



The Democracy & Me Poetry Contest

The Connection between Poetry, Community and Democracy

The Democracy & Me Poetry Contest invites B.C.'s K-12 students to reflect on the importance of community, civic engagement, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and democracy. In developing creative poetry or spoken word responses to the contest's questions, contestants are asked to reflect on how their voice offers a unique medium to express one's identity, culture, and connection to community.

Jointly hosted by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and the Office of the Speaker, this contest is open to all B.C. students. We encourage teachers to share this contest with their colleagues and get their whole class involved!

The contest began on October 27, 2021, and closes on February 28, 2022. For more information, please visit our contest website at <https://democracyandme.ca>. If you have any questions, send an email to poetrycontest@leg.bc.ca.

We look forward to reading and listening to your class's entries!



Download the Poetry Contest poster [here](#) to hang in your classroom!

Black History Month in British Columbia

February 2022 is Black History Month in British Columbia! While there's still much progress to be made towards meaningful equality, it's valuable to look at the past and see how far we've come. For example, the first Black woman elected to any provincial legislature in Canada was [MLA Rosemary Brown](#), who was elected in 1972 to represent the constituency of Vancouver-Burrard. A recipient of the Order of British Columbia and the Order of Canada, Rosemary Brown worked tirelessly to advance equality and reduce race and gender-based discrimination. Another trailblazer is [MLA Emery Barnes](#), who, in 1994, became the first Black man to serve as Speaker in any legislature in Canada. As an MLA, he worked with the B.C. Black History Awareness Society to establish February as Black History Month.

For more information about Rosemary Brown, Emery Barnes, and other Black history-makers in B.C. politics, check out our [Black History in B.C. Fact Sheet](#), which was developed in partnership with the BC Black History Awareness Society.

The House Returns this Spring

And we have some learning resources for you!



The Legislative Assembly is back with a new session starting on February 8th! While the opening of a new session is usually filled with pomp and circumstance with a marching band, cannons, inspection of the guard and the Speech from the Throne read by the Lieutenant Governor, it can also raise lots of questions. Who is the Lieutenant Governor? What is the Speech from the Throne? Why should I pay attention? We're here to help answer these questions with the assistance of our learning resources.

For example, we recently created a [new video](#) on the role of the Lieutenant Governor and their relationship with the Crown, premised around a very special flag that only flies when the Lieutenant Governor is in the Parliament Buildings. For students who want to learn more about the Speech from the Throne, we created a [fact sheet](#) outlining the origins of the speech and its significance in setting the tone for the government's legislative agenda. Lastly, our Discover Your Legislature website features a detailed explanation about the debate following the [throne speech and why it matters](#).

Here comes the Budget

As BCTI alumni, you'll likely remember that the spring sitting also includes the presentation of the provincial budget and the estimates debate. We know that these aren't the most exciting topics (at least for students!), so we'd like to share some other resources that can help engage and educate your class. One resource we're especially proud of is a BCTI Lesson Plan called [Creating a Budget: Who Wants Pie?](#) Designed around the Social Studies 5 curriculum - but easily adapted to other grade levels and courses - this lesson plan involves a classroom-wide budgeting activity where students discuss, debate, and prioritize how much money should be given to supply the items necessary to run their classroom and school. We've heard from teachers that it's always surprising to see how different groups of students interpret and analyze what they perceive to be the most important items in a classroom as they estimate how much money they actually cost!

Of course, to make sure that you and your students have a good understanding of the Legislative Assembly's fiscal processes, we recommend that you check out a couple more resources on our website. First is the [Budget Process Fact Sheet](#), which outlines in plain language how the provincial budget cycle works. This can be complimented with a more detailed explanation of how parliamentary processes like the budget debate and estimates debate occur in [Discover Your Legislature](#).

On the topic of provincial budgets, here's a fun opportunity for you and your class: participating in the budget process! Each year, typically around the summer months, the Legislative Assembly's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services holds its annual pre-budget consultations. This is an all-party committee composed of Members of the Legislative Assembly, and one of its roles is to consult with British Columbians to determine what they want to see included in the provincial budget. Once the public consultations are completed, the Committee crafts a series of recommendations of what issues they believe the government should address in the budget. This consultation process is open to individuals, groups, and organizations, and can give classrooms a rare opportunity to meet with and present before a parliamentary committee. For more information on this process, check out the parliamentary committee's website at <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees>.

Online Programming

With the challenges of COVID, it can feel like we've all been pushed into the deep end of online learning, whether we're prepared for it or not. That's why the Parliamentary Education Office is pleased to continue offering some of our favourite virtual programs, letting students connect with their Legislative Assembly without having to travel to Victoria!

Virtual Speaker in the Schools Program

The Honourable Raj Chouhan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, would like to meet with you and your students! Through the Virtual Speaker in the Schools program, Mr. Speaker will join your class to discuss his roles as Speaker and as an MLA. After a short introduction about the work of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker is pleased to participate in a Q&A with the students to help answer any questions they might have. Classes are encouraged to send three questions in advance of the virtual visit to get the Q&A started and then individual students are encouraged to come up to the computer's microphone/camera and pose their queries directly to Mr. Speaker. It's an illuminating opportunity for students to learn about a possible career as an MLA and what it's like representing the different interests of British Columbians in the Legislative Assembly.

For more information, visit: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/content-peo/Pages/Speaker-in-the-Schools.aspx>



The Honourable Raj Chouhan,
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Virtual Classroom Program

The Virtual Classroom program provides students with an opportunity to learn about the Legislative Assembly in a fun and engaging way online. The presentation is hosted by one of our Parliamentary Tour Guides and includes lots of fun stories and interesting photos of the Parliament Buildings from the time of their construction up to today. Students will learn about the key people who work in the Legislative Assembly, how a bill becomes a law, and the important symbols of the Legislative Assembly. We're always eager to book with teachers that are either familiar or new to the workings of the Assembly, so feel free to reach out and book a Zoom session for your class! And we also love to invite your local MLA to join the session, when they're available.

For more details on the Virtual Classroom, visit: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/content-peo/Pages/Online-Learning>.

New Seasons of the Year Colouring Sheets



As we're all acutely aware, British Columbia's various seasons can bring the sun, clouds, rain, snow, hail, and much, much more. In recognizing the immense range of welcome (and un-welcome) weather that we experience throughout the province, we've put together some new colouring sheets that are perfect for students in the younger years. These sheets consist of four unique scenes depicting what fall, spring, summer, and winter look like from the front of the Parliament Buildings, and are available on our [learning resources webpage](#) under the Activity Sheets heading.

From Tour Guide to Teacher

By Stephen Bagan, SD61 Teacher-on-Call

After seven years of working my way towards becoming a teacher, I'm excited to have recently joined the profession. Although I have had my sights set on teaching for several years, the opportunities that I've taken advantage of - particularly those offered through the Legislative Assembly of B.C. - are now serving me well as I begin my career. Such offerings include the summer Tour Guide Program, the B.C. Legislative Internship Program, and briefly working as a Constituency Assistant for an MLA.

My first opportunity - working as a Tour Guide - was a phenomenal experience and a great way to spend my summers as an undergraduate student in Victoria. A highlight was giving tours to school groups from around the province and seeing students' eyes light up as they entered the beautiful Parliament Buildings. It was here that I had the honour to offer the first daily Spanish tour, giving me a new level of confidence in my language and communication skills, which no doubt served me well in my endeavor to become a Spanish and English teacher.

During my summers as a tour guide, there was one persistent comment that I heard repeated by teachers: I was thanked for teaching their class about our provincial political system, which I came to realize was an area of the B.C. curriculum that teachers sometimes struggled with. I always felt mixed about this comment. On the one hand, I was certainly proud to be recognized for promoting an understanding (and hopefully an appreciation) of B.C.'s governance system among students; but on the other hand, I questioned why so many teachers found it challenging to meaningfully engage their students with civics and provincial politics. It's my hope that teachers across subject areas can be models of civic engagement and utilize the resources and opportunities available through organizations like the Legislative Assembly.

Throughout my recent experiences in schools, whether it was volunteering for classroom experience, teaching during practicums, or now working as a Teacher-on-Call, I have met many eager and inspiring students that will likely go on to be the next generation of leaders in our province and country. Nonetheless, I believe that it's vital for teachers to connect students with the opportunities that will help them best achieve their potential. The Legislative Assembly has provided me with the opportunities that defined my path to becoming an educator, and I look forward to encouraging students to take full advantage of the Assembly's programs and to become engaged citizens.



Mr. Bagan participated in the 2020 B.C. Legislative Internship Program (middle row, far left)



Parliamentary Trivia!

Q. **Who was the first woman in British Columbia to read the Throne Speech?**

Check out [Discover Your Legislature](#) to find the answer. The first correct answer will win a prize! Email PEO@leg.bc.ca to submit. Good luck!

New Video Resources for your Classroom

With the technical expertise of Hansard Services and the acting skills of the Parliamentary Tours program, we've created two new series of educational videos for your classrooms to enjoy!

In **Places & Stories**, join us to explore some of the special tales and unique features of the B.C. Parliament Buildings. From the colouring of its copper roof to the mysterious plaster faces that gaze upon the Legislative Chamber, this series intertwines some of the most interesting aspects of the Parliament Buildings with the many (and sometimes conflicting) stories that surround them.

[Golden Jubilee Window](#) - examine one of the Parliament Buildings' newest stained-glass windows.

[The Legislative Chamber](#) - look at the most important room in the Buildings.

[Upper Upper Rotunda](#) - experience the dizzying heights of the Buildings' uppermost rotunda.

[The Lieutenant Governor's Flagpole](#) - see one flagpole that's only used on very special occasions.

[The Mystery of the Roof Top Construction](#) - travel to the roof and learn about the domes' unique colour.

[Up to the Dome](#) - hike up to the top of the tallest dome in the Parliament Buildings.

In **Parliamentary Players**, follow the lives of three people who heavily influenced the political landscape of British Columbia. Each told by one of our Parliamentary Players, these individuals once walked the corridors of power within the Parliament Buildings, and through their work, they managed to shape our province into what it is today.

[Francis Rattenbury](#) - meet the architect behind many of the province's most iconic buildings, most notably the provincial Parliament Buildings in Victoria.

[Thomas Uphill](#) - meet one of British Columbia's longest-serving MLAs and the most outspoken representative for the mountain town of Fernie.

[Laura Jamieson](#) - meet the suffragist, educator, and MLA who was a driving force behind many of British Columbia's early social and political reforms.

Upcoming Dates:

[February 6](#) - Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee

[February 8](#) - New Session of the Legislative Assembly Begins

[February 15](#) - Canada Flag Day

[February 22](#) - Budget Day

[March 24](#) - Commonwealth Day

Land Acknowledgement

We wrote this newsletter in the Parliament Buildings, which are located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking (Le-KWUNG-en) peoples. Now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, these Coast Salish peoples have a rich culture and history dating back thousands of years. We are thankful to live and work here.

