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-  www.thereadingbear.ca

The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Valentine's Edition | February 14, 2022



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



Dear RBS Friends,

In the spirit of love, our Valentine's Day newsletter celebrates the power of relationships across the province's four RBS chapters (Vancouver, Kelowna, Victoria, and Prince George), reaching all the way to our friends in eastern Canada. This is always a special holiday for the Reading Bear, as we believe it best reflects the message of love, we hope to spread by all the work we do. Love is the *raison d'être*, our love of children and our communities.

What an incredible new year filled with everything we love: dedicated volunteers sharing their time and passion for children within so many communities across the province. Chapters continue to make strides to expand the [A Visit to Dr. Bear](#) program virtually, as well as by finding new ways to support young children with books and teddy bears via many new fundraising initiatives.

In this Valentine's Day edition, you will catch a glimpse of just a few of the remarkable Reading Bear volunteers and medical students who have inspired us. You will hear from the FLEX medical students, RBS chapter chairs, and other members such as our mother-son team, Dr. Caroline Erdos and her son Jamie Beaulieu. Underpinning all of these achievements is the support given by our various teams—communication, fundraising, FLEX, and advisory.

Thank you to each and every one of you for bringing your heart, joy, and love to our community and for making this effort such an enjoyable endeavour for us all. A special thank you to our donors. You make this all possible.

Wishing you a Happy Valentine's Day,
Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD

Click to view the RBS Valentine's Video below



Love is... our Growing RBS Family ❤️



Isabel Chen, Vice-President and Co-founder, her son Gaël and partner Kyle



Jennifer Ji, artist and member of the FLEX committee, with toddler Evelyn and partner Victor



Our very own panda bear family: Dana Anderson with her daughters, RBS advisory board member and niece to Trevor Newton



Victoria Kan, Director of Administration, with her daughter Sophie and partner Sachi

Reading Bear Family Spotlight



We are delighted to have our first mother-son team. Two years ago the RBS recruited the support of Dr. Caroline Erdos, literacy expert, to assist FLEX student Alex DeGrace on a project entitled [Understanding Dyslexia](#), along with Dr. Linda Siegel, RBS FLEX content expert, and others.

Dr. Caroline Erdos' desire to assist young families led to the creation of a blog called [Dr. Caroline's Corner](#), which features various topics of interest to young families, such as reading without books and what reading to children teaches them. Her son Jamie Beaulieu followed suit as he was assisting youth in various programs to promote literacy. He did a summer practicum in 2020 to update a tip sheet on [Early Reading Tips](#).

Last year Jamie translated the *Visit to Dr. Bear* book to French and is in the final stages of creating a video entitled *Une visite chez Dr. Ourse*, allowing us to reach more children.

Thank you both for your remarkable contributions to the Reading Bear Society.

About Jamie Beaulieu:

Jamie is a final year master's student in neuroscience at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. His research focuses on better understanding the mechanism of action of medulloblastoma, the most common cancerous brain tumour in children. He will be starting his PhD at Université de Montréal in the fall, where he will be using genetic engineering techniques to manipulate stem cell fate. His goal is to translate his work into novel therapeutics that can be used by medical practitioners. Jamie has been involved with various programs promoting childhood literacy. He has volunteered at school boards and public libraries, helping elementary school children with learning difficulties stay on track with their peers. He has been part of the Reading Bear Society since summer 2020 and is currently working on producing French material to broaden the reach of the RBS's promotion of literacy.



[Read more about Dr. Caroline Erdos here](#)

RBS FLEX Projects



Our evolution in the past nine years: FLEX medical practicum students

Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD, FLEX Activity Supervisor

In 2013, myself and three medical students joined forces to build the RBS foundation: Christine Wang (MD '16), Kay Fung (MD '16), and Isabel Chen (MD '15), who continue to assist in leadership roles: Isabel, vice-president and co-chair of the FLEX committee, along with co-chair and board director, Kay, and Christine as a RBS FLEX student mentor. Kay and Christine were part of the first group practicum students. This is outstanding leadership and commitment to service.

In the past nine years, the RBS has had the opportunity to support 37 medical and practicum students in the [RBS FLEX program](#), many doing all three FLEX cycles for a total 56 cycles. Since the start of the RBS, medical student projects have contributed to developing three areas of the RBS: 1) buddy reading program, 2) A Visit to Dr. Bear, and 3) resources on early childhood topics.

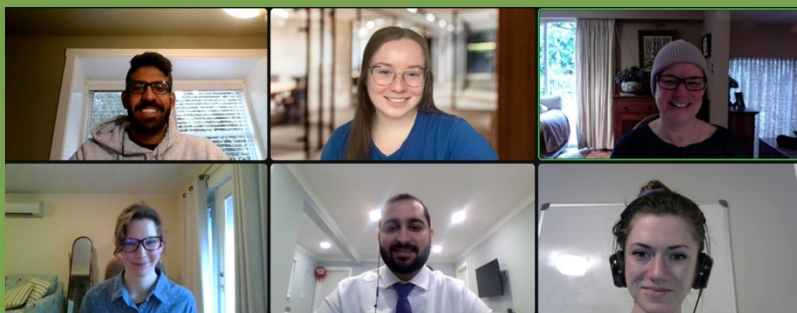
The Buddy Reading Program. For the first four years, the focus was on creating an activity booklet for the *buddy reading program*, which promotes social-emotional health and early literacy. The *My Bear Book* was created with a team of early literacy experts, including Dr. Linda Siegel and elementary school teachers and was piloted for three years. The activity booklet was designed by artist Jennifer Ji (MD/PhD '23) of the FLEX committee. The buddy reading program continues to run independently in schools in Vancouver with great success and has reached nearly 3,000 students, with hopes that it will restart next fall after an 18-month break.

A Visit to Dr. Bear program. In 2018, Amy Plessis (MD '20), founder of the RBS in Kelowna, member of the student advisor committee, and second-year pediatrics resident, created the first draft of *A Visit to Dr. Bear* as a FLEX student. Many students followed her, including former student and current board director, Paul Abraham (MD '19) and Bhavan Panghali, (MD '20) student advisor, second-year pediatric resident, who continued to pilot this program which is now being delivered virtually with a [module guide](#) for teachers and a video for at-home viewing entitled *A Visit to Dr. Bear at Home: [An interactive guide](#)*.

Resources on early childhood topics. The first tip sheets were developed in 2013 by Christine Wang for young families on when to bring a child to the doctor. There are now 19 resources, including [info sheets and videos](#), and a [book corner](#) on topics relevant to young families such as handwashing, healthy eating, and more.



FLEX students receive mentorship from various groups



The 2022 FLEX Team meeting on Zoom.

Top row, left to right: Arman Singh (MD' 22), Victoria Grandi (MD' 24), Joanne Roussy (RBS President & Co-founder). Bottom row, left to right: Alexandra Jamieson (MD' 24), Arjun Arora (MD' 22), Lauren Gingerich (MD' 22).

Mentorship is key to the RBS FLEX and is one of the foundational pillars of the RBS. One component of this pillar is the contributions of [medical student advisors](#). At the onset of FLEX, students are paired with a former graduate from the student advisory committee to provide an orientation to the RBS, with special attention to communication guidelines and email etiquette. Dr. Trevor Newton, RBS secretary-treasurer along with the medical student advisory committee have written comprehensive communication guidelines to best support incoming students. This is key, as good patient care and multidisciplinary interactions relies on strong communication skills. Mentors also offer guidance to the students during the course of their four years of studies, including CaRMS advice and references for residency programs.

Students meet weekly, which starts with a mindful practice followed by a fun fact to connect as a group. Students take turns as moderator, while another student takes minutes that are accompanied by action items to accomplish before the next meeting. This process was created by Dr. Isabel Chen, RBS VP and co-chair of the FLEX committee. Students are introduced to various search engines to review the multidisciplinary knowledge development in their field of interest. Furthermore, students share and discuss research articles and provide feedback on materials that the students are creating with an emphasis on the social determinants of health.

Additionally, students are supported by different committees. All projects are reviewed by members of the content [expert committee](#), and the [board of advisors](#) and students have the opportunity to receive feedback from experts in their field, including mothers, nurses, teachers, scholars, counsellors, psychologists, pediatricians, and physicians. Students also have the opportunity to do Dr. Bear in classrooms and virtual visits, as well as [community](#) visits to our [friends](#) at Mom2Mom and the Canuck Place Children's Hospice so they understand the setting for which the programs are developed and delivered and have an opportunity to interact with teachers and children.

Furthermore, students have presented [posters](#) at conferences for their FLEX projects and have received awards and scholarships for their endeavours. Three RBS FLEX students have received the [Young Women of Distinction Award \(YWCA\)](#).

Finally, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our [teams](#). Thank you to our large team of [experts](#) and all the graduates who have stayed on to support their fellow classmates. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support. A special thank you to Dr. Lynn Miller, Stephenie Gold, Dr. Janet Greenman, Dr. Christine Voss, Lynne Stanger, Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier, Julie Gelson, and Danielle Neer. It has been a pleasure to see how far we have come and where we are headed.

RBS FLEX Project Student Profiles

Welcoming back our FLEX students for 2022

We continue to be amazed by our inspiring cohort of FLEX medical students. This past December, three fourth-year FLEX students joined forces for their FLEX rotation with two second-year students, Victoria Grandi and Alexandra Jamieson. Returning for their third FLEX cycle, Arman Singh and Arjun Arora created a tip sheet on [sleep](#), which included a list of children's books for [bedtime](#) created by Alexandra Jamieson in Victoria. Lauren Gingerich created an info sheet entitled *Yoga with your Child*. Our special congratulations go to Victoria Grandi, for being selected by Children's Healthcare Canada to feature her FLEX project on [Reducing Needle Fear](#) in their **poster gallery** during the ICC Vaccination Conversations Pop-Up event that was held on January 27. We are excited to view her upcoming video entitled: *A Visit to the Vaccination Clinic* along with Dana Anderson, member of the RBS advisory board, and her twin daughters. The enthusiasm of our students and volunteers is contagious, and they really inspire us of how bright the future is.



Welcoming our New RBS FLEX Student Advisor: Arman Singh, MD 2022

"It has been a pleasure working with the RBS over our last three FLEX cycles. My research partner Arjun and I entered the RBS as first-year students and are now close to graduating. Through our projects with the RBS, we've learned how to use various search engines, such as CINAHL, Cochrane Reviews, and OVID Medline to synthesize information from a variety of sources. In keeping with the multi-disciplinary theme of the RBS, we've been lucky to receive feedback from teachers, pediatricians, nurses, psychologists, parents, and other experts, allowing us to design resources that will actually be utilized by the general public. We have hosted a booth on FLEX day and had the opportunity to do Dr. Bear visits to children at various school sites with StrongStart, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 and 2 students. We've always been well supported by our FLEX advisor Joanne, as well as the many other RBS members, including past graduates and working physicians who we have been in close contact with through our projects. We are very thankful for our time with the RBS and hope to be able to help in the future."





Victoria Grandi, MD 2024

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.

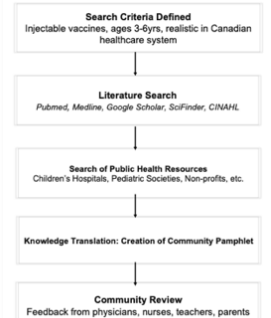
Reducing Needle Fear in Children Ages 3-6 years old A Review of Evidence-Based Strategies



AUTHOR
Victoria Grandi, BfSc., M.D. Candidate

BACKGROUND: Needle procedures are reported by children to be the most feared and painful medical experiences, with upwards of 63% of children experiencing needle fear in their lifetime. Complications that arise from needle anxiety include injuries to both the child and care providers from struggling, kicking and other escape behaviours, additional time and effort required at vaccine appointments, and the avoidance of needles in the future. This puts at risk the health and safety of individuals and a public health system that relies on herd immunity to stop the spread preventable illnesses. The median age of onset for needle anxiety is 5 years old. It is crucial to focus fear and pain reduction efforts to this critical period of needle anxiety development.

METHODS



Pediatric needle anxiety and pain management are **underprioritized** and **undertreated** despite the routine nature of childhood vaccinations.

Here are some **evidence-based** ways you can help your patients, families, and the community

turn this...

...to this!



Scan to access the community-friendly multimedia pamphlet

Knowledge Translation: From the Literature to the Community
The purpose of this project was to translate the main findings of the literature search into a format accessible and useful for the community. The goal is to raise awareness of tools that are evidence-based, time- and cost-efficient, and already available to the general population. This resulted in the curation of a multimedia pamphlet, combining a fun "A-B-C" approach with links to videos, books, educational material, and more.

Suitable For

- Parents and caregivers of young children
- Educators teaching children about healthcare and routine vaccination
- Posting in a pediatrician office or vaccine clinic

PARTNERSHIP



Victoria Grandi, BfSc., M.D. Candidate
Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD
Dr. Lynn Miller, PhD, R.Psych



Click to view Victoria's info sheet on [Reducing Needle Fear.](#)

The photo on the left depicts Victoria's poster which was presented during the ICC Vaccination Conversations Pop-

Click [HERE](#) to listen to Victoria's Project



The photo to the right depicts Victoria Grandi filming the upcoming RBS video: *A visit to the vaccination clinic*. Dana Anderson, member of the RBS advisory board and her twin daughters are also present as pandas.





Arjun Arora, MD 2022

Topic: Healthy Sleep Guidelines, Behaviours, and Establishing Routine in Preschoolers

Arjun is a fourth-year medical student in the UBC Vancouver Fraser Medical Program. Born and raised in B.C., Arjun previously completed a BSc in Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He was then briefly in the School of Nursing at UBC before entering medical school. Arjun is working with another RBS Flex student, Arman, to design a pamphlet on healthy sleep behaviours, guidelines, and establishing routine in preschoolers. Arjun conducted a literature search on sleep concerns in parents of preschoolers and possible interventions to increase healthy sleep behaviours, as well as cultural differences in co-sleeping. Arjun loves spending time outdoors, especially with his dog Maximus (a 125lb. Newfie/Italian Mastiff/Border Collie mix!). When Arjun is not outdoors or spending time in LSC lecture halls, he enjoys playing ice hockey. Arjun is excited to continue working with the Reading Bear Society to promote literacy and wellbeing in children.



Arjun Arora (left) and Arman Singh (right) return for their third FLEX cycle in 2022. Picture taken on FLEX day at IRC.



Arman Singh, MD 2022

Topic: Healthy Sleep Guidelines, Behaviours, and Establishing Routine in Preschoolers

Arman grew up in Surrey and completed his undergraduate degree in Biomedical Physiology at Simon Fraser University. Before entering medical school, he worked at a homeless shelter and as a program director for inner city children with the City of Surrey. Throughout his childhood, Arman always had a passion for reading and school visits with the Reading Bear have allowed him the opportunity to pass this passion on to future generations. In addition, Arman's experiences working with people in disadvantaged circumstances have influenced him to be a health advocate for those in need of help. In prior FLEX cycles, Arman and his partner Arjun developed a pamphlet on screen time tips for children aged 0-6. In fourth-year, they have developed a pamphlet for sleep tips in the 3-5 age group



Sleep Tips For Children Aged 3-5



Background

- Sleep is key for the healthy growth and development of children.
- Sleep helps with a child's attention, learning and memory.
- The Canadian Paediatric Society (2017) recommends that children aged 3-5 years old sleep 10-13 hours per day, which includes naps.
- **Common sleep problems** in children include resisting going to bed, trouble falling asleep and waking at night.

How to Help Your Child

Set a regular sleep schedule

- Create a schedule to ensure your child has consistent nap and bedtimes.
- This means sleeping and waking at the same time every day, including the weekends.
- A bedtime between 7 and 8 p.m. is appropriate for children three to five years old.

Engage in a bedtime routine

Having a consistent bedtime routine helps your child gradually relax and feel safe before going to sleep. Here is an example of a calming routine:

- 6:30p.m. – Warm bath or gentle massage
- 6:50 p.m. – Put on PJs and brush teeth
- 7:00 p.m. – Share a happy story from your day and read a favourite book
- 7:15 p.m. – **Bear breathing** (take 3 deep breaths in and out) and fall asleep with a teddy bear

Other relaxing bedtime activities:

- Singing a favourite song together, try "[You are my sunshine](#)"
- Quiet music
- Snuggle time, hugs and kisses
- Recall a positive memory
- A quick meditation routine, such as [Body Scan](#)
- Bedtime yoga, such as [Cosmic Kids](#)



Click **HERE** to see Arman & Arjun's
Sleep Info Sheet

Welcome to our newest FLEX students



Click **HERE** to check out Alexandra's Bedtime Reading List

Alexandra Jamieson, MD 2024

Alexandra is from the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island. She studied biology at the University of Victoria and worked in accounting before entering UBC's Island Medical Program, in which she is a second-year student. She has compiled a list of children's bedtime books to accompany the sleep pamphlet made by fourth-year students Arman and Arjun. She plans to collect more book recommendations on topics such as anxiety and to build on the yoga project started by fourth-year student Lauren. She is also working on a literature review focusing on the intersection of sleep, emotional regulation, and anxiety in



Bedtime story books Children aged 2-6

About Me

Hi! I'm Alexandra, a member of the Class of 2024 at the University of British Columbia's Island Medical Program. I'm passionate about children's health and literacy. As a child, I had a whole zoo of stuffed animals, and I loved to read Holly Hobbie's *Toot & Puddle* series and the *Franklin the Turtle* books by Brenda Clark and Paulette Bourgeois.



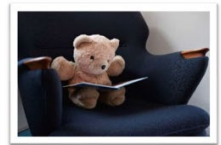
Sleep and Bedtime

Reading is an evidenced-based strategy to help create a healthy bedtime routine for children.

Below is a selection of bedtime stories in a variety of styles. Use this list as a starting point to find a new favourite nighttime book to share with your child.

Bedtime Books

- *Arlo: The lion who couldn't sleep* by Catherine Rayner
- *Bear Can't Sleep* by Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman (illustrations)
- *Go to Sleep, Little Creep* by David Quinn and Ashley Spires (illustrations)
- *How Do You Go to Sleep?* by Kate McMullan and Sydney Hanson (illustrations)
- *The Bedtime Book* by Todd Parr
- *Kiss Good Night* by Amy Hest and Anita Jeram (illustrations)
- *Night-Night, Forest Friends* by Annie Bach
- *Good Night, Sleep Tight!* by Claire Freedman and Rory Tyger (illustrations)
- *Good Night Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Bedtime Story* by Mariam Gates and Sara Jane Hinder (illustrations)
- *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?* by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth (illustrations)



RBS FLEX Project, Spring 2022, Developed by Alexandra Jamieson (UBC MD 2024).

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.

Yoga with Your 3 to 5 Year Old Child

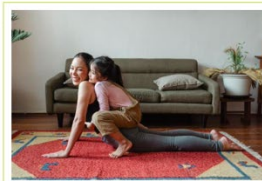


Yoga with Your 3 to 5 Year Old Child

What is yoga?

You probably use yoga every day, when you tell your children to take a deep breath, when you stretch first thing in the morning, when you move your bodies in mindful ways and notice how it

Yoga is the practice of noticing your breathing, and the way you feel, as you move your body and stretch. It can be focused only on breathing, it can focus on stretches, it can focus on relaxing; whatever you need while you practice.



The benefits of yoga for you and your child

First and foremost, one-on-one time with your child nurtures your relationship.

Self-regulation

- Manage daily emotional ups and downs
- Recognize feelings in their bodies and which emotions they represent
- Calm down and self-soothe

Attention and focus

- Bring attention to the present moment
- Focus on bodily sensations, such as in their belly, chest, and muscles
- Improve focus at preschool

Grounding

- Grounding means being firmly rooted – like a tree supported by roots
- Establish a familiar and safe space
- Provide a sense of stability through predictable routines



Lauren Gingerich, MD 2022

This year, I've worked on a guide to yoga to improve mindfulness and bring some easy, at home, mental wellness practices to families with small children.



The literature shows significant benefit to attention, focus, and anxiety for preschool children who practice yoga, as well as continued benefit as they age. The literature search consisted of the following search engines OVID Medline, CINAHL, and PsycInfo. Search terms included 'Child, preschool (age 3-5)', 'yoga', 'mindfulness', 'vagus nerve', 'vagal stimulation'. There are tons of great resources available for parents to explore yoga and mindfulness with their children, and future FLEX students are already planning to create more resources for the RBS such as favorite yoga children's books and a teddy bear yoga practice video.

RBS Prince George Chapter



Carmen Huang, MD 2025
RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair



Danielle Sidsworth, MD 2024
RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair

Chapter Update: The Prince George Chapter came to life this fall with the recruitment of over 10 volunteers signing up! We are impressed at the excitement of our classmates to present Doctor Bear to the community. Carmen and Danielle have also joined the social media team this year as social media coordinators and have been busy keeping everyone updated on RBS activities! Keep an eye out online for new posts!

Although the COVID-19 pandemic set back the plans to deliver “A Visit to Doctor Bear” to elementary students around the city, the Chapter was still able to be involved in the community. Danielle and Carmen organized a Holiday Book and Bear drive, with all donations going to Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) to support holiday gifts for children in care. Every year CSFS puts together holiday packages and gifts for children in care. Carrier Sekani Family Services has been providing health, child and family, and legal and research services to First Nations people in the Carrier and Sekani territory for 30 years. Donations were collected from the public by placing collection boxes at local businesses, including Gingerbread Toys, The Makerie, and Second Cup. The Prince George Figure Skating Club collected donations from their club members as well. Many medical students, including a very generous Ted Schokking (a volunteer for RBS) donated to the drive, which made this a very successful first fundraiser!


The RBS is delighted to welcome the Carrier Sekani Family Services to our Friends category, so we may continue to nurture this relationship over the upcoming years in Prince George.



The PG Team all dressed up for their holiday photo as they prepared for their Bear and Book Drive this past holiday



Note from Carrier Sekani
Sekanki: On behalf of the Carrier Sekani Family Services thank you so much for the teddy bear and book drive donations! What an awesome way to engage, teach, and prepare children for when they have to visit a doctor, as well as the very important focus on early literacy. Our families will definitely love all the books, toys, and teddy bears that were so



CARRIER SEKANI
 FAMILY SERVICES



**Carmen and Danielle collecting donations from
 Gingerbread Toys**



**Carmen and Danielle collecting donations from
 Second Cup Café**

RBS Kelowna Chapter

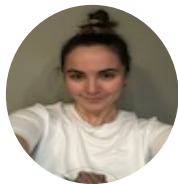


Austin Pietramala, MD 2024
RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair



Casey Li, MD 2025
RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair

Chapter Update: Hi, from the Kelowna RBS Chapter. We are excited to share what we have been up to recently. We were able to appoint Cossette Teghtmeyer as our chapter's fundraising coordinator. We are thrilled to have her on board, and her involvement has been instrumental in helping us coordinate our Teddy Bear and Book Drive. We were able to collect over 100 new and lightly used books and over 20 new teddy bears for Mamas for Mamas in Kelowna. Thank you very much to Melissa at Once Upon a Bookstore, Frank at Pandosy Books, and Russ from BC Liquor Store (Lakeshore) for their generous support during the drive. We were able to implement 10 virtual Dr. Bear sessions to Pre-K and K classes this past semester. With SD23, we plan to organize more virtual Dr. Bear sessions in the next few months.



Cosette Teghtmeyer

RBS Kelowna Chapter Fundraising Coordinator

Cosette is an undergraduate student majoring in Psychology, at UBC's Okanagan Campus. She was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, and moved to BC about 10 years ago. Cosette has a keen interest in the field of medicine and aims to develop an outreach program and career focused on providing Northern Canadian First Nations and Indigenous communities with better access to medical care. When Cosette is taking a break from her studies, she volunteers with the Kelowna General Hospital in the perinatal unit, spends time in nature, and enjoys taking her dogs on hikes. Cosette is excited to be a part of the Reading Bear Society and hopes to make a positive impact within the community.



**The Kelowna Team with Melissa Bourdon-King from
Once Upon Bookstore**



**Cosette Teghtmeyer with Russ Carter
from BC Liquor Store**



The Kelowna Team with Kelly Hopkins from Mamas for Mamas



The Kelowna Team with Frank Burger from Pandosy Books

RBS Vancouver Chapter



Grace Kim, MD 2024
RBS Vancouver Chapter Co-chair



Alissa Zhang, MD 2024
RBS Vancouver Chapter Co-chair

Chapter Update:

Last semester, the RBS Vancouver chapter welcomed eight new volunteers to the team! After a successful online orientation, new volunteers observed and conducted four visits with preschools across the Lower Mainland. In total, we were able to share the magic of the Dr. Bear visits with 45 students last semester. Although these visits were virtual, we were so happy to see all the excited faces of the children participating in the Dr. Bear visits and following along with their own teddy bears. It was also heartwarming to see this joy reflected on the smiles on all our volunteers faces! We are thrilled to continue Dr. Bear visits this term and are eager to return to in-person visits when we can.

We also are in the process of creating a Dr. Bear yoga video resource to incorporate into the Dr. Bear visits. This video will consist of several easy poses and flows to help relax and practice mindfulness in a child-friendly way. We are excited to help strengthen physical literacy while having fun and practicing Bear Breathing.

We ended 2021 on a high note with our 8th annual holiday fundraising and book drive. Over 1,000 books and 400 bears were collected this past holiday season. Thank you to our fundraising team, with a special mention to Antonia Bonnis, who delivered 500 books and 200 hundred bears to Kindergarten, Grade 1, and 2 at Queen Alexandra Elementary school and to Thunderbird Elementary school for Valentine's Day.



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

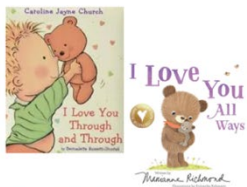
About Us!

Hello everyone, we are Alissa & Grace, second year medical students at UBC, and we are so excited to share some of our favourite books about love during this Valentine's season! One of our favourite books from this list is an adorable book called *I Love you Through and Through*. It speaks on unconditional love with amazing illustrations and fun rhymes. It reminds children how loved they are. For Grace, this book reminded her of her favourite childhood book, *Love You Forever*, by Robert Munsch which her mom used to read for all the time when she was younger. We hope you love these stories as much as we do.



Love

During the pandemic, it is so easy to feel isolated and alone. As Valentine's Day approaches, we wanted to spread the love and share some of our favourite books about the different types of you experience with family, friends, and even your teddy bears. So, grab your loved ones, your favourite bear, a warm blanket, and read these feel-good books together!



Books about Love

- ♥ *I Love You All Ways* by Marianne Richmond, illustrations by Dubravka Kolanovic
- ♥ *I Love You Through and Through* by Bernadette Rossetti-Shustak illustrations by Caroline Jane Church
- ♥ *I'll Always Love You* by Paony Lewis, illustrations by Penny Ives
- ♥ *Mama, Will I Be Yours Forever?* By Anna Pignataro
- ♥ *Me and My Mom!* By Alison Ritchie, illustrations by Alison Edgson
- ♥ *Will You Still Love Me If...?* by Eve Tharlet
- ♥ *Forever I Love You Forever* by Emma Dodd
- ♥ *Love Matters Most* by Mij Kelly & Gerry Turley
- ♥ *I Love You Already!* by Jory John & Benji Davies
- ♥ *Love Block* by Christopher Franceschelli, illustrations by Peski Studio
- ♥ *While We Can't Hug* by Eoin McLaughlin, illustrations by Polly Dunbar
- ♥ *Our Love Grows* by Anna Pignataro
- ♥ *Love the World* by Todd Parr



Developed by VFMP RBS Co-Chairs Alissa Zhang (UBC MD 2024) and Grace Kim (UBC MD 2024). We would also like to thank Vancouver Kidsbooks for their ongoing support.

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Welcome to Alissa and Grace's Reading Corner! They wanted to share some of their favourite books about love during this Valentine's season. Grab your loved ones, your favourite bear, a warm blanket, and read these feel-good books together!

Click [HERE](#) to see Alissa & Grace's List of Books about Love



Alissa meeting Denise Roussy, the heart and soul of the Reading Bear Society.

RBS Fundraising Committee



Antonia Bonnis
RBS Co-chair of Fundraising



Ceilidh Matthews
RBS Co-chair of Fundraising

"I started my journey at RBS when I was in Grade 5, now that I am in my last year of high school I have realized just how amazing the Reading Bear Society truly is. Over the years I have been able to connect with my school community through fundraising while supporting literacy resources across Vancouver. It has been an honour being a part of the team for so long and the experience has been one of the most rewarding. To this day I recall the moment it "clicked" for me. During a particularly cold Vancouver winter, I hauled books towards an elementary school. While making my way to the school's big double doors, I noticed a girl similar in age to me peeking around the corner. I was ten years old, and recall finding it odd when she asked, "Can I have a book?" I passed her a few novels. As I watched her face brighten with joy, I knew I wanted to volunteer with the Reading Bear Society for as long as I could. I have now been a part of the Reading Bear community for seven years and am continuously inspired by both the community of volunteers and the families who seek aid. By coming together as a community and doing our best to contribute our time and efforts, I feel that we can make a difference around something I believe to be an urgent issue." – Antonia Bonnis



Sisters Antonia and Anais Bonnis delivered boxes to Thunderbird Elementary school this Valentine's

Books and teddy bears found homes at Thunderbird Elementary School for the Kindergarten and Grade 1 children. Antonia Bonnis who raised the donations, first visited the school in 2013 to do buddy reading with a Kindergarten child. She is one of our longest standing volunteers.



Alissa Zhang and Chiara Piccolo made a special Valentine's drop-off of teddy bears to the Canuck Place Children's Hospice

Another Year, Another Card

Jennifer Ji MD/PhD 2023, Artist in Residence



Thank you, Jennifer Ji, for another beautiful Christmas card this past holiday season. Since her involvement with the Reading Bear in 2015, Jennifer has helped illustrate the "My Bear Book", and "A Visit to Dr. Bear". We appreciate her hard work and artistry! The illustration on the right is called "LOVE".



RBS Communications Team



Brett Collinge

RBS Director of Communications

I would like to welcome Carmen Huang (PG Chapter Co-Chair) to the communications team. We are so glad to have her join as the co-editor of the newsletter along with co-chair Chiara Piccolo, to create this edition of the Valentine's Newsletter. I am also delighted to welcome Jade Chen to the communications team as the website co-manager. Welcome to you both.



Jade Chen

RBS Social Media Coordinator & Website Manager

Jade is a third-year computer science student at the University of British Columbia. Having tutored high school students in Taiwan for their TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam, she recognizes the importance of early literacy and thus joined the Reading Bear Society to make a positive impact within her local community. In her free time, she enjoys rock climbing, hiking/backpacking, cycling, and cooking.



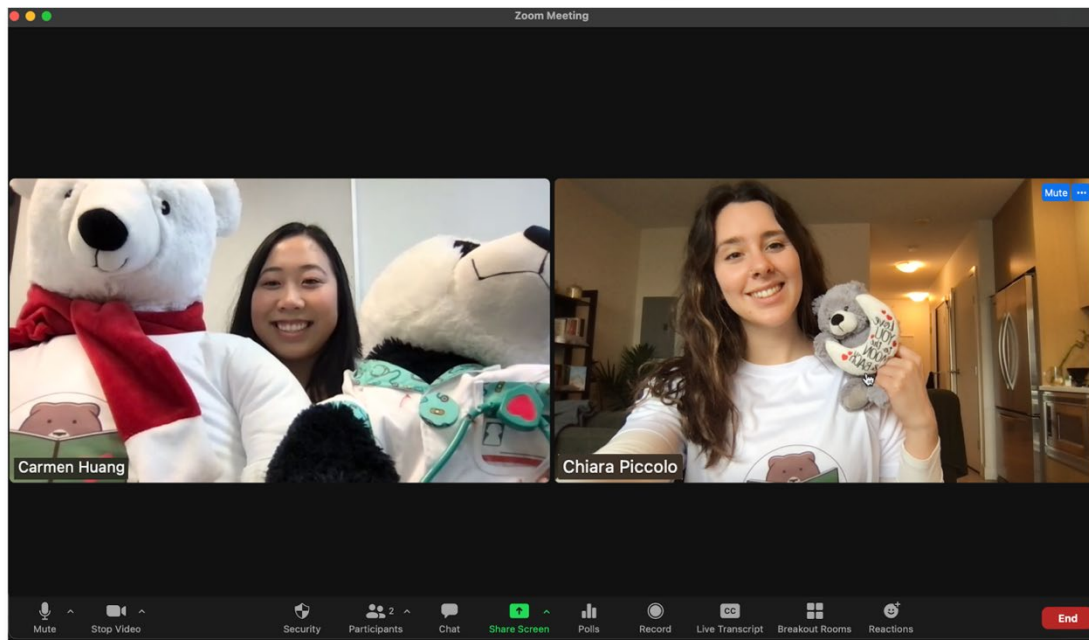
Carmen Huang

RBS Social Media Coordinator & Newsletter Co-editor



Chiara Piccolo

RBS Newsletter Co-editor



Carmen and Chiara meeting on Zoom to plan for this Valentine's Edition of the 2022 RBS Newsletter

Volunteer Profiles

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 Carmen Huang (MD' 25) and Chiara Piccolo (MD' 24).



Carmen Huang, MD 2025

Tell us about yourself.

I was born and raised in Quesnel, BC which is a small town near Prince George, BC. I graduated from UNBC with a major in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and a minor in Psychology. After, I completed one year of the Doctor of Pharmacy program at UBC. Nowadays, I am studying at UBC Northern Medical Program and if you can't find me on campus, you will likely see me skating, watching movies, or anywhere outdoors!

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear?

Ever since elementary school, I have been working closely with young children through coaching ice skating. I find it most rewarding when I can see children grow and flourish into compassionate individuals who are confident in themselves. I became involved in RBS in August when my skating friend and now co-chair, Danielle Sidsworth, reached out to the incoming class of medical students. I have always had a passion for childhood education/development and RBS gave me the opportunity to connect with my community while also fostering early literacy in youth. The impacts of RBS are meaningful and can transcend into generations of young lives.

What is your current role with the RBS?

Co-chair of the RBS Prince George Chapter, Social Media Team member, and co-editor of the RBS newsletters.

What is your best memory of RBS?

When Northern Medical Program students in the RBS Prince George Chapter dressed up in holiday hats and took our Christmas photo - we even had our very own Santa Claus!



Chiara Piccolo, MD 2024

Tell us about yourself.

I was born and raised in the Lower Mainland of BC. I graduated from SFU with a Bachelor of Science Honours in Biomedical Physiology in 2020. I have worked with children for 10 years through outdoor education programs, science education programs, and as a support worker for children and adults with autism. I now am studying at the UBC Medical Program in Vancouver. My other interests include hiking, kayaking, travelling, reading, and soccer!

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear?

In first year, I had already committed to a Global Health FLEX project but was browsing the FLEX Catalogue to find other volunteer opportunities. I knew I wanted to continue my passion for working with kids throughout my years in medicine and immediately knew that the RBS was an organization that perfectly aligned with my interests in education, reading, and of course all the fun that comes along with it!

What is your current role with the RBS?

I am currently the newsletter co-Editor and a Dr. Bear visit volunteer.

What is your best memory of RBS?

The first Dr. Bear visit I conducted over Zoom will always be a favourite memory of mine with RBS. I loved seeing the kids' enthusiasm and of course their sweet teddy bears. I was also so impressed to witness the concentration and effort that the pre-K kids put into their "bear breathing" techniques to reduce anxiety, I can really see how RBS makes a difference in the lives of children and parents. I also loved meeting the rest of the RBS team and look forward to working with them further.

Click [HERE](#) to see Carmen & Chiara's blog posts

Thank You

Thank you to our Financial Donors

David Vyre & Anne, and Ed Juls
Blair & Toni Lockhart



GALLERY ARTS

EST 2016

Thanks to Ms. Zohra Bonnis of Z Arts Gallery, for their large donation of teddy bears and books for Christmas and valentine's day deliveries

Thank you to our Teddy Bear Donors

Vancouver BC Liquor Stores

Yaletown Location – Douglas Perri

Dunbar Location – Maria Selezneva

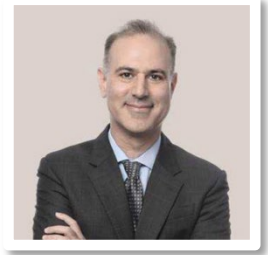
Kerrisdale Location – Martin Tran

Jericho Location – Heather

Kelowna BC Liquor Stores

Lakeshore Location – Russ Carter

Thank you, Mr. Ron Ezekiel, environmental lawyer at Faskens for his outstanding eight years of service to the RBS. Mr. Ezekiel, first started when his son was a reading buddy in Grade 8. Both his sons participated in the RBS reading buddy program throughout their eighth grade at St. George's senior school.



Our Book Donors

Virginie & Stephane LeBihan

Cindy Tesky & Joan Fortier

Business Donors Prince George

Gingerbread Toys



RBS Chapters Book Drive Supporters

Second Cup, Prince George

Makerie, Prince George

Gingerbread Toys, Prince George

Northern Health Sciences Centre, Prince George

Pandosy Book Store, Kelowna

Once Upon a Bookstore, Kelowna



The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in October Thanksgiving 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