

This edition's theme:

THE MANY PATHS TO INDEPENDENCE

CLBC MAGAZINE

Summer 2019



COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA

CELEBRATE DIVERSE ABILITIES

Stories from around British Columbia

Walking the path to independence together

Dale and Leanne Froese share their story about the importance of making their own decisions and having choices in how they live.

Pages 8 & 9



MESSAGE FROM

Interim CEO Lynn Davies

Independence can be as unique as each one of us

Welcome to the Summer 2019 edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES, a magazine developed by CLBC's Editorial Board and written by self advocates in British Columbia. For this edition, our theme is "The many paths to independence."

The different ways people find independence are as unique as the authors who submitted their stories. For some it is a mindset; for others it comes from being involved in activities in their communities. For Dale and Leanne Froese, who are featured on the cover of this edition, independence comes from supporting each other to pursue their own goals and passions through a marriage of over 20 years.

Although independence is often associated with not relying on others, a common theme that emerges through these stories is that we all play a role in supporting each other's independence. As Amber Rainshadow says in her story on page 13, "Slowly, over time I have gained the courage to speak my truth and to live my own life."

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With a group of wonderful individuals who assist me in day-to-day life, I am able to live as independently as possible in a way that works for me and my community." I hope you enjoy reading the stories and learning about the many paths to independence as much as I have.

As always, this edition also features recent news updates from CLBC, including new plain language videos about CLBC's updated Strategic Plan and information about upcoming Welcome Workshops taking place across the province. In the News section, you can also read about CLBC's work with self advocates, family members, service providers, employers and community groups to increase employment opportunities. We're happy to report that the number of people CLBC serves who are reporting income has grown from 2,200 to 5,065 over the past six years. Read all of the news updates on pages 4 and 5.

It has been a pleasure to introduce this edition of the magazine to you, and to serve these past several months as Interim CEO before CLBC welcomes Ross Chilton as its new, permanent CEO in August. You can read more about Ross in the news section on page 4.

Thank you for reading. I hope you are having a wonderful summer and we look forward to continuing to share many great success stories and news updates with you throughout the rest of the year.

Sincerely,

Lynn Davies

Interim CEO, Community Living BC



MESSAGE FROM The Editorial Board

CLBC Editorial Board Members are:

left to right: Vanessa Mendoza (Vancouver), Bryce Schaufelberger (Mission), Amber Rainshadow and Glimmer (Victoria), Sam Milton (Gitsegukla), Carrie Derickson (Richmond), Lee Kissinger (Victoria).

A special thanks to Editorial Board members and CLBC staff who provided writing and technical support to the authors in this edition.

Following diverse paths to independence

Hello! We are the CLBC Editorial Board made up of self advocate and community living leaders from across the province. Our role is to work with CLBC to improve communication with the people they serve and to find ways to share the stories and contributions of people with diverse abilities in B.C. Working together on this magazine has been one way to let CLBC, and the broader community, know what we think is important.

The theme for this Summer's edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES is about what independence looks and feels like to people with diverse abilities and the different paths people take to gain independence in their lives. We want to honour the fact that independence means different things to different people and that we all have the right to pursue independence regardless of the level of support we may need.

You will read stories about people with diverse abilities whose sense of independence comes from having a home, pursuing goals, falling in love, moving away, and following their own life path.

You will read how independence isn't always about being able to do it on your own, it's about being able to decide how it's done and who gets to help.

For us on the Editorial Board, independence is about confidence and the freedom to be yourself in your community and at home. It's about living life in your own way with support you can trust, having new experiences, showing others what you're good at, and feeling proud of your accomplishments.

If you would like to share your story about what independence means to you, please visit Selfadvocatenet.com and click "Submit your story idea."

We'd like to thank all the members of the self advocacy community and others with diverse abilities who contributed their stories to our magazine.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions for the next edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES.

Sincerely,
The CLBC Editorial Board

Ross Chilton joins CLBC as CEO

In May, CLBC's Board Chair Michael J. Prince announced the appointment of Ross Chilton as CLBC's next Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Ross begins his new role on August 12, 2019.

Ross has served as CEO of Community Living Society since 2007, where he helped expand support and employment options and formed the Community Living Housing Society to support innovative, inclusive housing solutions. Ross is also a parent of an adult son with developmental disabilities.

"Ross is the right candidate to build on the solid work CLBC has done under former CEO Seonag Macrae in recent years to strengthen services," said CLBC Board Chair Michael J. Prince. "Ross stands out for his core values, his compelling passion, and his deep understanding of the challenges and the opportunities ahead for advancing the inclusion of individuals who live with developmental disabilities."

Ross Chilton, incoming CEO of CLBC.



CLBC News

CLBC updates its strategic plan

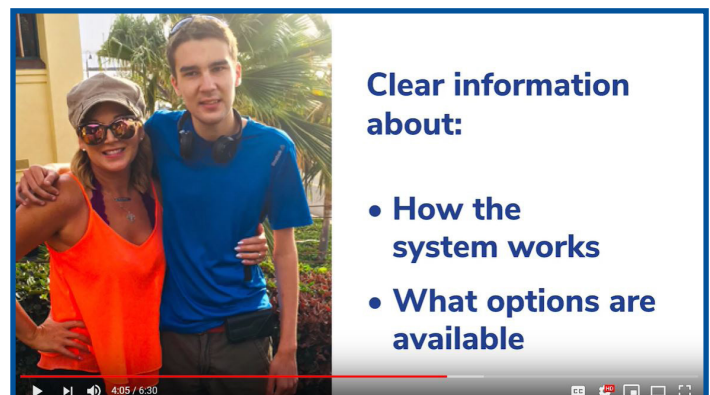
This May, the CLBC Board approved CLBC's updated 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. The plan has been slightly amended, following a check-in process with self advocates, families, advocacy groups, service providers and staff.

The consultation asked if CLBC's top four goals were still important, and if our implementation projects were the right ones. We heard that CLBC's goals to better serve people with multiple complex needs and to strengthen relationships should continue to take top priority. We also heard that more priority should be given to developing alternative housing options and supports and strengthening relationships with Indigenous peoples. You can find CLBC's updated Plan on a Page poster and 2017-20 Strategic Plan by searching "Strategic Plan" on the CLBC website.

To accompany the release of the updated Strategic Plan, CLBC has launched a series of three short videos in plain language to explain the Strategic Plan, as well as CLBC's vision and values.

The scripts for these videos were developed through a collaboration with BC People First. You can read more about this collaboration on page 15 and watch all three videos on CLBC's Youtube channel at:

www.Youtube.com/CommunityLivingBC



New videos describe CLBC's vision, values and Strategic Plan in plain language.

Learn about welcome workshops in your area

The CLBC Welcome Workshops are a series of four two-hour workshops that welcome people new to CLBC by sharing valuable information about resources in the community and about how different supports and services fit together in the big picture of adulthood.

The four workshops are: 1) Getting Started; 2) Community Connections; 3) Planning Choices; and 4) CLBC – The Real Deal. The workshops help people new to CLBC learn about CLBC and our services, potential supports in community and how to connect with other individuals and families.

Welcome Workshops are organized by local offices across the province. To find information about all upcoming Welcome Workshops, including those taking place in North Vancouver, Sechelt and Abbotsford this fall, visit the CLBC online event calendar by going to www.communitylivingbc.ca and visiting [What's New > Event Calendar](#).

If you are interested in attending one of these workshop series, please call your local office to register and for additional details. If you would like to learn more about Welcome Workshops, visit this page on our website: [How do I get support? > Attend the CLBC Welcome Workshop Series](#).

Twenty-five per cent of people CLBC serves are now reporting income

Research shows employment is key to helping people with developmental disabilities have improved quality of life. A job promotes friendships, financial security, inclusion, belonging and confidence.

Since January 2013, when the Community Action Employment Plan (the Plan) was launched, the number of people CLBC serves who are reporting income has grown from 2,200 to 5,065 (the target for the Plan for 2019 was 5,000). This is great news and could not have happened without the hard work and dedication of self advocates, family members, service providers, employers, community groups and CLBC staff who are committed to meeting the “vision of B.C. having the highest rate of participation in employment among people with developmental disabilities in North America.”

While significant progress has been made in the number of people working, there is still a growing number of people CLBC serves who want to connect

to their community through employment. CLBC and its community partners are currently working on setting a new target and identifying projects that will guide the work to continue increasing inclusive hiring over the next three years. We are calling it Community Action on Employment. In recognition that everyone has a role to play in helping raise awareness about the benefits of inclusive hiring, in Fall 2019 a small consultation will be held with individuals, families, service providers, government staff and employers to gather their input to inform this work. We look forward to updating you more on next steps for Community Action on Employment in Winter 2019.

Interested in learning more about inclusive employment and the benefits of working? Visit the Canadian Association for Supported Employment at www.employmentforall.ca. Want to share your story about your job? If so, please send an email to CLBCEmploymentReports@gov.bc.ca and someone will contact you to request an interview.

Nanaimo

Setting my own course in life

by Jamie Kirkby

To some people, having diverse abilities is a negative thing. However, my mother taught me the best thing about having diverse abilities is independence and the freedom to set my own life pathways. Independence to me means having the power to be my own person, having the freedom to speak while being heard, and having the opportunity to make my own decisions.

I thought I would never make it to college or get a career working with children. But instead of giving up, I'm learning to put in the necessary adaptations and make the most of my life even with the challenges. My main goal is to finish my education so that I can become a special needs education assistant. I have started steps to reach my goal by babysitting and volunteering with children to get experience for working in the future.

“Becoming independent doesn't just happen overnight and that is okay.”

JAMIE KIRKBY



Jamie's mother taught her the power of being her own person and making choices about her life.

I am also working on my self advocacy skills. I want people to listen to what I have to say and what is important to me. I have started to attend appointments on my own to practice using my voice instead of others doing it for me. Even if I can't speak verbally in the moment, I have prepared backups such as communication cards to help get my voice heard.

My path to independence has taught me that if you work hard and put your mind to something you can succeed. Something that has really helped me in my journey was taking time to learn about myself first, and then making a plan to become more of an independent person.

Becoming independent doesn't just happen overnight and that is okay. We all need help sometimes in our lives and needing extra support from each other is what makes us all human.

Surrey

An independent mindset

by Patrick Clark

Independence, after all, is a perception, and once I understood this concept, no one could ever limit me again. I choose what the word “independence” means to me. Therefore, I have:

The independence of thought. I am free to think and perceive any way I wish. To see beyond the normal limits of “No, you can’t do that.” Everything can be accomplished in a multitude of ways. Who would want to do it the normal way, anyway?



Independence to take action. The “independence of thought” gives me the power to take action, because I see that there is no limit. True, it may be difficult and take some time to achieve, but it involves me with life, keeps me connected, and that can only be good.

From the “independence to take action” comes **joy and freedom**. All because, “independence, first and foremost, occurs in my head.” It is a perception and an interpretation which I can change at any time. That is true independence in my book. Because, as long as one is thinking and feeling freely, they are most likely more independent than those who accept the limitations of normal perception.

From “joy and freedom” comes **new ideas and fun**. Is it any wonder that I seek out challenge and enjoy the road less traveled on? For me, being different is a gift and I have the independence to see it that way.

“For me, being different is a gift and I have the independence to see it that way.”

PATRICK CLARK



Walking the path to independence together

by Leanne and Dale Froese

We are Dale and Leanne Froese from Kelowna, B.C. We met in 1995 at a Karaoke party. Dale kept singing a country love song, "Love remains to me," over and over. He played hard to get. Finally, we went on a date and then we got engaged. We've been married for 21 years now. It's great being married. We do have our arguments, but don't we all?

We rent a suite from Dale's parents in a condo complex near the recreation center. We both have jobs at Starbucks. It's been 10 years for both of us working there. We work at different locations though because, as Dale says, "I live with my wife and I'm married, but I won't work with my wife!"

We have followed a path to independence. To us this means making our own decisions and having choices. Independence is about the freedom to make day-to-day decisions, like what movie to go to or who to hang out with.

Before I married Dale, I was part of a project that helped me learn cooking and banking skills. It's ok to get support where its needed, like budgeting our money.

Independence is about equality and being an equal part of our community. Everyone should have those opportunities no matter how much support they need. For us, love is important to have between us because without love and supporting each other it would be hard.

We are both leaders in the self advocacy community. We work with the Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship (cic.arts.ubc.ca) where they do research and projects with people who have diverse abilities to help make life better. We advise on how to make information plain language to make sure everyone understands.

We are also part of the Lower Mainland Down Syndrome Society (lmdss.com). We mentor young kids who have Down Syndrome.



Kelowna

Dale and Leanne both work at Starbucks in Kelowna, although at different locations. They share a laugh with Leanne's boss Jay.

Showing others that everyone has a right to be independent and make their own decisions is important for Leanne and Dale.

We want kids and their families to know how great life is and that, with the right support, a path to independence is possible. We help others look forward to the future for their kids and know they can have a brighter life.

When we were born in the '60s and '70s there were institutions and people didn't have these choices. Life is much better today because of the self advocacy movement, our allies and supporters. Now we have a voice.

It's important for people with diverse abilities to remember we have the right to be independent and to do what we want and that no one should hold us back. It's our choice and our decisions. We have the right to a bright and happy future.

Not everyone knows yet that they have the right to independence. We have to keep sharing and inspiring others. We hope our story does that.



“Independence is about equality and being an equal part of our community. Everyone should have those opportunities no matter how much support they need.”

LEANNE AND DALE FROESE

Vancouver

For Vanessa (left), independence means being able to do things on her own, but also knowing she has support available if she needs it.



Growing on my own

by Vanessa Mendoza

Independence means being able to learn and grow on your own while still knowing you have support when you need it.

My path to independence started when I moved out at 19 into a group home. But even in the group home I still felt overprotected. Sometimes even the smallest reminders can be frustrating. Like someone making sure I'm home on time, or eating properly, or that I know my way. It's hard having someone checking to see if you're okay for things you feel good doing or trying on your own.

Then I moved into semi-independent living. My own place. This is when I really started to get know myself. It's been four years now and finally I don't have someone hovering over me. Don't get me wrong, it's good to know support is there when you need it, but it feels really good to know that, "Hey, I did that on my own today." I explore my options rather than someone teaching them to me. I've become more alert to things, more confident to figure things out on my own. I don't have the best sense of

direction and I use a wheelchair, so people worry that I will get lost or won't be able to get around. But you know, I'm learning to plan and practice routes and figure it out even when I do get lost. It's a little scary, but I get on the right track and I have the support of friends or staff and let them know when I get there safely.

I've also become a CLBC Welcome Workshop presenter. This job and team makes me feel like I can take on more. I'm given responsibilities and take initiative. It's teaching me to step out of my comfort zone and stand in front of the room and be the teacher. The workshops have helped me to know where I stand in the big picture, having a clearer sense of how CLBC works and how I fit in helps with feeling independent.

My advice for others? Don't be afraid to advocate for your independence. I know it's easier said than done because usually the people trying to help are people that care. I've learned that part of the path to independence is developing the courage to speak up for it.

Learning independence

by Charlotte Heine

I've found my personal experience at Vancouver Island University (VIU) has helped me build my independence by connecting with the university community and increasing my ability to express myself through writing. One thing that made it that way were the instructors, including Kathleen, Brandon, Janina, David, Robert, Nicole, Leon, Ross, and Nelson and the other staff members such as Mary, Zoey, Bonnie and Debbie. I use their knowledge, wisdom, tips, tricks, and advice in my current writing and will continue to use these lessons in the future as well.

The people at VIU are wonderful, students and faculty alike. The staff are very helpful, the courses are informative and fun and the environment is inclusive and encouraging. If you want a good educational experience, I recommend VIU.

For example, when I was in the process of enrolling, I received a warm reception and everyone was quite accommodating towards me and my needs. They were happy to help me in any way possible within reason.

“Connecting with fellow students, taking part in campus activities, improving my writing skills and being included in the VIU community really help give me a sense of independence.”

CHARLOTTE HEINE

Nanaimo

There are lots of opportunities to make new friends or catch up with old ones. It's surprising how many people say “Hi” to me when I'm on campus. Some I do recognize and others I try to figure out when I met them and how I know them. Nevertheless it's great. Everybody's so friendly and it's what makes it an awesome university.

In addition, VIU has a culinary program and a variety of clubs, extra circular activities, theatrical performances, special events, functions and fundraisers supporting all sorts of causes and initiatives.

Connecting with fellow students, taking part in campus activities, improving my writing skills and being included in the VIU community really help give me a sense of independence.



For Charlotte, attending Vancouver Island University and taking part in the campus community has helped her build independence.

Nanaimo

Limitations don't define my life

by Kara Anderson

My name is Kara. I have lived my entire life with a diverse ability. I have found my path to independence by becoming a mom of a son who also has a diverse ability. He is 19 and gets lots of support from his grandparents and CLBC.

My son and I lived with my parents until eight years ago. With the help of Supporting Apartment Living, now Supporting Advocates in Leadership (SAL), I learned to live in my own home, cook healthy meals, pay bills and shop. I also learned to find my voice and stand up for myself, my son and others.

This led to the beginning of the Self Advocates of Nanaimo (SAN) with the support of some of my peers and SAL. I now have a group of friends who are like having second family.

I work for CLBC as a self advocate presenter for the Welcome Workshops which introduce CLBC services to adults with diverse abilities. I also present workshops for Empowering Self Advocates to Take Action (ESATTA), a planning process called People Planning Together, which is self advocates teaching other self advocates. That is how I met my boyfriend who is my co-presenter.

I have found through my independence a way to help others by sitting on the Community Council for Central and Upper Vancouver Island. The council is made up of self advocates, family members and community members who are connected to and support adults with diverse abilities.

I enjoy my independence by living life to the fullest. I have a wacky sense of humour which can be helpful at times when advocating for myself or others. One of the things that helps me define my independence is that I don't let limitations define my life.

Through her independence, Kara found ways to become involved in her community and help others.



Kara is actively involved with her local Community Council and the Self Advocates of Nanaimo.

Independence is also about interdependence

by Amber Rainshadow

My name is Amber Rainshadow. I am 55-year-old Aboriginal woman who lives with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

I grew up in 22 different foster homes, three religious institutions and a home for unwed mothers. There were moments of extreme abuse and neglect which left its mark and I carry to this day. It has not been an easy journey, but it has made me the woman I am today.

When I was young, I thought the goal was to be able to do everything myself, to be as independent as possible. My world began to change when I aged out of the foster care system and connected to a community named L'Arche Victoria. L'Arche and its founder, Jean Vanier, taught me that I am precious and loved no matter how I may appear to the rest of the world. Once I realized we are all broken in some way, that it is not possible for anyone to do everything for themselves, a huge weight was lifted.

“Every child, every person needs to know that they are a source of joy; every child, every person, needs to be celebrated. Only when all of our weaknesses are accepted as part of our humanity can our negative, broken self-images be transformed.”

Jean Vanier
from *Becoming Human*

Victoria

The values of L'Arche also taught me how to build community with my staff who I hire with individualized funding. Most of my workers are quite young and come with very little training. Sometimes they feel awkward and nervous, but in the end they walk away with skills that they can take with them on their journey. We learn from and support each other.

Slowly over time I have gained the courage to speak my truth and to live my own life. With a group of wonderful individuals who assist me in day-to-day life, I am able to live as independently as possible in a way that works for me and my community.

Amber and Glimmer enjoy spending time at the beach.



Richmond

What independence means to me

by Carrie Derickson

I come from a small town called West Bank First Nation. Growing up I remember a lot of issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Sometimes I refer to my home community as Neverland, like in Peter Pan. I left my community when I was 25. I wanted to make my own future and to focus on what I really needed rather than focus on the colour of my skin.

Being independent means being able to take care of my own needs, make my own decisions and be responsible for those decisions. It also means taking control of the different parts of my life, and my lifestyle, including where I live, where I work, and the opportunities I have to learn with my mind, body and soul.

“Being independent means being able to take care of my own needs, make my own decisions and be responsible for those decisions.”

CARRIE DERICKSON



Carrie encourages others to follow the path to independence in their own lives.

I have been blessed in finding my way to independence with my own apartment and staff I trust. But, it's not an easy path for many of us who live in the disability world. I have moved five or six times on my journey. Most of us rely on good people that we can trust to help us. Sometimes people aren't in our lives for the right reason, which is why trust is a big issue for me. We also rely on financial support that isn't always there either. Many of us struggle to get a job that will pay the bills and help with medical costs. This makes the path a little bit confusing and emotional because of how it winds around and up and down for good and for bad.

Independence for me depends on a web of trust, money and support. If that's not there, it's a hard road. I'm hoping I will soon be able to do more of my own thing, like pay my own bills with a job, and not money from the ministry.

Even though it's not easy, following the path to independence is worth it and I am hopeful that more and more people with all kinds of disabilities will have fulfilling and independent lives all over the world.

Finding the right words

"Everyone has a right to be communicated with in a way they understand," says Michael McLellan, board member and past president of BC People First (BCPF), a provincial organization that works to ensure people with developmental disabilities are respected and included in communities as full citizens. "As we always emphasize, 'Nothing about us without us,'" says Michael.

With that idea in mind, CLBC approached BCPF to help develop scripts for a series of short videos to explain who CLBC is, what its vision and values are, and describe the goals of the CLBC Strategic Plan. BCPF offers a paid plain language translation service that organizations and businesses can use to ensure the information they share is accessible and easy to understand.

"We're in our third year of offering these services, and this was actually part of our own strategic plan," says Michael. Past projects have included developing a plain language election guide for Inclusion BC and working on informational materials for a university.

BC People First members reviewed CLBC's Strategic Plan in detail during a session facilitated by CLBC's Self Advocate Advisor Jessica Humphrey and past BCPF Provincial Coordinator Ariel Pavic. A re-worded, plain language translation of the document was recorded during the session and used to create three short video scripts: "CLBC and its vision", "CLBC's Values" and "CLBC's Strategic Plan." The scripts were then given a final close review by the Plain Language Committee before being provided to CLBC.

"We look everything over, and review it line by line and section by section. Then we make decisions by asking 'Does it sound clear?' and 'Is it understandable enough?' If not, we'll eliminate some words, reword it, and adjust the text to be more accessible," says Michael.

Special feature: Collaboration with BC People First helps create plain language videos to explain CLBC's Strategic Plan.

With the final plain language scripts in hand from BCPF, CLBC's communications team worked with Alexander Magnussen, one of CLBC's Strategic Initiatives Advisors to record the audio narration for the video clips.

Using not only plain language, but also sharing information in different formats, is a sign of respectful communication says Michael. "I'm always emphasizing how important plain language is in any sort of communication. It's so important to recognize that many people communicate differently and need to receive information differently. Video can be an effective tool because not everyone can read, and not everyone can write. This is one way for people CLBC supports to receive the communications themselves and not have to rely on someone to interpret it for them. It's something I'd love to see more of."

Watch all three videos on CLBC's Youtube channel at:
www.Youtube.com/CommunityLivingBC

**STRONGER TOGETHER:
HELP US GET WHERE WE ARE GOING**



Become a BCPF Volunteer Advisor



Email us at
bcpfcoordinator@gmail.com
to get involved!

www.bcpeoplefirst.com

Remembering Cliff Stacey

In Memoriam

We are writing this story to honour Cliff Stacey, a well-known self advocate who lived in the Surrey area and who passed away earlier this year.

Many will recognize Cliff's smiling face from the posters and videos of CLBC's Start with Hi public awareness initiative. Originally launched in 2009, Start with Hi showed people across British Columbia that small, but important, actions like saying "Hi" can play a role in making communities safer and more welcoming for people with developmental disabilities.

Cliff was not only one of the public faces of the initiative, but also a proud and enthusiastic supporter. He attended events across the province as a spokesperson. This included paying a visit to Prince George, where he was born before moving to the Vancouver area at a young age. He was keen to share the message of starting with "Hi" with anyone he met, from the bus drivers he saw every day to provincial MLAs he met at community events. Cliff loved speaking with new people and making others around him feel welcome.

Cliff was also actively involved with self advocacy groups in his own community, and with BC People First, and encouraged others to get involved and get together to talk about challenges and celebrate successes. He came from a large family and was one of 11 siblings and also a proud father.



"I've learned a lot about the importance of making connections with people," wrote Cliff in a story for this magazine back when it was called The Citizen. The importance of connecting with others was a value that Cliff embodied every day.

He will be missed by all those who had a chance to meet him, whether they shared years of friendship, or even just a "Hi."

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