

# RETIREMENT

Comox District Teachers' Association



June  
2025

*Congratulations to 2024-2025  
SD#71 Retiring Educators from  
Comox District Teachers' Association*

*“Your retirement has made everyone value you ever more.  
It has made us appreciate the way you strengthened our cores.  
You are not just retiring from your post, position or role;  
you are retiring as a teacher who inspired our souls...”*

*A Message from CDTA President,  
Shawn Holland to 2024-25 Retirees*

- A heartfelt congratulations to all of the educators retiring from School District 71 this year.

Together, all of you have enriched the lives of the many students that have come through the doors of your schools. You have successfully educated young minds and young hearts over the course of your career. You can leave the profession knowing that you made a positive difference in the lives of your students and their families.

- Thank you so much for all of your years of dedicated service to public education. You've done great work, and you are on to your next adventure in life. Much joy to you and your family as you embark on this new chapter of your lives!

- Congratulations! -

<b>Leah</b>	<b>Baron</b>
<b>Helen</b>	<b>Boisseau</b>
<b>Tracey</b>	<b>Croonen</b>
<b>Kathleen</b>	<b>Daneliuk</b>
<b>Wayne</b>	<b>Della Siega</b>
<b>Diane</b>	<b>Driver</b>
<b>Roberta</b>	<b>Evans</b>
<b>Margot</b>	<b>Janz</b>
<b>Gerard</b>	<b>Leclair</b>
<b>Paul</b>	<b>Otto</b>
<b>Joan</b>	<b>Pearce</b>
<b>Pauline</b>	<b>Rankin</b>
<b>Julie</b>	<b>Shields</b>
<b>Doreen</b>	<b>Stride</b>
<b>Jody</b>	<b>Quiring</b>

## Leah Baron

### ~ G.P. Vanier Secondary

*I started teaching in 2003 here in the Comox Valley and I have had an exciting and varied career, having taught at the former Courtenay Middle School, Mark R. Isfeld, Highland, Lake Trail Jr. and finally with the International Students Programme at GP Vanier.*

*Just to keep it interesting I have also taught in Singapore, Cambodia and Indonesia. I have been so fortunate to have had so many inspiring colleagues and so many dedicated and thoughtful students.*

*I am looking forward to time with my grandchildren and, of course, there is more travel in my future.*

*Kind regards, Leah Baron*



## Hélène Boisseau ~ École Robb Road



*The most awaited activity of each year was the salmon dissection.*

*One particularly verbally gifted child half-jokingly referred to the dissection of the salmon eye to find the perfectly spherical and completely clear lens as "The most disturbing experience of his life".*

*~ Hélène*



## **Tracey Croonen**

### **~ Airport Elementary**

*Tracey's career started with 4 years teaching in Clinton BC before returning to the Comox Valley.*

*Tracey taught at Glacier View Elementary, Ecole Puntledge Park and Courtenay Elementary before moving into Administration. Administration time was made up of Vice Principal of Ecole Puntledge Park, Principal of Cumberland Community School and Principal of Airport Elementary.*

*After 36 years in education, retirement will be spent supporting aging family, enjoying grandchildren, sailing, mountain biking and travel.*

*~ Tracey*

## **Kathleen Daneliuk**

### **~ Valley View Elementary**

*After growing up in B.C. and graduating from UBC, I began my teaching career in Ontario in 1990.*

*In 2002, I moved back home to B.C. and then began my first contract with SD71 in 2004. After various placements around the valley, I ended up finding my "home" at Valley View Elementary and taught there for about 14 years.*

*I have absolutely loved my career as a teacher. I found it incredibly rewarding to work and learn with so many amazing colleagues, administrators, students, and volunteers over the years.*

*Now, I plan to spend quality time with family and friends, including my one-year-old grandson who lives here in Comox Valley. I also plan to travel abroad with my husband and spend extra time out on the water taking boating trips and enjoying life. Sincerely, Kathleen*





## Wayne Della Siega ~ NIDES Navigate/ Mark Isfeld

***30 years and 2 schools... I'm done!***

***It's been a ride to say the least but after a year off traveling to 12 countries for 6 months on 22 airplanes, I've realized that you need very little to be happy in life.***

***Life is short, take advantage of the health you have!***

***I say goodbye to my career and hello to our lifelong plan of following the sun year-round as we plan on living 5-6 months here in the Valley and 6 months in warm winter climates.***

***Ciao all! Wayne***



# Happy Retirement

## Diane Driver ~ Cumberland Community



I began teaching as a tutor when I was in grade 7 and kept that up through high school and into university. I was counselled not to go into teaching at the time due to a shortage of teaching jobs, so instead I went to graduate school and got an MSc in Microbiology.

I taught undergrads as a grad student and later as a lab technician. Although I loved research, I needed a change, so I headed to Japan where I taught English for 3 years. I loved teaching full time, so when I returned, I decided it was finally time to go back to UBC for my Teacher's Certificate.

I taught in the Surrey School District for 15 years, then transferred to Vancouver for another 3 years before moving with my wife to Vancouver Island. We bought our new home before I was hired with District 71, so I was thrilled when I was able to go straight into a 1-year contract at Courtenay El. I also spent a year in Huband before landing in Cumberland where I have spent the past 4 years.

When my wife and I moved to the island, we had retirement in mind, but it seemed so far away. I can't believe it's here already. I have thoroughly enjoyed my teaching career and count myself very lucky to have taught alongside so many wonderful teachers! I am looking forward to spending many hours in our garden in Bowser, catching up on my reading, and exploring Vancouver Island. ~ Diane

## Roberta Evans ~ NIDES Navigate

*My teaching career began in Calgary in September 1993 teaching a class of grade 3 & 4s. It ended here in the Comox Valley with a class of grade 2, 3 & 4s.*

*After teaching all the elementary grades from kindergarten through grade 7, this is my favourite age group! Nice to come full circle.*

*Throughout my 32 years of teaching, I have found that kids are inspiring, often entertaining, and full of energy and enthusiasm. However, it is the staff I have worked with who have made this work more satisfying and enjoyable. I am grateful for the many amazing humans I have worked alongside over my career.*

*My last chapter being part of the team at the Fine Arts eCademy at NIDES has been a fantastic finale. Full of creativity, community, compassion, and collaboration, it encapsulates all that I value in best teaching and learning.*

*My initial plan when I retire is to have no plan! Just see where each day takes me!*

*~ Roberta Evans*



## Margot Janz ~ Inclusive Education

*I began my teaching career in the early 90s as a high school English teacher in Richmond BC. Not long after my teaching career began we started a family, and my love of children took a whole new direction. It was a gift to be able to focus on raising our three for a number of years.*

*We moved from inner city of Vancouver to the Comox Valley in 2000. I went back to teaching English for a brief time at Vanier Secondary in 2004. I truly found my passion when I went back to school to do my master's in counselling psychology and then began my work as a SD71 school counsellor.*

*It's been a privilege to support the children, families, and staff of 10 schools in the Comox Valley. The connections have been rich and purposeful. I will always be grateful for the gift of being able to work in these communities.*

*Brian and I are looking forward to many adventures. His dream is to cycle parts of India and other less travelled paths. I may need to train a bit but I'm keen to join him! We also love paddling adventures in the many waterways nearby. One of our favourite things is to spend time with our three children and their partners. We include them on our adventures whenever they're able to join.*

*When closer to home you will likely find me messing about with clay or yarn, in the garden, or running the trails of Seal Bay Park. ~ Margot*



## Paul Otto ~ Brooklyn Elementary

*My name is Paul Otto. I started working with SD71 in 1993 where I was at Puntledge Park. Over the next ten years, I subbed and had partial contracts at Miracle Beach, Black Creek, Puntledge again and Tsolum for 2 years.*

*When I finally got my continuing contract, I was placed at Village Park Elementary for one year. In 2005, I was transferred to Brooklyn Elementary where I have spent the last 20 great years.*

*In retirement, my wife Dianna and I hope to travel some and continue our collecting. It's what we love to do. Paul Otto*



## Joan Pearce ~ LRC /NIDES Navigate



*This year completes 40 years in teaching, the last 33 with SD71. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work collaboratively with dedicated and passionate teachers, library clerks, EAs, office staff and administrators, all sharing the same goal of supporting student learning and growth.*

*Roles? French Immersion Primary, Library, LST, CST, and Nides (DL Primary and the Summer Languages teams.)*

*Most memorable event? Taking a float plane into Tahsis and Nootka Island to visit home schooling families.*

*Plans? TTOCing, forest walks and coffee with friends, and spending time with family in Victoria and Edmonton. ~ Joan*

## Pauline Rankin ~ Airport / Inclusive Education

*The end of June signifies 26 years working in Inclusive Ed at SD #71. I started out as a SNIRT (special needs itinerant resource teacher), have worked as a Sub at Vanier and Courtenay Middle Lifeskill, a short stint as a Hospital Homebound teacher, and did a couple of maternity leaves for the Vision Teacher.*

*I have worked at Miracle Beach, Black Creek, Tsolum, Huband, Arden, Glacier View Elementary, Royston, Brooklyn, Valleyview and have bookended my career by ending at Airport. The last half of my career I have worked as an Elementary School Counsellor.*

*When I was 10 years old I was watching the variety telethon and thought " I want to work with those kids"- I have and more. Because for me it has always been about the kids and their families. Now it is going to be all about my family*

*- especially my 7 grandkids! Pauline Rankin*



## **Doreen Stride ~ Miracle Beach**



*After 32 years in education, I'm ready to bring this unforgettable chapter to a close. I began teaching in 1986, first in Vancouver, and later moved to Courtenay in 1992 where I took a break from the classroom to raise my three children, spending seven years at home.*

*In 1999, I returned to teaching in the Comox Valley and have had the privilege of teaching K–6 students here ever since.*

*Over my years in education, I've experienced a career full of challenges, growth, and laughter. Somewhere along the way, I earned the nickname 'teacher-in-a-box'. I'm guessing it must have had something to do with moving classrooms 22 times, in*

*addition to packing up two entire schools (one for painting and the other a closure).*

*Though constant moving was not by choice, packing up classrooms became an art form. My secret? Unpack as little as possible and teach straight from the box when you can. For the record, eight banker boxes fit perfectly into a four-drawer filing cabinet! Though memory sticks have replaced most files, any primary teacher will understand—it's nearly impossible not to collect a lifetime of teaching tools. I'm happy to pass many of them along to the next generation.*

*Throughout my time in the classroom, I've also had the joy of mentoring eight student teachers. Being part of their growth and watching them develop into confident educators has been very rewarding. But perhaps the most special moments came more recently, when I had the opportunity of teaching two of my granddaughters in Kindergarten. To spend that time with them at the very start of their education journey was a full-circle joy I'll never forget.*

~ Cont'd ~

*It has truly been an honor and privilege to spend so many years teaching children. Teaching has not just been a job—it has been my passion, my purpose, and a deeply fulfilling calling. As I step away from the classroom, it is bittersweet to say goodbye to the students and colleagues who have shaped my life in so many ways.*

*Thank you to everyone who's been part of this incredible journey-especially the staff at Miracle Beach. I will carry you all with me as I begin the next adventure. You're support; laughter and shared moments have meant more than words can express. As for my nickname-'teacher-in-a-box'- it's become part of my story.*

*While I plan to enjoy many more exciting years ahead, gourmet cooking, golfing and travelling the world, I imagine that one day, far in the future, it just might be the perfect final tribute. ~ Doreen Stride*



