Building Community, Inspiring Change
Stories from CLBC Community Councils
Stories of success and inspiration

Community Council members volunteer their time because they are passionate and dedicated to using their expertise and experience to create more inclusive communities and break down the barriers associated with disability.

Community Councils bring people together much like stories do. Storytelling is a powerful way to make people feel emotionally connected and there is no doubt that stories can change the way we think, act, feel and communicate.

Each story featured in this booklet shares successful and inspiring examples of the amazing work and achievements that CLBC’s Community Councils have made across the province. CLBC staff and Community Council members can use the stories in this book to spark conversation and relay the significance that every community in BC should be an inclusive and safe place for all.

Thank you for your hard work, your dedication and commitment, and for sharing your stories.

Doug Butler, Chair, Thompson Cariboo Community Council

Dan Douglas, CLBC Community Planning and Development Manager, Kamloops

CLBC Community Councils

CLBC Community Councils operate across the province ensuring that self advocates, family members, community members and service providers play a major role in achieving CLBC’s vision of fostering good lives in welcoming communities.

Community Councils work collaboratively with community partners to support community inclusion, citizenship and full participation of people with developmental disabilities.

To learn more about Community Councils, please visit: www.communitylivingbc.ca and go to Your Community > Community Councils.
“Every year, our Council creates engagement goals we think are attainable for our group, given our diversity and how far apart we are geographically,” says Donna McCready of the Kootenay Community Council. “We try to build on these goals during annual planning so we have momentum, and can build on what we’ve done before.”

The Kootenay Council has done many creative activities over the years to help build connections and awareness in their area, including making black toques with the CLBC logo to give away at local Community Living Month events, helping to support two self advocate groups, and fostering close connections with CLBC staff, families, self advocates and community partners.

Donna is enthusiastic when she discusses a recent activity they hosted at the September 2011 Kootenay Regional Association for Community Living (KRACL) conference in Nelson. The council partnered with KRACL to provide a “hospitality room” where conference attendees, families, self advocates and others could drop in for information, to have a treat or coffee, or to just take a break from the conference.

“Having the hospitality room at the KRACL conference was a great way to leverage on an event that was already taking place, and gave us a great venue to connect with people,” says Donna. “Council members and CLBC staff were able to meet with families, self advocates and individuals in an informal setting. It was a fantastic way to provide information and get the message out about CLBC and the council.”

KRACL holds its annual conference each year in different communities throughout the Kootenays. The Council is planning on hosting the hospitality room at the next KRACL conference again so that Council members and CLBC staff have the opportunity to connect with community members in another part of the region.
Creating space for discussion

For a number of years, the Upper Fraser Community Councils and CLBC staff have been working together to hold forums to relay information and hear about local needs. Forums have been held to help connect self-advocates, assist youth transitioning to adult supports and discuss ways for adults to reconnect with community.

The council has been successful in connecting with school districts in Hope, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Agassi and Langley to hold student and parent sessions. The content for these forums usually involves having CLBC staff give presentations on eligibility and CLBC services and supports. This also provides an opportunity for the Community Council to inform families of their role and goals.

Over the past year the council has hosted a number of educational forums which include:

- Income Tax and Disability (in Langley and Chilliwack)
- A Forum on Aging (in Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Langley)
- A forum on the Registered Disability Savings Plan (in Abbotsford)
- The council arranged for an in-service training to CLBC staff within the Fraser region on working with families

The council is currently arranging a forum to be presented by a self-advocate based on her life story, and will host a presentation on community transition in partnership with the Family Support Institute and the Langley Association for Community Living. The council is also in the process of arranging training for families and self advocates on facilitating the PATH process.

In the future, the Upper Fraser Community Council will continue to work with CLBC staff, service providers and community partners to provide information, receive input, and promote and build inclusion through a range of activities, including additional forums.

Upper Fraser Community Council member Jerry Laidlaw shares information about housing at the Fraser Self-Advocate conference.
Since its inception, the Vancouver Community Council has made numerous efforts to meet its responsibilities. Some of their broad based initiatives include the following:

The council has talked to different community partners; participated in the creation of a CLBC-funded summer programme for young adults with developmental disabilities; made efforts to survey recreational needs; endorsed and encouraged a member’s Making Friends workshop at the YMCA; participated in CLBC Community Living Month events and Ageing forums; made a presentation to City Council; and held annual Family Meetings to give and receive information.

The council feels that their present focus might be their most successful project to date. In March of 2011, they held a strategic planning session. The plan that emerged, titled “Families Helping Families,” focused on listening to presentations from families that had worked together, identifying any common characteristics or principles and pursuing these with new families to help them network and help each other meet their needs.

The result was as follows: from the presentations they heard, from information gleaned from support groups, and from their own experiences, they settled on three areas of need – housing, recreation, education and employment. The council knew that parents sought assistance and support in meeting the needs of their adult children in these three areas.

After the strategic planning sessions and formal presentations from four different family groups, the council held a family meeting using a “World Café” format. Participants moved from table to table expanding on ideas and suggestions related to the four areas of need that the Community Council had identified. The ideas were recorded and shared at the next council meeting.

“Community Council members have chosen to be on one of three subcommittees – recreation, housing, and ‘education and employment’ – and in subsequent meetings have started to plan their next steps,” said Vancouver Community Council Chair, Peter Swayne. “Though still in the early stages, this project has developed a greater sense of purpose within the council.”

The council’s next step is to finalize what they will bring to families – whether offering recreational opportunities, exploring parents’ specific housing interests, preparing materials useful for parents preparing their adult children for employment or a list of other options. Ultimately, their aim is to encourage and assist families to work together to achieve the recreational, housing and employment goals they have for their adult children.
In 2009, members of the South Island Community Council (SICC) had a discussion with CLBC’s Self Advocate Advisor about developing a booklet for councils to help better include self advocates in council work. This was the beginning of a project that led to producing the video: Light the Way.

A video format was chosen to make the information more accessible to all council members. The goal was to create a resource to help Community Councils build their capacity to help self-advocates access and use information, to recruit self advocates, and find ways to best use self advocates’ skills and abilities at meetings. It was also hoped that it will spark discussions within each Community Council.

One of SICC’s service provider members, Kristen Kay, was part of the discussions to create this resource. Kristen is the self advocate liaison for the council. Her role is to help self advocates prepare for council meetings, to get their input and feedback on ways SICC can better support self advocates, and to identify self advocate projects or initiatives the council can support.

South Island Council members Kristen, Sharon Sinclair and Bill Hustler, along with SICC self advocates Mary Emmond and Michael Langridge, became members of a steering committee that developed the video. CLBC staff and Bone Creative, a Victoria graphic design and film company that provided most of the video production for free, were also members of the committee. The project took 4 months to complete.

Consultation was a key part of the project. Community Council members from all regions were consulted on the content for the video and a focus group was held with self advocates to get their input. Thompson Cariboo Council member and Provincial Advisory Committee chair Ross Spina and Simon Fraser Council member Barb Goode, a self advocate, agreed to talk about their experiences, perspectives and opinions on tape so they could be shared.

“I think the video shows what self advocates can do, and other people can use it,” says Mary. “The video made both Michael and me feel like we have a larger part in the SICC because we have shown how we can be part of it.”

“I liked attending the committee meetings when we were developing the video,” says Michael. “That was my favourite part of the project.”

Both Michael and Mary enjoyed meeting new people during the development of the video, and learning how a film is made. They both hope that other Community Councils can use the ideas and perspectives shared by self advocates in the video to help people feel more included on councils.

Hard copies of the video have now been distributed to all Community Councils and Community Planning and Development managers across the province. The video can also be viewed on CLBC’s YouTube page.

SICC members Michael Langridge and Mary Emmond participated in the creation of the Light the Way video.

South Island Community Council

Area Served: Communities west to Port Renfrew, north to Shawnigan Lake and the Greater Victoria area, Sidney and the Gulf Islands.

Membership: 2 Self Advocates, 6 Family Members, 2 Community Members and 3 Service Providers

Key Council Goal: Connecting with families to hear their concerns, strengthening the voice of self advocates, and leveraging Council connections and partnerships.
Supporting future leaders

After a self advocate conference had been held in Vernon in 2009, self advocates decided to hold a conference in Kamloops in 2011 so all self advocates in the Interior had a chance to attend. The Thompson Cariboo Community Council (TCCC), the Kamloops business community, and the local CLBC office and CLBC staff supported the development of this conference.

One of the self advocates on the TCCC, and 2011 conference MC, Tony Cuglietta, took the lead on developing the Kamloops conference, from creation to the details of the event and location. Jenna Fowler, a self advocate on the TCCC, also did a lot of great work on the conference.

“The first conference started with a discussion on a trip to 100 Mile House. The council had been hearing from self advocates that they felt they could not get access to important information, like how getting married might affect Persons with Disabilities payments,” says Tony. “On that trip, we decided it was important to have a conference for self advocates to provide them with information they are interested in, and needed to know about.”

Doug Butler, the Chair of the TCCC, helped Tony form a conference committee of self advocates to organize the Kamloops conference. The agenda for the 2011 conference was voted on by the 40 self advocates who attended the 2009 conference, and reflected their interests and questions. They made sure the cost for self advocates to attend was low - $30 - so it was accessible to as many people as possible.

Over 60 self advocates and support people from across the Interior attended the Kamloops conference on October 26 & 27, 2011. The Mayor of Kamloops provided welcoming remarks, and self advocates had a chance to learn about relationships, talk about diversity and language to support inclusion goals, and enjoy themselves at a dance that raised money for BC Children’s Hospital.

People also had a chance to participate in a workshop about the barriers people face every day and the group explored solutions together. There was also a workshop that used video, musical and interactive experience to talk about volunteering and helping others.

“In all of the workshops there were fun activities and good questions from the audience which is a great way to learn something new!” says Tracy-Jo Russell, a member of the organizing committee.

“The best part of the conference was that there was a chance for people to come to a conference, meet new people and see old friends again.”

The self advocate organizing committee plans to continue to hold self advocate conferences every two years. Future communities include 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Kelowna.

Thompson Cariboo Community Council

Area Served:
100 Mile, Williams Lake, Kamloops, Chase and Merritt Region.

Membership:
3 Self Advocates, 6 Family Members, 1 Community Member and 2 Service Providers

Key Council Goal:
Creating opportunities to foster self advocate leadership, independence and skills.

The North Okanagan and Shuswap Community Council (NOSCC) is proud of the outcome of a project they began in 2009 to help connect people to the local arts community, and create more opportunities for inclusion and innovation in the North Okanagan.

That year, the local CLBC office was able to provide a $22,000 grant for the project. Project terms of reference were developed by a sub-committee of the council, with input from CLBC staff, to help ensure that the use of the grant money would meet the objectives of the project, to develop more inclusion opportunities for a minimum of five individuals.

A rigorous process was used to find an organization that could fulfil the project’s mandate. An RFP was developed and advertised in the local paper asking organizations to demonstrate how they would leverage funds from another community source for the project, where activities would take place (i.e. recreational, municipal or educational setting), and how they would ensure people with developmental disabilities would make up no more than 20 per cent of the group (this way individuals involved would have greater opportunities to expand their networks in community).

Five organizations submitted proposals for the grant. A committee of NOSCC members and CLBC staff reviewed the proposals using the Terms of Reference created for the project. Vernon Community Arts Centre emerged as the successful proponent as they were able to double the funds for the project through another partnership. They were also delivering existing programs through a community centre and demonstrated how they would include adults eligible for CLBC supports in their adult programming.

“This has been such a great success for the community and for the adults involved,” says Jo-Anne Crawford, a NOSCC member. “The program has continued on with no additional funding from NOSCC or CLBC, and eight individuals are currently regularly attending Art Centre programs where they’ve made valuable community connections, and gained skills. This is three more people than our original goal, and we hope to continue to see the numbers grow.”

In the future, the NOSCC is planning on finding more opportunities to educate and inform community partners and the general public about the skills, abilities and opportunities adults with developmental disabilities can bring to communities.
“Everyone wants the opportunity to communicate,” says Sharon Taylor from the North Region Community Council (NRCC). This statement is the guiding principle of the work the NRCC has been undertaking since 2010 when they started providing individuals who don’t use spoken language with communication devices that are relatively inexpensive and make a huge difference in people’s lives.

The initiative began when a member of the NRCC saw a story on a national news broadcast about how some students with autism who struggle to communicate became engaged when they were offered an iPod Touch and the Proloquo2go software to use. One of the teachers stated that it can create a “meaningful ‘right now’ communication board for students with a level of engagement that [they] hadn’t seen with other teaching tools.”

Council members shared the information and how it was used for one young man with autism who lives in Smithers, BC, and how it changed his life as he began to communicate. As council members began to share information in their communities, they saw some school districts and Speech and Language Pathologists become excited about the possibilities it offered.

“Cost wise this is one of the most reasonable communication devices available but still often out of reach for an individual living with a disability,” says Sharon.

The program works on the iPod Touch, iPhone, iPad and iPad2, all devices that are readily available to purchase in most communities. The individuals in communities in the North who were using iPods were able to use the technology easily to greatly improve their communication skills and abilities. When the NRCC saw the benefits in being able to communicate better for the individuals who were using the program, they knew they wanted to do more. The NRCC purchased six iPod Touches for people in Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, Prince George, Quesnel, Smithers and Terrace.

The Prologo2Go software can be used on iPod Touches that are 3 or 4 years old. As a next step, the NRCC will look at sharing the success in their communities and asking for donations of older models that can be given to more individuals who will benefit from increased opportunities to communicate and connect with others.

“I would like this to be available to everyone with communication needs,” says Sharon. “It’s really encouraging to know this technology exists. We’re trying to get the word out to other partners so other people can benefit.” And the word is getting out. Several northern school districts are now using similar communication tools for students with communication barriers.
“Access to affordable housing was a key theme that emerged from our last strategic planning session,” says Richard Faucher, a member of the Simon Fraser Community Council (SFCC), and Executive Director of Burnaby Association of Community Inclusion (BACI).

Finding affordable housing in the Simon Fraser area is increasingly difficult for individuals and families. The council wanted to connect people with information and existing resources to start the conversation with adults and their families, and start linking people to affordable housing opportunities.

The council’s first step was to invite BC Housing (BCH) to one of their meetings to talk about affordable housing, options available through BCH, programs available to help people rent housing, and the work underway with CLBC to increase access to BCH units for the people CLBC supports. SFCC next invited Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) to talk about how to bring people “from deficit to abundance.” As part of their mandate to support individuals and families with lifelong planning, PLAN has done much research and work on looking at what are different approaches and best options for housing so people have a place to live that is safe, secure and reflects who they are.

Out of these presentations came the idea of creating a housing workshop for families where they could come and learn about options, resources and hear of other’s experiences. With community partners, a panel with representatives from BC Housing, PLAN and family members presented at an all-day workshop in Spring 2011. Individuals and families connected with other families, discussed options, shared experiences, and learned about resources. Stories shared included a mother who spoke of receiving funding from the Family Independence Fund to renovate the basement so her son could live more independently, and a group of North Vancouver seniors who talked about their experiences and what they have learned from providing two units for people who need affordable housing.

The outcome of this work to date is that a group of families has been formed to look at affordable housing alternatives, with the support of BACI, CLBC, Simon Fraser Society for Community Living and posAbilities, another Simon Fraser service provider. Funding has been received, and a consultant has been hired to research housing options in other jurisdictions, and to look at how to use differently the physical, experiential and intellectual assets of the agencies involved in the project.

“It’s an opportunity to connect with people across Canada, and to think about how to use what we already have in different ways,” says Richard. “It’s a very exciting project and a very exciting time to be involved in community living.”

For more information on PLAN, visit their website, www.plan.ca or call 604 439-9566.

Simon Fraser Community Council

**Area Served:**
Burnaby, Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, Anmore, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody

**Membership:**
2 Self Advocates, 4 Family Members, 2 Community Members and 3 Service Providers

**Key Council Goal:**
To enhance the creation of safe environments, improve access to community resources and acknowledge the gifts and contributions of people with disabilities.
In 2009, the Central and Upper Island Community Council held a series of family forums to hear directly from people about their concerns. In the Campbell River area, crisis response and intervention were one of the main themes to emerge from these consultations.

Diane Bieber, a service provider, and Ryan Salant, an RCMP officer, started with the council at the same time and had an interest in addressing crisis response in their community of Campbell River. To begin the project, the Council held a focus group to discuss the topic of crisis response further. Once they had the input, Diane and Ryan believed they could move forward with a project that could help address the needs of the people Diane supports, and assist the RCMP with community-based outreach (RCMP officers new to a community must complete a community project as part of their work).

The Campbell River RCMP has a database that can be accessed at the office and in their vehicles to help ensure they are meeting an individual’s needs, and protecting the health and safety of their officers. Diane and Ryan decided to build on this initiative by inviting the individuals Diane’s organization supports to contribute their information to the database. The focus is on individuals who had contact with the RCMP previously or who might likely have contact in the future. The decision to have their information included is left entirely to the individual.

The project has had a number of successes since it began several years ago. One young woman, who was the first to give her information to the database, has avoided hospitalization through the relationship built with the RCMP. Another young man has been provided with positive role models, which has helped him address behavioural needs, and is allowing him to develop more relationships in community.

“This project has been a great opportunity to educate and inform community partners and creates connections,” says Diane. “It has brought community response for crises a long way for the people that we and CLBC support.”

Ryan is currently exploring the option with his superiors to expand the project across Vancouver Island. Both Ryan and Diane have presented many times locally and in other communities on the project. They hope to see it continue to grow and flourish.
It’s all about connections

“We are interested in working with others so the voices of self advocates and families are heard in the broader community, and the people CLBC supports know about available resources and information,” says George Arambasich, a member of the Central and South Okanagan Community Council (CSOCC), and Director of T.I.E.R. Support in Kelowna.

Over the last three years, CSOCC has successfully worked with CLBC staff and many other groups in hosting self advocate conferences in Vernon in 2010 and Kamloops in 2011; organizing Ageing Forums in Kelowna, Penticton and Princeton with over 250 people attending; and getting community and media to join in celebrations for Community Living Month.

But two of the CLBC-funded projects that George talks most glowingly about – a Resource Fair and Family Event, and an Employment Sticker initiative – build on feedback from self advocates and families.

“We organized the first Resource Fair in Penticton in 2010. We asked self advocates to ask their contacts what they’d like to see at the Fair. Since people would be travelling some distance they wanted community partners present as well as CLBC service providers. At the Fair we had over 60% informal community supports and services that citizens use every day in their communities. It was a great success, and we also worked with partners to organize events for October 2011 in Kelowna, Penticton and Princeton. These actions are really helping to bring people together.”

The Employment Sticker initiative reaches out to local businesses to inform employers about the skills and abilities an employee with developmental disabilities can bring to the workplace. It recognizes businesses committed to inclusive employment by providing a sticker to display in their window (see graphic). The initiative was started by T.I.E.R.; CSOCC members have been instrumental in promoting the initiative in their home communities.

“We feel we are lucky that we have great communities to work with, a great membership in the CSOCC, and that the local CLBC Community Planning and Development Manager, Lisa Bourget, is so supportive. She has been instrumental in helping the CSOCC move forward on its passion to connect people to community.”
“I was curious about this new entity CLBC and felt the best way to learn was to join up,” recollects Marie Sabine, Chair of the Surrey/Delta Community Council. Marie has been on the council since its inception.

The work of the council she is most proud of to date is a project that began in 2009. That year, the Surrey/Delta Community Council, with the assistance of a number of self advocates, gathered input from families and caregivers to determine the key issues they were facing in the Surrey/Delta area. The council was interested in hearing about a range of topics, from access to recreation and leisure activities to transportation to services needed. The single largest issue to emerge from this information gathering was a concern about what will happen to loved ones once their primary caregiver is no longer able to care for them.

Currently, 24% of the people CLBC supports are over the age of 50, and 5% are over the age of 65. The council recognized action needed to be taken and discussed the best approach to use to help families and caregivers address their concerns. The council submitted a proposal to the Provincial Advisory Committee to develop a brochure on ageing so families and caregivers would have information and resources to start planning for lifetime care of their loved one.

Sandra Cottingham, Jule Hopkins and Marie worked on the wording of a new pamphlet, choosing language that addressed the sensitivity and difficult nature of the topic, but inspired people to take action.

“It had to hit them between the eyes,” says Marie. “When something is uncomfortable people tend to put it off” she adds. For example, the answer to the question, ‘Why do I need to plan?’ is “What if the first night your family member slept away from home was the night you had to move into a care facility or the night you died?”

“The pamphlet uses strong language, and highlights the fact that you need to have that conversation with all family members, CLBC and those within your loved one’s support network,” says Marie.

The work of the Surrey/Delta Council has informed work done provincially by CLBC. In 2010, CLBC with the help of Community Councils held 39 “Ageing Forums” with a broad range of over 1,275 community members around the province. The input received through the forums will inform CLBC’s next steps to help address a concern felt by families across the province.

“I am quite proud of the work of the council,” says Sharon Rose, Community Planning and Development manager. “The provincial work on this topic started with the diligent and proactive response by the Council to an identified need.”
To learn more about CLBC’s Community Councils across the province, please visit: www.communitylivingbc.ca and go to Your Community > Community Councils.