

## Professional Development Year 6

During our year 6 semester, we were privileged to be a part of a variety of professional development opportunities. From off campus field trips to on campus seminars, they were all very helpful to my learning.

Our first field trip was to O.U.R. Ecovillage in Shawnigan Lake. While most of us had never been to a similar place and didn't know what to expect, we arrived with open minds. I found that many of the sustainability methods they were using were either directly or indirectly related to the schools and our teaching practice. Creating and maintaining school vegetable gardens, teamwork and using renewable resources were just a few of the ideas that we could take away and use in our classes.

Our second field trip was on campus and was entitled "Building a Village". This was a very emotional and powerful exercise where we could vicariously feel some of the hurt and emotions as well as gain a deeper understanding with regard to the treatment of First Nations people since contact. Some of the stories from the elders were shocking and saddening. It made myself and others wonder aloud why we were never told or taught any of this during our school years. This was incredibly important to us as new teachers in BC and Canada as the repercussions of these events continues to this day. It gave me a better understanding of how children and grandchildren of those affected were just as much victims as their elders.

In the third week, we had a selected choice of seminars to partake in. For the morning session, I took part in the UDL (Universal Design for Learning) presentation. Although I have a deep understanding of technology, it was interesting to see different applications and online tools that I had never heard of. I believe I can use some of these tools to facilitate the learning of some students that may have difficulty reading, writing, or speaking. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and Read&Write stood out for me especially.

For the afternoon sessions, the Nanaimo Ladysmith school district did a presentation on hiring and applications. This was a good preparation seminar for anyone planning to head right out into the field. Whether you were planning on teaching in Nanaimo Ladysmith or somewhere else, it was a wealth of information regarding interview processes and documents needed for applying.

Aside from our weekly Pro-D days, we also had seminars every week where we would have a speaker or a film.

For our film, we watched "Freedom Writers". This was a powerful film that brought up our importance as teachers and how we must always strive to reach the students in our class in meaningful ways. It also brought up other questions such as Duty to Report and how far we can go as educators.

We were also fortunate to have a seminar on FASD. This made several things clearer to me after seeing certain cases in the schools previously. It was interesting to be able make some connections based on this new information. It was also surprising that although tests and observations could easily put a child into the

FASD, it required the mother to admit that she had consumed alcohol during certain stages of the pregnancy. Therefore, a large number of cases go untreated and “undiagnosed”.

Finally, we were fortunate to have one of our cohort members bring a film to us about a First Nations group from Port Hardy and their story. As with “Building a Village”, we were once again shocked at how Canada, which we were brought up understanding was the peacefully and friendly nation, could be so cruel and insensitive to an entire nation.

Overall, although we didn’t have many face-to-face classes over the semester, the professional development we received was diverse and plentiful. It look forward to taking this learning with me into my teaching practice as well as furthering my understanding through additional Pro-D opportunities.