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Cover image designed by artist Naomi Horii to celebrate Canada’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 11, 2010. See page 15 for more information about the Convention.

Message from the Executive Director and President

For more than 55 years, the British Columbia Association for Community Living (BCACL) has been at the forefront advancing rights, promoting action and supporting abilities for children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Along with our members, families, individuals with developmental disabilities and community partners we have set innovative standards for legislation, policy and practice, pushing the boundaries of how people can be included as full citizens in everyday life. With growing waitlists and recent cuts to funding and services, the urgency of our work remains clear. This year BCACL demonstrated our capacity to unite the voices and interests of people with developmental disabilities and their families for action and change.

We were welcomed by more than 350 families and people with developmental disabilities in over eight communities in our Road to Inclusion series. With the support of our members, we heard about the dreams, hopes and fears for the future that families have from across this province. They told their stories of cautious hope and desperation as many were denied access to funding for supports and services. Families talked of fighting long and hard for supports for their sons and daughters only to find out they were in jeopardy as a result of provincial budget cuts. We were privileged to sit down with people in their own communities and listen. With listening brings a responsibility to move forward and take action to ensure that decision-makers are fully aware of the experiences of families, individuals and the BCACL members who serve them so that investments are made in community living supports.

A united, vibrant and growing membership is critical for BCACL. It fuels and strengthens our advocacy and gives our work integrity. This past year we made significant strides in ensuring an organization-wide strategic planning process based on open dialogue knowing that this exchange secures our capacity to advance rights, promote change and support abilities. The launch of our Reason to Care Campaign takes us forward and provides opportunities to build relationships of support as we talk about the impacts of our work. The BCACL Board leads the way in these conversations and in setting our priorities for the future. We offer our thanks to the Board, membership and staff of BCACL for successful year and for providing the foundation for the future.



Faith Bodnar

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director



Annette Delaplace

Annette Delaplace, President

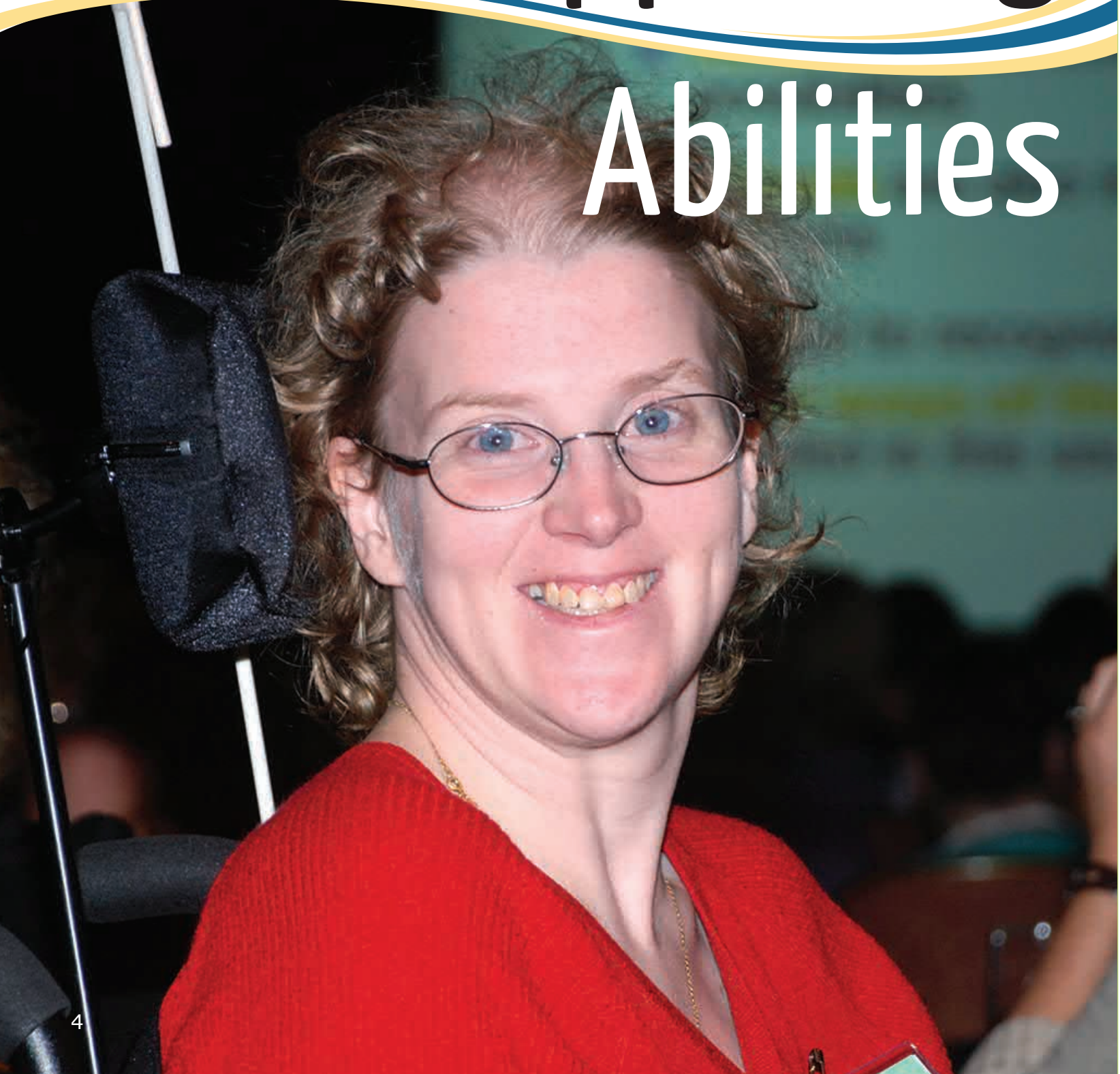
MISSION STATEMENT

We are a federation working with partners to build community and to enhance the lives of children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities, and their families by
supporting abilities, promoting action and advancing rights,
responsibilities and social justice.



Supporting

Abilities



SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT

British Columbia is rich with talented, strong self advocate leaders. Despite this, many communities are still not benefiting from the gifts and abilities of people with developmental disabilities.

This has prompted BCACL and the BC Self Advocacy Caucus to look at ways to support and empower self advocates and self advocacy groups to showcase their abilities in community.

BC Self Advocacy Caucus

Members of the BC Self Advocacy Caucus are elected every year at the BCACL Conference, where hundreds of people with developmental disabilities get together and vote for who they want to represent them at the Caucus table.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a focus for the Caucus in 2010/2011 and was used as a way to talk about issues that matter to them. BCACL and the BC Self Advocacy Foundation supported the Caucus to hold three 2-day retreats, where members talked about the Convention and how it related to different issues and their lives.

The Caucus decided to focus on three articles from the Convention:

- Article 9: Accessibility and transportation
- Article 19: Living independently and being part of the community
- Article 28: Standard of living

The Caucus made the following recommendations to the BCACL Board of Directors:

- Self advocates need to be present at all meetings with Ministers and government decision makers;
- BCACL needs to improve the accessibility of their front entrance;
- BCACL social policies should be available in plain language.



From left to right, the 2010-2011 BC Self Advocacy Caucus is:
Top Row: Shelley Decoste, Liam Wuthrich, Dave Wegenast, Michael McLellan, Roxana Podrasky, Tanya Norman (advisor), Sky Hendsbee, Karla Verschoor (advisor), Rachel Adair, Gordon Warkentin, Barb Goode
Middle Row: Lynn McCormack, Jason Tibayan, Colleen Mosimann.
Bottom Row: Mark Fugman, Sherry Shortman.

Self Advocates Seeding Innovation (SASI)

In 2010/2011 BCACL supported self advocates from across B.C. to lead and develop ground breaking projects in their home communities.

Self Advocates Seeding Innovation (SASI) was guided by a working group of self advocates and self advocate advisors. Coordinated by BCACL and sponsored by the Community Living BC Innovations Committee, SASI funded 25 exciting projects, bringing new and innovative ideas to life in British Columbia.

SASI successfully supported hundreds of self advocates to organize training, give back to community, bring people together for support, and be a powerful voice in community.

See page eight for just one of the many examples of how SASI supported the abilities of self advocates in B.C.

"SASI promoted leadership which is good for the whole community. It showed that people are more the same than they are different" - Tanya Norman, member of the SASI steering committee.

The BC Self Advocacy Caucus is financially supported by the BC Self Advocacy Foundation through a community gaming grant. The Caucus would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

BUILDING CAPACITY

BCACL provides training, education and networking opportunities for our member agencies, family members, people with developmental disabilities and community partners. In 2010/2011 we provided learning opportunities in areas such as supported employment, advocacy and family leadership, giving people the tools and resources they need to build on their abilities and succeed both personally and professionally.

2010 National Family Conference

Together with the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and Family Focus Society, BCACL co-hosted the national conference, "Families, a Journey of Generations Moving Mountains" on October 22-24, 2010 in Whistler, B.C. The conference was a huge success with over 500 people from across Canada attending 48 sessions. The conference planning committee made sure that each of the seven workshop streams met the needs of everyone to learn, network and share; 148 families, 155 self advocates and many other services providers, educators, friends and professionals were in attendance. BCACL provided subsidies for over 40 individuals to attend the conference.

Recognizing the importance of a good education for students with special needs, the planning committee created a full day stream of sessions dedicated to promoting and sharing best practices in inclusive education. Other conference sessions focused on social media, emergency preparedness, building self esteem, housing options and employment. Eleven sessions were presented by self advocates.

The event marked the first time BCACL had co-hosted a conference with both the Canadian Association for Community Living and Family Focus Society. This exciting collaboration resulted in a weekend of family networking, information sharing and fun. One family member describes her experience : "I learned a great deal at this conference, but if I were to choose one thing that stood out the most it is the importance of creating community networks. Thank you again for giving me space to connect with families, to access resources and to re-galvanize myself in this effort for my child and any children who can follow in his path."



The Ripple Effect Family Retreat

BCACL continued to support family leadership with the Ripple Effect retreat, where families come together and are inspired by their own strengths and abilities. This year's retreat was held the day before the National Family Conference in Whistler in October and attended by family members from Northern B.C., Surrey, Squamish, Port Moody, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Maple Ridge and Victoria. BCACL provided a children's program which allowed parents to bring their children to Whistler and still participate in the retreat. Several of the families stayed for the conference, providing them with an opportunity to network with other families and to learn about community living issues on both a provincial and national level. To date BCACL has supported 59 family members to attend the retreat.

Family Support Workers Network

BCACL supports a network of dedicated professionals through the Family Support Workers Network. Most members of the network are family members themselves and are employed by our member organizations or other community serving organizations. Family support workers play a vital role in community; they are often the first and primary point of contact for families, providing vital information, resources and support. Families describe them as "lifelines", helping them navigate B.C.'s complex system of supports and services and empowering them to advocate for their sons and daughters.

In 2010/11, the Network welcomed three new members to the group, from Williams Lake, Victoria and Greenville. The network ensures that support workers living in rural communities are connected to the most current information, policies and best practices related to their profession. They are able to share knowledge, resources, advice and develop common strategies and approaches.

BCACL is committed to supporting the very important work that Family Support Workers are doing, as they provide grassroots support for families, letting them know they are not alone and are part of a network of families and community organizations and a provincial movement for social change. Visit the Families section of the BCACL website for a list of Family Support Workers in B.C. www.bcacl.org

Real Work for Real Pay

People with developmental disabilities want to work. BCACL works with self advocates, families and organizations that provide employment support to help make sure people with developmental disabilities who want a job, have a job.

In 2010/2011 BCACL provided resources and training opportunities around employment for people with developmental disabilities. We updated and re-published the 1993 plain language publication "Finding a Job and Keeping It," a guide for people with developmental disabilities seeking employment and the people and organizations who support them. The publication was popular, prompting a re-print later in the year.

Other 2010/2011 highlights:

- participated in three panel sessions on supported employment.
- performed keynote addresses at two employer recognition events in Dawson Creek and Fort St. John.
- hosted internationally recognized supported employment "guru" Denise Bissonette for a full day workshop attended by over 100 employment support providers.
- presented two employment workshops at 2010 Conference for families and self advocates.

"I've been a part of the Family Support Workers Network for ten years now. Being able to connect with others in the profession who experience the same challenges and opportunities has helped me grow both professionally and personally." (Rachel LeNobel, Family Support Worker with the Simon Fraser Society for Community Living).

CO-OP HELPS SELF ADVOCATES FIND THEIR VOICES

“We believe that anything is possible with the right supports and tools. That’s what we do, we give people tools and teach them ways to learn and how to be what they want in life. We dream big and live big . We want to show the world what we are doing and what we can do.”

- Gladys Duran,
ESATTA Co-op

Gladys Duran, Ryan Groth and Barb Goode are three self advocates who had a dream: to help other self advocates find their voice. All three are strong community leaders with the knowledge, experience and passion to host workshops and training events to help people build on their strengths, do the work they love and be in charge of their lives.

It was important to Gladys, Ryan and Barb to start the project on their own, to make sure that they were driven by their own dreams and no one else’s. They already had what it took to be teachers and leaders. What they needed was money and support to get the project off the ground. Their project idea met all the criteria for support from BCACL’s Self Advocates Seeding Innovation (SASI) initiative (see page 5). Gladys, Ryan and Barb are “a powerful voice for others about changes self advocates want to make in their communities” (SASI application criteria).

SASI funding helped Gladys, Ryan and Barb set up a Co-Op called ESATTA (Empowering Self Advocates to Take Action).

ESATTA offers a half-day training session on self-esteem called “Light your path while living in the fast lane.” It also offers a two-day workshop called “People Planning Together,” which helps self advocates plan and have a say in their life. The workshops have been receiving positive feedback and were recently featured in Community Living BC’s publication, the Citizen.

If you are interested in ESATTA training sessions, a custom made workshop for your agency or group, or if you have any questions, you can contact esatta.coop@gmail.com



Promoting

Action



2011 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AWARD WINNERS

Every year BCACL's inclusive education committee selects individuals or groups who are making positive contributions to inclusive education. We are proud to announce our 2011 inclusive education award recipients:

Shailoo Bedi

Shailoo Bedi, the Director of Systems and Client Services at UVic's McPherson Library, has been instrumental in creating a way for students with developmental disabilities to access part-time "student assistant" employment at the library. Typically these positions have only been open to students taking courses for credit.

Carlie Graham

Carlie Graham, Manager of the Music and Media department at McPherson Library, plays a leadership role within the University to promote what needs to happen to make student positions successful within the University. The Music Department has employed a student with a developmental disability for the last three years.

These two individuals are shining examples of how accommodations and changes in approach for one student can help others to see the value and potential of students with developmental disabilities in all aspects of university life. Congratulations Shailoo and Carlie!



Carlie Graham (left) and Shailoo Bedi (right) accept their inclusive education awards.



BCACL Board Member Kathleen O'Hanley (right) presents Glenda Gaudette (left) with an inclusive education award.

Glenda Gaudette

Glenda Gaudette is a learning assistance teacher from Sardis Secondary School in Chilliwack. Her collaborative team approach includes the participation of the school as a whole: students, parents, teachers, administrators and district staff.

Rather than existing as a separate program, the Sardis learning assistance centre has promoted an inclusive, diverse culture of inclusion and friendship, supported by everyone at Sardis. Students with special needs are recognized for their abilities and have equal access to all classes and recreational activities, with the supports they need to succeed.

Glenda Gaudette and Sardis Secondary are excellent examples of how an entire school can come together and make inclusive education a reality. Congratulations Glenda and Sardis Secondary!

Inclusive Education

In 2010/2011, BCACL recognized a disturbing trend of school staff filing WorkSafeBC claims against students with special needs. The claims often resulted in lost educational days and even suspensions for students.

In many cases, the WorkSafe claims are rooted in a lack of understanding and training by staff who are supporting students with diverse learning needs. BCACL is working with parents to advocate for their sons and daughters in these challenging situations as well as with the Ministry of Education, calling for adequate pre-training and in service training for educators.

Chronic underfunding continued to be an issue, resulting in more cuts to supports for students with special needs. Class size and composition rules were hotly disputed in the courts and in the media.

BCACL wrote letters to the editor, the Ministry of Education and specific school districts in an attempt to shift the discussion away from whether or not to include students with special needs and to start looking at ways to do it better.



Transition from High School to Work

In early 2010 BCACL began the research phase of a project meant to broaden opportunities beyond traditional day supports for students with special needs leaving high school. The work is built upon the "Cross-Ministerial Transition Planning Protocol" which was signed by nine provincial ministries and agencies in 2009.

Our research resulted in a white paper that highlights best practices in transition planning from across North America. We used the paper as a foundation to guide our work on the project in 2010/11, which included connecting with families and educators in three different school districts, who will be featured as case studies in the project.

The steering committee and project coordinator decided to use a blog to highlight the project and feature successes and challenges faced by families and students as they leave high school. The interactive blog will include the use of video and discussion forums to promote information among students, parents, educators and other team members. The blog is expected to go live next year.

It's Wrong to Group Students Based on Their Ability. Excerpt from Letter by Faith Bodnar, printed in the Vancouver Sun on July 20, 2010

"To argue that segregation is a matter of best practice, creating better learning environments for all students, indicates the need for Zwaagstra to do more thorough research before wading into this debate and drawing conclusions that are neither supported by history nor defensible from a human rights perspective.

If some students with special needs are in fact only present in classrooms and not integrated "in their participation in the classroom learning," then it is our duty to act accordingly by developing clear policies and guidelines that support real inclusion. Additionally, we must ensure that educators at all levels, particular classroom teachers, have the resources, training and supports they need to provide a quality, inclusive education for all students.

To suggest that an academic education is inherently compromised for students who learn in inclusive classrooms is outdated and, one could argue, irresponsible. In fact, current research completed by Simon Fraser University demonstrates that the presence of students with special needs in classrooms does not detrimentally impact educational outcomes for other students (Friesen, Hickey & Krauth, 2009).

Read the entire letter on the BCACL website:
www.bcacl.org/pressroom/newsreleases/its-wrong-group-students-based-their-ability-vancouver-sun

