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The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Back-To-School Edition | September 3, 2018



Joanne Roussy

RBS President and Co-founder

It's hard to believe it's time to wish a happy fifth birthday to the Reading Bear Family. As a result of our dynamic team of volunteers, the RBS has gone far beyond our dreams. We have reached 3,000 children from various corners of the city, from Canuck Place to Thunderbird school, and now to the Kelowna chapter, all sharing the magic of books and stories.

I have heard heartfelt stories of how

a buddy, a bear and a book can make a big difference in the life of a young person. We have seen how the gift of friendship and a bag of books give hope and caring to a child who is experiencing a sense of isolation. Sharing a good book or storytime with one-to-one reading builds lasting friendships.

It takes a large group of devoted supporters accomplish such goals and each and every one of you have made

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 www.thereadingbear.ca



a difference. Thank you to our family of longstanding donors, the advisory board members for sharing their expertise, and the FLEX committee for mentoring medical students. A special thank you to founding medical students who have now completed their residencies and stayed on: Drs. Isabel Chen, Christine Wang and Kay Fung, as well as to our dedicated board members Katrina Hsu, Victoria Baronas, Victoria Kan, Paul Abraham and Emerald Yeh.

It is an honour and an inspiration to work with our teachers, who are dedicated to caring for and sharing

knowledge with children every day—special thanks to Colleen Sturrock and Julie Gelson. We hear their stories about how having a buddy made the difference to children and teens alike. Or how seeing the volunteers walk into a school dressed as bears captured the attention of young children and sparked feelings of magic and kindness that nurtured young minds.

We are excited for the new school year ahead, and as our friend Dr. Jim Frankish, professor in the UBC School of Population and Public Health, said, we can bearrrrly believe it!

Student Leadership update



Paul Abraham, MD 2019
Chair of Students

The new year will bring fresh faces and some interesting opportunities. We will look to focus primarily on School Visits in our volunteer outreach and see to it that our presence at the medical school continues to grow. I look forward to working with all of our volunteers as we move ahead on a special year. I had the opportunity to meet with a few of our leadership team over the summer and am amazed at their ideas, ingenuity and dedication to their roles. I look forward to meeting with interested volunteers and

continuing to chair monthly meetings. Additionally, I hope to see growth from a programs standpoint as we accept new FLEX students in addition to cultivating the current projects we have. The student leadership at our distributed sites is truly amazing. I am also happy to announce that the Reading Bear Society will be presenting a poster at this fall's provincial family medicine conference. Our collective experience and expertise are responsible for this shared achievement.

Spring Polar Bear visits & year end visits



Victoria Baronas
Chair of School Visits

I'm delighted to introduce next year's co-chairs of school visits, Jennifer Wildi and Umaiya Nageswaran!

Jennifer is currently a second year medical student and also coordinates the visits to the Canuck Place, Hospice for Children and is currently a FLEX student. Umaiya is a second year UBC student who is excited to be involved in the continued growth of the Reading Bear. Both are very enthusiastic and motivated to promote reading and well-being in the preschoolers and kindergartners around Vancouver. Welcome aboard Jennifer and Umaiya! At last spring's Polar Bear visits, Reading Bear Ambassadors, Daniel Alley and I dressed as a polar bear and a brown bear, visiting over 100 children in seven kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms to read and deliver books and share facts on polar bears.



Hundreds of books were delivered! Thank you to all the teachers who welcomed the Reading Bear into your classrooms. The end of year visits consisted of putting closure to the buddy reading program as well as sharing facts about panda bears. Did you know that panda bears spend up to 16 hours a day eating bamboo!



We're on a podcast!



<https://signalsforchange.ca/episode/the-reading-bear-society-joanne-paul/>

The Reading Bear is honoured featured on "Signals for Change", a podcast aiming to educate, connect and motivated listeners to take action to make our world a better place. Click the link to hear Paul Abraham (RBS Chair of Students) and Joanne Roussy's (RBS President & Cofounder) conversation with Paul Cheetham, President of Signals Design Group.

The Reading Bear's FLEX students



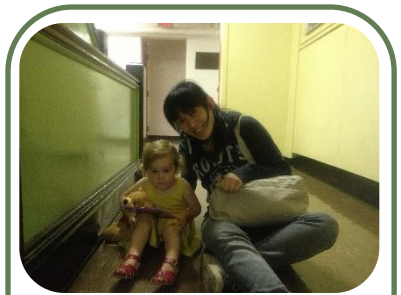
Isabel Chen, MD, MPH

RBS Co-founder and Vice President, Chair of FLEX

As we enter our fifth anniversary at the Reading Bear, first, I am delighted to announce that Dr. Kay Fung, our very own first RBS SDPO student is coming on board as co-chair of the FLEX committee. Kay has worked with the RBS since it's inception as co-chair of newsletter and this past winter she has served as a content reviewer for students' FLEX projects. I am also pleased to announce that Thomas McFarland will be entering the role of student funding support that was previously initiated by SDPO student Cristian Vadeanu. Longer standing medical students, Victoria Baronas (Chair of School visits and Director) and Paul Abraham (former FLEX student and recently elected RBS Director) act as student mentors, provide incoming medical students with student-to-student mentorship.

Two medical students (Amy Plessis 2017-18 and Thomas McFarland 2018) have implemented the first RBS Chapter in Kelowna. To best support the Chapter, they have created materials to introduce preschool and kindergarten children to a doctor's office and an orientation video for volunteer medical students. In one year, they have reached over 500 children and recruited a team of enthusiastic medical student as a volunteer base. You will find below an update about our current FLEX students and the educational materials that they have created and will continue to work on next term.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support as our goal is to offer a supportive environment to best support and promote medical students in their scholarly interests. Thank you for believing in the RBS and supporting medical students who wish to enhance the lives and health of young children.



Christine Wang, MD

Co-Chair of FLEX

The Reading Bear Society is 5 years old! It does not seem that long ago when I was a SDPO (now FLEX) student myself! This year I will be moving from Board of Advisors to FLEX Committee. I look forward to work with creative students developing new projects or improving current projects for the RBS!



Thomas McFarland, MD 2020

Co-chair of the Kelowna RBS Chapter

This year I am delighted to pass over the reins to Darren Gurentner and to Bhavan Panghali, second year medical students at the Kelowna site. You will hear more from them as their year moves forward. We took a lovely photo of all of the fantastic volunteers at SMP that took their valuable time to come perform Teddy Bear Clinic visits with us this semester! We are so happy to have such a supportive team here at SMP, with ambassadors of medicine that have reached out to 436 children over 21 visits and more than 15 schools across Kelowna! Our team is so enthusiastic to all be members of the Reading Bear Society, and love every minute they spend with children in schools around our community!

Promoting behaviours to help children achieve their healthiest and happiest selves

Gabby Levesque & Jennifer Wildi

FLEX Students



We are very excited to be working with the Reading Bear Society as part of our first year FLEX projects. Both having been involved in childhood education and physical activity promotion, Jenn as a sailing and Nordic ski instructor and Gabby as a youth soccer coach, we are strong believers that instilling healthy lifestyle behaviours early on in a child's life has a tremendous impact on their future health. For this reason, we decided to create a clear and concise pamphlet for parents of preschool/kindergarten/Grade 1 aged children to promote Canadian guidelines for health behaviours such as exercise, nutrition, screen time and sleep. Extensive research has confirmed the importance of these topics in children's health, and they are becoming increasingly important as the prevalence of screen use and sedentary behaviour increase. We are excited to share what we have found in the literature, and in the many resources that we have come across throughout our search. The pamphlet will detail current recommendations through an hour-by-hour daily map outlining the key activities and steps that children can take throughout the day to achieve their healthiest and

happiest selves. While simple, knowing more about the recommended guidelines and how each of these behaviours are integrated as part of a healthy lifestyle can make a profound difference in children's health, and the health of the community as a whole. We also plan to add additional reliable resources at the end of the pamphlet that parents and teachers can access for more detailed information. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who has offered their time and input thus far in our project; it is truly invaluable, and we would not be able to complete this project without the support of the community. We are excited for the final product to be shared with everyone!



Fostering emotional intelligence in children



Darren Guenther

FLEX Student

As a research assistant in an infant development lab for several years I realized that working with children is the best type of work; so, I am elated to be working on a FLEX project with the RBS to help support local children. During my undergraduate degree I learned about stress, child development, and the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ). EQ is an umbrella term for the ability to recognize emotions in self and others and modulate behavior to optimize the situation. Understandably,

these skills are vital to managing negative affect. Children with high EQ experience better mental health, more success at school, and improved interpersonal relationships. Like any skill, EQ is acquired via role modeling and deliberate practice. To this end, my RBS FLEX project aims to increase parents' awareness of habits that reinforce EQ in children. For now, this entails providing parents with a brief handout that outlines benefits and enumerates strategies pertaining to EQ. Hopefully, I may elaborate on this project in the coming years by creating and disseminating other parent friendly resources on this important topic.

Mom2Mom Book delivery



**Ceilidh
Matthews**
Summer Practicum
Student

Dressing up in a furry bear costume on a hot Vancouver summer's day might not sound appealing, but with fellow Reading Bear volunteers I enjoyed every minute of my time at the Mom2Mom picnic. Now a third year university student, I have been involved with the Reading Bear Society for seven years. I have particularly valued the various roles I have undertaken as a volunteer, from reading in classrooms, to fundraising, to researching the impact of the RBS on both student high school volunteers and preschool children. During my second summer practicum with the RBS, I have enjoyed my visits to Canuck Place, where I worked with fellow volunteers to engage children in reading activities. This summer's Mom2Mom picnic provided yet



Ceilidh Matthews and Brett Collinge hand out books at this year's M2M picnic

another glimpse of how energizing and satisfying it is to volunteer in the field of early literacy education. Reading Bear volunteers, dressed as friendly bears, read stories aloud to a welcoming group of children. The children enjoyed receiving a bag of books which they eagerly took home to share with their own reading bear.

The event reminded me of why I value the work of the Reading Bear Society. The impact of the organization's work is clear in the excitement, enjoyment and

energy displayed by the young audience. For an hour on that hot summer day, the children lost themselves in a world of talking bears and then hurried home to enjoy and emulate the model of reading aloud to their own cuddly reading bear friends.

I look forward to attending next summer's picnic and in the meantime will continue to find ways in which to support the Reading Bear Society while studying at university.



On August 30th, the Reading Bear hosted a booth at the Medical Undergraduate Society Club Night, signing up over 50 UBC medical students interested in volunteering.

Pictured: Director of Communications, Katrina Hsu, and Reading Bear FLEX and second year medical student, Jennifer Wildi.

Volunteer Profile: Rebecca Spouge

In each newsletter, we hope to profile some of the long-time supporters of the Reading Bear Society. This month features Rebecca Spouge, Reading Bear Canuck Place Coordinator

Tell us about yourself:

I am currently a UBC medical student. I completed my bachelor's degree at McGill University in Anatomy and Cell Biology. During my summer breaks I worked in the learning resource department at a Vancouver elementary school solidifying my passion for working with children. The Reading Bear Society opportunity seemed like a great fit!

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear Society?

I was lucky enough to become involved in the Reading Bear because a friend of mine in the UBC medical program in Kelowna introduced me to Joanne. I love how the Reading Bear inspires education in young children and I was incredibly excited to bring this program to Canuck Place.

What is your current role in the RBS?

My role involved establishing the Reading Bear at Canuck Place and subsequently organizing and coordinating these visits. As I head into my clerkship rotation I have passed on the torch to Jenn Wildi who will lead the way and continue to develop this amazing relationship with an empowering hospice.



What is your best memory of RBS?

My favourite memory during my time so far with the Reading Bear Society would have to be dressing up in the bear costume and making the children at Canuck Place laugh. There was one particular visit where one of the young girls could not stop giggling. It was infectious. It was reassuring to know that the children were having just as much fun as I was during the visits.

Why do you support the RBS?

The Reading Bear Society very quickly became an important part of my life. This program facilitates educational development at a young age while also instilling knowledge surrounding indigenous people, healthy eating habits, and emotional resilience. I loved that we were able to develop a relationship with Canuck Place and bring these themes and a few smiles to these strong and brave children. It was incredibly rewarding to read to the children and see how much they loved learning. The fact that each visit was fun for both myself and the children was just the icing on the cake. I am lucky to be a part of this initiative and I look forward to continuing to volunteer with this group.



Introducing Board of Directors member Emerald Yeh

Ms. Yeh has been a member and supporter of the Reading Bear Society for many years. She is currently serving on the Board of Directors and involved in fundraising, school visits, and book drives. She graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degree in psychology and economics, and spent most of her career as business woman in Hong Kong. She was an avid supporter and committee member of many charities including the Hong Kong Cancer Fund, Aids Concern, and Hong Kong Girl Guides. Returning to Canada with her children for schooling, she served as PAC chair for three years. Her involvement with the Reading Bear began with her high school children supporting the Christmas Card sales and participating in school buddy reading visits. Emerald is strong believer in strength of community giving and has been very active in guiding her children to participate in their various areas of interest.



Reading Bear ambassador, Denise Roussy, sorts teddy bears for June's school visits. Each StrongStart child received a teddy bear and a bag of books to take home. our mascot bear is called Denise on the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to learn and share in the magic of books and reading.

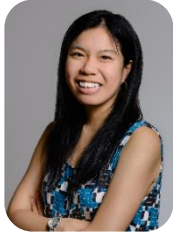
SAVE THE DATE: Upcoming Fundraising Event for the Reading Bear September 8th

Event: *Hijulez Garden party clothing sale*
Hand embroidered and one of a kind, vintage from Florence and Paris
Date: *Saturday, September 8th, 1PM-4PM*
Address: *1846 Wesbrook Crescent (out at UBC), parking on the street*
(will be hosted indoors if rain visits)
Part of the proceeds to the Reading Bear Society & Mom2Mom
Website: *hijulez.com* **Instagram:** *@hijulez*



Congratulations

Graduates



Kay Fung, RBS FLEX Co-Chair and member of the Board of Directors, graduated from the UBC Family

Medicine Program in June 2018. She has a special interest in global health and working with marginalized and underserved populations. Following graduation, she looks forward to pursuing these interests as a locum family physician in a variety of outpatient clinics and within the hospital setting in the Greater Vancouver area.



Congratulations to RBS director, **Victoria Kan** who received her Bachelor of Nursing at UBC last spring.

Dr. Lorna Kan and RBS Director Victoria Kan

Congratulations Drs. **Isabel Chen**, RBS VP and Chair of FLEX and **Christine Wang** for completing their residency in family medicine.

Victoria Baronas, Reading Bear Director, received her PhD of the MD/PhD at UBC.



Victoria with RBS President Joanne Roussy

Mary Zheng for receiving her Bachelor of Elementary Education.



Jada Lau graduated high school and will be attending Western University at the Ivey School for Business this fall. Jada was the first middle

schooler to volunteer for five consecutive years. She did fundraising and school visits along with volunteer recruitment.

Gilmar Gutierrez graduated from UBC Biochemistry and will be attending Queen's university in the fall as a medical student.



Gilmar (right) with RBS Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Trevor Newton and RBS Chair of Volunteer Recruitment Santi.

Awards

Director of Students **Paul Abraham's** poster on his work with the Reading Bear titled *An asset-based community initiative supporting early-childhood literacy and health promotion* was selected for display at the BC College of Family Physicians 2018 Family Medicine Conference in November.

In March, **Isabel Chen** was awarded the Crofton House School Alumnae Achievement Award for her community work.



Isabel Chen, Emerald Yeh, RBS Director, and Lydia Vandenberg, Assistant Director



Emerald Yeh, RBS Director and Mary Zheng

Congratulations **Mary Zheng** for her nomination for the YWCA Young Women Of Distinction Award

Congratulations to **Dr. Andrew Deonarine**, RBS FLEX research advisor and to **Nicolas Roussy-Newton**, RBS volunteer, for receiving



Nicolas Roussy-Newton and Dr. Andrew Deonarine at Harvard University

finalist award for the Presidents Innovation Challenge at Harvard University for their ZY4 initiative

The Reading Bear is on Instagram!



@thereadingbearsociety

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 RBS is grateful for the ongoing support from our five year supporters: Café Crepe, Zohra Bonnis of Z Gallery, Liz Watson of Watson, Inc., Phyllis Simons of Kidsbooks, Emerald Yeh, and Telus.



Kidsbooks



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A huge thank you to ...

Ann Juls for her financial donation

Paula Tioseco and **Bettina Tioseco** at Westside Montessorri School, **Elaine Wong**, Grade 1 teacher at Saint George's School for their book donations

Shaw for providing 48 polar bears delivered over the summer

Julie Steele for hosting book drives at three schools.



Shaw)



Julie Steele with Dr. Trevor Newton,
RBS Treasurer/Secretary

Jennifer Buckland, **Carol-Ann Kunimoto**, and **Jenny Malcolm** for their book donations

Paul Cheetman, President of Signals Design Group, for hosting Dr. Joanne Roussy, RBS President and Paul Abraham (UBC Faculty of Medicine 2019), Chair of Volunteers for featuring The Reading Bear on their podcast



Chair of Fundraising Amy Gill with bears donated from Shaw

The next edition of the Reading Bear newsletter will be sent in February 2019. Please email rbs.newsfeed@gmail.com if you have any stories or photos you would like to share with us!

In the meantime, please like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Instagram](#) to stay up to date with all the Reading Bear activities!