training from Royal Roads University. Over her 29-year tenure at Alexis Park, she transitioned from teaching children with diverse learning needs to serving as a school-based resource teacher, and ultimately, teaching kindergarten.

Throughout her 34-year teaching career, Catherine appreciated that all children require kindness, acknowledgment that they are an individual, and the assurance that they are cared for, with some needing additional support. Working at Alexis Park was a challenge and a joy!



MARY MACDONALD

I spent a few years substitute teaching, making some great headway in the business; in those days, teachers and principals would request you. My "real" career began in 1990 at Vernon Secondary School, and it has been the only school where I have taught. My initial contract required me to teach English and Drama, as well as produce the school yearbook. I signed on the dotted line, and my journey began

Over time, I made many connections with students and colleagues, which was truly the best part of the job. It was wonderful to provide enthusiasm and energy, and to share my love for literature and history. Some of those students have returned to our school as teachers and educational assistants, while others have found their place in our community. I feel blessed to have them approach me and share their experiences, both past and present.

As for my colleagues, I have had the privilege of teaching and working with some amazing people who mentored, collaborated, and supported me in this ever-changing profession. All these experiences will leave an indelible mark on my. Happy Trails!

VTA RETIREES

2024 - 2025



KATHERINE NORMAN

Charles Bloom has been my home for 38 years of growth, fun and laughter. I am grateful for all the community support throughout my long teaching and coaching career not to mention our school Therapy Dogs, Freddie and Archie this past 6 years.

I had such great experiences taking my French students on a dozen different trips to Europe, Quebec and Ottawa. Very honoured in my 40th year of coaching basketball to have received a Lifetime Achievement Award plus Team and Coach of the year.

Archie and I will still TTOC at Bloom, we will also be volunteering at senior's homes and other places that need us blended in with all our adventures on the water and land. There have been so many treasured and bonded friendships over the years, I am forever grateful for each one.

Some highlights have been laughter every day, a dozen trips to Europe and Quebec with students. I am proud to have introduced Therapy Dogs, Freddie and Archie to our school.

My retirement plans include; kayaking, paddleboarding and hiking with Archie. We also plan to explore BC, TTOC, and volunteer at seniors homes and other venues together.

I am grateful to have served in a supportive community for all of these years!



MIKE SAWKA

My education highlights include me being an integral part of the Vernon Secondary community for my entire 30 years which ironically was the same school I graduated from back in the 80's. It was like I never left! I have loved my time there and the bonds and friendships I made with my colleagues and student over the years. I feel blessed to have had such a rewarding career that has finally reached the finish line. Well Kinda—there's a pretty good chance you may still see me lingering in the odd classroom as a TTOC.

I have 3 great children that are all in their 20's that I am sure will all keep me busy in this new chapter of my life. I also look forward to new and exciting adventures with my partner in life Lena.

Like we all dream of, retirement plans will involve travel, sun and relaxation, but I also have grand plans to play a lot of competitive seniors baseball and slo-pitch which will most likely add to my travel plans and destinations.

Thank you to all that have been a part of this journey that I will always look back fondly on!

CHARLOTTE OGASAWARA

My journey into public education didn't start until after I had my two boys. My friend and neighbor Cheryl Altwasser was a Learning Assistant Teacher and she invited me to volunteer in her Learning Assistance Room at J.W. Inglis school. What followed was a series of incremental steps that moved me ever closer to my dream job. While at J.W. Inglis, I worked with Teacher Assistants who I saw as having the perfect career. With that, took my second small step and registered for the Teacher Assistant Program. Upon completion, I got my first job as a Teacher Assistant at Cherryville Elementary. While there I learned that you could get your teaching degree in the Okanagan which led to my next much bigger and bolder step, paying \$15.00 to registered at OUC for the courses needed to be accepted into the Bachelor of Education Program. Head down and fast forward, 4 years later I was subbing and supporting hospital homebound students. I sure learned a lot in those years! Eventually, I was thankful to be back in the nurturing staff at Cherryville Elementary as a classroom teacher, another rich learning experience. Being under the layoff line, I had to leave Cherryville and was recalled to BX Elementary where I team-taught grade 4 and 5. Following my passion, I took another big step and returned to university to complete my Special Education Degree. Again, I missed the layoff line, and was recalled to Vernon Secondary School, where I would work with and learn from a wonderful teacher mentor, Jan Glenesk. Vernon Secondary is where I am today and where I have had the good fortune to build relationships with many amazing students. It brings me joy to see them in the community, hear their stories, and know they have found their place and are doing well. I am so glad, that fate brought me to VSS where I have worked with so many colleagues who brought their A game everyday. Thank you for your dedication and your friendship. I've been blessed.



ERIN HOBKIRK



My SD#22 teaching career began in 1990 at WL Seaton, focusing on Science and Business Education. After a couple of years in Salmon Arm, due to layoffs, I returned to SD#22, excited to be a part of the brand-new Clarence Fulton Secondary. Over the years, I had the privilege of teaching Computer Science, Marketing, and Business Education. Then came a pivotal moment in 2004, when Bob Gardner encouraged me to step into the library. I must admit, the thought of becoming a teacher-librarian filled me with trepidation, yet I dove in and completed my Teacher-Librarian Diploma while working in the Fulton library. My computer background has enabled me to help both colleagues and students in navigating the ever-evolving technology landscape. I truly loved working to support teachers in their classrooms, and also contributing to the Fulton community with components like morning music, TV displays of Fulton student life, live streaming athletics and grad ceremonies, fundraising for the school's outdoor signage, and for acquiring a class set of cruiser bikes. What makes this experience even more special is having had both of

my daughters graduate from Fulton. I am sincerely grateful for my time in SD#22 and especially for having been part of the wonderful Fulton Family. I am now looking forward to beginning the next new chapter.

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VERNE SCHIER

After 27+ years in education, I am stepping away from teaching to dedicate more time to my IcebergSolar.com energy business, helping one family (home) at a time to eliminate dependence on hydro (and outsourced US and AB) electricity with associated rising bills. Also creating more memories with my beautiful loving family will be amazing. I feel like I now know what I want to be when I grow up!

My teaching career has been rich and diverse, herding across two school districts—Shuswap and Vernon—and into a wide range of fantastic classrooms and roles. I began this perpetual apprenticeship teaching on-call throughout the Vernon School District, to M.V. Beattie Elementary in Enderby, then Parkview in Sicamous, Shuswap Junior Secondary in Salmon Arm, Clarence Fulton Secondary, Alexis Park, and finally Silver Star. Over the years, I've taught Kindergarten through Junior Secondary, served as a BC Ministry Special Education Technology Consultant, and in the area of Learning Resource

Teacher. Each position brought its own challenges, rewards, plus entertainment, and I've grown immensely through the relationships formed with students, colleagues, and communities. Finally this apprenticeship is complete! On to the next!

Take a moment to google “(Cowboys/Teachers) Herding Cats” video. “In a sense, that’s what we do!”

Outside the classroom, as more time will allow, I intend on continuing my enjoyment of skiing, wakeboarding, dirt biking, quadding, mountain biking, sledding, Jeet Kune Do, racket sports, camping, and travel; all with my family. My deepest gratitude is for the kind, strong people in my life along with the guidance and grace of God.



SEAN SOOKOCHOFF

Sean has been a shop teacher for 27 years. He started his career in Lac La Biche, AB in 1995 after graduation from UBC Faculty of Education. From there he taught in Japan before moving to the Okanagan in 1997. Sean taught at Spring Valley Secondary, Rutland Secondary, Kelowna Secondary and Vernon Secondary schools.

Sean is married to Sofia Sookochoff, and together they have 2 sons, Alex (14) and Oliver (12). They enjoy golfing, biking, camping and holidaying to far away places. Sean and his family intend to remain in the Okanagan for the foreseeable future.

Sean is currently working towards his Emergency Medical Responder certification and is stationed in Oyama as a volunteer firefighter. He will spend the next 10 years being a dad, working on his home and improving his golf scores!



DORRIS LEE

I was born and raised in Vernon so I am thrilled to finish my teaching career here.

After finishing my BEDUC at Simon Fraser University, very few school districts were accepting applications so I worked at Burnaby Village Museum as the Education Coordinator for 3 years. After a year in Lillooet at Cayoosh Elementary, and 19 years in Coquitlam at Cedar Drive and Hazel Trembath, I fortunately was given the opportunity to work in Vernon. I have been in SD #22 for the past 17 years. My time included a short time at BX, 8 years at Harwood, 2 years as a District Reading Teacher and now 7 years at Kidston.

I have happily taught K-2 for 38 years and have loved every moment of it. I will miss the spontaneous hugs I received every day and being called "Mom, Grandma and even Grandpa a couple of times" by my students! ☐

My retirement plans include travelling with my beautiful adult daughter, taking my puppy Winston on long daily walks, working on the many summer projects that I never got to, learning how to play the piano and trying pickleball. I am sure other things will come up and I am so blessed to have the time now to do them.



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ANDREW TAYLOR

My teaching career has spanned 35 years, and of those years, 33 have been in the Vernon School District. I have has taught at the following schools; queen Charlotte's Island (Haida Gwaii), Kidston, OKL, JWI, Alexis Park and Harwood. Having completed my B.Ed. at UBC in Vancouver in 1990, I then completed his Masters of EdTech in 2011.

My wife, Jackie, and I met at UBC Vancouver in the teaching program. We went to Haida Gwaii together to teach and married in 1991. We have two children, AJ and Hannah. They live in Toronto and Calgary with their partners.

I love reading, golfing, hiking, laying by the pool and travelling. My retirement plans include more travelling, visiting kids, more golf and more fun!

SANDRA GLINSBOCKEL

Sandie began her career in Quesnel teaching Grade 7 where she quickly learned that middle school students are hilarious, unpredictable, and more than a little mischievous- all qualities she emulates! After this, she transitioned into the secondary system where she has spent the remainder of her career.

After surviving 4 Quesnel winters, Sandie arrived in Vernon 1994 and spent 17 years at CBSS and 14 years at VSS. During this time, Sandie was a classroom teacher, school-based resource teacher and a teacher in the Alternate system. Over the past 20 years she has been grateful for her time spent as a high school counsellor. Supporting students navigate the trials and tribulations of puberty and dealing with teenage drama never got old.

What has made this journey truly special for Sandie however, are the amazing teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators she has worked alongside. She thanks them all for their support and dedication to students and the profession, and for inspiring her. Sandie is also grateful for the friendships, endless laughs, and questionable shenanigans of the infamous car rally!

Sandie wishes her fellow colleagues all the best as they continue their journey as educators, mentors and advocates for students!



VTA RETIREES

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YOUR VTA EXECUTIVE FOR THE 2024 – 2025 YEAR



President:	Dave MacKenzie
Past President:	Cori Huizer
1st Vice President:	Billie Jo Beaudoin
2nd Vice President:	Charlene Lau
Secretary:	Teresa Kiel
Treasurer:	Steve Skultety
Local Association Rep:	Lisa Laboucane
Bargaining Chair:	Meghan Black
Professional Development Chair:	Deb Vandesande
Social Justice Rep	Melissa Reeves
P/R, Communications	Vacant
Occupational Health & Safety Chair:	Cori Huizer
Local Aboriginal Education Contact:	Vacant
French Education Chair:	Christine Buhler
IBIPOC Rep:	Mike Lau
Members at Large:	Jennifer Lactin
	Chris Brandle
	Vacant
TTOC Rep	

Please check the VTA website: www.vernonta.com for contact information.

BARBARA HAMILTON

My teaching career began in 1986 when I started subbing in Saanich during my fifth year of university. After graduation we went travelling and ended up in Kobe, Japan where we taught at a college for two years. Upon returning to Canada, we settled in Victoria to teach before we came to Vernon in 1992. From Charles Bloom to Mission Hill to Coldstream Elementary, I have loved it all. Next we will be teaching in Muscat, Oman...another adventure!



Congratulations Retiring Teachers!

An Invitation to Retiring Teachers



The Vernon Retired Teachers Association (VRTA) offers sincere congratulations to this year's retiring teachers. We hope you have a long and fulfilling retirement.

Whatever activities you choose to pursue we hope that you will make joining the VRTA one of them. As a provincial and local association we can offer a variety of supports which will enable you to transition and maintain a rewarding retirement.

How does our organization operate? At the provincial level the B.C. Retired Teacher's Association (BCRTA) is a strong organization which takes an interest in all our concerns as retired persons. The BCRTA represents us on the pension board and liaises with other organizations to protect us in matters concerning our health and well being.

The BCRTA publishes a magazine on issues and activities of interest to retired teachers as well as maintaining an informative website (www.bcrt.ca).

At the local level the VRTA focuses more on social interests and local activities. We meet five times a year for a short business agenda followed by an interesting presentation and lunch with plenty of time to socialize with former colleagues and friends. You are welcome to invite friends and partners. Our local association offers almost \$4,000.00 dollars in scholarships each year. We also support the local food bank by twice yearly collections at our meetings.

Membership is voluntary and open to all retired teachers and administrators. One of the most positive advantages of membership is access to very good travel insurance packages. The larger the membership the more influence we can exert in matters of importance especially pensions.

We are holding our annual 'No Host, No Bell Breakfast', as per tradition, on the first day of school - September 5, 2023 at 9:30 at the Hot Spot on 6th. To find our more information about the breakfast and the Vernon Retired Teachers Association please email me. I look forward to hearing from you!

Cheryl Jennings
VRTA
cjcanada@hotmail.com

- A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart. Retirement just means you've touched a *lot* of hearts.
- You may be leaving the classroom, but your impact will echo through generations.
- The best teachers don't just teach—they inspire. Your inspiration now gets to go global... or at least garden-wide.
- Retirement is not the end of your teaching career—it's the start of your legacy.
- You taught thousands of lessons—but the greatest one was how to care.
- You can finally grade *nothing*. Congratulations!
- No more bells. Unless it's the one for Happy Hour.
- Retirement: where every day is Saturday... except with fewer papers to mark.
- Goodbye staff meetings, hello afternoon naps!

You taught for decades—now you get to teach your coffee cup how to sit still for hours.

THANKS FOR
TEACHING ME
THE MEANING OF
-PLETHORA-
IT MEANS A LOT

