

# The Citizen

Connecting people with their community



COMMUNITY LIVING  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



## Summit brings Self-Advocates together

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Heather Porteous and Lori Sherritt were among twenty-six self-advocates who took part in the recent Self-Advocate Summit.

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Rick Mowles, CEO

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**THIS MONTH IN THE CITIZEN WE ARE EXPLORING CLBC'S WORK TO** engage with community. Connecting people with informal supports and events is a big part of supporting individuals to lead full lives and participate in their communities. We are profiling the Self-Advocate Summit that provided self-advocates with an opportunity to explore a number of important questions and include input into CLBC's strategic planning process.

The theme of this year's 2010/2011 CLBC Annual Report is "Engaging with Self-Advocates and Families". We are committed to creating opportunities for families and individuals to engage with CLBC and others in the community to discuss significant issues and listen and learn from one another. Last year we held over 300 meetings, workshops and forums to connect with our key partners on topics such as ageing, transitioning youth, family stories, safeguards and personal support networks. The Annual Report is now available on our website and in local CLBC offices. You can read more about the Annual Report on page 16.

We have also witnessed the successful launch of [www.icanbesafeonline.com](http://www.icanbesafeonline.com), CLBC's new website designed to educate and inform the individuals we support on how to stay safe while enjoying online activities. Currently, this is the only website in Canada that is dedicated to teaching online safety to adults with developmental disabilities. In this issue of The Citizen we feature Katrina's story about her involvement with [icanbesafeonline.com](http://icanbesafeonline.com) and how she uses social media to create awareness about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

As part of our ongoing commitment to engaging with families, CLBC worked with the Family Support Institute to create a book of families' stories about informal safeguards and personal support networks. "The Power of Knowing Each Other: Stories about informal safeguards told by BC families" was launched last month across the province. Launch events promoting the book have provided an opportunity to share families' messages about how they have developed friendships and social connections to create positive experiences.

I hope you enjoy reading this month's edition of The Citizen and all of the valuable work that we are doing to connect people to the broader community and some of the innovative approaches that are strengthening and fostering inclusive communities. ■

## Getting involved

By Cliff Stacey



Cliff Stacey takes part in the recent Self-Advocate Summit. Read more about the Summit on page 12.

**HI, MY NAME IS CLIFF STACEY AND I** have been a self-advocate for 25 years.

I was born in Prince George and when I was still young, my parents and my 3 sisters and 7 brothers moved to Vancouver. You read that right, I have 10 sisters and brothers. I come from a large family, that's for sure.

Another important thing about me is that I am a proud dad. I have a 21-year-old daughter named Linea who lives with her mom. Linea is my pride and joy. She just graduated from high school and although she has lots of challenges, she worked hard and she graduated. Linea's mom and I do not live together but we stayed friends and worked together to raise Linea.

These days, I live in Surrey in a cottage out behind my aunt and uncle's house. I help them out a lot. I am the handyman around the property. I paint, sand, pressure wash and do lots of things for them. They are great and I think they like having me around to help. I have to say that I am very happy with my home.

For fun I like to go to the movies with my friends. I have a new friend called Beth. We met at bowling and we talk on the phone.

A couple of years ago, I got involved in CLBC's Start with Hi initiative. I am one of the people on the posters you see everywhere. Helping out has been great. I have visited Campbell River, Prince George and Cranbrook as a spokesperson. Going back to Prince George sure brought back a lot of memories.

I've learned a lot about the importance of making connections with people. People in my community know me now. Even the bus drivers say hi to me. I think Start with Hi is important. It helps us all to be friendlier to one another and it keeps us safer.

I really have to say that I have a bunch of great people in my life. People like Jule Hopkins (CLBC's Manager of Safeguards) and Dorothy, my counsellor. They are amazing!

Last year I got to meet Denise Turner, CLBC's Board Chair. She was so nice and interested to learn about who I am.

I am also getting involved with a self-advocate group again. There is a group in Surrey. We meet at Milieu Family Services. I want all self-advocates to be involved in a group. It is good to be together and talk about challenges and do things together. People First is getting more active again in BC and I want to encourage people to join a group.

I love to be active and I am happiest when I am busy and helping out. Find a way to be helpful, it will make you happy too. ■

*Inside Voice* is published in each issue of *The Citizen*. If you are interested in writing for this column, please call Chris Rae at 1-877-660-2522, or email [editor@communitylivingbc.ca](mailto:editor@communitylivingbc.ca)

## Kathy's story: A home of her own

*The following story appears in CLBC's new safeguards resource "The Power of Knowing Each Other: Stories about Informal Safeguards told by BC Families". Developed by CLBC and the Family Support Institute (FSI), the book is meant to inspire and stimulate people's thinking about informal safeguards.*

### **BONNY KLOVANCE IS A PIONEER IN THE COMMUNITY**

living movement, well-known for her long time contribution, advocacy and commitment to rights of people with disabilities. Bonny's daughter, Kathy, spent many years living in an institutional setting. Kathy is now 53 years old and has a very active life in the small town where she lives. Kathy has her own home and the people who support her have been instrumental in assisting her to develop relationships in her community.

Bonny contracted German measles before she knew she was pregnant and Kathy was born with congenital rubella syndrome. Kathy was born at a time when there were no community services and supports for children with special needs or their families. Before she was one year old, Kathy had experienced many medical problems and her developmental delays were obvious. Kathy did not receive a diagnosis of autism until she was 12 years old.

It was incredibly challenging for Bonny to raise Kathy at home without support. After researching ways to help Kathy, the family learned about a chiropractic hospital in Colorado. With the financial support of Bonny's parents, Kathy spent two months in Denver where she had her second birthday. Bonny feels the treatment made a huge difference for Kathy assisting with her medical problems and helping her to develop large motor skills such as sitting and walking.

When Kathy was four years old, her family learned she was hearing impaired. Even though it was determined she had enough hearing to talk, she has never used words to communicate. A doctor recommended that Bonny consider placing Kathy in Woodlands – a large institution for children and adults with disabilities. The wait list was about five years at that time. Kathy went for a one-week assessment at Woodlands and came out with two black eyes. For Bonny, Woodlands was no longer an option.



Bonny did the best she could to help Kathy grow and learn at home. Kathy screamed and cried when asked to do new things, but Bonny continued to encourage Kathy to learn. When she was six years old, Kathy attended a school for "handicapped" children operated out of a church basement. Kathy's oldest sister walked her to school in the morning and Bonny picked her up by noon. Kathy attended the school three days a week, but only for about six months because her family moved to a different community. Bonny was preparing to advocate for Kathy to attend public school in their new community when the Endicott Centre opened. It was a school about 80 kilometers away from their home and Kathy was one of the first students to attend. The Centre operated like a boarding school – Kathy lived at the school and went home on long weekends, holidays and for the summer months. Bonny remembers feeling so relieved that Kathy could finally go to school.

Kathy is a familiar face at the local drug store where she enjoys shopping.

Kathy lived at Endicott Centre through to adulthood. She developed a number of skills and learned to use a visual communication system. The number of people attending the Centre increased significantly over the years and as Kathy matured, she became extremely unhappy. She expressed her frustration by harming herself and destroying property.

As institutions began to close, Kathy was moved into a group home with three other individuals. Her housemates

required such a high level of support that Kathy's own needs were often left unmet. Kathy continued to express her unhappiness through self-injurious behaviour. Bonny retired as a teacher and decided to bring Kathy back home to her own community. Kathy moved into a home with another woman, but it turned out they were not very compatible. The other woman was aggressive toward Kathy and the support staff. Kathy's response was to hurt herself. Bonny used her influence as a member of her local and regional associations and the BC Association for Community Living to get what Kathy needed, and the professionals involved came up with a creative solution that continues to work.

Kathy's parents bought her a house where she lives by herself and five compassionate, skilled support workers provide care for Kathy in 24-hour shifts. These long shifts eliminate staff changes and unsettling transitions in the middle of Kathy's day. Although it took some time, Kathy's self-injurious behaviours began to decrease as her world opened up to include employment, a large social network and a variety of community activities, all organized and provided by her support workers.

Kathy's workers live in a tiny community north of the town where Kathy lives. As the staff work 24-hour shifts, they often include Kathy in some of their usual activities during the time they spend with her. Their families have welcomed Kathy into their lives and have become like extended families to her. She especially enjoys spending time with the children who are members of their families. A husband of one of her workers plays in a band and Kathy, who loves music and dancing, travels around with the band to their events. Another worker is very involved with a theatre group and Kathy sits in on rehearsals and productions and is considered part of the group. She is also involved in an improvisational dance group that has incorporated Kathy into their activities.

The support in Kathy's life reflects her personality. She is "a night owl" and enjoys staying up late. It takes her about two hours to get ready in the morning because she has a very specific routine she likes to follow. Kathy loves to socialize now and is the "life of the party." She does not enjoy spending time in large groups of people with disabilities, other than Special Olympic bowling. She loves going to the pub where everyone makes a fuss over her and she never misses a dance at the community hall.

Kathy enjoys spending time in her community.

Kathy is so well accepted by all her support workers' families and friends that she has become part of their communities, as well as the community she lives in. She had a job that involved picking up and delivering mail. This has made her well known in the community. She retired from her position when she was 50 as she wasn't too thrilled at having to get up early enough to get to her job on time. She enjoys walking to the local drug store by herself where she buys snacks, puzzle books, cosmetics and 'smelly things' which she loves. Store personnel accommodate her idiosyncrasies as Kathy's disabilities sometimes result in using loud vocalizations to express her needs.

When Bonny moved to the coast ten years ago, Kathy's older sister, Cindy, continued to monitor Kathy's living and medical situation since she lives and works nearer to Kathy's home. Cindy also phones and visits Kathy and takes her on excursions as Bonny has done in the past. Kathy also has two younger sisters, Diane and Wanda and a younger brother Joey. She often visits Diane's home where she has been introduced to Diane's friends who have now become her friends, as well. Diane has taken Kathy to visit her in-laws who have come to consider Kathy part of their families.

Wanda and Joey have always treated Kathy as an equal, so others in their circles do too. Because of her brother and sisters, the circle of people who know and care about Kathy has grown significantly. Bonny celebrates the changes in Kathy's life over the past fifteen years – living in her own home with flexible, community support has allowed Kathy to grow and develop as a person. Along with her own family, Kathy now has a very large social network of people who know her as a member of their community and as a friend. ■

*"The Power of Knowing Each Other: Stories about Informal Safeguards told by BC Families" can be viewed and downloaded on the CLBC website under Individuals and Families > Safeguards. If you are interested in requesting a copy of the book, please e-mail [info@communitylivingbc.ca](mailto:info@communitylivingbc.ca).*



## Sending a positive message

### **KATRINA ZIMICH SCROLLS QUICKLY THROUGH THE MESSAGES ON HER BLACKBERRY.**

“I’m always scanning my page,” she says. She keeps a close watch on the questions and comments that appear on FAS Angels, the public Facebook page she launched in February to raise awareness about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). “I definitely want to put a good message out there,” she stresses.

The outgoing Richmond resident is very comfortable using social media to connect with friends on her personal Facebook page. She’s also an enthusiastic advocate who speaks to medical students and “anyone else who will listen” about FASD.

So it was just natural that when she was looking for a way to share her passion more widely, Katrina turned to Facebook. FAS Angels has attracted followers from as far away as California and Michigan, and Katrina is now planning to expand with a website and a support group.

With 81 fans and counting, Katrina’s thrilled with the positive response she’s had to FAS Angels. “Before Facebook, it would have been much harder to connect with people,” she says. “I love it.”

Katrina is also one of a group of self-advocates approached by CLBC to talk about social media and how it is used. Through a focus group, Katrina provided advice on the development of CLBC’s new safe social media website, which was launched on June 30.

The site, [www.icanbesafeonline.com](http://www.icanbesafeonline.com), is a fun and easy-to-use website that educates adults with developmental disabilities and their families about how to stay safe when using the Internet. This is the only site of its kind in Canada dedicated to teaching online safety to adults with developmental disabilities.

The website features online safety tips, videos, quizzes and a blog. There is also a section specifically for families and service providers so they can learn the information they need to help people with developmental disabilities be as safe as they can be when they are online.

Katrina is a spokesperson on the site which features video clips of her talking about all of the different ways to stay safe while still having fun and connecting online. Katrina has thought a lot about her own safety online. She’s careful to block public access to her personal Facebook page and she doesn’t provide her personal details or contact information on her FAS Angels page.

You can learn how to be safe online by watching Katrina’s video tips at: [www.icanbesafeonline.com](http://www.icanbesafeonline.com). You can visit Katrina’s FAS Angels Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FASAngels](https://www.facebook.com/FASAngels). ■



Katrina Zimich raises awareness about FASD and how to be safe online.

## Sharing a love of the game

By Mel (as dictated to fellow volunteer and CLBC Facilitator Meaghen Taylor-Reid)

### HI, MY NAME IS MEL AND I LIVE IN EAST VANCOUVER.

My love of hockey started at a very young age. I grew up watching hockey games with my Dad and going to hockey Halloween parties at Rogers Arena. I've always been hooked. I even met a few NHL players who gave me some tips.

I started to learn how to skate when I was about 5 years old. When I was 16, my friend at Britannia Arena asked if I was interested in joining the high school girls hockey team. I also participated in Special Olympics figure skating.

For a few years I wasn't able to skate, but about 12 years ago I learned about the HEROS hockey program in East Vancouver at Britannia Arena. HEROS stands for Hockey Education Reaching Out Society. It's a hockey program for kids who wouldn't normally be able to learn how to skate and play hockey. They meet once a week and their values are: listening, respect, discipline and fun. HEROS started in Vancouver but is now all across Canada and even overseas in Ireland.

I was asked to volunteer and help in the girls' dressing room and with scorekeeping. I would sometimes practice with them. Then, Executive Director Norm Flynn asked me if I wanted to be on the ice and brush up on my skating skills. I said "Yes!" right away. From there, I worked on my puck handling, cross-overs and rules of the game.

I got so good I was asked to be a junior coach and then a coach. I was so proud to get my first participation medal and my first coach's track suit. They're some of my prized possessions and mean a lot to me. I still help in the dressing room with tying skates, equipment, and taping. I chat with the girls about my favourite teams: the Canucks, Senators and Giants.

Other great memories from my time with HEROS includes: a Christmas party at Rogers Arena when we got to skate on the ice and tour the dressing rooms; going to Canucks and Giants games; attending an Olympic hockey game; skating at the Richmond Oval; and all the holiday parties. I also participate in the summer camps which are a lot of fun.



Mel (centre) shares a passion for hockey with the players and coaches involved in the HEROS program.

HEROS makes me feel more confident. It keeps my self-esteem up. It teaches me about learning to manage anger, how to have discipline and respect others. It helps me to get better at playing hockey. I like seeing everyone each week. I like making friends and getting to know new people. It's fun to see the kids' siblings join the program.

It's also fun seeing the HEROS kids play the coaches. The other coaches are helpful teaching me about hockey as well. They talk to me about working with the kids and I can talk to them if something is bugging me. I also like to meet all the partners of HEROS like CIBC, TELUS, Vancouver Police Department, and the Western Hockey League.

I enjoy HEROS and hockey so much, I've started to do other hockey things again. I've just started volunteering for a high school group and I'm taking a skating for adults course. I've also rejoined figure skating with Special Olympics. HEROS helps me out a lot. It's a caring and safe group, but best of all, it's so much fun!

Learn more about the HEROS program online at [www.heroshockey.com](http://www.heroshockey.com). ■

## Sibling connection

**SYLVIE ROUSSEAU AND CAT MAIN MET** many years ago at a Sibling Support Group for siblings of people with developmental disabilities sponsored by The Neurological Center (now called the Center for Ability) in Vancouver. They did not maintain contact but as chance had it, they met again in their teens through a mutual friend.

“It was Cat who recognized me,” smiles Sylvie. “We even got our hands on some old video of the two of us at age seven in that group.”

Reconnecting as adults who had shared this childhood experience gave the two young women much to talk about.

“We were so amazed at the commonalities in our experiences as sisters to someone who has a disability. Even though our two sisters (Noella and Kirsteen) are very different people, it made us wonder about who else we could connect with to explore this idea.”

Although they found groups that were organized in the United States, Britain, Australia and Italy, there were no organized sibling groups for adults in Canada.

That was when the idea of Sibling Jam started to take shape. The idea was to create a group that appealed to people who were between the ages of 20 and 50, but certainly open to participants of all ages if they came forward.

As the two began to dream about what a group might look like, they drew on their past education and work experience in community living, expressive arts, peer counselling, teaching and group facilitation, as well as their future goals: this September Cat will be an Expressive Arts Therapy student at Langara College and Sylvie will be starting the Occupational Therapy program at UBC. The idea of using art related activity as a basis for peer connection was a natural fit for both of them.

In May of this year, they held a one day gathering in Vancouver. The day was a resounding success. As one participant reported, “I learned a lot about myself through the exercises and the conversation. I learned that I was not alone, and that was a big relief.”

Cat and Sylvie worked hard to create a space where people would feel safe and supported to express themselves honestly. The day included storytelling, collage work, writing and drama exercises. Participants were also asked to bring an object that reminded them of their unique growing up experience. This gave everyone a great conversation starter and led to many interesting discussions.



Sylvie Rousseau and Cat Main worked together to create the Sibling Jam group.



Sylvie and Cat guided the group through each activity in a way that was designed to deepen connection and support people to acknowledge both the positive and negative experiences in their lives.

The overall philosophy for Sibling Jam was to create space for honest conversation and the possibility for connection. “We wanted to be together in a non judgemental and supportive way and to have the ability to be honest about our feelings and experiences. Art was just the tool that we chose to use to facilitate this,” says Sylvie.

Sylvie explained that the group got to share wisdom and knowledge common to the experiences of siblings. Throughout the day it also became clear that each group member had their own unique experiences and could be a resource and a wealth of information for other siblings.

Many siblings worry about the future and the possibility of one day supporting their brother or sister with a disability, one of the group members was able to share about living with and supporting her adult sibling.

“This was an awesome opportunity to hear from someone actually doing this. What it’s like, what the challenges are, and also the joys,” says Sylvie. “It’s something I have wondered about over the years. What that might be like and whether that might be my

future as well. Listening to that story was incredibly enlightening and empowering for me”

Although Sylvie and Cat know that returning to school in September means a very busy schedule, they are both committed to continuing on with Sibling Jam. They feel that the project is just at its beginning stages and has a lot of potential to grow and evolve.

As Sibling Jam is a sibling driven project, Cat and Sylvie are encouraging feedback and ideas from fellow siblings. Sibling Jam has a Facebook page where you can find information about upcoming events.

The next events take place in the fall and will be a chat group on the evening of Tuesday, October 25 and a full day workshop Sunday, October 30. ■

*To learn more, please visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for “Sibling Jam”.*

*Sylvie and Cat can also be reached at:*

*[sylvie.rousseau@gmail.com](mailto:sylvie.rousseau@gmail.com)*

*[main\\_cat@hotmail.com](mailto:main_cat@hotmail.com)*



(above)  
Sylvie with her sister Noella.



(left)  
Cat with her sister Kirsteen.

## Recognizing partnership



(left to right) CLBC managers Rob Wicharuk and Lisa Bourget and Director of Regional Operations Lynn Middleton accept the Partnership Award from Tanya Behardien, Executive Director of PDCRS, and Mark Rutter, Board President.

**ON JUNE 27, THE PENTICTON & DISTRICT Community Resources Society (PDCRS)** recognized CLBC with a Partnership Award presented at their Annual General Meeting.

“In the past year, we’ve worked through some challenges and the help and support received from staff of CLBC really helped us to get through that and really made a difference,” says Marsha Lacroix of PDCRS. “The award is a recognition of the work that we do and the work that CLBC does with us, in order to provide services to the people who need it. It recognizes the staff who helped us work through the challenges and to let them know we appreciate the assistance.”

PDCRS, through its Community Services Office, currently runs over 20 programs for individuals of all ages and a variety of needs, which improve the quality of life of people

in Penticton and the South Okanagan. Past recipients of the Partnership Award include the City of Penticton and the two local School Districts.

“The award is presented to an organization that has supported or collaborated with us extensively to make a real impact on the people and communities we serve. It’s a way for PDCRS to recognize and acknowledge the people and organizations that are often behind the scenes, but without whom we couldn’t do what we do,” says Marsha.

“This is a great recognition of the strength of our collaborative partnership,” says Lynn Middleton, CLBC Director of Regional Operations. “We’ve been able to work through challenges and handle growth and new situations in a supportive way.” ■

## Celebrate One Day Together

**ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2011, BECON SUPPORT SERVICES, COMMUNITY LIVING VICTORIA,** Community Living BC, Integra Support Services, Kardel and Recreation Integration Victoria invite people from the South Island to join in an event that celebrates people with disabilities.

From 11:00 am to 3:00 pm at Topaz Park in Victoria, BC, there will be live music and entertainment on stage, barbecue lunch, refreshments, kickball tournament that everyone can play, inflatable obstacle course, children’s activities, face painting, interactive activities, prizes, and special guests. One Day Together is a day to celebrate the diversity in our communities, where citizens can dance together, play together, and eat together.

One Day Together has been the kick off to Community Living Month events in Victoria for the past two years, and brings all citizens of the community together in friendship, food, and fun. Community Living Month is a time when communities around the province and across Canada host events to celebrate the abilities and achievements of people living with developmental disabilities.

For more information, please contact: [info@onedaytogether.com](mailto:info@onedaytogether.com). ■



## Developing important skills

**FIVE INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED BY CLBC IN THE SIMON FRASER REGION WILL BE TAKING PART IN THE NEW** Read On! adult individual reading and communication program at the Down Syndrome Research Foundation's Centre for Specialized Learning.

The Read On! adult program is designed to support people who had limited opportunity to learn to read while in school, or who would like to build on an existing base of reading skills. Supporting students who seek to improve communication skills or learn English is another key facet of the program.

"It gives opportunities that these individuals would normally not be able to access. This program will provide great transition support for our youth and employment readiness skills for all," says Jamila Reckord, CLBC Facilitator in the Simon Fraser Region.

The individuals participating in the program received full funding from the Ministry for Social Development's BC Employment Program through Triumph Vocational Services.

"In conjunction with CLBC and the Specialized Centre for Learning, Triumph has supported a variety of clients to access specialized learning opportunities to allow them to prepare for the competitive workforce. Triumph has worked with CLBC for many years, supporting clients to develop meaningful employment plans and tailoring services to focus on the client's abilities and strengths," says Triumph's Regional Director Michael Hawkins.

"We are very grateful for this partnership" says Jamila.

The Read On! program uses the interests of the students as a launch pad to reading success, says Pat Hanbury, Program Manager with the Centre for Specialized Learning. "The one-to-one format also supports individual goals that may include reading comprehension, numeracy and computer skills. We also support small groups of students in a Reading and Communication Plus and Transition program. All of these programs are designed to build confidence and support important social communication skills. We welcome our new students and have enjoyed getting to know Meaghen, Jenny and Jamila from CLBC as well as the Triumph team through this partnership."

Alyaa is one of the five participants in the ReadOn! Program. She is a newcomer to Canada, moving from Iraq with her parents two years ago. "I'm so happy to be included in the ReadOn! program here in Burnaby. I am thankful for this opportunity to work on my speaking and English skills," she says.

Alyaa is excited about the lessons and information to be learned through the program and also about the opportunities it will provide. "I hope to learn more about transportation, safety and Canadian culture. I look forward to making new friends and working." ■



Alyaa and her teacher Candace.

## Summit brings Self-Advocates together

**TWENTY-SIX SELF-ADVOCATES AND** three support people from around the province came together, from June 15 to June 17, to participate in an informative Self-Advocate Summit. Under the leadership of Shelley Nessman, Kim Lyster, Aaron Johannes, Susan Stanfield, Karla Verschoor, Barb Goode and Jule Hopkins with keynote speaker Norman Kunc, the self-advocates were able to further develop their leadership skills and contribute to CLBC's learning on support networks and ageing. The summit opened with a wonderful message of welcome and encouragement from CLBC's Board Chair, Denise Turner.

The goals of the summit included:

- Self-Advocates learning how to help others to use and understand the CLBC Plain Language Support Network booklet.
- Self-Advocate being able to assist others and themselves in building their support network.
- Self-Advocates experiencing and learning how powerful their stories are and the difference it will make in helping people to understand their needs and interests.
- Self-Advocates having the opportunity to provide CLBC with valuable information on Ageing.

Amy McMillan and her mother Sheila were two of the attendees at the Self-Advocate Summit and share their thoughts on the experience.

### AMY SAYS:

"I thought it was awesome and I had so much fun meeting so many different people. It filled my heart with so much joy. I had a blast.

I learned a lot at the summit. Do you know how it feels when somebody makes you upset and makes you mad? CLBC really helped me to learn and tell my story about how I feel about things that happen in my life and in my friends' lives.

My story became more real. Shelley Nessman helped me to see what kind of things I can do to help people understand me. I also know that I can help people to open their eyes. I got to talk about how important it is for people to know how to speak up and be heard. I know that can be scary, but we can do this.

Barb Goode said in the book she wrote that sometimes it may not be that easy to do the right thing, but it is important to try. She also taught me that we have the right to tell our stories and what it means to live with our disabilities, and that it is important for people to know what matters to us.

The Self-Advocate Summit asked me to help other self-advocates to make friends and find supports and supporters that will help them to be treated better, be safer and be cared about. This is important that people have other people in their lives that like them and care about them. I like being myself, but when I was 10 years old I used to hate myself. Now, one thing that I do know is that I have a disability but it does not matter. I feel that people like me and I found that I am more like them than I am different. I may be a young woman but I know how it feels to feel alone, but if we pick up our selves and help others then we can change our lives. That's my story, and the Summit helped me to tell it."

### SHEILA SAYS:

"Amy was thrilled to be invited, along with a friend from Ladysmith, to the Summit. I had recently retired from work and was pleased to be able to accompany her over to the mainland.



Amy McMillan talks with Kim Lyster at the Self-Advocate Summit.

When we arrived and went down to the first session, I decided to just stay to listen to the speakers, as I had heard Norman Kunc speak years ago and had enjoyed listening to him.

Following the speakers, I was asked to help facilitate discussions at our table with others whom I had just met on the needs of individuals with disabilities as they age. The content of Norman's speech, as well as the exchanges between the self-advocates at the table, engaged me in a way I had not expected. I was honoured to be included in discussions and to listen to the struggles and successes of the self-advocates in their journey to find respect, to be valued, to be heard and to build meaningful relationships within their community. It was a huge reminder of such universal core values that are so important, but that we often let happen only by chance.

It was very refreshing as well to be part of such a meaningful exchange between CLBC staff and Spectrum Society Staff who work from their hearts, and self-advocates who so willingly share their valuable stories and experiences. The connections and friendships I shared at the Summit over the three days, was a truly unexpected and rewarding experience."

The organizers of the event sincerely thank all of the self-advocates and support people who worked so hard at the Summit and make the commitment to help spread the word about the importance of support networks and informal safeguards. ■

(right) Heather Porteous and Lori Sherritt were among the twenty-six self-advocates who participated in the Summit.

(below) Sheila McMillan and Amanda Arnet exchange thoughts and ideas.



# Representation Agreements: An important tool

By Joanne Taylor, Executive Director, Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry

**ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2011, AMENDMENTS** to the Representation Agreement Act and other personal planning legislation come into effect. This is good news for British Columbians, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities.

The first time I saw the Representation Agreement Act was in 1992 at a meeting of the Project to Review Adult Guardianship. The 'draft' Act was being projected on a screen and we were taken through it paragraph by paragraph (I learned later to call the paragraphs Sections and Sub-sections). New to the process, I struggled to make sense of the language and concepts. At the same time, there was an excited energy in the room. What really impressed me was the mix of people – lawyers, notaries, seniors, people with disabilities, advocates, family members, consumers of mental health services, health care providers, staff of financial institutions, community leaders. I was intrigued. What could inspire people to sit in a crowded room reviewing legislation?

I soon learned that there was a lot more to the project than rules and regulations. I was witnessing law-making from the 'ground up'. The goal was to create a legal alternative to adult guardianship; the law reform process was being driven by the community. I had experience with the health system and understood how being labelled incapable could easily make a person invisible. But until then I had no idea that if an adult is found incompetent in a legal context, it means the individual becomes a non-person and loses their decision making rights.

The Representation Agreement Act provides a way for an adult to receive support with decision making, without losing their rights and while retaining their personhood. It does this by looking at capability from the

individual's perspective. Jon's capability is defined by who Jon is, rather than by an absolute standard of who a 'capable' person should be. The duties of Jon's representatives are to support Jon's capability to express his self-determination. When using the Representation Agreement with a financial institution or hospital, more people come to learn how Jon is capable and to support his self-determination. In this way, Representation Agreements help make our communities more welcoming, and enable everyone to participate in them. These are goals shared by Community Living BC.

My involvement with Representation Agreements over the past 18 years has been to help put the law into practice. In 1995, a Resource Centre, now called Nidus, was established to facilitate education and the making of Representation Agreements. While participating in numerous government reviews of the legislation, Nidus continued to help people learn about and use Representation Agreements. The knowledge gained from these experiences is shared through stories, fact sheets and videos on our new website.

With the government's announcement of amendments coming into effect on September 1, we celebrate the re-affirmation of the original vision for Representation Agreements and an end to uncertainty about their future. Representation Agreements are here to stay! Thanks in part to a grant from Community Living BC, we are able to provide timely and accessible information on Representation Agreements to the broader community and set a positive example for other provinces and countries.

For information on the amendments and Representation Agreements, please visit [www.nidus.ca](http://www.nidus.ca). ■



Joanne Taylor,  
Executive Director  
of Nidus Personal  
Planning Resource  
Centre and Registry.

## Working hard and contributing

### **AARON ALLINSON GREW UP IN QUESNEL AND GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL IN 1998.**

While attending the College of New Caledonia he volunteered at several job placements to gain work experience. Aaron says that 7-11 and the Minor Baseball League were his favourite jobs at that time. After college Aaron worked at a recycling depot (Prima) for one year. He participated in paper pickups and sorting papers.

Aaron began participating in Special Olympic sports in 2001. Not only does Aaron participate in the sports but he volunteers when needed for fundraising events. Aaron has had the opportunity to represent Quesnel at numerous out-of-town events.

Aaron began attending the Self Help Skills Program of the Quesnel Community Living Association when he was 24 years old in 2002. Aaron moved out of his mother's home and into his own apartment when he was 25. He began receiving support from Quesnel Community Living Association's Independent Living Program. Throughout the years of participating in the Self Help Skills and Independent Living Programs, Aaron has gained skills that assist him to live positively in his community.

Through his participation in Self Help Skills, he built a relationship with the City of Quesnel and has been recognized by the City for his efforts. He volunteered at E-recycling days and Emissions Testing Clinics. Aaron attends Quesnel Community Living Association's board meetings and serves as a Self-Advocate Advisor. Aaron has assisted the Self Help Skills program with charitable acts by collecting Good Cheer for families at Christmas. He has also collected items and sent "Shoe Boxes" for children in need. Aaron has assisted in collecting money for World Vision at Christmas.

Aaron has a very full life. He is part of the "Community Volunteer Program" where he gains hours by completing various volunteer jobs, both at Quesnel Community Living Association and the local Salvation Army. Aaron assists with the running and upkeep of a hall the Self Help Skills program manages. He attends Self-Advocate meetings monthly. Over the last four hockey seasons Aaron has volunteered weekly at the Millionaire Junior Hockey games, never missing a home game.

In 2011, Aaron achieved his long term goal of paid employment in the community. Aaron is an employee of the City of Quesnel where he works part time as a janitor at the Arts and Recreation Centre. He is also employed part time at the Child Development Centre and the Literacy Quesnel Society as a janitor. ■



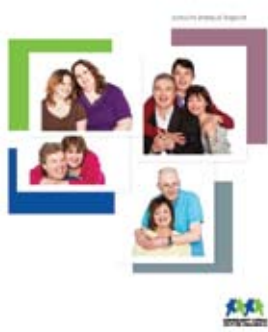
Aaron Allinson stays active by working and volunteering in his community.

# Engaging Families and Self-Advocates

## COMMUNITY LIVING BC'S 2010/2011 ANNUAL REPORT IS NOW

available and provides an organizational overview of CLBC, as well as key business and performance highlights, including financial reporting.

Engaging  
Families and Self-Advocates



CLBC's 2010-2011  
Annual Report.

The report focuses on the theme of “Engaging Families and Self-Advocates” and in British Columbia our society revolves around all types of families. For this reason, engaging the people we support and helping them reach out to one another is a priority for CLBC. Our feature family stories cover a youth in transition, employment, home sharing and social media. On page 6 of this edition of *The Citizen*, you can read Katrina’s story about using social media to spread awareness and promote online safety.

The Annual Report highlights several of CLBC’s achievements over the past year including engagement meetings with self-advocates and families hosted by CLBC’s Board of Directors, as well as the many workshops, training sessions, presentations and events facilitated by CLBC during the past year.

To view the 2010/2011 Annual Report, please visit the CLBC website under Policies and Publications > Publications > Annual Reports. Printed copies of the Annual Report are also available in CLBC offices. ■

## CONTACT US

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