



English

# Life and Learning in the Time of COVID-19



**Stories from Canadian LINC Teachers and Students**

This compilation features some of the stories submitted by ESL teachers and students across the country in response to TESL Canada's National Storytelling Contest. The contest was open through the summer of 2020. Featured stories were chosen from among the contest finalists and are shared with their informed consent.

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# JOURNALING DURING THE PANDEMIC

## RHONDA COLLIS'S CLASS

Multi-level CLB 5+ Class

Cowichan Intercultural Society

Duncan, B.C.

“During the COVID 19 pandemic our classrooms went immediately online with Zoom. As we all grappled with sudden isolation, I realized as a teacher and as a writer that my multi-level advanced class would benefit from journaling about their experiences. Two students submitted samples of journal entries. A third student composed a poem dedicated to her mother who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in Mexico in mid-June from COVID 19.”

— *Rhonda Collis, LINC Teacher*

### **Monday, April 27th, 2020**

It's not only just bad things, there are also good things: COVID19 is bad if I think negatively. On the other hand, I am aware that there are a lot of good things around me if I think positively.

There are many things that we are learning in class about the coronavirus. Every one of us has been learning positive and different ways of thinking. It's good to share what we are thinking. I love my classmates. They are always giving me great ideas and I'm so glad to be with them and learning together.

— *Akiko*

**“It's not only  
just bad  
things, there  
are also good  
things...”**

## Mom

I wish you were here.

Who is going to be here when I don't know how to prepare a recipe?

Who is going to be here at Christmas?

Who is going to wait for me at the airport?

Who is going to laugh so hard at my husband's accent?

Who is going to be there if I need advice?

I am grieving.

I am in pain.

I am still thinking this is a nightmare.

The most cruel nightmare.

2020 hit us so hard.

I wish I could see you one more time.

I wish I could hug you so tight.

I wish I could give you one more massage.

I wish I could call you and listen to your voice one more time.

I wish with all my heart that one day we are going to be together again.

Rest in peace

mom.

— *Dulce*

**“I wish with all  
my heart that  
one day we  
are going to be  
together again.”**

## Monday, May 11th, 2020

This morning, I watered my plants outside. The hummingbirds flapped their wings to drink the bottle of sweet water that hung at our window. The choir of singing birds broke the morning's peace. There was a great variety of birds. Some of them were flying from one tree to another. Some were jumping on the grass. I had read many fairy tales. Most of them had the same opinion, which was that birds know our destiny and have a lot of wisdom. But I would like to tell the "wise" birds to fly carefully to avoid the windows next time.

— *Wendy*

## Monday, May 11th, 2020

Lots of places have eased restrictions around the coronavirus. People can go to the beach or meet friends in small numbers. But they still need to keep a social distance.

I saw a photo in an article where people were at English Bay in Vancouver, and they stayed apart from one another. On the other hand, I heard that in the U.S., after restrictions eased and some restaurants reopened, some people gathered together or they had parties. I think people are happy that the restrictions have been eased, but it doesn't mean they can go back to normal life as we had before. I feel some of the people are missing the point. People hear what they want to, but they don't listen if they don't want to follow the rules. The government's public health officer is still saying that people need to keep a social distance.

— *Akiko*

**“...it doesn't  
mean they can  
go back to  
normal life as  
we had before.”**

## Wednesday, May 27th, 2020

This morning, I heard the news about a Chinese student committing suicide. The reason was he had bought an expensive ticket. The student was studying in Seattle. There was one flight per week. So he was so lucky to buy a ticket, although it was a high price. The student called his parents after he bought the ticket. The student's parents scolded him through the phone. The student was so disappointed, and then the tragedy happened.

Going back home was the student's last hope. It is not only a challenge for a mature adult, but also for kids. Particularly international students, who must live in and adapt to a new environment. Language and culture were the barriers. He could not figure out the problems he encountered. He was not as strong as everyone thought. It wasn't such an easy choice for the family. They must have regrets.

— *Wendy*

**“...must live  
in and adapt  
to a new  
environment.”**

# SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE IN THE TIME OF COVID19

## HEIDI SCHLACK'S CLASS

CLB 5+ Class, NorQuest College  
Edmonton, Alberta

### Josiane

Since the pandemic of COVID-19 appeared, many things have changed in our lives. What is the particularity of this disease? We don't have a treatment, and we can get it easily. We are very worried because we don't know where and when we can contract it. So we have to respect the social distancing, and we have to practice hygiene rules. When we stay at home, we protect ourselves against COVID-19. We hope that we will find the treatment very soon.

### Yemane

COVID19 is making people sick all over the world. We are all being asked to practice social distancing. I can't see my friends or do fun activities with them. But, I can keep learning if I put in the effort and stay motivated. I can find new ways to do things if I try. I have a unique opportunity to learn new skills and try something I've never done before. I'm worried about the pandemic. But I'm happy because we are safe for now.

### Bikila

COVID19 was started from a small city in China. But now there is not a place in the world where the virus has not entered. This virus is making millions of people get sick and thousands of people have been killed. So our prime minister is announcing day-to-day how we are to keep our social distance, wash our hands, use masks, stay at home and many more ways to prevent the spread of the virus. We don't know where and when we will get sick so we have to be careful to protect ourselves from this virus, because if you are saved, you will save your family, friends and your nation. I hope this time will pass so don't worry but stay home and save lives.

### Sheena

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has upended family life around the world. School closures, working remotely, physical distancing – it's a lot for parents to navigate. As the coronavirus has spread, so has misinformation fueling discrimination and stigma.

### **Ayesha**

COVID19 makes our life very complicated. People are suffering a lot all over the world in this pandemic. Everyday, many people are becoming COVID19 positive, many people are dying and many people are recovering. Students can not go to school which makes them depressed and bored. We can not meet with our family members and friends. It is a very hard time to survive in this world. When we go outside, we have to wear a mask, gloves and frequently wash our hands. Nowadays, it is very important to maintain social distancing when we go outside. People face difficulties in the workplace because many people have lost their jobs. At last I can say, we have to stay safe for ourselves, our family, and for the world.

### **Mihret**

Our world was worried this year because of this COVID19 disease. I know it's a dangerous disease and am scared to go outside or to meet people because I don't know where they are going or who they are meeting. I can protect myself by staying at home, wearing a mask, practicing social distancing and hygiene, and washing my hands. All of this is our responsibility and I am staying safe until now.

### **Girija**

I'm really concerned about my health and my family. We make the most of our time by taking care of ourselves. Whenever we are going out, we maintain social distancing and avoid contact with sick people. When we come back to the house, we wash hands frequently with soap. We avoid large groups. We are always wearing masks and hand gloves. I hope and pray that everything will be alright and the situation improves soon.

**“...we have to stay safe for ourselves, our family, and for the world.”**

