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The Reading Bear Society Newsletter



Back-to-School Edition | September 4, 2017



Mary Zheng and Rebecca Spouge entertain at the end of the school year visits



Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD

RBS President and Co-founder

Dear Friends,

As the Reading Bear enters its fifth year, we have a great deal to celebrate. To date we have reached over 2,000 youth in four high schools and six elementary schools. In the past year, we have delivered over 3,000 books and several hundred bears, and remained busy over the summer with special visits to children and families at Canuck Place and at the Mom2Mom picnic.

I am pleased to announce a new partnership with the Beaty Biodiversity Museum at UBC. Reading Bear participants now have access to a Beaty Box for their classrooms and an end-of-year visit for interested schools.

In this issue, you will be introduced to our dynamic leadership team, as well as our first group of summer practicum students. The RBS held its third AGM on June 7, 2017, and Emerald Lau and Katrina Hsu were elected to the board of directors. I am delighted to welcome them to their new roles, and I am excited about the outstanding leadership we will have in this upcoming year.

Lastly, a special thank you to Telus for their donation of stuffed animals, to Kidsbooks for the generous donation of books, and to all of our volunteers who make it possible for the Reading Bear to thrive.

New partnership with the Beaty Biodiversity Museum: Bringing literacy and environmental stewardship to the classroom and community



The Beaty Biodiversity Museum is a great place to take your class. Our exhibits, activities, and lessons can support your classroom, whether you teach preschool, K-12, or post-secondary.

Give your students the unforgettable hands-on experience of exploring UBC's impressive and extensive collection of over two million natural history specimens and increase their awareness of biodiversity, ecology, and conservation.

Beaty Box Outreach Kits

Can't come to the museum? Book one of our Beaty Boxes, outreach kits with touchable specimens, information about scientists, and hands-on activities that explore biodiversity. For more information, visit beatymuseum.ubc.ca/beaty-box



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beatymuseum.ubc.ca

Open year-round, Tuesday-Sunday

bookings@beatymuseum.ubc.ca

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) @beatymuseum



The RBS is delighted to announce its new partnership with the Beaty Biodiversity Museum (BBM). The Beaty Box outreach kits, focusing on bears and the forest ecosystems, complements the RBS signature animal as well as their operational model. Schools have an opportunity to take a Forest Beaty Box out as part of the RBS program that fosters environmental stewardship around the eight bear species. In addition to providing the outreach kit, the BBM could also be the location for an end of the year celebration, providing guided museum tours for RBS big and little reading buddies. In recognition of the partnership with the RBS, the BBM is pleased to extend a 25% to members of the RBS network.

Beaty Boxes

- Fees: \$75.00 per two (2) week rental*
*25% discount for schools taking part in the RBS program. Please mention RBS at time of booking in order to receive the discount.
- Click to learn more: <http://beatymuseum.ubc.ca/learn/beaty-boxes/>
- Click to book a Beaty Box: <http://beatymuseum.ubc.ca/learn/group-booking-information/request-a-beaty-box/>

Programs & Tours

- Fees: \$9.00 per student and 12.00 per adult*
*25% discount for schools taking part in the RBS program. Please mention RBS at time of booking in order to receive the discount.
- Click to learn more: <http://beatymuseum.ubc.ca/learn/for-schools/>
- Click to book: <http://beatymuseum.ubc.ca/learn/group-booking-information/book-a-program/>

Welcome from our student leadership team



Paul Abraham, BSc, BEd, MD
2019
Chair of Students

I am thrilled to take over the role of Chair of Students this year with Victoria Kan as my co-chair. Our team is ready to take on the coming school year as we look to increase volunteer recruitment and grow the club and leadership in new and exciting ways.

Our new Chair of Volunteer Recruitment is Katrina Hsu with Jenny Lee and Amy Gill acting as Co-Chairs. Amy will continue in her role as Chair of Fundraising as will Victoria Kan with her work as Chair of Administration. Our Bear and Book Drive coordinator will be Julie Newton. We also look forward to the expanded role of Chair of Media and Communications which will continue to be performed by Katrina. Victoria Baronas will be shifting in roles to Chair of School Visits as we



look to continue our work in elementary schools across Vancouver. Rebecca Spouge has joined our team as the new Canuck Place Coordinator. Katrina Dutkiewicz and Ivan Chiu will continue in their roles



as Ambassadors to York House School and St. George's School respectively, and Steven Xu is our new website programmer. The team is looking forward to our first event of this season, which is the

medical undergraduate society (MUS) fair event that will be held on September 12th at UBC.

This year, the Reading Bear Society will look to strengthen our student base as we move forward in our existing schools. Program development will also be key as we will continue to seek the leadership and advice of multiple disciplines. We wish our outgoing 2016-17 leadership team a vote of thanks and embrace our 2017-18 team with excitement for the school year ahead.



The first student leadership meeting of the school year was held on August 31st. Paul Abraham, Chair of Students and 3rd year UBC medical student, led the team into an exciting 2017-2018 calendar of events.

Photo from left: Katrina Hsu, Director of Communications; Paul Abraham, Chair of Students; Ivan Chiu, Ambassador; Rosemary Hu, Student Representative for UBC; second row: Victoria Kan, Director of Administration; Rebecca Spouge, Coordinator of RBS Canuck Place Visits

End of the school year visit photos and notes from teachers



“On behalf of our students and staff, many thanks to your team for all the support provided through the RBS. It is so important for students to develop and enhance their abilities to read; the people and program provided by the Reading Bear are most appreciated for the time and commitment towards this crucial endeavor.”

Bruce Murton
Principal at Admiral Seymour Elementary

“I would like to thank you all for all of your hard work and dedication to this project. The children really love and look forward to meeting with their buddies. It's such a great experience for both the Ks and the St. George's boys. This is my first year in the Vancouver School Board. I was a teacher at a private school similar to St. George's for twelve years and I can tell you from my experience and by observing the boys' tender, empathetic, loving approach with the kiddies. You are making a difference and we appreciate it so much.”

Jenni Watson
K/Grade 1 Teacher at Admiral Seymour Elementary



“I just wanted to say thank you once again for your support of the StrongStart program. The families and I always appreciate the time you and your volunteers spend with us, reading to us, and the donations as well.”

Deborah Boushie
StrongStart Facilitator at Queen Alexandra Elementary



Click [here](#) to see more pictures!

Summer student practicums with the Reading Bear



Isabel Chen, MD, MPH
RBS Co-founder and Vice President,
Chair of FLEX and Student Practicums

Hello RBS Family,

I hope this newsletter finds you well! Before we embark on yet another exciting, action-packed year, I want to thank several of our wonderful summer practicum students. Their work - much like their talents and backgrounds - is diverse and advances the mission and reach of RBS. The RBS benefits greatly from the multi-disciplinary perspectives of our volunteers and these students' passion and creative ideas propel our work forward.

Thank you, Carolyn Norton and Cheryl Gascoyne, for revising the activity book entitled *My Bear Book*. Carolyn is starting her master's program in Audiology this fall, and Cheryl Gascoyne is entering her third year of medical school at UBC.



Cheryl Gascoyne and Carolyn Norton with *My Bear Book*

Thank you, Ceilidh Matthews for coordinating focus groups with our high school buddies to gain valuable insight into their experiences. Ceilidh is completing her undergraduate studies in Health Sciences at McMaster University.

Thank you, Mary Zheng, for revising the StrongStart module in addition to making classroom visits. Mary recently completed her bachelor's degree in Biology and is entering her teaching degree.



Mary Zheng at a StrongStart visit

Finally, I want to thank our wonderful summer practicum students as well as our FLEX student in the interior. Many thanks go to Amy Plessis, second year medical student for starting a Reading Bear club in Kelowna and for initiating a FLEX practicum in the interior.

As you can see, the RBS students were very busy this summer. Their creativity and vision remind us of how bright our future is. Thank you again, everyone!

Practicum experiences: Mary & Ceilidh



Mary Zheng, BSc

Summer Practicum Student

It has been my absolute pleasure this summer to do a practicum with the Reading Bear Society. This past year I have gained valuable classroom experience through conducting orientations at various elementary schools, and the program also gave me the opportunity to refine the module for StrongStart classroom visits. I am very grateful for these experiences that have allowed me to reflect on and improve upon my practices as an educator. I look forward to future involvements with The Reading Bear Society and to continuously learn and grow with this organization!



Mary Zheng reads *Big Bear Hug* to an attentive audience.



Ceilidh Matthews

Summer Practicum Student

The Reading Bear program offers Grade 8 boys from St. George's School a unique experience. Each month, the boys visit elementary schools to chat with their assigned reading buddy and to enjoy reading together. Curious to learn more about the boys' experiences, I led them in a

reflection process after their final visit. In June, I visited a Creative Writing 8 class and had a conversation about their overall experience with RBS, favourite moments, their relationship with their buddy, and their future aspirations to continue volunteer work. The boys were enthusiastic in describing their experiences, noting that they developed a plethora of interpersonal and problem-solving skills, and hoped to continue volunteer work in some capacity. After a few guiding questions based on those found in the RBS manual, as well as small group conversations, I asked the class to write a short reflection about their experience. As one student reflected, "When I first met my buddy, he did not speak a single word... After a couple more ineffective sessions, I noticed passion finally sparking within my buddy".

Ultimately, reflective writing can be extremely helpful in aiding thought processes and synthesizing experiential learning. Certainly, verbal reflection is important, and helps classmates compare and contrast experiences, allowing for considerable cross-talk and the emergence of an array of different ideas and thoughts.



Ceilidh participated in the RBS while at Crofton House School in Grade 10

The Reading Bear goes to Kelowna



Amy Plessis, MD 2020

Second Year UBC Medical Student

For as long as I can remember I have loved working with children! I love how eager they are to learn and their innocent curiosity over everything. I am excited to have the opportunity to use my FLEX block to combine the two things I am passionate about: healthcare and children. I have been working with the RBS to create a module targeted towards Kindergarten/Grade 1 students that promotes healthy habits and exposes the children to common physical exam instruments they may encounter at the doctor's office. The healthy habits we promote in the module include bear breathing to help the children relax, outdoor playtime, healthy eating, hand hygiene, and of course reading! The children can also explore teddy bear X-rays, stethoscopes, otoscopes, and tongue depressors. We have tried to focus on the most common reasons children visit the doctor's office: upper respiratory tract infections and injuries.

This past week, I had the privilege of piloting the module at Queen Elizabeth school with their eager kindergarteners. It was so much fun to see how excited the children were to listen to their own heart beating and tell me all they know about vegetables and exercise! I was very impressed by how attentive the children were and how much they seemed to appreciate the visit. It has never ceased to amaze me how much of what we say the children retain and take to heart. I feel very fortunate to be in the position where I can have an impact on the children in my community; I am looking forward to doing more classroom visits here in Kelowna!



From left: UBC Kelowna medical students Marabeth Kramer, Amy Plessis, and Megan Shurey



Amy Plessis presenting the Bear Clinic module at Queen Elizabeth



Introducing RBS FLEX student Thomas McFarland

"I am a second-year medical student attending the University of British Columbia in the Southern Medical Program in Kelowna. Originally from Ottawa, Ontario, I am new to the mountains, but have always loved being outdoors regardless. I enjoy hiking, sailing, swimming, fishing, camping, and horseback riding. I have always loved sports, especially basketball (as I am quite tall), soccer, and ultimate frisbee. Among everything else though, my favourite hobbies are music related. I play guitar in a local Ottawa dance band, and love nothing more than to dance, especially salsa and tango. I am extremely excited to be working with the Reading Bear Society because I love to be around children, as they never fail to make me laugh. I hope that through my work with RBS I can help promote literacy in a fun and positive way!"

The Reading Bear visits Canuck Place



Rebecca Spouge, BSc, MD 2020

Canuck Place Visit Coordinator

The Reading Bear Society had the great opportunity and pleasure this summer of visiting Canuck Place. We read some books, learned bear facts (who knew pandas could eat 22,000 pounds of bamboo a year?), and sang songs. It was such a great and affirming experience as a medical student to interact with these kids in a fun environment that brought smiles and giggles all around. Just the simple interactions with children was very rewarding; acts of kindness and fun can go a long way towards happiness and well-being, both for the Canuck Place residents and the volunteers! It was also a great way to develop my communication skills by adapting to each child in an individualized manner. Fun, learning and dressing up as a bear: you cannot go wrong with Canuck Place visits as it is such a welcoming home!



On April 27th, Reading Bear Ambassador and medical student, Amy Plessis, along with RBS President Dr. Joanne Roussy visited children at the Canuck Place. They read books, shared bear facts and artifacts, sang songs, and delivered a special bear and a bag full of books to teach child.

Top photo: Rebecca Spouge at Canuck Place
Left photo: Amy Plessis; Dr. Hal Siden, Canuck Place Medical Director; and Canuck Place therapy dog Poppy



About Canuck Place

Canuck Place Children's Hospice offers a comprehensive care to over 715 children living with life-threatening illnesses and the families who love them throughout BC.

Over 1,000 books and stuffies in 49 bags delivered to the children of Mom2Mom



Katrina Hsu, MSc, BSc
Director of Communications,
Newsletter Editor

For the fourth consecutive year, the RBS donated bags of books and bears for the children of Mom2Mom (M2M). [Mom2Mom](#) is a community-based organization supporting mothers and children living in Vancouver's inner city, and a sister organization to the RBS. The RBS began just after M2M was established in 2012 when founding M2M member Dr. Joanne Roussy, upon witnessing homes depleted of books and young children struggling at schools, went on to co-found the RBS along with Dr. Isabel Chen and an inner-city school principal, Lani Morden.

I had the pleasure of representing the Reading Bear at M2M's annual summer picnic at MacLean Park on July 26th. The atmosphere was warm and relaxed, and it was heartwarming to see the smiling, mingling mothers and mentors enjoying time together while their children ran around playing in the park. Despite the fun activities and the food, the children gathered to listen to books with the theme of Mother Bears. I had two mother bears along with me: Denise, the RBS's favourite stuffed Grizzly bear, and Dianne Hsu, my own mother dressed as a brown bear. Together, we shared bear facts with the children, read a book aloud, and distributed over thirty bags stuffed with books, each labelled with a child's name and age. We watched children's eyes light up as they received bags of books heavier than they could

carry, and saw a surprising number abandon their games to settle down on a picnic blanket with a book and read.



From left: Jessica Chant, M2M Executive director; Dianne Hsu, RBS volunteer; Katrina Hsu, RBS Director; Victoria Beckhurst, M2M Program Coordinator
Photo credit: Vivienne McMaster of [Be Your Own Beloved](#)

At their foundation, both the RBS and M2M share a mission to reach children early in life to equip them with the tools needed to nurture well-being: whether it be through books and a reading companion, or mentorship to support resilient mothers. The RBS is thankful for its partnership with M2M, as well as all our book donors and fundraisers for making our continuing support for M2M families possible. Over 1,000 books stuffed in 49 bags full of books and snow leopards compliments of Telus were distributed this year.



<https://www.facebook.com/mom2momvan/>

<http://www.m2mcharity.ca/>

The RBS featured in M2M [summer picnic blog post](#)

Volunteer Profile: Zohra Bonnis

In each newsletter, we hope to profile some of the long-time supporters of the Reading Bear Society. This month, let us introduce you to Zohra Bonnis.



Zohra Bonnis and her two girls, Antonia and Anais

Tell us about yourself:

I am originally from France, and have four children. I am passionate about art, and my dream has always been to have my own gallery so that I can support artists and promote art from around the world.

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear Society?

I became involved with RBS because of my dear friend, Dr. Joanne Roussy.

What is your current role with the RBS?

With the generosity of friends and moms from Crofton House, I help collect books for RBS alongside my daughter, Antonia Bonnis. Antonia has also been helping to sell

postcards which have been created by other kids, with all proceeds going back to the Reading Bear Society.

What is your best memory of RBS?

My best memory of RBS is of Antonia and I going to a school to meet all the kids and to read to them. It was so inspiring to watch my daughter, at age ten, being a buddy to a Grade 1 student and watching their bond grow. The change in both kids was amazing as they gave and received pure love and joy through books.

Why do you support the RBS?

Life, at the end of the day, is not about what we have but really about how much we can give of ourselves, mostly to kids of future generations. Their smiles are priceless, and I hope I can continue to work with RBS as long as I can.



Antonia Bonnis (left) at Thunderbird StrongStart visit with the Reading Bear in 2013



"The children of Thunderbird Elementary school were extremely cheerful and excited to see the reading bears. Whenever a book was being read, they attentively listened and were rapt with wonder. Throughout the day, the children learnt about bears and even touched a bear paw print! Even though I wasn't the person reading, I could feel the passion to help others emanating from all the volunteers! It was a wonderful experience and I hope to read to more children in the future!"

- RBS Ambassador Brandon Tsang

News

New advisory board member Barb Newton



Barb Newton has been a primary teacher in British Columbia for the past 33 years. She completed her degree in Psychology and a Diploma in Art Education from UBC and attained her teaching certificate at Simon Fraser University, going on to teach in four different districts. During her many years of teaching, she recognized a growing need for students to learn strategies to help them control impulsive behaviour and self-regulation issues. Barb believes the Reading Bear is an excellent program that addresses this growing need and helps students recognize the benefits of establishing connections, being patient and providing compassion to help others.



RBS Advisory Board member Dr. Andrew Deonarine and UBC President Santa Ono. Andrew received the Friedman Award for Scholars in Health from UBC in 2016.



Chris Shields, Mom2Mom member and Treasurer, and Julie Roussy-Newton, RBS book drive coordinator.

Ambassadors engage with UBC science students



Julie Roussy-Newton and Jenny Lee represented the RBS at UBC's SCOOPS (Science Co-op Student Association) event on March 23rd. Both had a chance to interact with the participants individually and really engage them in talking about the RBS and the importance of early literacy.

UBC and the Reading Bear

The Reading Bear Society attended the UBC celebration of Community Engaged Learning that was held at the Kitsilano Neighbourhood House on Tuesday, April 25th.



Joanne Roussy, RBS President, and Louise Cowin, UBC Vice-President, Students

Louis Brier Nursing Home

We were excited to bring the Reading Bear to Louis Brier Nursing Home, Special Care Unit on June 23. Reading Bear ambassadors Mary Zheng and Rebecca Spouge, Dr. Trevor Newton, and Dr. Joanne Roussy, shared bear facts, read books and visited with residents. The residents loved all of the large stuffed bears.



Mary Zheng and Rebecca Spouge, RBS ambassadors, and Nomi Fenton, Volunteer Coordinator at Louis Brier

Congratulations

Congratulations to **Ivan Chiu** on his recent wedding. Ivan is a second year medical student and RBS ambassador to the Canuck Place. Best wishes to the bride and groom for a happy life together.



Best wishes to **Julie Roussy-Newton**, RBS Book Drive Coordinator, on her studies at Polimoda School of Design in Florence, Italy.

Kay Fung was chosen as the Larry A. Green Visiting Scholar for March 2018. Kay is continuing with her role as co-editor of the newsletter and FLEX Representative.

Graduates



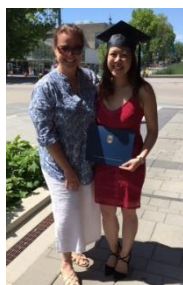
Cristian Vadeanu graduated from UBC Medicine and will be pursuing his residency training in Emergency Medicine in Edmonton.

He will continue in his role as support for funding for FLEX medical students.



Katrina Hsu graduated with an MSc in Global Health from McMaster University. She

recently returned from a research internship in Portugal this summer.



Mary Zheng, RBS ambassador, received her bachelor's degree in Biology and is pursuing her BEd Elementary this fall at UBC.



RBS Ambassador Jenny Lee's summer internship at the World Health Organization

Jenny Yi-Chen Lee has been an ambassador for the Reading Bear Society since 2015. She first served as the Chair of Administration then as a liaison between RBS and the UBC undergraduate community. This summer has been an exciting time for Jenny as she was offered an internship with the World Health Organization Headquarters in Geneva. Jenny says her times at the Reading Bear have truly allowed her to foster compassion and expand social consciousness. In the upcoming school year, Jenny is excited to continue serving at the Reading Bear Society.

Thank you!

Our successes are achieved only because of the hard work and dedication of our generous supporters. On behalf of everyone at the RBS, we thank you for your commitment to our youth and organization.



The Reading Bear would like to express its gratitude for the support and involvement with book drives. We recognize the time it takes to prepare and deliver books drives and we truly value the time you have invested in the program and to the recipients of your gifts. – Julie Roussy-Newton, Book Drive Coordinator

- A special thank you to **Dr. Jim Frankish**, Professor Emeritus at the School of Public and Population Health for his ongoing donations of books to the Reading Bear. He has donated over the years over 1,000 books that have been delivered to inner city schools
- Parents **Michelle Ostrow** and **Leanne Goodwyn** for organizing a book drive at **York House School** that collected hundreds of books for inner city schools
- **Erin Fawcett**, Senior Community Investment Manager at **Telus**, for the donation of snow leopard stuffed animals
- **Phyllis Simon** at **Kidsbooks** and **Molly Helferty** at **Kid Can Press** for donating the Reading Bear's feature book, *Big Bear Hug* published by Kid Can Press
- **Brian Lee's** assistance with Christmas card sales last year
- **Zohra, Antonia and Anais Bonnis** for so many beautiful new story books
- Book donors **Joan Fortier, Dana Anderson, Barb Newton, Daniel Shearer, Kay Grandage, and Rebecca Spouge**
- **Amy Gill**, Chair of Fundraising, for holding another very successful book drive this summer
- **Anna Tsang, Emerald Yep, and Jada Lau** for packing over 100 bags of books for the Thunderbird StrongStart, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 classes

