

Melissa Affleck



**TEACHER CHAMPION**

## MAY 2022 | MELISSA AFFLECK

In this issue of our BCAITC Teacher Champion series, we profile BC teacher Melissa Affleck. Discover her passion for educating students about BC agriculture, food, and the environment.

**Q: What school do you teach at? A:** c̄əsqənel̄ Elementary in Maple Ridge.

**Q: What grade(s) do you teach? A:** I teach grade 1.

**Q: How and when did you first learn about BCAITC? A:** I first heard about BCAITC from a colleague in Abbotsford when I was a Support Teacher. When I moved back to Maple Ridge and got my first classroom, I knew that I wanted to be a part of this amazing program. I started with the [Planting a Promise](#) program 5 years ago and started [Spuds in Tubs](#) 2 years ago.

**Q: How long have you been teaching students about BC agriculture and food? A:** I have introduced kids to food and agriculture, but it was really difficult to make it relevant to them until we started Spuds in Tubs. Primary students don't often see where food comes from and in the past two years, there has been an even bigger disconnect because many haven't even been in grocery stores. Growing and then eating potatoes is a tangible way for them to understand food and agriculture.

**Q: What are the most important things that you want your students to learn about BC agriculture and food? A:** I really want students to understand lifecycles and the role that humans can play in lifecycles. The lifecycle of the daffodil helps them to see that while we only have a season of beautiful blooms, each part of the lifecycle is important. As humans, we have an impact on nature and agriculture and for them to be aware at a young age of how plants grow and how we can help them grow lays such a strong foundation for them to be informed citizens as they get older.

**Q: BCAITC has over 500 free downloadable resources including lesson plans, activities, videos, recipes, and more! What is your favourite BCAITC resource and why? A:** I use the [Planting a Promise](#) and [Spuds in Tubs](#) handbooks. They have helped me to build my understanding of the two lifecycles and have made it easy to do other activities as a springboard. For example, I use the template of the lifecycle as part of the provocation to investigate and document the bulbs in the fall.

**Q: What is your favourite BCAITC program and why? A:** My favourite program to start with is [Planting a Promise](#) because it is so simple for a teacher to set up and the reward is so great. We have a wonderful time in the fall exploring the bulbs and then gardening and they love to check on their bulbs in the spring and keep track of their progress. I moved to a new school 3 years ago and I now have 3 generations of bulbs so each of my classes can see their flowers bloom each spring.

**Q: What is an agriculture or food-based project you have recently implemented in your classroom? A:** It has been so neat this year how my students have caught on to gardening and are really invested in our outdoor space. Their concern for our daffodils has led to a lunchtime Gardening Club where one day a week, anyone from my class who wants to come and garden and pull weeds outside can. This has also extended into our Dramatic Play where they have set up a flower shop where they "grow" flowers in the class and take orders and arrange them and deliver them to people around the school. I love how this connection to plants has extended into so many areas of our day.

**Q: Do you have any advice for other educators on how to integrate agriculture and food education into their curriculum? A:** Don't be afraid to just start. When I first started, I was nervous, but as I have become more comfortable over the years, I have been able to do more involved projects and see my connection to BCAITC as more of a whole-year project. The BCAITC programs are very accessible because all of the supplies and step-by-step instructions are provided.

**ABOUT THE TEACHER CHAMPION SERIES:** This monthly BCAITC series features BC teachers who are passionate about providing agriculture and food education to K-12 students. For more information, please contact our Communications Coordinator, [meghan@aitc.ca](mailto:meghan@aitc.ca).