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The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Thanksgiving Edition | October 11, 2021



Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD
RBS President and Co-founder



Dear RBS Friends,

This year, we are reminded more than ever to count our blessings with gratefulness. Blessed to travel, hug loved ones and enjoy in-person time with family and friends, it brings to heart the fundamental importance of our relationships to our health, happiness and well-being.

At the Reading Bear, we celebrate many blessings this Thanksgiving. This fall we have a record number of registrations and many new volunteers in leadership roles that you will meet in this newsletter. First, I am delighted to introduce a new chapter in Prince George with a dynamic team of four. Our new early reading blog by Dr. Carolyn Erdos, literacy expert, accompanies a new book corner. This past summer, two practicum medical students, Grace Kim and Alissa Zhang, spearheaded information on vaccination for young families. I am also pleased to announce that Eloise Moss, RBS FLEX medical student received the YWCA Young Women of Distinction award on June 6th. And we are delighted to welcome back Paul Abraham, RBS director, who just completed his residency program in family medicine in Ottawa and has returned to guide the medical student leadership team this fall.

Alas, all good things must come to an end. We have been fortunate to have had Katrina Hsu lead the communications team as director of communications for the past seven years. Her stellar dedication has created a cornerstone of the RBS. We wish her the very best in her future endeavours.



Press to watch Katrina’s tribute video

Finally, at the RBS we have been deeply touched by the work of former Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen, who was a fierce champion for the first supervised safe injection site. We celebrate his life and accomplishments, as he inspired a generation of medical students to advocate for the needs of patients who live with addictions.

Wishing you a festive Thanksgiving Day,
Joanne Roussy

A Tribute to Katrina Hsu

RBS Director of Communications

Katrina's incredible work ethic and integrity quickly made her a star leader and ambassador of the RBS from the outset, from starting a club at Simon Fraser University to developing our newsletter, creating policies for our internal and external communications and establishing our social media presence, as well as being a frequent participant in our visits to inner city schools in Vancouver, where she helped develop and present early literacy education modules. Katrina has shown phenomenal commitment through seven years of volunteering with the Reading Bear while completing her undergraduate and graduate degrees, and I have personally witnessed the genuine compassion that helps Katrina connect with the children in our programs. One of my favourite memories of Katrina is of her reading with a three-year-old girl and her mother. Her gift for storytelling combines the qualities of warmth, enthusiasm, and patience, which young children respond to. Her sense of responsibility to vulnerable populations extends to communities outside of Vancouver as well. In 2015, she took our program with her on her travels to Africa, where she presented our early literacy module at a school in Zambia from her own initiative. It has been a pleasure working alongside Katrina. She will be dearly missed. I have no doubt she will make a remarkable contribution in her future endeavours. – Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD, RBS President and Co-Founder



I had the opportunity to work alongside Katrina for many years on the social media committee and then later as the Newsletter Editor. Katrina was always so approachable and such a joy to work with. She had a keen eye for details and was very dedicated to everything she did. She will be incredibly missed by everyone at the Reading Bear Society

–Dr. Kay Fung, Board Member

Dearest Katrina,
This organization has grown and flourished with your incredible support and talents over the years! It has been a privilege to work with you and we have all appreciated and benefitted from your tireless contributions. We are so very sad to see you go but we are excited to support and cheer for you in all your future chapters! Wishing you all the very best,

– Dr. Isabel Chen



Katrina has been essential in shaping the direction and progress of the Reading Bear Society over the past seven years. As the Director of Communications, she has helped build the foundation of our organization which will allow us to continue carrying out our mission and goals for years to come. She was kind in all of her interactions and cared deeply about her work with the RBS. We wish Katrina all the best in her future endeavors.

– Brett Collinge, RBS Director of Communications

Honouring Mayor Philip Owen

From Isabel Chen, Co-founder & Vice-President, MPH, MD (UBC'15):

Mr. Philip Owen, former Vancouver mayor (1993-2002), passed away September 30th, and we are writing to honour his extensive legacy on the lives of Vancouverites, which expanded to include all North Americans. Mr. Owen's "Four Pillar Approach" shaped significant social, political, and economic changes around drug treatment and harm reduction policies, which our patients benefit from every day. The commitment to harm reduction greatly impacted the medical system and our very approach to medical care. It is with heavy hearts that we mourn his loss, but it is with much appreciation that we, as future health system leaders, look forward to advancing the decency and dignity of all of our patients with the same courage and vision as did Mr. Owen. We, too, aspire to work toward clinical and society-wide changes that promote health equity.

From Trevor Newton, Treasurer and Secretary, MD (UBC'87):

The Reading Bear Society board and medical student leadership team from across BC (Prince George, Kelowna, Victoria and Vancouver) join together to honour the legacy of Mr. Philip Owen, Vancouver mayor (1993-2002). The concern for children's health and addictions led to the first teddy bear and books being delivered to the home of a young girl whose parents were struggling with addictions. A professorship was created to honour his legacy, The Philip Owen Professorship in addiction medicine at UBC, by the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation and the BC Centre on Substance Use. His legacy continues to inspire generations of medical student in the fields of substance use, advocacy, innovation and leadership.



RBS members honour Mayor Philip Owen by holding a word that they believe best captures his legacy.

Summer Practicum: COVID-19 Vaccination Info Sheet

Alissa and Grace, Vancouver Chapter summer students, created a COVID-19 vaccination resource for caregivers. With school around the corner and restrictions loosening across the province, many parents have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine for children under 12 years old. As information about the COVID-19 vaccine continues to evolve, please see the list of resources below for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 vaccination for children under 12 years old.

[Click to view the vaccination info sheet](#)



Alissa & Grace's Reading Corner Children aged 2-6 years old

About the Corner

Hello! We are Alissa and Grace, and we are super excited to share our love for books through this reading corner. This was created in hopes of encouraging parents and children to grab their favourite teddy bear, snack and spend some time reading these books together ☺. Throughout the year, we will be sharing our favourite books from the RBS library with you. Themes we will explore include love, diversity, health, sleep, and some other all-time RBS favourites!

About Us

We are 2nd year medical students studying at the University of British Columbia and we joined Reading Bear Society because of our interest in child literacy, healthy living, and our love for connecting with children. Together, we are also the co-chairs of the Vancouver Chapter this year.

Alissa: Reading and storytime were always a big part of my childhood, as I found that it was a time where I could use my imagination and learn something new! My favourite books as a child were *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Sheila McGraw and *First Day Fitters* by Julie Danneberg, illustrated by Judy Love. Growing up, my favourite childhood teddy bear was a polar bear with a pink dress named Lily!

Grace: Growing up, I remember reading a lot of children's books in English with my parents because I really enjoyed them and because they were a great way to help me learn the language. In particular, I remember my favourites included *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, and *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch, illustrations by Sheila McGraw. My favourite childhood teddy bear, which I still have with me, is named Beary!

Early Reading Resources

Decoda - Let's Read Together: https://decoda.ca/wp-content/uploads/Lets-Read-Together-Preschoolers_final-web.pdf

Reading Bear Society - Early Reading Tips: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f29b00a3131b6ce72/t/5fa630d68657be665ed3ae69/1604727003729/Early+Reading+Tips.pdf>

Shanahan on Literacy - Encouraging Summer Reading: <https://shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/encouraging-summer-reading>

RBS Summer Project, July 2021. Developed by Alissa Zhang (UBC MD 2024) and Grace Kim (UBC MD 2024). We would also like to thank Vancouver Kidsbooks for their ongoing support and thank Dr. Lyana Patrick, PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, for her suggestions.

Although the RBS strives to provide complete and accurate information, we make no warranties, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy of the information in our materials and assume no liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions in our materials.



COVID-19 Vaccination Resources For Children Under 12 years old

With school around the corner and restrictions loosening across the province, many parents have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine for children under 12 years old. As information about the COVID-19 vaccine continues to evolve, please see the list of resources below for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 vaccination for children under 12 years old.

Vaccination Tips for Children

- [Nervous about getting needles? Use the CARD system to have a more positive vaccination experience.](#)
- [BC CDC: Getting a Vaccine: Find out what to expect when you get a COVID-19 vaccine.](#)



Frequently Asked Questions

- [Government of Canada: Ask the Experts video series: COVID-19 vaccines questions](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada, Indigenous Services Canada: COVID-19 awareness resources and videos in Indigenous languages](#)
- [Immunize BC: FAQ for Youth and COVID-19 Vaccinations](#)
- [BC Children's Hospital: COVID-19 and Children - Information for Patients](#)

Information in Different Languages

- [COVID-19 fact sheets in different languages](#)
- [Multilingual COVID-19 vaccine resources](#)



For More Information

Non-medical information about COVID-19 is available through Service BC in more than 120 languages at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) or visit gov.bc.ca/covid19.

RBS Summer Project, July 2021. Developed by Alissa Zhang (UBC MD 2024) and Grace Kim (UBC MD 2024). We would also like to thank Ted Roh (UBC MD 2024), Victoria Grandi, (UBC MD 2024) and Celidh Matthews (BHS 2020).

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New Book Corner

Vancouver Chapter Chairs, Alissa Zhang and Grace Kim, have created a reading corner to share their love of books. They hope to encourage parents and children to grab their favourite teddy bear, snacks, and spend time reading books together! Themes will explore love, diversity, health, sleep, and some other Reading Bear favourites.

Click [HERE](#) to check out
Alissa and Grace's
Reading Corner

RBS FLEX Projects

Welcome to our newest members of the FLEX team

Read Victoria's
Info Sheet [HERE](#)




Victoria Grandi, MD 2024

About Victoria: Victoria grew up in a small town in Ontario where she completed her Bachelor of Forensic Science specializing in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry at the University of Windsor. Victoria spent 8 years as a competitive gymnastics coach and facility supervisor where she recognized her affinity for promoting healthy active living and mental/emotional resiliency in youth of all ages. Victoria looks forward to building meaningful community connections in her new hometown of Vancouver and continuing her research with the Reading Bear Society!


Topic: Reducing Needle Fear at Vaccine Appointments

For her project, Victoria aimed to address the common concern of needle phobia in children. She recognizes that vaccine appointments can be very stressful for both caregivers and nervous children, and this fear can persist later in life resulting in avoidance of necessary vaccines or medical procedures. In an effort to promote trust and positive interactions with the healthcare system, Victoria created an evidence-based resource with strategies for reducing needle anxiety in children ages 3-6 years old. The resource is available online and includes links to multimedia sources (such as videos, workbooks, children's books, and websites) for both parents and young children. Victoria's project was reviewed and approved by pediatricians, teachers, parents, and other community members.



Reducing Needle Fear at Vaccine Appointments

children ages 3-6



What is Needle Fear?

Needle fear is a common emotion experienced by many children at vaccine appointments. Children may express their fear of needles by crying, hiding, kicking and screaming when talking about or seeing needles. It often begins during preschool years and can make medical appointments stressful for families and healthcare providers. It is important to address needle fear so it does not worsen and persist later in life. Thankfully, research-backed strategies exist to help overcome this anxiety. Each child is unique and may require a different combination of strategies; it takes time to explore what works best.

Strategies to Help Your Child

(Remember A-B-C-D)

Apply Anesthetics
Numbing medicines (also called topical anesthetics) are a safe and effective way to make the experience more comfortable for your child. Creams, ointments and patches are available over-the-counter. Depending on the brand, numbing medicine must be applied 30-60 minutes before receiving an injection, so consider applying the cream at home or while you wait in the clinic.

Watch a video to learn more about topical anesthetics available in Canada and how to use them

Medicine-Free Options for Reducing Pain:

- Bring ice or a cold compress to the appointment and apply to the injection site for a few minutes before and after the injection. Cold is even more effective when paired with vibration (ex: massage device, [Buzzy](#)).
- Rub the injection site firmly for 30 seconds before and after the needle is inserted.
- Have your child sit up and relax their muscles. Studies show that lying down and tensing muscles can make needles more painful for kids.

Be Honest


Avoid promises you can't keep

- "It won't hurt"
- "It will all be over soon"
- "You're fine" or "It's okay"

Instead, **prepare your child for what to expect** a few days before the visit

- Together, watch a video or read a book about getting vaccines
- Encourage learning through play. Have your child give you or his/her teddy bear a shot with a toy syringe
- Have your child attend a kid-friendly educational event on vaccines

Studies show that falsely reassuring your child can actually make vaccines more upsetting and painful. Instead, prepare your child for the experience through videos, books, or play. **Focus on the benefits of getting vaccines:** a healthier body and protection from getting sick!





Ted Roh, MD 2024

Topic: Routine Vaccines in BC

Since there was not enough information to produce a pamphlet about the COVID-19 vaccine for preschool-aged children, I decided to focus my FLEX project on the routine vaccinations already being given to BC children entering preschool. This is because there has been a notable decline in routine childhood vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic. To explore this topic, I conducted a literature review covering routine vaccine safety profiles and vaccine adherence, as well as reasons for vaccine hesitancy. The results of the review helped identify gaps in existing literature and build the foundations for an educational pamphlet to be distributed by the Reading Bear Society. Looking forward, I hope to complete the pamphlet and have it reviewed by academic and community stakeholders. I appreciated the opportunity to learn research skills from the Reading Bear Society and apply them to a deliverable.

2021 RBS FLEX Project Student Profiles



Anisha Bains, MD 2023

Topic: Belly Button Breathing

Anisha created an info sheet and video focusing on breathing techniques for young children.

[Click to view the Bear Breathing Video](#)

[Click to view the Belly Button Breathing Sheet](#)



Belly Button Breathing

Children Aged 3-5

What is Belly Button Breathing?

Belly button breathing (BBB) is an exercise used to help children slow down their breathing and focus their attention. Your breath is like a remote control to your brain and body. So, when you feel worried, belly button breathing can signal to your brain that it's safe and okay to relax.

When Can I Do BBB?

Belly button breathing can be done anywhere and at any time. The key is to repeat this practice daily so that it becomes a habit. Try taking some breaths with your child to encourage this practice or have them teach their teddy bear how to bear breathe. Use belly button breathing in the following situations:

- At or before a doctor's visit or vaccination, try taking some breaths to feel less worried.
- Before bedtime or naptime, belly button breathing can help us calm down. Watch your belly move up and down as you breathe.
- In the car, take some breaths on the way to or from school.
- Take some breaths as you open the door to go outside to play. What do you smell, see, and hear? What do you feel?

Benefits of Regular Practice

Regular practice of breathing exercises, like belly button breathing, has been shown to have the following effects in children:

- Improves attention
- Reduces feelings of anxiety
- Enhances learning ability
- Lowers the effect of stress on the brain and body

Resources

- Breathe Like a Bear: Mindfulness Moments for Kids
- Pizza & Hot Chocolate Breathing
- PBS Kids Belly Breathing
- Teddy Bear Belly Breathing
- Stop, Breathe & Think Kids

Developed in collaboration with the UBC Medicine FLEX Program by Anisha Bains, MD 2023. Created Spring 2021.

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Check out [this](#) video to see how it's done!

How Can I Do BBB?

Belly button breathing can be done sitting, standing, or lying down with a teddy bear in your arms, or resting on your stomach. If you can't find a teddy bear, place a hand on your belly instead. Encourage your child to watch the teddy bear move up and down on his or her belly while he or she breathes. Alongside your child, practice the following steps:

1. Find a comfortable position for you and your child.
2. Start by breathing out for three seconds – one, two, three.
3. Next, breathe in for three seconds – one, two, three.
4. Repeat this process five times, or until you and your child feel calmer.



Eloise Moss, MD 2023

Topic: A Visit to Dr. Bear at Home, an Interactive Video

Eloise created a video for children who are in shelters so they may receive a visit from Dr. Bear.

[Click to view Eloise's Dr. Bear Video](#)



RBS Victoria Chapter

Chapter Update: This fall, the Victoria chapter welcomed Marie and Margot as first-year co-chairs, joining Kathleen Cherry and Celine Edwards. The group is keen to start volunteering with local school groups and starting virtual visits later in the term. We will also be running a drive for book and teddy bear donations for children in shelters this winter. We are looking forward to partnering with schools in Victoria, Sooke and Langford and hope to reach out to Indigenous Communities and elementary schools to advocate for access to early literacy and a healthy lifestyle through building intergenerational mentorship. We are excited for RBS to continue its outreach this year.



Marie Schulze, MD 2025

RBS Victoria Chapter Co-chair

Marie completed her Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology at the University of Victoria and proceeded to attend the University of British Columbia where she studied nursing. Marie is attending the Island Medical Program in Victoria this Fall. A variety of experiences, including working as a Special Olympics coach, offering exercise programs for students in the Songhees Indigenous community, and working with children struggling with their mental health, allowed Marie to discover her passion for working with children. Marie is excited to be joining the RBS Victoria Chapter as a co-chair member to advocate for literacy while encouraging healthy living amongst kids.



Margot Schmidt, MD 2025

RBS Victoria Chapter Co-chair

Originally from Bella Coola, BC, Margot completed her BHSc in Biomedical Studies at UNBC followed by a MSc in Kinesiology at UBC. She is now attending UBC's Island Medical Program. Margot discovered her passion for working with children while teaching swimming lessons and has since ran community outreach to improve water-safety in school-aged children, planned YMCA summer club activities, and volunteered at BC Children's Hospital. Margot is excited to be involved with the Reading Bear Society and looks forward to building positive connections.

Victoria Chapter's Inaugural Presentation



Celine (top picture) and Alex (bottom) ran the first Victoria Chapter Dr. Bear session online for the John Stubb's Kindergarten students. The students were very engaged and volunteers at the RBS Victoria Chapter are looking forward to more virtual and in-person Dr. Bear visits on Vancouver Island soon.



Read more about this Dr. Bear visit in our Facebook post [HERE](#)

Teachers wanting their classes to participate can find more information about RBS at <https://thereadingbear.ca/> School psychologist Kathleen Cherry is also the chapter's advisor and is available at kcherry@sd62.bc.ca

New Prince George Chapter

Chapter Update: We are very excited to have the chapter officially up and running and have been able to recruit volunteers. We have two advisors from the community to help with the Chapter - Gurkirat Kandola, a pediatrics resident, and Joanne Archer, a retired nurse with expertise in infection control. Over the summer, Shianne and Danielle reached out to the community looking for donations and Gingerbread Toys was gracious enough to donate toy doctor kits. Shianne has stepped down as co-chair as she began third year and we brought on Carmen, a first year, as our new co-chair. We are very much looking forward to being involved in the community and with students this year!



Carmen Huang, MD 2025

RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair

Carmen was born and raised in Quesnel, BC and graduated with Honours from UNBC with a Bachelor's of Science in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology. She is currently attending UBC's Northern Medical Program. Carmen grew up deeply involved in the sport of figure skating as a competitive athlete and shared her love for skating with youth in her community by volunteering as a program assistant in her local skating club. Carmen is thrilled to join the Reading Bear Society team and embark on this new impactful journey.



Danielle Sidsworth, MD 2024

RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair

Danielle grew up in Prince George, BC and completed her Bachelor of Science Honours in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UNBC. She is a UBC medical student in the Northern Medical Program. She began figure skating from a young age and moved on to coaching. Coaching skating allowed her to share what she loves with children who enjoy it as much as she does and where she found her passion for working with children. She is excited to participate in the programs RBS offers, where she will join her passions of medicine and working with children.



Joanne Archer, BTEch, MA

RBS Prince George Advisor

Joanne has recently retired after 44 years in health care. She received her Bachelor of Specialty Nursing from BCIT and her Masters in Disability Management from UNBC. Joanne has had many different roles over the years. More recently she served as Director and the Education and Practice Consultant for the Provincial Infection Control Network of BC. She continues to serve as an Executive Member of the Board of Directors for PAINBC. Joanne has always had a passion for education in health matters for all people.



Dr. Gurkirat Kandola, MD PGY-2

RBS Prince George Advisor

Gurkirat was born and raised in Prince George, BC and after completing her BSC (Hons) in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UNBC she graduated from the UBC Northern Medical Program in 2020 before entering the UBC Pediatrics Residency Program. She has always enjoyed teaching, coaching and mentoring children and youth. During her first two years of medical school she volunteered for the Teddy Bear Clinics and Talk to Your Doctor Youth Workshops. Gurkirat is excited to join the RBS program and work towards promoting child literacy and healthy living in Northern BC!



Shianne (middle), Danielle (right), stand with Sherrill (left), an employee of Gingerbread Toys, with their Doctor Kits that were graciously donated by the toy store. These kits will be used during “A Visit to Doctor Bear” to familiarize children with basic equipment found in the doctor’s office.



Danielle (left) and Carmen (right), new Prince George Chapter Chairs, wearing their Reading Bear T-shirts. We are so excited to see what their chapter has in store for the coming year.

RBS Prince George Chapter in the News

Danielle and Shianne, in the UBC Northern Medical Program, have started a new chapter in the Reading Bear Society in Prince George. CKPG Today interviewed Danielle about what RBS does and the chapter’s plans moving forward.

Click [HERE](#) to read the article and view the news clip.



RBS Kelowna Chapter

Chapter Update: Hi from the Kelowna RBS Chapter. We are excited to share with you a bit of what we have done in the last 6 months. We implemented our first online Visit from Dr. Bear module to a K class, and our volunteers had a wonderful time teaching the children. We were also fortunate to work with the Kelowna school board these past few months. With that being said, we are delighted to announce that the school board has approved the Dr. Bear virtual and in-person visits into the SD23 curriculum for K classes! We are delighted to be able to offer these visits for the 31 different elementary schools within the district. For a second year, we will be collecting books and teddy bears for children in need during the holiday season. The donations will be collected and donated to a women's shelter, in partnership with the Community Women's Initiative.



Austin Pietramala, MD 2024

RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair

Austin was born and raised in Kamloops, BC, and is currently living in Kelowna, BC. He studied chemical biology at Thompson Rivers University before moving to Kelowna to study medicine at the Southern Medical Program. Over the past few years, Austin has volunteered with the Canucks Autism Network and has coached youth soccer of all ages. When he isn't studying, he loves playing sports (especially soccer), playing music, running, and hiking. Austin is excited to be working with RBS and looks forward to bringing his positive enthusiasm to teach children about the importance of literacy. He is also hoping to make some children laugh along the way.



Casey Li, MD 2025

RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair

Casey is from Ontario but moved to BC after completing her Bachelor of Health Sciences degree from McMaster University, with a specialization in Child Health. She is now a medical student at UBC. She has always enjoyed working with children and has a keen interest for childhood education/early literacy. Due to her passion, she founded a patient education program for children called DATCH (Developmentally Appropriate Tools for Children with Hemophilia) with student-initiated educational resources informed by a multi-disciplinary care team including child life specialists. Casey looks forward to collaborating with everyone at Reading Bear Society and encouraging children to learn about their own health.



Danielle Neer

RBS Kelowna Chapter Advisor

Danielle Neer has taught in both public and private schools since earning her teaching degree in 2005. She holds an M.Ed. from The University of Western Ontario and a MA in Child Study and Education from the Eric Jackman Institute of Child Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). She is currently a teacher with the Vancouver School Board and a volunteer with organizations in the West End neighbourhood.



Dr. Christine Voss

RBS Kelowna Chapter Advisor

Dr. Voss is a pediatric health researcher based at the UBC Faculty of Medicine Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Management in Kelowna, BC. She is also the Flex Director for the Southern Medical Program.



RBS Vancouver Chapter



Grace Kim & Alissa Zhang

Co-chairs of Vancouver Chapter



Grace and Alissa are both in the UBC MD class of 2024 and stepped into their roles as the Vancouver Chapter co-chairs this past summer. They helped facilitate virtual Dr. Bear visits during the COVID-19 pandemic and organized other summer projects including a COVID-19 Vaccination Resource for families, and a Reading Corner for fun books to read as a family. This past summer, Grace and Alissa attended the annual Mom2Mom picnic where they read the Visit to Dr. Bear book to families and helped facilitate book and bear donations to all the those attending the picnic. Towards the end of the summer, Grace and Alissa worked with the Community Women's Initiative to help with their annual Item Drive by facilitating book and bear donations to local women's shelters and recovery houses. They are excited to continue the momentum from the summer by welcoming on new RBS volunteers and organizing Dr. Bear visits with local schools for this 2021-2022 school year.

Grace and Alissa would like to thank Kat Xie and Mariam Manna, outgoing Vancouver Chapter co-chairs, who conducted virtual visits last spring to 69 this term, across eight classrooms and reached 94 children.



New Volunteer Spotlight: Chiara Piccolo, MD 2024

RBS Newsletter Editor & Social Media Coordinator

I am so excited to join the Reading Bear Society as a Newsletter Editor and Social Media Coordinator! Prior to joining RBS, I worked at Science ALIVE, a children's science educational program, for over five years in a variety of roles including Social Media Coordinator, Program Instructor and Coordinator, and Team Lead. I am so thankful for the opportunity to continue in similar roles in a great program with RBS. I am also looking forward to bringing my experience as a behaviour interventionist and as a peer support worker to the RBS visits. My first Dr. Bear session over Zoom earlier this year was such an amazing experience; I absolutely loved engaging with the kids and partaking in their excitement. I can't wait to volunteer in more sessions both online and in person. Also, as the Director of Fundraising for the Community Women's Initiative, I'm so grateful to be a part of RBS, as they have been such a generous partner for two years and it is lovely to help continue this partnership!



RBS Training Sessions



On April 5th, the Reading Bear Society held a virtual Dr. Bear training session to introduce our members to the online delivery of our Dr. Bear visits. It was an excellent opportunity for members from different sites to connect! Thank you to Kat and Mariam for hosting this informative session.



On September 28th, Vancouver Chapter co-chairs Alissa and Grace hosted another Dr. Bear training session to welcome all our newest volunteers. There were 35 attendees at our event to train for upcoming online Dr. Bear visits, and we hope to move to our in-person version soon.



Volunteer Profile: Alissa Zhang, MD 2024

In each newsletter, we profile some of the many valued supporters and volunteers of the Reading Bear Society. In this edition, we are proud to feature Alissa Zhang, MD 2024, Co-chair of the RBS Vancouver Chapter.

Tell us about yourself.

I recently graduated from McMaster University from the Bachelor of Health Sciences program with a Child Health Specialization. I am currently in my second year at the Vancouver Fraser Medical Program with an interest in pediatrics. In my spare time, I love playing rugby, going on runs, hiking new trails and playing spikeball with friends!



How did you become involved in the Reading Bear?

I have always been passionate about early childhood education and fostering community, so after hearing about all the programming that RBS organizes, I knew I wanted to be involved in any capacity I could. I am so grateful to be able to contribute meaningfully to children and their families, especially during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is your current role with the RBS?

I am currently a co-chair of the RBS Vancouver Chapter, alongside Grace Kim. We help to lead of team of dedicated volunteers that contribute to the various initiatives and programming that the RBS Vancouver Chapter organizes, from leading Dr. Bear visits to creating educational resources for children and families. Grace and I have also started a suggested reading list called “Grace and Alissa’s Reading Corner”, where we showcase fun and exciting books and stories each month!

What is your best memory of RBS?

My favourite memory of RBS so far was my first Dr. Bear visit. Despite the virtual nature of the visit, we all dressed up as bears with our bear hats and bear suits, which definitely brought a smile to my face even before we began the visit. I was so happy to see that the students were listening attentively and eager to participate in all of the activities that we had planned for them. The students enjoyed the fun videos and small skits that we had prepared, and many laughs were shared by the students! This visit really showed me the power that having fun and creating a safer space to learn and share can have a child’s learning, even through a virtual format.

Why do you support the RBS?

I support the RBS because I believe that it is important to support all children in their growth and development starting from an early age, especially when it comes to early childhood literacy and health literacy. I believe in the RBS philosophy of fostering a stronger sense of community and improving lifelong learning and health outcomes across British Columbia.

RBS Fundraising Committee



Ceilidh Matthews

RBS Co-Chair of Fundraising

Thank you to Ceilidh Matthews, our Co-chair of Fundraising, for her efforts in obtaining books for donation to the Community Women’s Initiative. This past year, along with the support of generous donors and sponsors, the RBS provided over 1000 books and 500 teddy bears to children across Vancouver and Kelowna and more recently to the children at Mom2Mom for their annual summer picnic. Following this successful season, the RBS will be partnering with the CWI once again to bring books and teddy bears to children this holiday season. Starting in September, the RBS will kindly accept donations of books and teddy bears, and we will distribute them to children in December.



Community Women’s Initiative Book Donations

For the second year, RBS was delighted to donate hundreds of books to our partners at the Community Women’s Initiative (CWI) for their Item Drive this August. These books and teddy bears will be delivered to women’s shelters across the Lower Mainland. Thank you to the many book donors for their generous book donations as well as the RBS Fundraising team who sorted the books.



Thank you to Dana and her daughters for their generous book donations

The CWI would like to sincerely thank our partners at The Reading Bear Society for their generous donations of children’s books and teddy bears to our 2021 Item Drive. These items will make a difference in many children’s lives. We are excited to continue working with all the amazing volunteers at RBS for upcoming CWI events.

- Alissa, Chiara, and Nicole (CWI Executives)



We would also like to thank to the teachers and parents at the **Westside Montessori school** for their fifth year of book donations. We are grateful for their ongoing commitment and generosity.

Mom2Mom 2021 Picnic



Grace Kim & Alissa Zhang

Co-chairs of Vancouver Chapter



On August 25th, Grace Kim, Alissa Zhang, and Ted Roh from the RBS Vancouver Chapter attended the annual Mom2Mom Summer Picnic. Dressed up as bears, they shared their favourite books with the children at the picnic and helped to ensure that each child left with a bag full of books, bears, and masks for their next story time fun! RBS has attended the annual M2M Picnic for almost a decade and we are already looking forward to next year's picnic! This is our eighth year of supporting M2M with books and teddy bears.



In August, Mom2Mom celebrated their annual summer picnic. This year was extra special because it was our first official gathering as a community since 2019.

During the picnic, families were entertained by a balloon artist, got henna tattoos, ate delicious pizza, and enjoyed a visit from the Reading Bear Society!

A welcomed guest at all M2M community events, Reading Bear brought bags of books and lots of laughs. Although we are not through the pandemic yet, encouraging moments like these make us hopeful for the future.

- Stephanie, Mom2Mom



RBS Communications



RBS welcomes Brett Collinge as our new Director of Communications

Brett graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry before beginning his MSc at the University of British Columbia in the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Program. He is currently in his second year and conducts his research at the BC Cancer Research Institute. Brett has been involved with the RBS since 2017 and has been a fundamental part of the leadership team within the organization in his role as co-chair of communications. His strong support for engaging youth and promoting early literacy initially brought him to the RBS and he looks forward to continuing his role this year.

Brett: I would like to welcome the new members of the RBS communications team. Thank you for your commitment and time. I look forward to working with you this year.

RBS Communications Team (new members) 2021-2022



Chiara Piccolo, Newsletter Editor & Social Media Coordinator

Chiara grew up in the Vancouver Lower Mainland and completed her BSc Hons at SFU in Biomedical Physiology. She joined RBS to further her passion for childhood education which developed throughout her work as a science instructor and as a behaviour interventionist for with individuals with autism. Chiara hopes to continue working with and advocating for children throughout her roles with RBS.

Yvonne Deng, Social Media Coordinator

Yvonne is currently a medical student at the University of British Columbia. She spent her undergraduate years at McGill University, where she studied immunology. There, she became involved with teaching piano to students at a primary school in Montréal. Now having returned to Vancouver, Yvonne hopes to continue working with and supporting children, particularly those living in underserved communities, through her work in RBS.



Alissa Zhang, Newsletter Editor

Alissa is a medical student at the University of British Columbia. She graduated from McMaster University from the Bachelor of Health Sciences program with a Child Health Specialization. Alissa has worked as a rugby instructor and sport development facilitator for children and youth across Toronto and Hamilton, working to improve physical literacy for children. Alissa is looking forward to working with RBS to improve child literacy and healthy living.

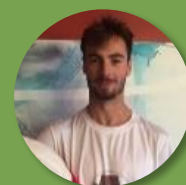


Ted Roh, Website Co-manager

Ted is a second-year medical student at UBC. He was born in South Korea and raised in Burnaby, BC. He completed his BSc in Biology at UBC in 2020. Ted worked as a childcare teacher and hosted science workshops for children prior to medicine. He is particularly interested in studying about family dynamics and technological integration.



Continuing Members:



Gavin Doyle,
Web Manager



Tiana Lee,
Graphic Designer

News

Dr. Caroline's Corner: Monthly Blog Post



Caroline Erdos, Literacy Expert



Read Dr. Erdos' full
blog post [HERE](#)

Dr. Erdos is a consultant for the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board in Quebec and a speech-language pathology advisor for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Canada. Prior to this, she was ALDI Coordinator (Advancing Learning in Differentiation & Inclusion) for the 10 English school boards in Quebec, Canada, where she supported resource teachers through various professional development initiatives. Dr. Erdos has over 20 years' experience as a pediatric speech-language pathologist in a tertiary care centre and has worked as a language and literacy consultant and a legal expert in speech-language pathology. Her areas of expertise include bilingualism and multilingualism, reading impairment, oral language impairment, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and craniofacial disorders. She has guest lectured at Université de Montréal, McGill University, and the McGill University Health Centre. She has also given workshops at numerous conferences across North America and has written and collaborated on several publications.

UBC Medical Undergraduate Society Clubs Night

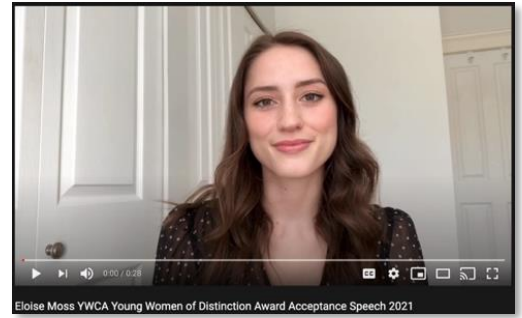
RBS attended the annual UBC Undergraduate Medical Society Clubs Night on September 15th from 6 to 8p.m. Due to the current nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, this clubs night was held entirely online through Zoom. Grace Kim, Victoria Grandi, and Ted Roh helped to present to medical students from across the province interested in volunteering with the Reading Bear Society for the 2021-2022 school year. We look forward to welcoming the new volunteers into the RBS family.



Congratulations



Congratulations to **Eloise Moss** (MD 2023) on receiving the YWCA Young Women of Distinction Award. Eloise won this award because of her dual commitment to RBS and the Community Women's Initiative. Click [HERE](#) to view Eloise's acceptance speech. She is the third RBS nominee and recipient of this prestigious award. Click [HERE](#) to view previous winners.



Our Growing RBS Family

We are delighted to announce the birth of Gaël Chen Ragins, born May 1st in Los Angeles. **Congratulations to Dr. Isabel Chen**, RBS co-founder & vice-president and Dr. Kyle Ragins. Wishing baby Gaël a happy and healthy life.



Congratulations to Victoria Kan, our RBS Director of Administration, on the arrival of her baby, Sophie. *The Peekaboo Baby* is Sophie's favourite book as she loves to look at the photos of real babies and looking at herself in the mirror in the end. Sophia also loves the book *Don't Look Inside*, a tactile monster book with lots of things to touch and play with, which is great for sensory development. Sophie also enjoys her teddy bear from RBS.

Congratulations to Dr. Paul Abraham, RBS board member and former FLEX student, on his recent engagement to Amanda Weest-Lee. Wishing you much happiness in the journey ahead.

Also, congratulations to Paul for the completion of his family medicine residency program in Ottawa. The RBS is delighted to have Paul back in Vancouver to continue his leadership role with the medical student leadership team.



Thank You to our Donors

Thank you to our longstanding major donors **Café Crêpe** and **Z Gallery Arts**. These organizations truly make a huge difference for us, and we are extremely grateful.





The Reading Bear Society



The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in February 2022. Please email rbs.coms@gmail.com if you have any stories or photos you would like to share with us!

In the meantime, please follow us on our social media accounts to stay up to date with all the Reading Bear activities:

www.facebook.com/thereadingbear

www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety

www.thereadingbear.ca