

# Parliamentary Education Gazette

A Newsletter for B.C. Teachers

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Read Time: 8 minutes

## Education Steering Committee: Farewell & Thank You

A huge thank you to our outgoing Education Steering Committee member, Michele Cumberland. She has been on our committee since 2020, serving the Parliamentary Education Office with her wisdom, advice, experience and enthusiasm for all things parliamentary democracy. Michele has authored articles for the Gazette, encouraged her students to do the same, developed classroom activities for our website, and is always willing to take on any tasks that support our parliamentary education mandate. As the recent recipient of the King Charles III's Coronation Medal, presented by Senator Bev Busson and Richard Cannings, Michele is well-deserving and well-recognized for her excellence in teaching.

We are pleased that Michele has agreed to be our Lead Facilitator with our annual B.C. Teachers' Institute for this Parliament, as well, so we will not have to say goodbye. Thank you so much, Michele, for all you have provided in this field, and I look forward to continuing our friendship.

By: Karen Aitken, Director, Parliamentary Education Office

## Reflection on the Spring 2025 B.C. Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy

Greetings and *hadih* from Fraser Lake, the Nechako Lakes region of beautiful B.C. and homeland of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council.

I recently had the great fortune to attend the B.C. Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy in Victoria, an annual, multi-day professional development opportunity hosted by the Parliamentary Education Office at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Twenty of my teaching peers from around the province were 'schooled' on the inner workings of parliament. It was extraordinarily inspiring, informative and reassuring - reassuring in that all British Columbians should know that we are in good hands.

In the early 1970s, when I was about five years old, we drove past the Parliament Buildings while on holiday in Victoria. The main building looked like a castle to me, so I asked my older brother, "What is that?" He replied: "That is where all the money is."

Several decades later, we were welcomed to the Chamber floor of the Legislative Assembly by Elders Mary Ann Thomas (Esquimalt Nation) and Clarence "Butch" Dick (Songhees Nation). They spoke of the changes they have witnessed in governance and the progress made on First Nations issues, all the while stressing positive emotional health as the key to success. Moments later, Hon. Raj Chouhan joined us, revealing his grassroots motive for becoming involved in small-community politics, culminating in his current role as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. It was rather like listening to your favourite aunt and uncles providing life advice.

From there, we had a workshop or seminar every 45 to 60 minutes, eight hours a day, for three days. Q&A sessions with Legislative Counsel, the Sergeant-at-Arms, Cabinet Operations, the role of the Lieutenant Governor, Treasury Board, the Minister of Education and sit-downs with various MLAs, filled our schedule. I was genuinely impressed with the integrity, approachability and 'common person' demeanour of every civil servant we met.

Our concluding exercise was the creation of a series of lesson plans that are [available](#) for the general public but are intended for our students. I urge all educators and families to examine these lessons that unravel how our Legislature works and social and political issues that pertain to all of us.

Testament to the effectiveness of this workshop occurred when one of my peers leaned over and surreptitiously whispered, “I’ve always contemplated a career in politics; I think it’s time to act on it.” Our students will also benefit from the Teachers’ Institute, and I recommend it to all my colleagues, province-wide.

Now when I drive past the ‘castle’ and someone asks, “What is that?”, I can reply with certainty: “That is where some of the most relevant lesson plans for understanding governance and democracy are developed.”

By: Dave Vanderwerkhoven, School District 91, 2025 BCTI Alumni

## Legislative Assembly of B.C.: Connecting with Democracy

Have you ever travelled our nation or another and wondered how their government works or even just what their ‘seat of democracy’ looks like? It is possible that you also find this interesting and take delight in exploring and learning about how other places debate issues and create legislation to improve their systems and keep up with our advancing world.

When one walks into these often-amazing buildings, one learns stories and facts and can get inspired. Architects of the past and present have a way of creating something so timeless and awe-inspiring that each visit is a delight and an adventure. Here in B.C., we have the ability to do this in our very own Parliament Buildings in Victoria. Each year as I bring students to visit, the awesomeness of the building is not lost on me, even though I have visited approximately 30 times in my lifetime.

Surely, you remember the first time, as a young elementary school student, you stepped inside this mammoth of stone and were dwarfed in size? Your favourite teacher braved the administrative chaos to get you and your little friends to Victoria for a magical day to experience this democratic institution - the place where ‘it’ happens. As an elementary school student, you aren’t totally sure what ‘it’ is, but they do their best to tell you and explain things at your level. You will always remember how special this building felt.

Thankfully, as you hit high school, another teacher braves paperwork and early mornings to take you back, and again, you love the building but also manage to learn something new and valuable from your excited and demonstrative guide. This time, it sparks something new inside of you. Maybe it is re-lit from your first visit, or maybe things all fall into place, and you see that this is where you want to be to help change happen. You leave thinking about what steps to take to get involved somehow.

In B.C., we are blessed to have our Legislature open to all: visitors, residents, citizens and children of all ages. This is not something to be taken lightly or for granted; it is not as common as you think it is. As a British Columbian, it is your house, the home of our democracy, and a place that has the ability to inspire you, your children and your grandchildren.

By: Suzanne Uher, Education Steering Committee Member



Legislative Assembly of B.C. and Knowledge Totem



### PARLIAMENTARY TRIVIA

What year was B.C.'s provincial flag adopted?

Send your answers to [PEO@leg.bc.ca](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca) to win a B.C. flag pin!

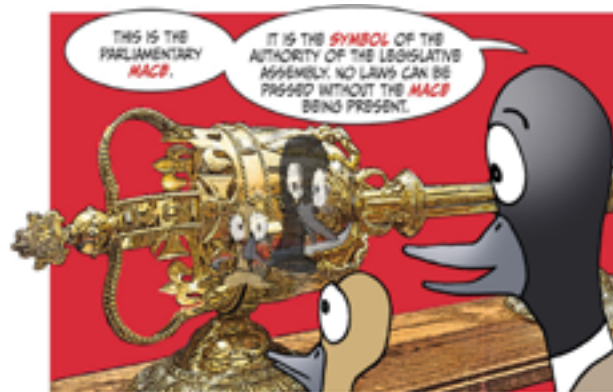
## Access Learning Resources



The Parliamentary Education Office has launched new resources to use in the classroom:

### SPOTLIGHT: *LEGISLATIVE LEADERS* COMIC BOOK

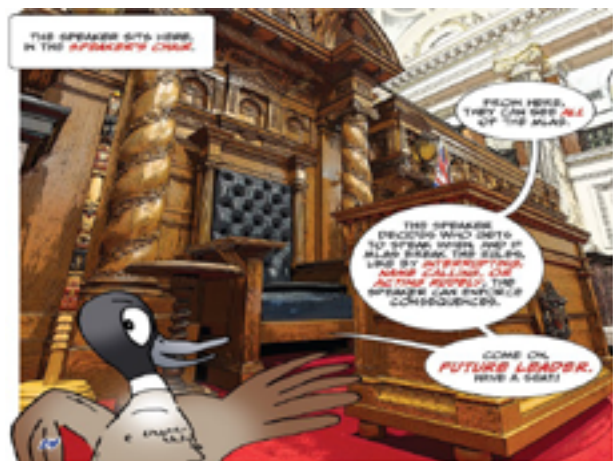
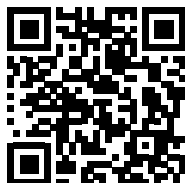
Next time you are at the Parliament Buildings, stop by the Parliamentary Gift Shop and pick up a copy of *Legislative Leaders*, a new comic book produced by the Parliamentary Education Office. *Legislative Leaders* tells the story of Ollie, a young Canada goose on his first migration. Ollie is nervous about flying at the head of the V, so his big sister Hazel teaches him leadership lessons on a whirlwind tour of the B.C. Parliament Buildings. This colourful, 24-page comic is perfect for middle-grade readers.



*Legislative Leaders*, pg. 17

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Democracy & Parliament](#)
- [Parliamentary Glossary](#)
- [Architectural Symbols Lesson Plan](#)
- [Exploring the Contributions of B.C. Premiers Lesson Plan](#)
- [Symbolism in the Parliament Buildings Lesson Plan](#)



*Legislative Leaders*, pg. 14

### ELECTIONS B.C. RESOURCES

Elections B.C. and our partners have free [resources](#) available year-round to help voters and future voters learn about provincial elections:

- **Online Course about Provincial Elections (Audience: grade 10-12 students)**

Elections B.C. partnered with ChatterHigh to launch a gamified online course called Explore Provincial Elections. During the course, students learn about the election process, voter rights and voter registration with Elections BC.

- **Media Literacy Lesson Plans (Audience: grade 9-12 students)**

Elections B.C. partnered with MediaSmarts to create a lesson plan about media literacy and elections. It's available in English and French.

- **Democracy in a Box Activity Kit (Audience: all ages)**

The democracy kit explores voting and democracy - past and present - in B.C. It's available in English and French. The kit includes supplies for a mock election, trivia cards, a map to explore B.C.'s electoral districts and a timeline to learn about the history of voting rights in B.C.

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact Melanie Callas, Outreach Advisor, at [Melanie.Callas@elections.bc.ca](mailto:Melanie.Callas@elections.bc.ca).



# Upcoming Parliamentary Programming

BCTI: RETURNING FALL 2025



## B.C. TEACHERS' INSTITUTE ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY (BCTI)

**October 22 - 25, 2025**

Participate in a unique professional development program at the Parliament Buildings in your provincial capital.

Learn about parliamentary democracy and become champions of citizenship education. Return to your school with an enhanced understanding of British Columbia's political system.

Meet with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, MLAs, senior public officials and have a behind-the-scenes tour of your Parliament Buildings. Collaborate and share with your colleagues from across the province!



**CALLING ALL EDUCATORS: EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE SEEKING APPLICANTS**

We are looking for one (1) new member to support and enhance the learning objectives of our office. The members provide ongoing input, recommendations for programming and practical advice about the teaching profession in B.C. We are especially keen to have teachers with experience in secondary, rural and/or Indigenous educational settings. Term begins August 2025. Apply [online](#)!



**BCTI DEADLINE TO APPLY:**

**JULY 7, 2025**



**APPLY ONLINE:**

<https://bit.ly/3ECMGiB>



## SIGNIFICANT DATES

**JUNE**

**15, 1949**

Dr. Frank Calder, Nisga'a Chief, was the first Indigenous person elected to the Legislative Assembly of B.C.

The Honourable Rosemary Brown was the first Black woman elected to a provincial legislature in Canada

**AUGUST**

**30, 1972**

## PARLIAMENTARY PLAY AND TOUR

Join an interactive program that whisks students back in time on an award-winning historical play. Classes could meet architect Francis Rattenbury or participate in the Chocolate Bar Protests.

The Parliamentary Play and Tour is free and runs for approximately 80 minutes. Program dates: May 20 to June 24, 2025.

Book [here](#).

Teachers have two programs to choose from:

- **My Place in Politics (Grade K-6)**

This program whisks audiences back to 1947, where they meet suffragists, students and Chocolate Bar strikers. The play explores how groups developed a plan of action to address issues like discrimination, inequality, and the fight for human rights. Then the group will enter the buildings for a guided tour focusing on participation and representation at the Parliament Buildings today. This program is designed to complement the Grade 5 and 6 social studies curriculum, but is fun for all ages.

- **A House for Democracy (Grade 7-12)**

This program explores how the Parliament Buildings have been shaped by Indigenous history, colonialism, nationalism and the First World War. Audiences go on a journey through time with notorious architect Francis Rattenbury, then venture inside to discuss what the buildings mean to British Columbians today. This program is designed to complement the Grade 9 and 10 social studies curriculum, but is fun for all ages.



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## TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wrote this newsletter in the Parliament Buildings, that are located on the traditional territories of the Lekwugen-speaking peoples. Now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, these Coast Salish peoples have a rich culture and history dating back thousands of years.

We are thankful to live and work here.

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## CONNECT WITH US



[Educational Programs & Workshops](#)



[PEO@leg.bc.ca](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca)



250-387-8669

