

In Ethan Eigenfeldt's video *Speak Out*, young workers witness a number of unsafe activities while tape on their mouths prevents them from speaking.

# B.C. students inspired to speak up for safety

By Jackie Wong

Two-minute videos by and for youth are empowering high-school students to stand up for workplace safety. The videos offer insights that can help with staying safe in after-school jobs, and create a safety mindset that can last long after graduation.

There's a bit of magic in catching a glimpse of a young person's imagination, and the top submissions to WorkSafeBC's 12th annual student video contest, which focus on the importance of workplace safety, reveal the impressive creativity of teenage minds.

The wide-ranging videos include a live-action black comedy encouraging workers to break the silence about dangerous or abusive workplaces, and a cast of teens and children in suits encouraging people to speak out about workplace bullying, among others.

## From VHS to YouTube: The evolution of student videos

"This is one of the most fun parts of our job," says Robin Schooley, who coordinates the student video contest alongside Helen Chandler. Schooley and Chandler are industry specialists in WorkSafeBC's young- and new-worker program.

They've watched with excitement as the contest has evolved since its beginnings in 2006, when "people would send us VHS videos," Schooley remembers. "Now, they film it on their phone and send us their YouTube link."

There were 45 submissions from B.C. secondary schools this year: Some 140 students took part in making the films.

"We were really pleased with the fact that the 45 came from all over the province," says Chandler.

And, new schools participating came out swinging. Centennial Christian School in Terrace, B.C., which participated for the first time this year, took home two awards: A win in the grades 8 to 10 category for their video *Junior Speaks Up* (a *Choose Your Own Adventure*-style Lego animation) and an honourable mention for *Young Curt — Falling* (a rap music video, shot in black and white, about forester safety).

Thanks to the sponsors — British Columbia Safety Authority, Seaspan, ActSafe, and London Drugs, who each contributed \$2,500 for the top two awards in each category — there was a total of \$10,000 in prize money. WorkSafeBC, meanwhile, funded the contest's two \$500 prizes for honourable mention.

## Walnut Grove Secondary takes home two wins

“That WorkSafeBC is promoting this contest, and has been for so many years, is such a great thing,” says Ryan Radford, a digital media and video production teacher at Walnut Grove Secondary School in Langley, B.C.

Two of Radford’s students, Kevin Kim and Ethan Eigenfeldt, submitted videos on workplace safety that earned the two winning spots in the grades 11 to 12 category, for their videos *Find Your Voice* and *Speak Out*.

Kim’s *Find Your Voice* is a moving piece of motion-graphic animation that addresses bystanders’ fears when they witness abuse in the workplace or at school.

Eigenfeldt’s *Speak Out* depicts silenced workers treated like cogs in a machine, and the video ends as one character rips off the tape on his mouth and opens it to speak.

Radford glows with pride when he talks about his students — he says he did little else but provide them with the contest opportunity and technical supports. “I’m learning just as much from them as they are from me.”

## Activating peer-to-peer conversations on safety

Their videos will also live beyond the contest. Schooley and Chandler note that employers around the world often download student videos for training purposes. The videos may be able to take the message to young workers who might not feel comfortable advocating for their own safety.

“Young people don’t always feel empowered to speak for themselves, to say, ‘These are my rights and I’m entitled to them,’” Schooley says. She hopes that activating peer-to-peer conversations through the student video contest will help change that.

“Empower people not to just know their rights, but to exercise them.”

## Watch the videos and participate in 2018

You can visit [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com) and search “student safety video contest” to see the 2017 videos. And, watch for updates on the theme for next year’s contest — to be unveiled this fall. ☺

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