



# The Philosophy of SelfDesign

 SelfDesign<sup>®</sup>

LEARNING  
FOUNDATION



# SelfDesign is the art and science of lifelong learning

SelfDesign is an approach to engaged and individualized learning. It orients people toward learning as a process rather than a product, and it supports them as designers of their personalized learning journeys and their lives. By its very name, SelfDesign suggests that learning is most effective when created around each person's interests and goals rather than geared towards generalized population.

In a context of conversation and relationship, learners construct their knowledge through imagining, planning, exploration, and assessment. Curiosity and enthusiasm determine the direction, resulting in learning being experienced as a joyful, lifelong process. Over time, specific qualities tend to emerge for learners –focused on personal, social and global awareness, and responsibility.

SelfDesign is a fully inclusive model, recognizing that all learners move through the phases of their lives in patterns unique to them, and within these phases they are supported to follow a learning path appropriate to their diverse abilities, learning styles, gender identity and expression, and personal or spiritual beliefs.

*SelfDesign nurtures self-agency, 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.

## A brief history



In 1982, SelfDesign Founder Brent Cameron considered his daughter's request to leave kindergarten and return to her learning environment of relationships within family and community. Having watched his child approach learning with enthusiasm, curiosity and passion for her first five years and having an education background himself, Brent could easily contrast her response to the limitations of public school's structured system. Trusting in the basis of his child's desire, Brent supported her request and embarked on a journey of mutualized learning founded in love and respect.

What began in 1983 as the tiny Wondertree Centre in Vancouver grew through the years, and in 2002 it transformed into an online, province-wide educational offering for families throughout British Columbia.

Today, renamed SelfDesign to reflect Brent's belief that the strongest learning occurs when people are able to determine and create their own learning path, it serves thousands of learners as it continues to grow and evolve.

“Unlike schooling, the process of SelfDesign is a whole body/whole mind transformation, incorporating the patterns of our living into the design of learning strategies. The SelfDesign model has nothing to do with schooling and everything to do with lifelong learning.”

- SelfDesign: Nurturing Natural Genius  
by Brent Cameron and River Meyer

# 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.

While each learner in SelfDesign programs is seen as a unique individual with distinct gifts and needs, the essential elements of the SelfDesign philosophy remain the same for all.

## Our three core elements:

1

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.

With each interaction, the learner is changed, bringing their evolving self to the next experience. The process creates a continuous spiraling expansion, with ongoing development and deepening that we recognize as learning.

Much of the learning process is invisible, occurring over time and within the learner's internal domain. While traditional views of education have tended to focus on products or outcomes to demonstrate that learning has happened, SelfDesign attends to the journey. Emphasis is placed on the maturing of competence and confidence that expands as the learner travels self-authored pathways in co-inspiring relationships.



## 2

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

In SelfDesign, learning is seen as a natural element of the human experience rather than as something that must be imposed in order for it to occur. The SelfDesign model demonstrates trust in the inherent desire and capacity of human beings to create meaning in their world, with each learner individually supported to create and navigate their own journey.

This shift from a traditional view of education moves learning from a predetermined set of requirements to a self-determined path of what, why, and how to learn, with continuous imagining, planning, conversation, reflection, assessment, and re-evaluation along the way.

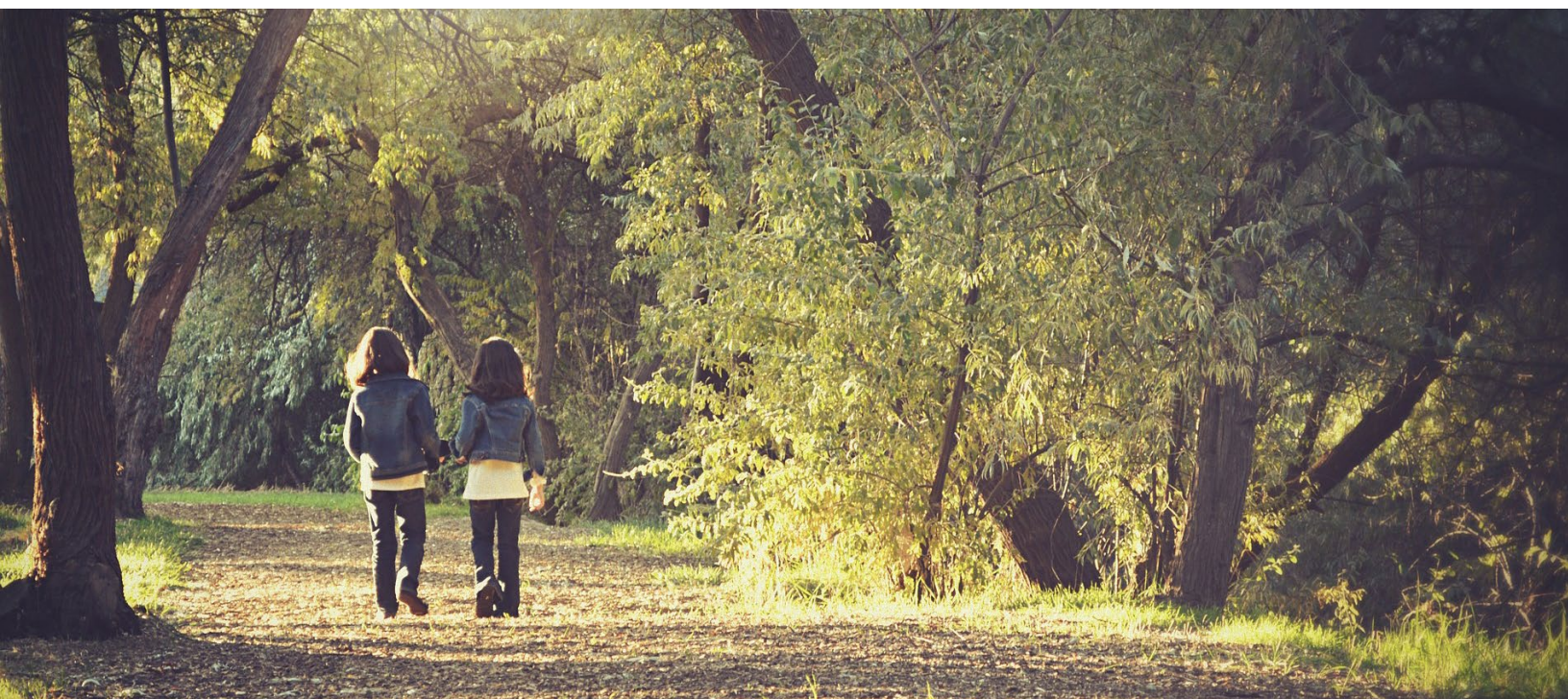
The model aims to develop a sense of personal agency, ongoing curiosity and creativity, collaboration, and a lifelong passion for learning.

## 3

Learning and personal development occur within nurturing, relational environments.

SelfDesign puts focus on the learner's development within nurturing, relational environments. The initial influence of family sets in place foundational values, beliefs and self-concepts, which widen as spheres of connection and influence that expand to community and beyond. Positive experiences in these realms, combined with a fostered awareness of natural interdependencies and the importance of self-reflection, tend to support the development of collaboration, cooperation and mutual respect.

The conversations and meaningful interactions that occur within positive environments are key to the building of knowledge for each individual, creating the growth and expansion known as learning.






# A living and breathing model

Using the three core elements, SelfDesign employs practices and strategies that support lifelong engagement and learning.

Our B.C. certified educators play a key role in bringing the SelfDesign approach to life. Learners and families often need support and encouragement to build the three core elements into the creation of learning goals and daily activities. The educator promotes trust in this process through relationships and conversation.

Ongoing discussions about learning create an understanding of how knowledge is built over time and through experience. The long-term goal of positive environments and relationships is modeled by the educator, who supports possibilities, affirming language and development toward desired goals.

With emphasis placed on expanding strengths rather than correcting perceived deficiencies or differences, positive self-perception develops that strengthens the learner's motivation to explore their learning world. Focus is placed on gradually bringing forward the learner's voice, holding them at the centre of their learning while building their confidence in self-agency. Based in weekly connection, an ever-deepening dynamic of mutual respect and collaboration lives at the centre of the educator–family relationship.



*“SelfDesign is a process and a practice, with an evolving outcome of increasing self-determination, self-responsibility, and awareness of social and global interdependencies.”*

- River Meyer

# 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

An observable manner of living tends to evolve over time for those who practise the SelfDesign approach. It shows itself on both a personal and a social/global level through such qualities as presence, engagement, reflection, flexibility, self-awareness, self-responsibility, and the ability to hold multiple perspectives.

As learners grow to notice that their personal knowledge architecture emerges through conversation and relationship, they value opportunities to interact in a deepening way. With environments that support an education designed around interest and relevance, learners have the best opportunity to develop the qualities and skills most needed for 21st century learning and living.

“ *SelfDesign honors the processes and essential desires of each person, thereby encouraging the unfolding of the infinite potential within us all. Only when we design our unique and separate identity in harmony with our true Self can our living be happy and respectful. Only then can we discover our interconnectedness and begin to truly live in peace. “*

- SelfDesign Founder Brent Cameron's personal writings





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