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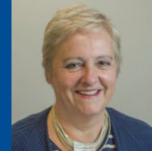
CLBC NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2015

Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES Stories from around British Columbia





Message from CEO Seonag Macrae



A message we cannot ignore

Welcome to the second edition of "Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES," a CLBC publication developed and written by self advocates in British Columbia.

Take a moment to read their stories, and you will understand in a fresh way why inclusion matters. This in fact is the theme of this year's United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3: Inclusion Matters. As you will read in the message from our editorial board on the opposite page, it was important to them for that reason to have this edition published to coincide with that day.

In this edition, self advocates write about having the opportunity to share love and life, to go to university, to have meaningful work, and more. They underscore the message in ways we cannot ignore. For those we serve, and their families, inclusion is more than a nice idea, it is an elemental ingredient for a full life.

It's why CLBC is always seeking to improve, not only in day-to-day services, but through initiatives that enhance self advocates' place in community. For example, this fall we launched a new project that will focus on establishing new kinds of community inclusion services that grow personal skills, natural networks and employment. It is in the early stages, but will eventually offer another option to individuals (see the CLBC News section on pages 4 and 5).

I want to also take this opportunity to thank readers for their part in helping us celebrate Community Living Month in October. Thanks to your hard work, events were held across the province, and many municipalities showed how much they value the contributions of citizens with diverse abilities. It just goes to show, we all have an important role to play in telling our friends and neighbours that, indeed, inclusion matters.

Thank you for reading and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season!

Sincerely,

Seonag Macrae

CEO

Community Living BC

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A special thanks to Editorial Board members and CLBC staff who provided writing and technical support to the authors of our newsletter stories and articles.

Message from the Editorial Board

Inclusion matters in all parts of life

Hello! We are the CLBC Editorial Board made up of self advocates and Community Living leaders from across the province. Our role is to work with CLBC to improve communication with the people they serve. Working together on this newsletter has been an opportunity to share with CLBC what we think is important. The Editorial Board also provides feedback and suggestions on projects and new initiatives that CLBC is working on.

In this edition, we are proud to recognize and celebrate December 3, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), or as some of us like to say, Diverse ABILITIES. IDPD started in 1992 to promote action and awareness about disability issues. This is an important day to acknowledge the contributions of people with diverse abilities, as well as the challenges many of us face every day in our communities.

The theme for 2015 IDPD is Inclusion Matters: Access and Empowerment for people of all abilities. For us, inclusion matters in all parts of life. We believe inclusion is about having a voice and being asked for your opinion, no matter how you communicate. It's about being able to get around in your community, creating your own home, learning and going to university, having a job or a business, making real friends, being part of your culture, and having the chance to fall in love.

We'd like to thank all the members of the self advocacy community and others with diverse abilities who contributed their stories to our newsletter. We'd also like to thank all of you who partnered with your communities to celebrate International Day for Persons with Disabilities. Finally, we would like to thank our founding Editorial Board members (pictured below), whose terms are coming to an end, for their tremendous contributions.

As always, we look forward to your feedback and suggestions for the next edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES.

Sincerely,
The CLBC Editorial Board



seated, left to right: Jerry Laidlaw, Cliff Stacey, Penny Soderena-Sutton, David Johnston, Krystian Shaw. **standing, left to right:** Tara Torme, Sheenagh Morrison, Michael McLellan, Tricia Lins, Shelley DeCoste, Shawn Spear, Jo-Anne Gauthier, Bryce Schaufelberger. (**Not pictured:** Shelley Marinus)

CLBC News



Celebrating Community Living Month 2015

This October marked the 17th Community Living Month in British Columbia. This annual celebration recognized the contributions of people with developmental disabilities across our province. We're happy to report that it was an eventful month with great events taking place in communities across the province. Many local communities also made official proclamations to mark the occasion.

Thank you to everyone involved in coordinating and promoting the many great community events, which included dances, barbecues, award ceremonies, art shows, photo contests and more! To see some of the highlights of Community Living Month 2015 events, please visit: www.communitylivingbc.ca/clm2015



Maggie Litster and Kathy Kurulok enjoy the Interior Region Self Advocate conference, one of many events and celebrations during Community Living Month 2015.

A new generation of possibilities



To help mark a decade of service in 2015, Community Living BC has published "A new generation of possibilities: Special 10-year anniversary update." This report is part of our effort to thank those we serve, their families, service providers and community groups for their dedication and contributions to the vision of good lives in welcoming communities. It shares stories of those who are helping us become more effective and person-centred. You can read the report online on the CLBC website at: www.communitylivingbc.ca/10years.

CLBC launches new web story series

CLBC has launched a new web-based story series called Welcoming Communities. In this series, we are publishing stories about individuals we serve, their families, community councils, service providers and others who are contributing to the vision for good lives in welcoming communities.

Stories are posted on the <u>CLBC</u> website under <u>News > Welcoming Communities</u> and will be featured on the CLBC homepage. So far, we've published stories from Surrey, Castlegar, Kamloops and Williams Lake.



CLBC News

Project advances new support options

This fall, CLBC launched the Advancing New Support Options project. This is a three-year, three-phase project to develop new CLBC service options that will balance supports around accessing employment, meaningful community inclusion, skill development and strengthening informal networks. The project responds to requests from many individuals and families for more than just employment services to assist individuals in comfortably pursuing employment.

CLBC is partnering with the Community Living Innovation Venture and is collaborating with service providers, self advocates and family members to develop new service options that are more responsive to the goals and aspirations of individuals on their path to employment and full citizenship. Updates about the project will be shared on the CLBC homepage in the months ahead.

Removing financial barriers for PWD recipients

In important news for people CLBC supports who also receive Persons with Disabilities (PWD) assistance, the provincial government has announced changes that will allow people to hold significantly more assets and receive financial gifts and inheritances with no impact on their monthly assistance.

Beginning December 1, 2015, the amount of assets that people receiving disability assistance may hold without losing eligibility for assistance will rise to \$100,000 for an individual with the PWD designation, and \$200,000 for a couple where both have PWD designation. Currently, the asset limits are \$5,000 and \$10,000 respectively.

For the full details of these changes, please visit: news.gov.bc.ca/releases (under November 5, 2015)

Aboriginal Disability Awareness Month

The Province of BC declared November as the first Aboriginal Disability Awareness Month. The First Nations Summit and the Metis Nation British Columbia passed similar resolutions. Community Living BC proudly supported the first-of-its-kind awareness month in Canada to help promote understanding of Aboriginal disability issues and recognize the contributions of Aboriginal people with disabilities within B.C.

CLBC staff are committed to supporting all individuals with developmental disabilities to live good lives in welcoming communities. You can learn more about our recent efforts to improve access to services for First Nations communities on the CLBC website under **Supports & Services > Aboriginal Initiative**.

REGIONAL STORIES: FRASER



Trust is key for job support

Congratulations to Self Advocate Inclusive Employment Trainers, Shelley DeCoste, Elisa Paczos, Conrad Tyrkin and Julya Hutton, for their leadership at the Surrey / Delta regional Employment Roundtable on September 17. As members of the Self Advocate Mentoring and Training Network, these four presenters shared their insights and advice to an audience of Work BC and employment service providers. The workshop was organized by CLBC staff and community partners who recognized the need for an event to highlight the expertise and experience of those with diverse abilities.

The four trainers shared their personal stories and what they are looking for in support when working or looking for a job. They delivered a message that people with diverse abilities can, and want to, work and with the right support anyone can be successful. Each presenter emphasized the importance of having a trusting relationship where the job supporter takes the time to really get to know the job seeker and sees them as an equal, not a client. Trainer Elisa Paczo stressed, "There is no manual for working with people with disabilities. We all want to feel valued and respected just like any other human being." One of the participants from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation said, "I was incredibly impressed with yesterday's event. We need to have something like this for all Work BC providers."



Inclusive employment trainers deliver the message that people with diverse abilities can and want to work.

Members of the Self Advocate Training and Mentoring Network, along with other presenters, are featured on the newly launched Speaker's Bureau hosted on www.selfadvocatenet.com. The Speakers Bureau continues to be developed by self advocacy leaders across B.C. who say, "there are many people with a story to share that will help others think and act differently toward people with diverse abilities. When we have a chance to share something important to us, we often challenge stereotypes and change attitudes."



For more information about the Speaker's Bureau and Self Advocate Training and Mentoring Network, or to

organize self advocate led training in your community, contact CLBC Self Advocate Advisor, Jessica Humphrey at: Jessica.Humphrey@gov.bc.ca.



To learn more about upcoming self advocacy conferences and many other events, visit the CLBC online events calendar at:

www.CommunityLivingBC.ca/Events



Retreat draws delegates from near and far

This October marked the 16th Annual Edenvale Self Advocacy Leadership Retreat in Abbotsford, B.C. The three-day weekend event brought together new and old friends from across the province to celebrate and advocate as members of B.C.'s Self Advocacy movement – a civil rights movement led by those labelled as having an intellectual or developmental disability.

The Edenvale retreat started in July 2000, with sponsorship from community living agency H.O.M.E.S. (Healthy Opportunities for Meaningful Experiences Society), who recognized the power and commitment of a fast growing network of self advocacy groups in the Fraser Valley.

Sixteen years later, community partners and allies of the self advocacy movement from all over British Columbia, and as far as Northern Ontario, continue to work together to coordinate and sponsor this important reunion of leaders. Gregg Schiller and Arlene Schouten have been a key organizers of this event from the very beginning.

The Edenvale Retreat and Conference Centre hosts the event and is a place that reminds us

that anyone can be a self advocate and that we must take the time to listen and honour the voices of all people.

Linda Ash and Carol West from Prince George attended Edenvale for their first time and share their experiences here. Carol: "This was my first time attending the retreat. Our group drove for 10 hours on a Greyhound bus and when we came in we had a great welcome. Our first workshop was 'express yourself' where we did pictures and listened to Gregg play the piano. Friday and Saturday night there was a bonfire and the self advocate game show. And there was Halloween food, fun, dance and party time. I would like to say thank you to the Prince George Self Advocacy Caucus for sending me down and covering my cost. I had a great time."

Linda: "There was a lot to do in those few days and good food and staff who made it a great time. Thank you to all. I liked the turkey dinner the best! Thank you Gregg and others who made my stay feel good. I would like to thank Prince George Self Advocacy Caucus for sending me down and covering my cost."

The 17th annual Edenvale Retreat will take place in October 2016 on Thanksgiving weekend. For more information, email:

GreggSchiller@shaw.ca



Self advocates gathered in Abbotsford for the 2015 Edenvale Retreat.

REGIONAL STORIES: INTERIOR



Sharing love and life together

By Aaron Barsarowick and Angel Nelson

We are Aaron and Angel from Penticton, B.C. We have been dating for three years and on June 27, 2015, we moved into our own apartment together.

The minute I set eyes on Angel I never wanted her to leave my sight. We met at an adult program on April 17, 2012. We both love to watch sports, travel to visit friends and family and attend self advocacy conferences. This year will be the third time we have travelled to Ferndale, Washington for our Christmas vacation.

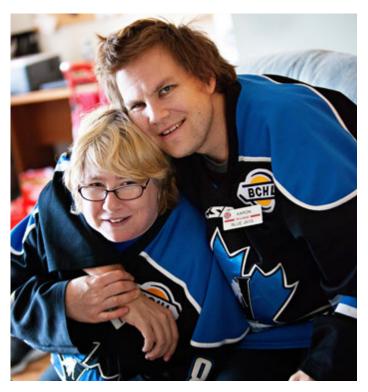
We both work at Boston Pizza. Aaron has worked there for 17 years, and Angel for one year.

In October, we shared our story about moving in together at the 2015 Interior Self Advocacy Conference called "Living Successfully with Diverse Abilities."

Before making the decision to live together, Angel lived in home sharing for five years and Aaron had his own apartment. Everyone has been very supportive of our choices. But we still took our time.

We split the cost on bills and groceries and we share house chores. When we go out for dinner or a movie we share the cost. We help each other out with the budget and we talk about it together. We have our own support and some that we share.

We both love watching Toronto Blue Jays, Vancouver Canucks and BC Lions games on TV.



Aaron and Angel first met in 2012 and are now planning their wedding.

We love each other by giving each other loving hugs and by killing ourselves laughing. When one of us is down and out we cheer each other up. When Angel's power chair breaks down, Aaron is there to help her out.

Our advice to other couples who want to live together is to take your time. Don't rush it and get to know each other very well.

Guess what? We are planning our wedding for 2017!



University changed my life

By Sharalin McLeod

My name is Sharalin McLeod. I am a University of British Columbia Okanagan Alumnus. I studied as a participatory auditing student in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies department for five years. I feel inclusion in a university setting is crucial. It allows for people to learn and grow like anyone else.

My experience as a UBC-O student was a great one. It allowed me to be included in different classes. I studied Creative Writing. I also learned about things like world development, the media and the history of residential schools. Being included in classes also meant working and doing assignments.

During my first year, I participated in a poster collecting contest and won it for collecting the most posters! This led to getting a job as a Campus Life Marketing Coordinator. My duties included putting up new posters, organizing the bulletin boards and taking down outdated posters. This job gave me confidence to belong to the university community.

One year I was invited to go snowboarding at Big White ski resort with a classmate. Another time I went skiing for five hours total. Inclusion at university has led to inclusion beyond the classroom.



"Inclusion at university has led to inclusion beyond the classroom."

Sharalin McLeod

These experiences in university have helped me grow, as well as given me tools to learn and do assignments and tests with the rest of the group. Being included in the university community makes a difference for people with diverse abilities who want to learn and experience new things.



For more information about Inclusive Post-Secondary Education in B.C. visit **www.steps-forward.org**

REGIONAL STORIES: NORTH



Conference empowers self advocates

By Betty King

Hello, my name is Betty King. I am the chair person for the Terrace self advocates. I have been the chair person for three years now.

We had a self advocate conference on October 2 in Terrace. It was at the long house at the college. The self advocates planned this conference for several months.

I helped with the food, venue, and speakers. It was a lot of hard work to get this together. The theme for the conference was "empowerment." We had our drumming group open the conference. This group is made up of all self advocates. We had speakers come and talk to us and show us things.

One of the speakers came all the way from Prince George. His name was Cory Walker. He is an adult who has autism.

I got to hear one of the speakers, Stacey Tyres. She was talking about and how we can deal with some of our problems. Stacey is a poverty law advocate here in Terrace. We asked her questions about some of the things that are happening in Terrace because she is part of city council. I asked about getting a street light fixed by where I live, and about three weeks later it was fixed!

We also had Cecile Bohme speak. She is a retired community living employee. Another speaker we had was Morgan Reinsbakken. She is an art therapist. She taught us how to paint.

The purpose of our conference is so we can get people from other places to come and talk to us and help with what we need and how we can get it. Yes, I felt empowered afterward that I could talk to people in large crowds.



"I felt empowered afterward that I could talk to people in large crowds."

Betty King Chair, Terrace Self Advocates

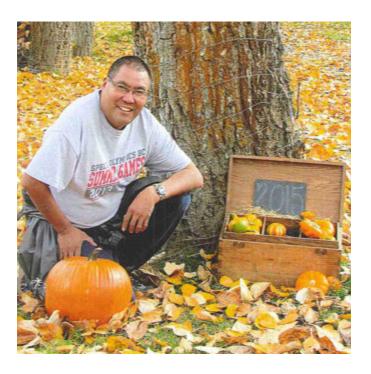


Make a difference in your community

By Eldon Carter

Hello my name is Eldon Carter. I have lived in Quesnel, B.C. for about 37 years, which is most of my life. I am part of my community through Special Olympics, self advocacy, the CLBC North Community Council and my two jobs.

I have worked at Eagle Village Supplies for 15 years. I also work in the summer at the RCMP detachment washing police cars. My jobs are important to me because I like the experience of getting to know the company I work for. I like the feeling of contributing to my community. My jobs are also important because it shows that there are people out there who can work even though they have a disability.



I'm trying to get our self advocacy group going again. It's a place where we talk about our rights and try and change things so we can be more involved in our community, like advocating for the buses to run until 7:00 pm at night. We organized a Walk the Talk for Community Living Month in October. People from the City of Quensel and CLBC came out to hear self advocates talk about what is important to us and that we want to volunteer, work and help out our community.

Community awareness is important. We need to show that we are here and capable. I hear the word "inclusion," but I don't think about the word too much. To me it's just important to have fun in your community and for the community to know that people with disabilities need to be involved. I feel like years ago we were getting labelled not very nice things. So it's good to be a leader and to show people we can do things even though we have a disability.

"I like the feeling of contributing to my community."

Eldon Carter

REGIONAL STORIES: VANCOUVER COASTAL



Chutney business adds spice to life

By Roshni Kashyap

I am Roshni and I like to be called Rosh. That's why my business is called Rosh's Chutneys. I am 23 years old and they say I have Down's Syndrome, but that does not get ME down. With the support of my family, I make and sell chutney.

What is chutney? I call it a sauce with a twist and I make it in three varieties: sweet, mild, and hot. Chutney is a sauce recipe from India, where I am from. I make my chutneys from my own recipes and I use cranberries from here in B.C. Cranberries are very healthy and delicious. My chutney can be used as a sauce with meat and with vegetables and as a spread or dip and in other ways too. If you go to my website, www.roshschutneys.com, you can learn more.

"With a little support we can all go a long way."

Roshni Kashyap

I enjoy selling my chutneys. I display them by having a stall and talking to people in different communities and selling to them. This October, I had a stall at the Cranberry Festival in Fort Langley. That was a huge festival! I also had a stall at the 100 Braid Studio in New Westminster. This was in August 2015 and I was part of the Culture Crawl. Recently, I sold my chutneys at the Down Syndrome Research Foundation conference in Vancouver. I live in Coquitlam and I like going to different places and meeting people at my stall.



Roshni has turned her love of cooking into her own chutney business.

I am doing what I love, cooking! I have loved cooking since I was very young. I use skills I learned from my parents and my sister and from taking the Food Services program at Vancouver Community College. I wasn't happy with the job I got after the program because it was really only cleaning in a restaurant. Then my family and I discovered how good I was at making chutney, and then we formed my business, Rosh's Chutneys. I love making chutney!

I do presentations in the community for people like teachers and I promote the mission statement of my business: "To provide meaningful employment to others with special abilities." Rosh's Chutneys is a company with a good idea: with a little support we can all go a long way. I believe that, and I want to let other people know about doing what you love and having a business.



Discovering your talents on stage

By Jacynthe Geschke

I went to my first event at Theatre Terrific over ten years ago on a Saturday in May. It was different than anything I ever experienced. They were exploring sound and movement and how we express ourselves. At first, I was reluctant to do what the others were doing. At the end of the day, the leaders gave us paint, brushes and a big roll of black paper to share. I took a paintbrush and painted some flowers. Painting makes me feel happy.

My first play with Theatre Terrific was later that summer in the annual Summer Fringe program. I was The Watcher and listened to the play quietly onstage while the other actors talked about friends or family. When it was my turn at the end of each performance I used paint, not words. Over the two weeks of the play at the Vancouver Fringe Festival, I painted a picture of relationships: a mother with her child on her lap and the father standing nearby. People came back to see the play because they wanted to know how my painting was turning out.

Since that first class I have participated in many others. I was even part of a professional cast when we performed a play called "Dogs" at Performance Works on Granville Island. Since I started going to Theatre Terrific, I have had many great experiences and I have made many friends.



Jacynthe has been performing with Theatre Terrific for over 10 years.



Theatre Terrific brings together artists who would usually not have the opportunity to work together. Their diverse groups include professional and amateur artists from 16-year-olds to seniors, and are inclusive of everyone.

Theatre Terrific is based in Vancouver, and can lead classes and put on theatrical performances throughout the Lower Mainland and in other B.C. locations.

<u>Artistic Director:</u> Susanna Uchatius Website: www.theatreterrific.ca

REGIONAL STORIES: VANCOUVER ISLAND



Why community recognition is important

By Jennifer Deakin

My name is Jennifer Deakin. I am a member of the CLBC South Island Community Council. This year, our Council partnered with 11 of Greater Victoria's districts and municipalities to officially proclaim October as Community Living Month. I was proud to accept the Saanich proclamation from Mayor Atwell on October 27.

We are being heard. We are being acknowledged. We are being accepted. It's time to take a moment to see where we've arrived and celebrate together. Everyone of us has a different strength and therefore every one of us has something different to offer.



Being on the CLBC Community Council as a self advocate has allowed me to voice my concerns and my ideas. I feel like I am part of many who are helping create change and inclusive communities.

I am a proud employee of the University of Victoria. I have been working there for almost six years in the library and now in food services. I live independently in an apartment in subsidized housing. It means the world to me to have the same opportunities as everyone else and the ability to make it happen.

I have so much to offer. If people get to know me they will soon learn I am not just a client, a number, a caseload. I am an employee, a friend, a family member, a community member who has the ability to be a learner and maybe more importantly a teacher. Inclusion does matter.

Mayor Richard Atwell presents
Saanich's proclamation of Community
Living Month to Jennifer Deakin, a
member of the CLBC South Island
Community Council.



Pursuing a passion for art

By Amanda Stewart

Hello my name is Amanda Stewart. I am 24 years old and have autism. However, this has not stopped me from finding and pursuing a passion of my own as an artist. My love of art has been with me as long as my parents remember and through school my teachers saw and told me that I had great potential and love for the things that I did and still do now.

Today, I am a student at Vancouver Island University. I am in my fifth year, taking one course per semester. I am greatly interested in being a graphic artist. I use both traditional and digital media to make my art. However I mainly use digital media for my more professional and shared work, keeping my traditional sketches for my friends and closer people to see. My sketches are usually in black and white as my digital pieces are fully shaded coloured work, which I sell as Christmas cards and posters.

Below are two examples of my work that I made - a computer desktop background (left) and a poster (right). As you can see, I love the Japanese style manga and I have since elementary school. I still remember that the best artist in class was the one who could draw Pikachu the best. All in all, art and everything that it has done for me has made my life a lot more happy and less stressful. I even found my current boyfriend

though art. Without art, I do not think that I would live a life as happy as it is now.



"Without art, I do not think that I would live a life as happy as it is now."

Amanda Stewart



Amanda has been interested in art as far back as she can remember.



GLOSSARY

Learn about key words and phrases that appear in this edition, then try to find them in the word search puzzle below.

Can you find them all?

Awareness - To be aware is to know about a subject, such as inclusion, and to be alert to changes that affect that subject.

Empowerment - To give power to a person or a group of people. This power gives a person more confidence and control over his or her life.

Initiative - A first or new step taken by a person or group (such as CLBC) to make something better and to reach a goal.

Mentor - A mentor is someone who teaches you and gives you advice. Mentoring means training others and advising them.

Option - An option is one of a number of available choices. To have options means to have choices in things one can do.

Word Search

Tip: Words appear horizontally, vertically and diagonally.



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