



# Community Report 2019



## Message |

Devon Girard, Chair, Board of Directors  
SelfDesign Learning Foundation

*“Whether we realized it or not,  
we were learning an important  
SelfDesign technique: how to create  
intention around one’s own growth.”*

Almost 30 years have passed since I first walked into the WonderTree Learning Centre in downtown Vancouver – with some trepidation – and met Brent Cameron and the learner cohort that was to have such an impact on my life. I was a shy 9-year-old, already an unwitting host to some social anxiety issues stemming from bullying at school, and I was skeptical that WonderTree – or any other school – could be safe and interesting. My mom said, “try it for 15 minutes” and by the end of the day, she had trouble tearing me away. I was soothed by the friendly-energy of the other kids and stimulated by the various projects they were working on – science experiments, paper maché globes, computer ‘programming’ in HyperCard. Kids with energy and motivation surrounded me. I was hooked.

This was the beginning of what was to be a long natural learning adventure – a lifelong adventure, as it is turning out.

Brent loved maps and models. He was a student of sacred geometry as much as he was a passionate educator. While reminding us that the map is not the territory (he was also a student of neuro-linguistic programming), he worked with us – 30 years ago, using mandalas of various geometries – to outline our goals, our interests, and our relations. Whether we realized it or not, we were learning an important SelfDesign technique: how to create intention around one’s own growth.

When we were a bit older, Brent offered the Fibonacci spiral as a template to chart out our life phases, revealing insights on our maturation trajectory and provoking much thinking on the scope and scale of our life journeys. This personal exercise was so potent and universal, it evolved into a group exercise called the LifeSpiral, offering contrasts between participants in different phases of life.

Individuals are not the only entities with a lifecycle, of course. WonderTree evolved into Virtual High and then into SelfDesign. Twelve learners became 36 became 100 became 2,000. The school Brent started with his daughter is now the second-largest independent school in British Columbia, a new leader in Special Education, and

a worldwide reference for personalized education. Growth is not just a numbers game – we have also matured in many ways.

As I recall those tender days when I was nine years old, I can recognize the thread of my Self evolving through the years – and while I might envy certain qualities from my youth, I wonder if my younger self could have appreciated the capacities I have developed since, over time and with experience.

I wonder also about SelfDesign's maturation writ large. Which life phase are we collectively moving through? What organizational strengths and capacities have we developed?

One common pattern in my own learning is that of plateaus and spurts, consolidation and expansion – the phenomenon of incrementally developing one's abilities with little obvious result, then suddenly breaking through and jumping a level in short order. In my view, SelfDesign has generally been in a consolidation phase during these past few years, evolving internally in order to support our external growth. This strengthening of our internal processes – albeit always a work in progress – is now palpable and is opening a new horizon of potential: a stable platform on which to be creative.

SelfDesign has never been better positioned to deepen and strengthen our offerings. A shift from consolidation towards innovation is in the air. The Journeys pilot program is due to cross an exciting threshold in 2020. There has been much discussion of creating new opportunities for our learners to engage in more in-person experiences via camps and mentorships and perhaps even brick-and-mortar project centres. With our organizational house trending towards order, I look forward to collectively exploring and stepping into our new strengths in 2020 and beyond!

*Devon Girard*

**Devon Girard**  
Chair, Board of Directors  
SelfDesign Learning Foundation



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## Message |

Amber Papou, President & CEO  
SelfDesign Learning Foundation

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

Many things have changed in the SelfDesign Learning Foundation, but the philosophy, the commitment to our community, and the provision of leading-edge educational programs for our families and learners have remained consistent for the past 37 years. In almost four decades, the organization has evolved and grown from a dream that our founder, Brent Cameron, had about what education could be to our current reality of being one of the largest distributed learning schools in Canada that has served tens of thousands of people – what an achievement!

Keeping with our tradition of service and excellence, 2019 marks another year of accomplishments for the SelfDesign Learning Foundation. Once again, through funding provided by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, the foundation was able to provide self-authored and project-based educational programs through our school, the SelfDesign Learning Community. Through the knowledge and expertise of a team directed by our principal Nikki Kenyon and supported by approximately 2,000 contractors, we were able to serve 2,410 learners and their families in kindergarten to grade 12 in both the school and SelfDesign Home Learning program.

In addition to our kindergarten to grade 12 programs, 2019 marks a successful completion of the first phase of development for the SelfDesign Journeys program. Journeys is a unique SelfDesign Learning Foundation program that will provide families with children with autism valuable insights, resources and information that support the children's learning from a holistic perspective. In 2018/19, the program was piloted as an e-learning series and was open to families in the SelfDesign Learning Community. Development of additional e-learning and live webinars and the possibility of expanding the audience beyond the SelfDesign Learning Community are planned for 2020.

As in past years, I am proud to lead this wonderful and often magical organization, and I want to acknowledge that the success experienced in 2019 was made possible because of the commitment and the passion from the people who make up our community. From the Board of Directors who volunteer hundreds of hours a year, to our dedicated leadership teams and contractors who serve so selflessly, and of course to our learners and families who believe, as we do, that SelfDesign is a place where learning and self-knowledge are synonymous.

Thank you for making 2019 such a great year. I look forward to serving you in 2020.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amber Papou". The script is fluid and cursive.

Amber Papou, B.Ed., MBA  
President & CEO  
SelfDesign Learning Foundation



## Message |

Nikki Kenyon,  
Principal of Educational Programs  
SelfDesign Learning community

“SelfDesign's in-person and real-time offerings are growing, bringing learners together to learn new skills, explore ideas and themes, and connect with each other.”

As I write this, the 2019/20 SelfDesign school year is well on its way. Learners, families and learning consultants are realizing the year's learning plans, while frost, northerly winds, and a snowline that is creeping down the mountainsides signal winter is.

For me, however, the first signs of winter this year included an additional event – meetings and discussions with provincial inspectors.

It may seem odd that a school as unique and flexible as SelfDesign Learning Community celebrates achieving standardized provincial requirements. But it is an opportunity to affirm who we are as a school, what we do, and how we do it. In walking inspectors through the details of our processes for supporting learners and their families in kindergarten to grade 12, we confirm that SelfDesign provides access to personalized, distributed opportunities to all learners.

I'm happy to report SelfDesign Learning Community has again passed its B.C. Ministry of Education inspection. With this renewed provincial accreditation, we can continue operating as a recognized, provincially funded Group 1 Independent School in British Columbia.

Inspection also provides an opportunity to reflect on our many successes this past year. SelfDesign's in-person and real-time offerings are growing, bringing learners together to learn new skills, explore ideas and themes, and connect with each other. In 2019, dozens of learners in grades 8-12 from across B.C. gathered in person for five SelfDesign camps, including our new musical Jam Camp. Our facilitated virtual workshops saw learners in grades 6-9 meeting weekly to investigate themes related to Math, English, Socials and Science, practise group presentations, and connect with peers in real-time. Our Genius Hour sessions continue to offer learner-participants from kindergarten to grade 12 regular opportunities to showcase what they are doing in their learning lives, ask questions, and share ideas.



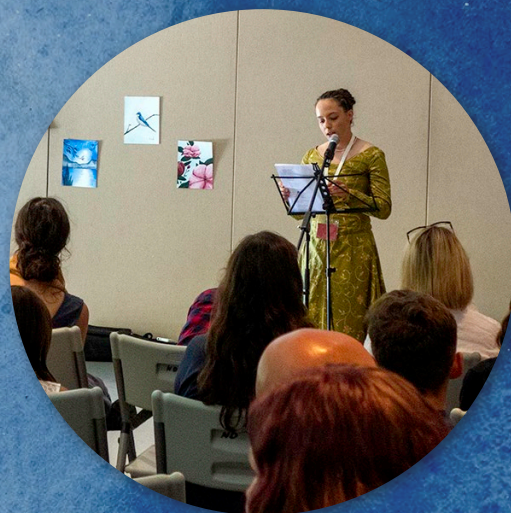
The SelfDesign Commencement Celebration also deserves a shout-out. Planned by learners for learners, this event showcased their many accomplishments. At this 2019 commencement celebration, for example, a trio of learner-musicians who had been practising together virtually for months performed live in front of several peers, as well as families and educators. It was the first time the group had performed together in person – and they blew us away!

I also want to thank last year's grade 11 learners, many of whom are now in grade 12 with SelfDesign. These incredible learners have been key to the success of our entire, new grade 10-12 program from its launch in 2017. They have helped us pilot and refine our offerings every step of the way as they learned, grew, matured, and progressed. In the process, we have learned as much from their insights about the program as they learned experiencing it – and the result is an even better program for learners following in their footsteps.

So much to celebrate; so much to recognize. It's truly an honour to be part of this exciting, unique organization.

*Nikki Kenyon*

**Nikki Kenyon**  
Principal of Educational Programs  
SelfDesign Learning Community



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*“These incredible learners have been key to the success of our entire, new grade 10-12 program from its launch in 2017.*

*They have helped us pilot and refine our offerings every step of the way as they learned, grew, matured, and progressed.*

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## Our mission

To support learners, families and educators in creating what matters to them in their lives, through effective educational methods in alignment with the principles of SelfDesign.

## Our vision

SelfDesign is the leading model for natural and personalized lifelong learning in North America.

## Our values



Curiosity is our lifelong pathway to transformative experiences. We foster engagement in the natural unfolding of interest-based learning through conversation, collaboration and co-creation.



We embrace heart-centred and co-inspirational relationships based on acceptance, respect and support of one another.



We innovate and evolve our learner-centred educational programs and services based on an understanding of cutting-edge research in the fields of pedagogy, human development, neuroscience and technology.



We live our shared values of honesty, authenticity, fairness and openness.



We are responsible and responsive to our stakeholders, upholding our agreements to them and to one another. We assume individual self-agency and capacity while remembering we are part of the greater whole organization.




We are committed to excellence by providing first-choice educational programs and services that are inclusive, supportive and accessible to those we serve, regardless of income level, personal or spiritual beliefs, or degree of need.



# Our philosophy

The art and science of lifelong learning



“SelfDesign nurtures autonomy, curiosity, connection and collaboration, authenticity, confidence, open-mindedness, respect and resilience in all learners.

## We believe

**That every learner, regardless of age,** brings a unique contribution to the world. SelfDesign ensures that the learning environment becomes the vehicle rather than the obstacle in making those contributions come to life.

**That people learn everywhere and in every moment,** and that learning is enriched and amplified through conversations and relationships with others.

**In the safety, acceptance and inclusion of all learners** in regard to ability, learning style, culture, personal or spiritual beliefs, gender identity and expression.

“SelfDesign Learning Foundation is a first-choice option for our families because of the care and detail that is provided by our team in the delivery of an educational online program that is both relevant and meaningful to our learners.”

- Amber Papou, CEO of SelfDesign





# Open the door to lifelong learning...



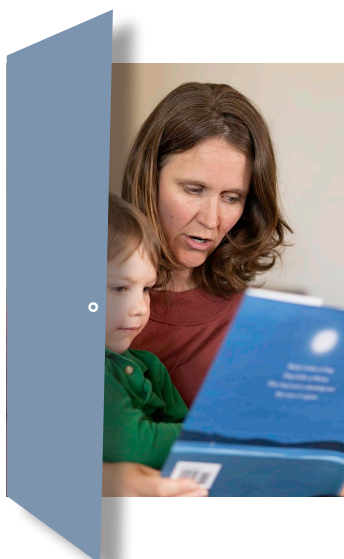
## AUTONOMY

Author your own learning journey



## INNOVATION

Innovative education for people of all ages and abilities



## CONNECTIONS

Learning through relationships with parents, peers, educators and community



## CURIOSITY

Learning is everywhere, curiosity is the beginning



## RESPONSIBILITY

Fostering personal, social, and global awareness and responsibility

# Learn what you love, love what you learn



Learning is a continuous and accumulating process rather than a product or set of outcomes. From imagining and planning, from enacting and experiencing, from reflecting and assessing to re-imagining – this process lasts a lifetime.



Learners are positioned at the centre of their individualized learning path.



Learning and personal development occur within nurturing, relational environments.

*“What I especially love is when we have young children come through our learning program and have a whole lifetime to live into the philosophy of SelfDesign – it actually shifts the way they are out in the world and they become little passionate fires of learning.”*

- River Meyer, Director of Organizational Learning & Culture





# The SelfDesign Learning Foundation

## Education for the 21st century

At SelfDesign Learning Foundation, we support learners of all ages and abilities in authoring their own lives and designing their own learning.

The SelfDesign Learning Foundation is a registered Canadian charity, incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the province of British Columbia.

### We are your foundation for lifelong learning.

Since 1983, the SelfDesign Learning Foundation has grown to become a global leader in the development of programs and initiatives that foster personalized and life-long learning.

Our model and philosophy set us apart, drive every initiative and fuel our passion as leaders in education. We believe that learning is unlimited, ageless and continuous.

## SelfDesign Learning Foundation programs & services



### SelfDesign Learning Community

A technology-enabled school  
for students from kindergarten  
to grade 12



### SelfDesign Home Learning

A flexible option for parents  
who wish to homeschool  
their child



### Support Services

For learners with  
special needs

# SelfDesign Learning Community

An innovative and personalized approach to learning

We go above and beyond the walls of a classroom

We offer a unique, personalized and inclusive approach to education for approximately 2,000 learners from kindergarten to grade 12 each year.

- ✓ We follow the **B.C. Ministry of Education curriculum**
- ✓ Our B.C. certified educators provide **personalized one-to-one learning**.
- ✓ Our foundation supports **tuition-free education** for residents of B.C.
- ✓ **Learners can graduate** with a B.C. Certificate of Graduation, Adult Graduation Diploma or School Completion Certificate. They have the same opportunity to apply for university or college as a child in a brick-and-mortar school.
- ✓ Our **inclusive education program** provides equal access to learning opportunities for all learners, by providing personalized support services to learners with special needs.





With SelfDesign Learning Community, learners and families experience a supportive learning experience in their home, online and in their community:

- ✓ Each **learner takes the lead in their own learning** in their own home environment and within their local and online communities, guided by one of approximately 185 B.C. certified educators.
- ✓ We engage **professional service providers** to support learners in areas such as music, art, speech and occupational therapy, physical education classes, and more.
- ✓ **Families are an expert** in knowing their child and are a valued part of the circle of relationships that include parent, learner and educator.

## What sets us apart



Learning happens everywhere



Prepared for success



Personalized learning



A supportive approach



B.C. Ministry of Education approved



Indigenous Learning



SelfDesign Learning Experiences Library



Inclusive education





# Our approach to learning

- ✓ **Our model and philosophy**, which focus on personalized and lifelong learning, sets us apart from other technology-enabled schools and brick-and-mortar schools.
- ✓ We **follow the B.C. Ministry of Education** curriculum in a way that puts children at the centre of their learning journey. We acknowledge that learning is a process, not a product, and that it's centred on relationships and conversation.
- ✓ We guide learners, with the **support of a B.C. certified educator**, to develop a personalized learning plan for each child to help them achieve the path to completion that best suits them – B.C. Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma), Adult Graduation Diploma, or School Completion ("Evergreen") Certificate.





# Lifelong learning –

## Helping learners prepare themselves to achieve life goals



*“The ability to self-motivate has really stayed with me and has helped in my life since graduation – When I see an opportunity, I just go for it. I know that procrastinating is not going to get me anywhere. When I see something I want to do, or a job I want, I make that phone call or write that email and send it off right away. I learned these contextual lessons through SelfDesign.”*

– Quinne,  
commenced SelfDesign learner

When Quinne was 15, an opportunity not many people her age have fell into her lap. While travelling with her family, they visited the farm of a passionate gardener who owned a successful seed company called Sacred Grove Seeds. The gardener was looking to retire, but didn't want to let the seed lines fade out. When she learned Quinne also loved gardening, she passed the business along to Quinne.

Fifteen may sound like a young age to go into business for yourself, but with the flexibility and personalized learning that SelfDesign makes possible, Quinne integrated her business learning into her school projects. The experience also prepared her for life after graduation.

“Running my seed company made me learn a lot about financials at a younger age,” Quinne says. “The whole accounting part – having integrity around money and being able to figure things out and understand deposits, credit and that sort of thing – has made me a lot more conscious in the management of my own personal money, as well.”

Quinne, now 19, commenced from SelfDesign this past June with an Adult Dogwood Diploma, awarded to students who successfully complete the provincial graduation requirements. The Adult Dogwood Diploma is one of three pathways offered by SelfDesign to support learners to achieve their goals in the way that best suits them. The other two pathways are the Adult Graduation Diploma and the School Completion (Evergreen) Certificate.

The type of personalized learning that Quinne embraced as a SelfDesign learner gives her and other learners the same opportunities to graduate as learners in traditional classroom-based schools have: they, too, are eligible to apply to post-secondary institutions to further their education and pursue professional careers.

“Our learners can get the same credentials at our school as in any school in the province,” says Nikki Kenyon, SelfDesign's Principal of Educational Programs. “But what really sets us apart is that, while learners follow the pathways that are common

to every school in the province and indeed achieve their Dogwood or other certification, we take it further and actually set them up for where they are headed next. When you believe in lifelong learning, the goal isn't just to achieve a credential, it's to achieve the skills needed to continue to learn everywhere you go."

SelfDesign also fosters self-motivation in learners from a young age, bestowing a huge advantage for a life of continuous learning.

"The ability to self-motivate has really stayed with me and has helped in my life since graduation," Quinne says. "When I see an opportunity, I just go for it. I know that procrastinating is not going to get me anywhere. When I see something I want to do, or a job I want, I make that phone call or write

that email and send it off right away. I learned these contextual lessons through SelfDesign."

She also credits SelfDesign for giving her the time and freedom to delve into many, varied interests. In addition to running her seed business, she is successfully developing a career as a singer/songwriter. She also homesteads with her family and enjoys horseback riding, and performs in a string orchestra and an a capella choir.

"The beauty of what we offer the learner is the ability to use their interests and passions to meet the curriculum requirements," Nikki says. "By the time learners leave SelfDesign, they are set up for their future in a really beneficial way."

## We support...



### **INCLUSIVE LEARNING**

We provide learners with Indigenous learning opportunities so they can understand the world and its relations through a framework of Indigenous wisdom and philosophy.



### **SUPPORTIVE LEARNING**

The safety, acceptance and inclusion of all learners in regard to ability, learning style, culture, personal and spiritual beliefs, and gender identity.



### **INDEPENDENT LEARNING**

The development of traits such as autonomy, collaboration and a sense of social and global responsibility, which can position learners to be successful in post-secondary programs and careers.



# How it works

## **Learning takes place at home, online and in the local community.**

We provide families and learners with digital technologies and resources as a complement to real-world learning.

## **We focus on learners being at the centre of their learning journey.**

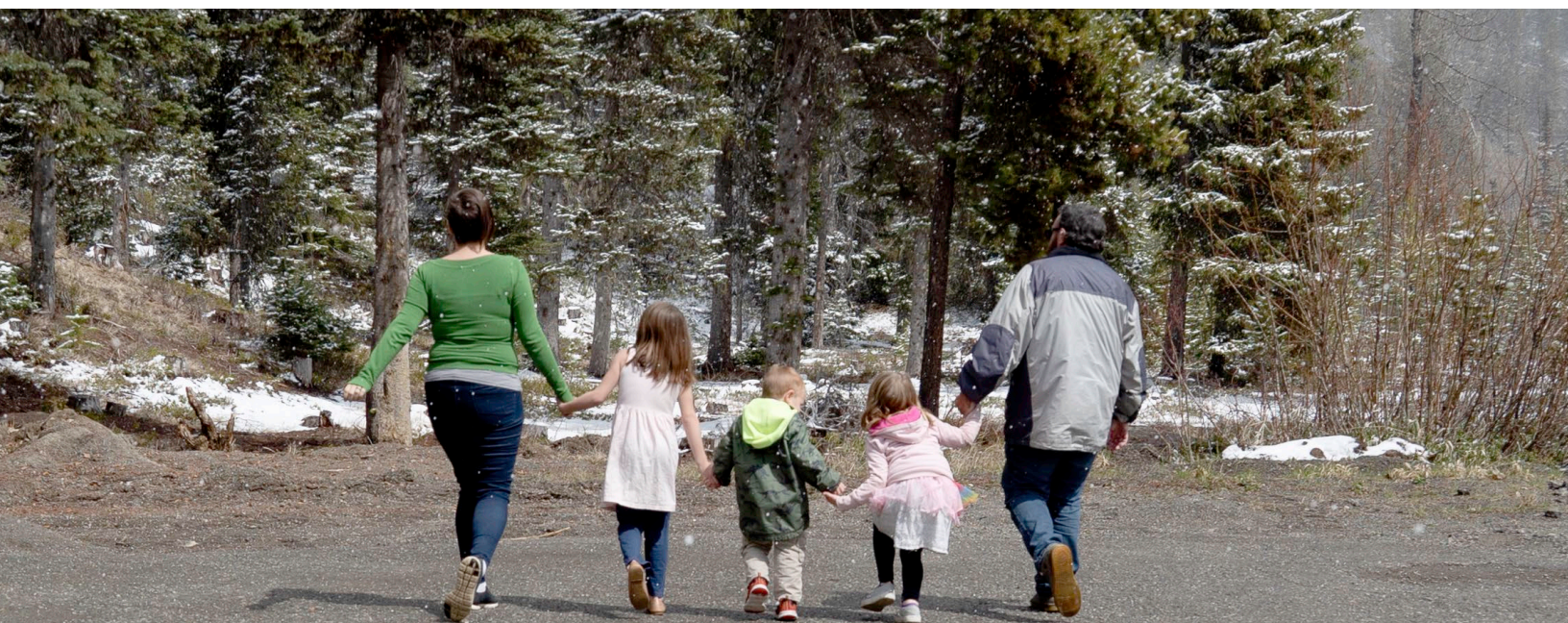
Not all children learn in the same way, at the same pace, in the same learning environment. Personalized learning, in the SelfDesign Learning Community, means each child takes the lead in their own learning. It is a 21st-century approach to education that puts the needs of each child first, because they are a unique individual with their own learning style, interests and goals.

Personalized learning is different than classroom-based personalized learning. Classroom-based personalized learning involves customized educational lessons to support learners' needs, yet within the limitations of a fixed curriculum and learning schedule.

*“ We chose SelfDesign because it would allow our children to explore their unique interests without pushing them down any specific path or requiring them to follow any specific way of thinking.*

*We wanted to allow them to 'learn how to learn,' which was really important to us, while still getting support from a teacher and a school and getting the resources, the ideas, the articles and the book and all the other amazing things that SelfDesign provides us so we can still make sure our children are meeting Ministry outcomes, they are going to graduate with their peers, they're staying at grade level, but they don't necessarily have to fit that narrow path.*

- Cheryl, SelfDesign parent





**Distributed learning is a technology-enabled educational model that represents a profound shift in the way education is delivered and received.**

As a model of education for the 21st century, distributed learning offers solutions to many of the challenges faced by traditional brick-and-mortar schools. It also provides learning experiences that are flexible and supportive of the needs of today's generation of learners.

Distributed learning meets provincial standards and is directed and supervised by a B.C. certified educator, with the responsibility for the program resting on SelfDesign Learning Community.

**We assess our learners based on competencies.**

Because our kindergarten to grade 12 program is based on competency, we assess learning not through reporting, but through a process we call Observing for Learning. Our B.C. certified educators participate in ongoing weekly conversations with family members and their child.





# Learning happens everywhere – at home, in the community ... even while travelling



*“When we went to the Galapagos, my learning consultant gave me a book on Charles Darwin. I read it and got completely obsessed with it. I was learning about all the species and the ideas he had. I was looking at the animals and talking about it. That was awesome.”*

– Sophie,  
commenced SelfDesign learner

What happens when a young person uses the freedom of time that self-directed learning offers to channel their passions and become unwaveringly dedicated to a goal? SelfDesign learner Sophie, 18, spent her Grade 9 year learning while travelling across South America with her family. This dedication and perseverance led to her winning the Ministry of B.C. Achievement Award for 2019.

“Receiving the Ministry of B.C. Achievement Award for 2019 is a validation of all the work that I did at SelfDesign,” Sophie says.

“As a parent, you think your kid is just so special and amazing,” says Ginette, Sophie’s mom. “But when they win an award like this, it’s affirming to see other people validate that feeling. Sophie’s work ethic and ability to do things well is exceptional.”

When Sophie was in Grade 9, she and her younger sister kept up their schooling through SelfDesign while they travelled with their parents.

“We went to Costa Rica, Cuba, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador,” Sophie says. “Mostly we stayed in hostels or rented apartments and it wasn’t about all-inclusive resorts or relaxation. It wasn’t even really a vacation, it was more of an adventure.”

It was an adventure that brought learning to life for Sophie, who integrated authentic real-life everyday things that came up during their travels into her formal learning.

“The whole experience was self-directed,” she says. “I loved the freedom of coming up with learning topics as we traveled in order to gain more from the experience itself. For example, I wrote essays while I was in Cuba about the Cuban Revolution. My learning consultant, Tracey, gave weekly reflections on what I was learning and gave me resources and book recommendations that were supportive of the direction I was able to determine myself.”

A cornerstone of SelfDesign's approach is that learning happens everywhere. Sophie's experience of delving deep into the cultures she was immersed in exemplifies this ideal. SelfDesign follows the B.C. curriculum, so math and science were woven into her time, as well.

"When you're immersed in different cultures, languages and activities, you're just bound to learn things," she says. "When we went to the Galapagos, my learning consultant gave me a book on Charles Darwin. I read it and got completely obsessed with it. I was learning about all the species and the ideas he had. I was looking at the animals and talking about it. That was awesome."

SelfDesign Principal of Educational Programs Nikki Kenyon believes it doesn't matter whether you're in your home, community, neighbourhood or travelling around the province or country – there is always something to spark a question or interest. SelfDesign allows learners the possibility to explore that.

"The beauty of it is learning can happen anywhere," Nikki says. "SelfDesign is founded on the philosophy that true learning arises as you are in relationship – relationship with those around you and with your environment. This means that no matter where you are in the world, you can have meaningful and relevant learning experiences."



*"When you're immersed in different cultures, languages and activities, you're just bound to learn things."*



# Supporting learners with special needs

- ✓ **Our inclusive kindergarten to grade 12** program provides equal access to opportunities for all learners, including specific services to support learners of all ages with special needs.
- ✓ **Learners are unique so we adapt our programming** to them. Every learner has a unique voice, and our inclusive kindergarten to grade 12 program is committed to listening to each and every child – however they are able to communicate.
- ✓ **Families know their child better** than anyone and, while opinions of professional experts are highly regarded, their insights are equally valued.
- ✓ SelfDesign's **support services creates Individual Education Plans** for children that go above and beyond a regular learning plan. Each plan is learner-centred and created through collaboration between families, their child, and a B.C. certified educator (specialized learning consultant) to identify and support their child's individual needs. Learners will have access to specialists who can provide a wide array of services, including speech pathology, psychology, etc.
- ✓ We **provide services for all learners needing additional support** to maximize their learning opportunities. We offer support services to learners who have been, in accordance with B.C. Ministry of Education guidelines, professionally diagnosed with low incidence needs or who may or may not have been diagnosed with high incidence needs.

*“It's a real privilege to be able to support learners who struggle to feel welcome even or valued, to know that they can have a home in SelfDesign and they can feel like they can be who they are and that they belong.”*

– Nikki Kenyon,  
Principal of Educational Programs,  
SelfDesign Learning Community



# Bringing out the best in kids – whatever their challenges



Kaitlin Megumi Marty

*“We were able to allow their learning to be around their passions and their strengths. We were able to set up a program around them, rather than having to fit into a program.”*

– Megumi,  
SelfDesign parent

In June 2019, Kaitlin and her family attended the SelfDesign Commencement Ceremony. They were celebrating the completion of her SelfDesign education.

But 13 years earlier, when she was just seven years old, it wasn't certain Kaitlin would ever be able to finish her education. Severely challenged with autism, she had been sent home from Grade 2 with a note saying she was not to return.

Like many kids affected by autism, Kaitlin's sensory system has developed differently. She is non-speaking – she understands both English and Japanese but is unable to converse easily. She couldn't tell you her name or telephone number if she got lost, and she requires 24/7 care. She also has motor dyspraxia, which prevented her from signing, speaking, writing or even using an iPad to communicate.

Her mother, Megumi, turned to SelfDesign's Support Education program.

“At the time, I didn't know if we could serve [Kaitlin's] needs, but I said I would try,” B.C. certified educator Kathleen Forsythe, who was assigned as Kaitlin's learning consultant.

“Having a child with special needs, and myself not being a teacher, made me doubt whether I could do this,” Megumi says “But Kathleen assured me that's what she was there for, as a certified educator, and reminded me that I know my child best and, therefore, I would be the best teacher for her.”

The results amazed her.

“When we came to SelfDesign, we started to realize that Kaitlin had passions. She started to reveal herself,” she says. “I have a completely different girl now.”

SelfDesign's programing is compatible for supporting learners with complex needs, because it is personalized to each individual child. In addition to Kathleen's one-on-one support as learning consultant over the



13 years Kaitlin was a SelfDesign learner, education assistants came to the family home. Field trips to the Vancouver Aquarium and Science World allowed Kaitlin and her younger brother Marty, who has similar challenges from autism, to leverage the local community as part of their learning. SelfDesign also contracted professionals to provide music, art, skating and gymnastics lessons that allowed the children to succeed in areas no one had thought possible.

"We were able to allow their learning to be around their passions and their strengths," said Megumi.

"We were able to set up a program around them, rather than having to fit into a program."

Everything started progressing very quickly in 2015. Using the choice-based rapid prompting method, Kathleen and Megumi discovered the children understood everything and could spell and read, but the motor dyspraxia was preventing them from expressing what they wanted to say. Kathleen and

Megumi realized providing choices helped the children learn. Kaitlin and Marty can now read, and Kaitlin completed her SelfDesign education in 2019, while Marty is now in his final year.

"Kaitlin's incredible response to our SelfDesign approach is arguably one of the reasons we currently have 493 children with autism enrolled in SelfDesign," Kathleen says.

More than anything, however, Megumi says SelfDesign offers parents hope.

"When the diagnosis gets given, it looks bleak," she says. "The hopes and dreams you might have had for your children are changed utterly. The autism diagnosis is a challenge we never expected. However, what SelfDesign did for our family allowed us to bring the best out of our kids. I'd like to pass that hope along to other families. The sky's the limit."

“More than anything,  
SelfDesign offers parents hope.  
– Megumi



# SelfDesign by the numbers

In the 2018/19 learning year,  
we celebrated many successes.





# 2,159

## **Kindergarten to grade 12**

learners were supported in the SelfDesign Learning Community K-12 program.

# 853

## **Learners with special needs**

were supported through our Support Services.

# 2,000

## **External service**

**provider-contractors** supported our community.

# 185

**BC certified educator contractors** supported learners.

# 62

## **Contractors supported**

SelfDesign's administration and operations.

# 336

## **Learners attended events**

-SelfDesign Learning Community hosted seven camps and many gatherings and in-person events

# 167

## **Learning resources**

are available in the SelfDesign learning experience library, providing **23,800 individual learning experiences** to learners and their families.

# 65

**Learners completed their education** with SelfDesign Learning Community.

# 251

## **Home learners and**

**their families** enrolled in the Home Learning program.



# SelfDesign Home Learning

## Pursuing learning independently...

Home Learning offers an alternative to the SelfDesign Learning Community's kindergarten to grade 12 distributed learning program by providing the opportunity for a child to learn independently at home.

This is the most flexible option for families who wish to take on the responsibility for their child's education and are not concerned with B.C. Ministry of Education requirements.

Home Learning differs from our regular kindergarten to grade 12 program in the following ways:

- ✓ **Families do not work** with an educator.
- ✓ **Parents take responsibility** for the learning program and do not report to the school.
- ✓ **Learners' work** is not assessed.
- ✓ **Learners do not earn credit** for courses in grades 10 to 12, nor graduate and earn a high-school diploma.



The SelfDesign Home Learning program has been serving learners since 1989.

In 2018/19, we served 251 home learners and their families.



# Long-lasting partnerships

At SelfDesign Learning Foundation, we are all about forming partnerships and relationships with people and organizations who align with our values and vision for personalized lifelong learning for all.

Our main offering, SelfDesign Learning Community, is recognized and supported by the B.C. Ministry of Education and is a Group 1 Independent School in the province of British Columbia.

## We are proud to be affiliated with:



**The Transformative Learning Foundation**, based out of the United States, develops and delivers educational resources and support services that promote various approaches to natural self-directed learning. The foundation's mission is to co-inspire self-authored and joyful lifelong learning.



**The Graduate Institute for Transformative Learning** is a unique learning community in the United States that is committed to the integrity and capacity of each person to design her/his own learning – and life.

Many of our educators and staff at SelfDesign have graduated from the institute.



**Cognia** offers accreditation, certification, assessment, professional services and consulting within a framework of continuous improvement. SelfDesign Learning Foundation received a positive Cognia Performance Accreditation in 2019.



**The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund** aims to build cultural understanding and create a path toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. SelfDesign is registered in the fund's Legacy Schools program, which provides educational resources to ensure the unique interests, rights and perspectives of Indigenous people are recognized and implemented.

# SelfDesign Learning Foundation

## Highlights and successes





## Successful pilot of the SelfDesign Journeys Program



The SelfDesign Journeys Program is an innovative parent education program designed for parents of children with developmental challenges, including, for example, autism spectrum disorder. The Journeys program is based on the SelfDesign learning model and is designed specifically for use by these families who are interested in a lifelong learning approach that can be applied beyond their child's school experience.

SelfDesign successfully piloted the Journeys e-course this year with 15 SelfDesign families and aims to make the full program available in 2020.

## A SelfDesign Path: A course for parents



This year, we invited parents to explore the heart of SelfDesign philosophy through A SelfDesign Path, a course designed to guide new and current parents through our unique approach to learning.

This incredible, self-paced, module-based course allows parents to explore our approach to learning and relationships and make the most of the SelfDesign experience. It is available on mobile or desktop.

The course can lead to supportive conversations between families and their learning consultant, as well as contribute to richer family conversations.

Support Services offers a special edition of A SelfDesign Path course, adapted for parents of learners with special needs.



## SOGI 1 2 3

SelfDesign is proud to be an inclusive school and is affiliated with SOGI 1 2 3. SOGI 1 2 3 helps educators make schools inclusive and safe for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI). At a SOGI-inclusive school, students' biological sex does not limit their interests and opportunities, and their sexual orientation and how they understand and express their gender are welcomed without discrimination.

SelfDesign is implementing SOGI 1 2 3 education material and concepts in various ways and by doing so, SelfDesign enlivens our community's Value Statements and upholds the B.C. Human Rights Code. This offers SelfDesign contractors, educators and parents an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the various ways that we can support all members of our educational program. SelfDesign has a designated 'SOGI Lead' who connects directly with the SOGI provincial educational lead.



## Learning Experience Library

In 2019, learners and their families requested more than 23,800 learning experiences from the SelfDesign learning experience library. SelfDesign offers more than 167 resources to enhance a child's learning experiences. Resources include access to subscriptions such as Discovery Education and BrainPop, which we provide free of charge.

## Learners lay the groundwork for their own Learner Council

In December 2018, some learners inquired how they could find a way to 'voice' their concerns about a variety of topics in a more official way. The discussions sparked the idea of a Learner Council.

From that initial inquiry, a team of seven learners in grades 10-12 worked, with guidance and encouragement from our Vice Principal, to form an acting Learner Council. They figured out how to organize and work together to identify and meet their goals, including completing all of the steps necessary to get to the point of an election.

They created the guidelines and framework necessary for full Learner Council elections. SelfDesign learners elected the SelfDesign Learning Community's first Learner Council in September 2019.





## Reconciliation and SelfDesign: Integrating Indigenous culture and values into the learning experience



Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners and their families gathered together to participate in the Haida basket-weaving tradition in Campbell River during the spring. The daytrip offerings included two guest speakers on the Maori storytelling tradition and the Anishinaabeg usages of sweet grass. There was also a tour of the Women and Water exhibit at the Bill Reid Gallery in Vancouver, and workshops in Burnaby and Kamloops on traditional drum making. In addition, our Voices Indigenous Film & Book Club met monthly in the spring to discuss films, documentaries, picture books, novels and autobiographies. We also hosted seasonal Indigenous parent discussion forums and multiple opportunities for professional development were made available to our educators to deepen the context of their understanding about the Indigenous Canadian worldview and perspective.

SelfDesign proudly became a member of the Legacy School network in 2019. By joining our voices to those of over 350 other Canadian legacy schools, we hope to make significant strides in connecting and empowering our members through opportunities for both increasing awareness and impactful action.

These activities are organized by SelfDesign's Indigenous Resource Coordinator and educator. They are part of SelfDesign's strategy to support Indigenous learners in our community, and to advance reconciliation for all members, based on the recommendations put forward by our Indigenous Task Force in 2017.

*SelfDesign's Cultural Explorations events support learners, families and educators to actively strengthen their understandings about history, culture and Indigenous ways of knowing and being. They provide space for us to gather together to explore and set to a path of reconciliation through action.*

