

## GRATITUDE

# Michael Galli, One of BC TEAL's and the TEAL Charitable Foundation's True Heroes

by Jennifer Pearson Terell

**MICHAEL GALLI** is one of BC TEAL's and the TEAL Charitable Foundation's true heroes. After many years of service, Michael made the decision to step back to spend more time with his young family and to meet his increasing responsibilities as Director of International Recruitment and Admissions at BCIT. This article honours Michael's commitment "to promoting the teaching and learning of English as an additional language" in British Columbia.

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—Michael Galli

It all started in 2006 when Michael arrived in Vancouver and almost immediately joined BC TEAL. From the beginning, Michael always spoke with passion about his "commitment to lifelong professional development." In the years that followed, Michael would serve on the board as well as President and Past President of BC TEAL. During his time as President, Michael's leadership and business approach proved very successful and BC TEAL thrived. Membership increased from 500 to 900 and led to a series of outstanding and well-attended conferences. BC TEAL was not only highly respected provincially for its commitment to professional development but also recognized across Canada as an outstanding professional organization. In Michael's words, "I hope everyone understands the value and significance of BC TEAL. While we English language professionals may function well in our classrooms, without an association to bring us together to share and learn from one another, we would have no 'profession,' just a lot of people doing their own thing. I have found my professional home in BC TEAL."

In 2012, Michael joined the TEAL Charitable Foundation Board and would serve as Chair from 2018 to 2021. The TCF mission is "to promote the teaching and learning of English as an additional language." In 2016 with the influx of the refugees from Syria and under Michael's leadership, the TCF redefined its financial goals and the decision was made to fundraise for

refugee education. The new awards would be for refugees in need who wanted to study in postsecondary programs. The new plan called for the TCF to fundraise and establish a new \$300,000 endowment with the Vancouver Foundation for refugee education. The interest accrued from the new endowment would be used to set up annual awards.

New TCF fundraising events were quickly developed by the board. The new initiatives were innovative and proved financially very successful. The first significant new fundraiser was the "Climb for Refugee Education – Grouse Grind" in 2014. This was a pledge event in which Michael led the way by ascending and descending Grouse Mountain no fewer than four times and earning hundreds of dollars in pledges. The second major fundraising event was "Tears to Smiles: Wine and Cheese Reception." This event involved selling tickets, a silent auction, and inviting a series of distinguished speakers including Kim Phuc, Ian Hanomansing, Ujjal Dosanjh, Carman Aguirre, and Shane Point. With Michael's leadership, TCF's total endowment with the Vancouver Foundation grew steadily and by 2021 was valued at over \$1,250,000.00. The increased value of the endowment made it possible for the TCF to secure the funding for the existing TCF awards as well as the new refugee awards.

By 2021, there were three new annual refugee awards valued at \$3000 each. The first refugee award was established in 2014 as a memorial in honour of Michael's infant son Taiga. In the years that followed, two additional refugee awards were established, namely the TCF Refugee Award in 2018 and the Nicholas Collins Founders Refugee Award in 2020. The new awards make a real difference in the lives of refugees. Refugees were not only able to study in postsecondary programs but also able to realize their dreams of becoming nurses, community workers, accountants, firemen, early childhood educators, translators, social workers and teachers. As always, Michael generously shared the credit for these achievements with the TCF Board. In an interview with Joe Dobson, Michael is quoted as saying, "When I step back and think of all the goodness that comes out of the TCF, I feel so fortunate to have been able to add my name to the ranks."

Michael Galli will be remembered as one of BC TEAL's and the TEAL Charitable Foundation's true heroes. His dedication, leadership, hard work, and incredible kindness will always be an inspiration for all of us involved in "the teaching and learning of English as an additional language."



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