Learning.

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Disability Alliance BC’s Annual Gala Fundraiser
Thursday, April 9, 2015 at the Croatian Cultural Centre, Vancouver

Would you like to support DABC by becoming a Swing Into Spring 2015 sponsor? We have different levels of sponsorship for this annual fundraising event.

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- Presenting Sponsor—$6,000
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- Silver Sponsor—$2,000
- Friend Sponsor—$500

“DABC is so grateful to our community partners. We hope you’ll consider supporting our work by becoming an event sponsor. Thank you!” Pat Danforth, DABC President

Please see page 8 for more on Swing into Spring 2015! For details, please contact Jody at 604-875-0188 or jody@disabilityalliancebc.org.
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There is no learning without others, everyone can learn, and indeed we can decide if we choose to teach one another empowerment or oppression.

Learning. It’s a word we use all the time, in diverse contexts, among different people and places, in an effort to capture the myriad ways that we make sense of our world.

Learning is what beings do, human and non-human; it is who we are. The articles and reflections in this TRANSITION speak to the theme of lifelong learning—the learning we do as we live our lives. But isn’t all learning lifelong? The term lifelong learning came about through an tendency to equate learning with the four walls of a classroom, to a certain part of our lives.

Shelley Hourston and Jewelles Smith each tell a story about the power of learning in our lives, and also its power over our lives. For example, Alkenbrack shows us how learning is experienced along lines of inequality: welfare agencies give people who need income assistance a website address so they can register on their own. There is little thought to the fact that many low-income people in BC do not have access to the Internet or a computer, or someone to help them with these difficult tasks.

This is a learning experience built from oppression. Indeed, if we don’t pay attention to how learning is organized, who has access to the tools of learning, and how people are invited to learn in community, then we transform the power of learning to just another mode of exclusion.

We also learn from these stories that people persist in learning against all odds, drawing upon the help of others, building knowledge collaboratively, sharing knowledge with others. We can see this in Jewelles Smith’s story of phenomenal persistence to pursue her doctoral studies—something she does for herself, for the love of learning, for her passion for her field of study, and for her love for her children.

Lifelong learning is so much more than a skill we bring to the job site. And if we needed any more inspiration, Shelley Hourston found 45 other ways that lifelong learning builds our resilience, our strength, and our capacity to be happy and live a good life. Perhaps one of the most powerful of these—“contributing to the experience and wisdom of others”—gets at the heart of the stories and ideas shared in this edition: there is no learning without others, everyone can learn, and indeed we can decide if we choose to teach one another empowerment or oppression.

Suzanne Smythe is an Assistant Professor in Adult Literacy and Adult Education in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. Her research is in the areas of adult literacy policy, digital equity and professional learning for adult educators. Before joining the Faculty of Education at SFU, Suzanne worked as a literacy educator and researcher in South Africa and in Vancouver, BC.
Disability Alliance BC’s New Logo and Tagline

By now, many readers have seen our new logo and tagline: “We Are All Connected.”

The logo, with its inter-connected letters and our tagline, speak to the importance of building strong connections both within and outside of the disability community.

We are all happier and therefore more resilient, if we have close connections with people and the different communities in which we participate. The dictionary definition of connection is “fitting together, or joining, or a bond or link.”

We think connection is a wonderful theme for our organization. It fits beautifully with our mission, which is to support people with all disabilities, to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community.

Thank you to Spring Advertising for volunteering their time to design our new logo and tagline. We hope you like it.
Learning in Our Community’s Margins

BY BETSY ALKENBRACK

At the Carnegie Community Centre in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, there is an adult learning centre on the top floor where I have been working for 10 years. Last week, Hugh came into the centre with a desperate look on his face. He had a few numbers scribbled on a scrap of paper which he hoped would allow him to register for social assistance. Someone told him we could help. You may wonder why a worker at the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation didn’t help him. After all, isn’t it their job to help applicants?

That’s what I thought the first time I met a welfare applicant asking for help. But I was sadly mistaken. Instead of helping new applicants, Ministry staff hand them a slip of paper with a website and password, and tell them to register online. So the applicant goes home and registers on his home computer, right?

Wrong. Not if you are caught in the “digital divide” like Hugh.

A 2010 Statistics Canada report describes this as “the gap between Information and Communications Technology (ICT) ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’.” StatsCan found that only 54% of households with incomes of $30,000 or less have home internet access. Compare this with households with $87,000—the top bracket in the study—where 97% have home internet access. A 2012 Environics poll found that 17.5% of Vancouverites do not have access to the internet at home.¹

But owning a computer is only the starting point.

Hugh was born in Canada, but he is a digital immigrant—someone who was born before computers were in widespread use. Up to this point in his life, he has not had the opportunity or need to learn.

Hugh was born in Canada, but he is a digital immigrant—someone who was born before computers were in widespread use. Up to this point in his life, he has not had the opportunity or need to learn. So it is a strange new world for him and, like any “immigrant”, it takes time to learn this world. However, Hugh does not have time. He needs financial support now. So he must sit down with a stranger and share a lot of personal information. And to add to his problem, he had the wrong numbers written down, so we were not able to get online access. He fell back on familiar technology—a telephone—but was put on hold, and left in frustration. We will likely never see him again.

Some students who come to our learning centre are luckier than Hugh. We are able to help them and they may stay on to learn more about computers. We also have learners who come for help with more basic language and literacy assistance. How do they negotiate the overwhelming amount of information that we all have to deal with every day?

In 2003, a group of Adult Basic Education instructors conducted research to answer this question: “How do adults with little formal education learn?” The students they interviewed said they most often learned by asking “friends or family who they perceive to be ‘smarter’ than they are.”³

This reminds me of Larry, a student I worked with years ago in Toronto. He was a plumber who fell back on familiar technology—a telephone—but was put on hold, likely never see him again.

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In 2003, a group of Adult Basic Education instructors conducted research to answer this question: “How do adults with little formal education learn?” The students they interviewed said they most often learned by asking “friends or family who they perceive to be ‘smarter’ than they are.”³

This reminds me of Larry, a student I worked with years ago in Toronto. He was a plumber who struggled with reading and writing. Every time Larry got a new work order, he would phone his wife, spell out the words and she would tell him what the words meant.

In these cases, family plays a central role in helping print-challenged adults. But many of the people we work with are not connected with their families and this disconnect adds to the overwhelm. What do they do when confronted with new information? I asked Efrem, an immigrant from Ethiopia, and one of our regular computer users at Carnegie. “I come here or I ask at church. Someone always helps me.”

Down the street from Carnegie, Vera drops in for a visit at the

¹ 2012 Statistics Canada report describes this as “the gap between Information and Communications Technology (ICT) ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’.” StatsCan found that only 54% of households with incomes of $30,000 or less have home internet access. Compare this with households with $87,000—the top bracket in the study—where 97% have home internet access.

² Hugh was born in Canada, but he is a digital immigrant—someone who was born before computers were in widespread use.

³ This reminds me of Larry, a student I worked with years ago in Toronto. He was a plumber who fell back on familiar technology—a telephone—but was put on hold, likely never see him again.
WISH drop-in centre for street-based sex trade workers. Like Effram, she is estranged from her family, but she has a strong support network or “street family.” She is a busy activist and an articulate spokesperson on issues related to harm reduction and First Nations people. I really admire her skill and success, and wondered how she got started in this work. I was surprised by her answer.

“It all started here. I was like all the other women—addicted, on the street. But staff at WISH listened to me, helped me and supported me to build up my life and help others.”

This probably sounds familiar to most adult educators. We try to listen to our students, support them and build up their confidence. But more important, we help them to build community so that they can support each other. But I always ask myself if it is enough. It seems to be a good start for Vera, Effram and others I work with day to day. But I will never know what, if anything, would work for Hugh.

The names in this article have been changed.

BETSY ALKENBRACK HAS WORKED IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR ABOUT 30 YEARS IN TORONTO, JOHANNESBURG AND VANCOUVER. THE THING SHE LOVES BEST ABOUT HER WORK IS COMBINING LEARNING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVITY.

Footnotes

1 Report to the City of Vancouver by Chief Librarian, Vancouver Public Library (Project Sponsor). Subject: Digital Strategy.


2 Thanks to Gabi Witthaus, Research Associate at University of Leicester, for this term.

Swing Into Spring with Us in 2015

We’ve set the date and location for our 2015 Swing Into Spring Fundraiser! Our last two fundraisers have been such a great success, thanks to your support and that of our wonderful sponsors, that next year we’ll be celebrating the coming of spring in a bigger location: the Croatian Cultural Centre.

Swing Into Spring 2015 will be on Thursday, April 9th. We are thrilled to have Stephen Quinn, of CBC’s On the Coast, back as our charming host. And, the spectacular David C. Jones will once again be providing his special brand of entertainment. We’ll let you know about our other special guests closer to the event.

At the fundraiser, we’ll be announcing our 2015 Outstanding Employer of the Year Award winner and an Honourary Mention winner. If you’re a person with a disability whose employer has gone the extra mile for you, why not nominate her or him for the award?

You can download the Nomination Form now from http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/2015employer.htm. If you have any questions about our Outstanding Employer of the Year Award, please email Val at feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org.

Join Us as an Honoured Sponsor
Are you interested in sponsoring Swing Into Spring 2015? Sponsorship packages range from $500-$6,000 and we have a special early bird offer. If you become a sponsor by December 31st 2014, you’ll receive a free ad in TRANSITION, in addition to any ads that are part of your sponsorship package!

Tickets on Sale Now!
If you would like to join us, please contact Jody Lorenz at jody@disabilityalliancebc.org or phone her at 604-875-0188 or TTY 604-875-8835.

A huge thank you to our early bird sponsors.

Silver Sponsor

Friend Sponsor

Vancouver Taxi Association

TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION of BC
Who Will be Employer of the Year?
Nominations are Now Open

Nominations are now open for Disability Alliance BC’s (DABC) second annual Outstanding Employer of the Year Award. Last year’s winners were Starbucks Coffee Company (1500 West 2nd Avenue, Vancouver) and the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society, Surrey.

This Award recognizes a BC employer who has demonstrated excellence in the hiring and employing of people with disabilities. A Committee comprised of DABC Board members and staff will select the Award winner and winner of an Honourary Mention.

The names of the two employers selected by the Committee will be announced at DABC’s Swing into Spring Annual Fundraiser on April 9, 2015. Winners’ names will be publicized in DABC’s quarterly magazine TRANSITION and our monthly e-newsletter, website and social media. Both employers will receive a plaque commemorating their Award.

Nominate an Employer
Nominations for this Award can be made by:

- An employee/past employee with a disability of a business/organization
- A person who knows a person with a disability who would like to nominate that person’s employer. The nominator must complete the nomination form with the employee.

Eligibility Requirements
Nominated employers

- Must be currently operating in British Columbia and be doing so at the time of the Award presentation
- Agree to be nominated for the award
- Be willing to have their name made public at the Award presentation and in related announcements

Employees

- Must have a disability
- Must have been a paid employee of the nominated employer at some point in the 18 months preceding the April 9, 2015 Award
- If they are not the nominator, need to agree to have their employer nominated and work with the nominator on the application
- Be willing to have their name made public at the Award presentation and in related announcements

Deadline for Nominations is January 30, 2015.

For more details, and to download a Nomination Form, go to http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/2015employer.htm
Loving to Learn

BY JOHANNA JOHNSON

My mother said, “Johanna, now you are a teacher and you need to teach everyone you meet about your life.” When my mom put it to me in that way, I understood and was able to turn my life into a mission. I suddenly had a purpose and I love a challenge.

Let me start by saying that over the course of my life I have come to the conclusion that teaching is learning and vice versa. I have learned a great deal from teaching and one of the most important things I’ve learned is that I still have a lot to learn.

Officially, I became a teacher in November of 1997, but I’ve felt like a teacher all of my life. When I was a 14-year-old with a disability, I was complaining to my mother about “people…why do they always stare? Why do I always have to travel. I used to imagine what my life would be like if I hadn’t had my spinal cord injury, but that wouldn’t be MY life.

I have learned that my life is the journey I’m on and some turns in my road have been amazing and some have been terrible, but it is my road. All I can do is learn from it and stay on it until I reach my destination.

As I wrote this piece, I was on strike along with all of British Columbia’s public school educators. I cannot put into words how much I missed teaching, working with the students, collaborating with other educators and communicating with the parents and guardians.

When I was walking on the picket line I had a great deal of time to think. I pondered how I teach, what I’ve learned, and what is important to me. I cherish living in a part of the world that strives to value public education which, in essence, is seeing potential in every member of the community.

Johanna Johnson is a Vancouver teacher and Past-President of Disability Alliance BC.
Learning Opportunities for Those Over 50

Some educational and community organizations offer free or low-cost courses for people over a certain age. If you would like to explore these learning opportunities, you may like to contact your local community centre, high school, seniors’ centre, parks and recreation program, art gallery, or public library to find out about any classes offered in your community.

Here are a few places to start:

**Simon Fraser University**
SFU offers discounts on selected continuing education courses, for people over the age of 55. Most courses are over several weeks and range from psychology, to archaeology, to art, to opera. http://tinyurl.com/pw6v4g8

**University of BC**
UBC also offers a wide range of short- and long-term courses and seminars for people aged 65 and older. Seniors may also be eligible to take credit courses at no charge. https://cstudies.ubc.ca/seniors

**The Life Institute**
The LIFE Institute is a not-for-profit organization which delivers educational programs for older adults covering a wide variety of subjects in the arts, humanities, sciences, technology and contemporary issues. http://tinyurl.com/pvb6rtp

**Province of BC**
Some learning opportunities available around the province are listed on this Province of BC page. http://tinyurl.com/mcsyzct

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**FILL YOUR PRESCRIPTION AT NO FRILLS PHARMACY AND HELP RAISE FUNDS FOR DABC**

Prescriptions filled at No Frills Pharmacy, 310 West Broadway in Vancouver, will help raise funds for Disability Alliance BC (DABC).

How to participate
- Register in-person with Nicole or Chloe at the DABC office, Suite 204-456 West Broadway in Vancouver.
- Complete a short form and receive a stamped Loblaws Card.
- Take the card with you to No Frills Pharmacy, 310 West Broadway, in Vancouver.

How the program works
After you register at the DABC:
- Present the card when you are filling out your prescription.
- Receive 20% off all No Frills name brand non-prescription medications, when you present your stamped Loblaws Card at No Frills Pharmacy.
- No Frills will contact your old pharmacy and transfer over your client information.
- You can receive free home delivery of No Frills Pharmacy prescriptions, anywhere in the Lower Mainland.
- If you have to pay for part of your No Frills prescription, you will receive a discount voucher for No Frills groceries.

Please note
- You must fill a prescription first, to be eligible for these benefits.
- This program is only available at the No Frills Pharmacy’s West Broadway location and is not applicable to the grocery section of the store.

For more information, call Nicole or Chloe at 604-875-0188.

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**OUR THANKS TO NO FRILLS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT**
Book Your Emergency Planning Workshop

Disability Alliance BC (formerly BC Coalition of People with Disabilities) has created two workshops to train businesses, government departments, local governments and community organizations on how to create emergency plans that include people with disabilities and seniors.

**Strategic Inclusive Training for Emergencies (SITE)**
Teaches businesses, government departments and community organizations how to create inclusive emergency plans.

**C-MIST and the Duty to Accommodate**
Learn what Canadian and BC laws say about local governments’ responsibility to provide emergency response programs in a way that are accessible to all citizens.

Workshop details and costs online at [www.disabilityalliancebc.org/epworkshops.htm](http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/epworkshops.htm) or please contact Karen Martin at 604-875-0188, karen@disabilityalliancebc.org.

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Make Your Home Safe for Independent Living

Are you a low-income senior or a person with a disability who wants to live safely and independently in the comfort of your home?

Do you have difficulty performing day-to-day activities?

Does your home need to be adapted to meet your changing needs?

If so, you may be eligible for financial assistance under the **Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI)** program.

**Find out today if you are eligible** and if you meet all of the requirements as a low-income homeowner or as a landlord applying on behalf of an eligible tenant.

To apply or learn more, visit [www.bchousing.org/HAFI](http://www.bchousing.org/HAFI)
You can also contact BC Housing:
Phone: 604-433-2218
Toll-free: 1-800-257-7756
DABC Receives Awards

Burnaby Family Life recently presented awards to recognize Community Partners and their staff members. One of their staff nominated advocate Ashley Silcock (and Disability Alliance BC) to receive an award.

This is what a staff member at Burnaby Family Life had to say: “Ashley Silcock from Disability Alliance BC is a frontline advocate and champion for people with disabilities.

“She has always been available to help us find answers to some of the tough questions we have to deal with when helping our clients. She has dedicated her time to coming to our programs and facilitating information sessions so that our clients are educated and feel empowered to move ahead successfully in their lives.

“We would like to thank Ashley and Disability Alliance BC for their commitment.”

Congratulations to Ashley and thank you to Burnaby Family Life for recognizing Disability Alliance BC!

Disability Alliance BC has also received a Citation Award from The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT), after being nominated by CAOT and CAOT-BC.

According to CAOT, “the purpose of the Citation Award is to acknowledge the contribution/ accomplishment to the health and well-being of Canadians by an agency, program and/or individual within each province/territory, who is not an occupational therapist.”

DABC Executive Director, Jane Dyson, accepted the award at the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Awards Ceremony on October 25th.

To learn more about the award, visit the CAOT website: http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=1365

Thank you to CAOT for recognizing our work through this wonderful award!

We would like to thank the generous sponsor of this edition: Vancouver Taxi Association.
Higher Learning in University and in Life

Back in 2007, I graduated and received my Master’s Degree in Women’s Studies from Simon Fraser University. At that time, I was seven years into higher education and the pursuit of learning. I completed that degree by landing myself in the hospital for a week. | BY JEWELLES A. SMITH

A little over a year ago, I began a PhD at the University of British Columbia–Okanagan campus. There were a number of factors I had to consider before taking this journey. These included how to manage the commute; how to organize my teenage sons and their schedules; how to finance the endeavour; and most of all, how to maintain my health.

Living with a chronic and episodic condition can be challenging at the best of times—long days and commutes were just the beginning of my worries. I had to manage allergies, asthma, chronic pain and anxiety.

Back in 2007, I graduated and received my Master’s Degree in Women’s Studies from Simon Fraser University. At that time, I was seven years into higher education and the pursuit of learning. I completed that degree by landing myself in the hospital for a week.

The months that followed were a slow recovery. Part of this “education” was learning new methods of self-care, pacing (close monitoring of how and when I expend energy to “manage” my illness as much as possible), saying “no,” and the art of juggling life, work and children.

I also made the decision to move back to the small community of Revelstoke, BC, where I have a long-standing community of friends. I’ve spent the last four years integrating my sons into this community, while I have slowly continued building my career (mostly remote work).

And then, about a year and a half ago, I made the decision to apply to complete a PhD.

One of my goals was not to move our family out of Revelstoke. My boys love this community and I want them to be able to conclude their high school experience at one school. So, I put the word out to my friends that I was thinking of doing a PhD, but I didn’t want to move.

Fortunately, I heard back from several friends about an amazing professor at UBC Okanagan (Dr. Rachelle Hole). I made an appoint-
beginning, I am working on my comprehensive exams and feeling strong going forward.

Over the past year, I’ve been able to stay with friends (in both Kelowna and Vernon) when I needed to. I tried to plan my trips to Kelowna in such a way that I could go for two or three days and take care of everything during those days. A few times, when the highway was closed (and after my accident), I Skyped into meetings and classes.

Professors were amazing at accommodating my situation. I did have to ask for a few extensions, but I had been through the academic experience before, so I knew to register with the disability centre immediately upon beginning school (even if I didn’t think I would need accommodations, it was important to be registered in the event that support was needed).

One of the difficult aspects of school is financing. I have received a couple of graduate scholarships that covered tuition, plus a little extra, and I’ve been taking work contracts as they come. I managed to maintain an A standing through the semesters. It is very challenging to work when you are a student.

I am hoping that I secure scholarships that will allow me to focus exclusively on my research next year. To that end, I apply for anything I come across that I qualify for and, although scholarship and grant applications can be arduous, when you receive one of those rewards, it’s worth all the time spent.

I think I still have a lot to learn about pacing, but I am truly enjoying every minute of my PhD. Now that I am focusing exclusively on readings related to my research, I feel all the work preparing to do this is paying off. I am still on target for my goal of graduating the same year my youngest son graduates from high school (he just began grade 10).

Learning can take place in so many environments. I learn as much from working in my community as I do in an academic setting. I have always loved education and found my place in academia.

I’ve never been one to hit milestones at the conventional times. I graduated with my grade 12 at age 24 and I began my Bachelor degree at age 29. I’ve never been one to hit milestones at the conventional times. I graduated with my grade 12 at age 24 and I began my Bachelor degree at age 29. I worked right through until I completed my Masters at 36. Starting a PhD in one’s 40s can seem daunting, but I would encourage anyone, no matter their age, or abilities, to pursue learning—wherever and whenever you find an opportunity.
Things You Should Know About Uber

A MESSAGE FROM THE VANCOUVER TAXI ASSOCIATION

Would you hire a “taxi” from a company where the only requirements to be a driver are to be 21 years of age or older, with a fairly new car and a driver’s license? We think most people would not, and our association is working to make sure one such company—Uber—doesn’t receive approval to operate in the City of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver. Back in 2012, Uber received a cease and desist order from the Province of BC for failure to meet provincial and municipal regulatory standards.

Uber is currently in Vancouver signing up drivers. The streets of Metro Vancouver could be filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of drivers who want to make extra money from their personal cars. None of these vehicles will be identifiable as an Uber car, or as part of their service. You book cars for Uber through a Smartphone app.

The Vancouver Taxi Association (VTA) would like the public to be aware of some facts regarding Uber’s illegal proposed operations. Uber:

- does not have authority to operate in BC, at this time
- entered the market in 2012 and was asked to leave by provincial regulators for failing to comply with the passenger safety and accountability requirements
- does not accept passengers requiring accessible transportation and drivers have no training to work with passengers with disabilities
- does not accept cash or taxi savers
- pays no Canadian taxes on the percentage collected from each trip and paid to drivers
- drivers are not required to have any training
- drivers are not required to carry excess liability insurance on their personal vehicles. If you ride in an Uber vehicle and are involved in an accident, ICBC could cancel the insurance because the driver and their vehicle were not properly insured as a passenger-directed vehicle.
- has been blamed for destroying the taxi industry and undermining regulatory and taxation regimes around the world. We do not believe British Columbians want to contribute to this type of scenario.

What do you think? If you agree Uber would be a bad choice for the City of Vancouver and the Province, VTA suggests you speak to your provincial ministers, or Vancouver Mayor and Council.

For more information, please contact Carolyn Bauer at VTA at 604-258-4701.

The taxi industry in BC has built our business on hard work and playing by the rules.

Dhillon, Carolyn Bauer—and the BC Taxi Association member companies—Mohan Kang, Emon Bari, Don Guilbault and Gurdip Sahota—have created this sub-committee to deal with this issue.

The taxi industry in BC has built our business on hard work and playing by the rules. Our Services

- 24/7 on-call repairs
- Pick-up of used mobility equipment
- Personalized requests and custom orders
- Standard and specialty equipment rentals

Contact Us
604-200-0119 • wheelinmobility.com
Share information about your business or organization with our growing network. It’s a way to invest not only in your business, but in the dignity and independence of people who live with a disability. Advertising revenue helps support DABC services and programs.

**TRANSITION MAGAZINE**

We have a wide range of ad sizes to choose from, on either black ink or colour pages, with prices for budgets large and small (see details on opposite page).

You can design the ad or we’ll do it for you at a reasonable cost. And, you can book one ad or a series. The more you book, the more you save.

We also offer a 35% discount for not-for-profit organizations.

**E-NEWS ADVERTISING**

We are also now offering ad space in our monthly e-news, *Our Voice*.

- Reach our growing list of 2,500+ subscribers with options from monthly to one-time ads.
- Choose from three ad types to fit your needs and budget.

**INFORMATION**

For information on advertising with DABC, please contact Jody at 604-875-0188 or transitionads@gmail.com.

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**Did you have Polio?**

Are you experiencing symptoms such as:

- **excessive fatigue** not related to activity or relieved by rest
- **increased weakness** in unaffected and/or previously affected or paralyzed areas
- **muscle and joint pain**
- **reduced endurance**
- **sensitivity to cold**
- **difficulty sleeping**
- **problems breathing and swallowing**
- **sensitivity to anaesthetics and medication**

If you are having difficulty with one or more of these symptoms and you had polio previously, you may have Post Polio Syndrome.

It is important to inform yourself about this condition. Tell your doctor.

**For more information contact our office:**

**Post Polio Awareness and Support Society of British Columbia**

Phone: 1-250-655-8849
Fax: 1-250-655-8859
E-mail: ppass@ppassbc.com
www.ppassbc.com
A Rebel with a Cause

BY SUSANNE K. RAAB

I had the opportunity recently to sit down with Michael Bortolotto. Michael was born with cerebral palsy which affects his muscle coordination and his speech. Like many people living with a disability, Michael’s childhood was filled with medical professionals and teachers who focused on what he could not do, and painted a bleak picture of his future. He struggled through school, eventually living on the streets in Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Then, one day, he came across an idea which resonated so deeply within him, it changed the course of his life.

Today, Michael is a successful entrepreneur, public speaker, husband and father. He has recently been awarded the prestigious Cathleen Lyle Murray award by the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine (AACPDM). AACPDM is a multi-disciplinary scientific organization made up of physicians, allied health professionals and researchers whose mission is devoted to the study of cerebral palsy and other childhood onset disabilities. The organization promotes professional education around the world to improve the quality of life for children with disabilities.

The purpose of the Cathleen Lyle Murray award is to recognize outstanding individuals in non-medical professions “on the basis of their impact on society through their humanitarian efforts to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities.”

In September, Michael attended the 68th Annual Meeting of the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine in San Diego, California to accept the award and to make a presentation. His talk included new insights into how “resetting” can help a person living with cerebral palsy improve their muscle control, including their speech and movements.

I talked with Michael to find out why he calls himself a “positive rebel” and how he has overcome great challenges in his life to build a successful business and family life.

Q You call yourself a positive rebel—what is that?

A Without actually knowing it, I’ve always been a positive rebel. When I was about 27 years old, I read a book by Marsha Sinetar called, “Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow.” I read about self-leadership and people who had succeeded throughout history. The people who conquered, led, won, and rebuilt societies and civilizations always rebelled against their minds’ temptation to think negatively, have ideas of limitations and give into fear. As I read this, I thought—this sounds like the way my mind works. Being a positive rebel is not easy, especially when society isn’t going your way. I have to be highly creative and innovative, as well as a little bit stubborn, to overcome the challenges that I face in my life.

Q You’re careful to use the word “challenges” when you speak about your life, rather than “disabilities.” Why do you make that distinction?

A I’m 51 years old and many different people have come through my life who have greater challenges than me. When the first such person came into my life—I first saw the label “disability.” But when I took time to see their heart, mind and spirit, the “disability” faded away and I saw the “challenge.”
At about the same time, my attention was drawn to look at the so-called “non-disabled” person. Soon their challenges became apparent and I thought—wow, they’re struggling in many ways as well, but nobody is calling them “dis-enabled.”

Then, one day everything came into perspective when someone was telling everyone around me I couldn’t do anything. That’s when I showed what could be done.

We all have challenges and barriers we encounter in our lives, but they can be overcome.

Q What has been the most challenging barrier for you?

A My most challenging barrier has nothing to do with me. Given time to explore, invent, adapt, create and do things at my own speed, I can do almost everything. My biggest limitation is society and the bias society has toward people living with disabilities. Society’s fear of uncertainty and insecurity builds canyons and mountains around me and people like me everywhere. Please let me follow my heart and I’ll succeed just fine and, I promise, I won’t nuke anything of major importance!

Q You have accomplished a lot. What are you most proud of?

A Overcoming all of the limitations my doctors, teachers and society placed on me early in my life, and living life on my own terms. This includes building my own business which allows me to make a positive difference in the lives of others who are facing challenges of their own. Maybe most importantly, I’m incredibly proud of my family—my wife Dorothy, our daughter Natasha and our son, Quintin.

Q Tell me about your personal life. When you are not working and speaking, how do you spend your time?

A My personal life is about learning how to be a husband, father and accountable person who shows up when the chips are down. Being accountable to me means constantly trying to stretch my abilities to do things around the home and throughout society. Being a father is more than just parenting, it’s about the opportunity to explore what else, and more, I can do. This has ranged from changing diapers to landscaping, to running a chainsaw, to building an ice-cream cone and buying a new truck.

Q I understand you’ve delivered thousands of presentations to a variety of audiences, including school children, corporations, athletes, entrepreneurs, firefighters, police officers and self-advocates all over Canada, as well as the US. What draws you to public speaking?

A I want to show people everything is possible, not only in my life, but in their lives. I want to be an example to those people who need a leader to show it is possible, to never, never quit and to help people live their lives to their maximum.

I want the world to see my heart, body and soul for what it can do!

Q Where would you like to go from here?

A I want to continue to help people to believe in themselves, to change the way they think about themselves and their abilities, and to give them the chance to live their life to their fullest potential. I’m publishing a new children’s book called Tour de Courage to inspire children to believe in themselves, at a time when they are most impressionable. I will continue to travel across Canada and the US to speak to children and adults about the power of being a positive rebel.
Lifelong learning is one of those terms that feels rather odd when you think about it. The idea of “lifelong learning for leisure” sounds at first like an oxymoron. Given the rate of change in our society, the notion of taking a break from learning is almost laughable.

Blogs like Lifehacker (http://life-hacker.com) have gained popularity through daily tips on how to cope with torrents of information and our need to constantly learn new skills. After a few days of “think writing” for this article (my process of rumination and mental first drafts before I get to my keyboard), I realized that lifelong learning for leisure is actually a treasure trove of resilience-enhancing possibilities (please see the opposite page for a definition of resilience).

Laal and Salamati* describe lifelong learning as “the whole range of learning that includes formal, informal and non-formal learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in their day-to-day experiences.”

Lifelong learning includes a range of activities, participants and scenarios. Embracing lifelong learning as leisure increases our opportunity for resilience-building practices. As you read through the list below, think about how your leisure activities may be increasing your resilience in a variety of ways. What new experience or activity could you try to enhance your lifelong learning and resilience? Consult the Resources below too for additional tips and sources of leisure activities.

Lifelong learning for leisure can increase your resilience in these 45 ways:

1. increasing self-esteem
2. improving memory
3. developing your natural abilities
4. improving employment/volunteer skills and opportunities
5. increasing your life satisfaction/self-fulfillment
6. expanding your social networks and relationships
7. improving your communication skills
8. developing wisdom
9. improving interpersonal skills
10. increasing creativity
11. reducing boredom
12. improving problem-solving skills
13. improving conversational skills
14. expanding life experience
15. improving self-reflection
16. enhancing listening skills
17. increasing confidence
18. contributing to the experience and wisdom of others
19. improving your information literacy skills
20. developing observation skills
21. providing an opportunity to share your knowledge
22. enhancing your perspective
23. providing opportunities to tell your story
24. creating an opportunity to practice skills learned in the past
25. practicing making mistakes
26. creating situations for decision-making
27. practicing seeking and recognizing options/opportunities
28. learning through conversation
29. developing and communicating ideas

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*Laal and Salamati* refer to sources that are not specified in the text.
30. improving health literacy skills
31. observing the skills/achievements of others
32. exploring diverse ways of capturing your ideas and thoughts, e.g. journaling, Mind Mapping, brainstorming, etc.
33. observing the challenges and trials of others
34. practicing telling your story in different ways and to different people
35. learning new coping strategies from others
36. recognizing and experimenting with your preferred learning styles
37. improving your mental health
38. experiencing a sense of accomplishment
39. reflecting on your own knowledge: we don’t know how much we know
40. questioning your beliefs
41. expanding your capacity to question others
42. satisfying curiosity
43. contributing to your community
44. collecting ideas and strategies from the experience of others
45. becoming an “expert” in a new area


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**Resources**

- “Asking for Help.” TRANSITION magazine (Fall 2013) http://tinyurl.com/p2h8wv8
- Community Resources. Disability Alliance BC (DABC) website http://www.disability-alliancebc.org/commresources.htm
- Your local public library http://www.bclibraries.ca/contacts/
- Meet Up Groups—a searchable list of events and groups in your area on many topics. You can also start your own group. http://www.meetup.com

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**WHAT IS RESILIENCE?**

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.*

Need Help with the RDSP or DTC?
Contact Us.

Thank you to Vancity and PLAN for their support of our RDSP work.

October 2014 was RDSP month and we thought it would be a good time to remind you that Disability Alliance BC (DABC) helps people to apply for the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) and Disability Tax Credit (DTC).

This assistance can include going with someone to their bank to help them with the RDSP. We also provide workshops on the RDSP and DTC for community organizations and people with disabilities.

The RDSP is a great savings opportunity, even for people living on very low incomes. Here are some of the reasons why:

✓ A person opens an RDSP when they’re 30 years old and deposits their $250 GST cheque each year, by the time they’re 60 their RDSP could be worth as much as $100,000.

✓ People can open an RDSP with no deposit and individuals living on low income are entitled to receive a $1,000 bond from the Federal government every year for up to 20 years.

✓ People who deposit $500 a year are entitled to a $1,500 grant every year for up to 20 years.

✓ People receiving income assistance who open an RDSP can access $150 through the Endowment 150 program from the Vancouver Foundation.

✓ People receiving disability benefits can put money in or take money out of an RDSP without it impacting their monthly cheque.

For more information, please contact Lillian at 604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278.
SUPPORT DABC

BECOME A DABC MEMBER

Numbers matter. The more members we have, the stronger our voice in the community.

Please become a Disability Alliance BC (DABC) member today (formerly BC Coalition of People with Disabilities). You can be a voting member or a non-voting member, and we welcome both individuals and groups.

I accept your invitation to join the DABC and enclose my membership fee of $15 (groups and individuals).

I am also including a tax-deductible donation of $__________. (Donations over $10 are tax deductible).

Please return your payment/donation with this form to: DABC, 204-456 W. Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1R3.

You can also become a member or donate online at: http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/supportadvertise.htm.

Please check the applicable boxes:
- New membership or Renewal
- Voting Member or Non-voting Member

Voting members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability.

Name ____________________________

Organization ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City/Prov_________ Postal Code _________

Phone _______ Email ____________________

ABOUT US

Our mission is to support people, with all disabilities, to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community. We champion issues impacting the lives of people with disabilities through our direct services, community partnerships, advocacy, research and publications.

FRONT LINE SERVICE
Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one assistance with provincial and federal (Canada Pension Plan Disability) income supports and other benefits.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS
Our projects respond to community need and increase people’s ability to participate and contribute.

MAKING NEW PARTNERSHIPS
We keep connected with a large network of community organizations across BC and regularly provide them with updates about issues of importance to the disability community.

FREE PUBLICATIONS
We publish a range of capacity-building self-help guides and advocate resources, in reader-friendly language. Resources are provided free of charge, either by mail or from our website.
December 3 is
International Day of People with Disability

International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) is an annual worldwide United Nations-sanctioned event for increasing awareness and acceptance, and for celebration of inclusion and achievement. The theme for this year is Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology. The theme focuses on the role of technology as a way to break down barriers for people with disability and how devices are becoming faster, cheaper and more accessible. Highlights include: disaster risk reduction and emergency responses and creating enabling working environments.
Disability Awareness Training for Public Libraries

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has been working as a community partner with the BC Library Association’s Special Needs Interest Group (SNIG) on a Disability Awareness Training Toolkit for public library staff.

Funded by the Vancouver Foundation, we collaborated with a learning and education consultant to develop the focus and content for the Toolkit.


The Disability Awareness Training Toolkit incorporates the “social-ecological model of disability” and the principles of Universal Design. The Presenter’s Reference Guide notes the World Health Organization’s description of the social-ecological model. “[D]isability is not something that a person has but, instead, something that occurs outside of the person—the person has a functional limitation. Disability occurs in the interaction between a person, his or her functional ability and the environment.

A person’s environment can be the physical environment, communication environment, information environment and social and policy environment.” (Toolkit p. 7)

Universal Design is a proactive way of minimizing barriers wherever they appear and maximizing success for the greatest number of people. The Toolkit does not look at “disabling conditions, but rather the issue of accessibility, particularly cognitive accessibility; and taking lessons from Universal Design as a way to open the library to as many patrons with disabilities, and others with diverse needs, as possible.” (Toolkit p. 9)

Disability Awareness Training sessions will be scheduled periodically face-to-face and in webinar formats.

Public Library staff will be informed of upcoming sessions via BC Library Association communications. Alternatively, interested staff may wish to explore hosting sessions for their library.

Contact Margarete Wiedmann, Chair, Special Needs Interest Group, BC Library Association. Email mwiedmann@cnv.org.
Young Man Journeys to a Meaningful Life, Disability and All

BY MICHELLE STRUTZENBERGER

On March 5, 2010, Paul Tiller realized a dream he, his family and friends had been cherishing for years—the Peterborough, Ontario resident moved into his own apartment. Paul’s arms jutted over his head in a sign of victory when asked what he thought as he stood in the centre of his new place.

For Paul and those around him, the move was an important milestone in his journey to a meaningful life, “disability and all.” It signalled his growing independence with a community that extended beyond his immediate family. He was 24 years old.

The start of Paul’s journey to the full life he now enjoys began in many ways the day his mother, Lucinda Hage, determined to take her own mother’s wisdom to heart and see him as a whole child.

It was only months after Lucinda had adopted Paul as a baby that he began having seizures and was eventually diagnosed with Tuberous Sclerosis.

Lucinda’s commitment to see Paul’s disability as only part of who he is would profoundly shape the lives of both her son and herself, she says.

Perhaps most importantly, it opened the way for others to share a similar perspective, which in turn opened all kinds of possibilities for Paul. “You create the future through your declarations, your way of being and your actions,” leadership writer Joseph Jaworski says.

One of the greatest of those possibilities was the creation of meaningful relationships with many different people in the community. It was those relationships that were and are at the centre of Paul’s thriving, Lucinda says.

For instance, she’s convinced Paul progressed as well as he did after high school—a time when many people who have an intellectual disability flounder—in large part because his role models were now people in the community: bus drivers, “Dan the Man” and the staff at local sports and activity centres, as well as his co-workers at the Holiday Inn who valued Paul for his contribution.

Parents whose children live with a disability are understandably worried about their son’s or daughter’s future, Lucinda notes. The gaps in public supports and services are particularly glaring for adolescents who leave the school system—and the care and daily structure that go with it—according to a report from the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary.

In 2012, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin launched an investigation into the dire lack of services for young adults with autism and other developmental disorders after several families in crisis threatened to abandon their children because they could no longer care for them. The ombudsman has received more than 1,000 complaints from parents who are broke, sick or unable to find programs or group homes to keep their adult children safe.

While there are certainly no one-size-fits-all answers for anyone, Lucinda’s journey with her son has brought her to a place of joining in with many others who point to the broader community as the life-blood of anyone’s thriving, including those who have a disability.

Strong communities recognize the capacity of all people, even those who are traditionally marginalized; and in strong communities everyone is included in the life of the community, author John McKnight writes.

“You create the future through your declarations, your way of being and your actions,” leadership writer Joseph Jaworski says.

“If what we are doing doesn’t help people connect into meaningful relationships, it’s a waste of time,” says David Pitonyak, an advocate for schools and agencies to focus on relationship building for people who have a disability.

A key leverage point in creating these meaningful relationships is
training and employing people to be life coaches and facilitators for people who have an intellectual disability, Lucinda says.

And a critical task in cultivating these relationships is discovering and lifting up the gifts of all those who are involved.

For instance, one of Paul’s gifts is that he isn’t concerned with people’s appearance or their social standing, but with their essence. “Paul allows people to be who they truly are and responds with unrestrained joy,” says Lucinda.

“If what we are doing doesn’t help people connect into meaningful relationships, it’s a waste of time,” says David Pitonyak, an advocate for schools and agencies to focus on relationship building for people who have a disability.

When people of all abilities are living together in community in complete equality and reciprocity, a “collective intelligence” is created that is more sophisticated than any group could produce on their own, Ian Brown writes in his book The Boy in the Moon.

When she first came across this perspective of Ian’s, shaped in large part by his journey to multiple L’Arche communities with his son who has multiple disabilities, Lucinda says she gained a stronger understanding of the effect Paul has on people with whom he has close relationships. “They wanted to be with him, not out of a sense of duty, but because together they experienced something unique.”

Lucinda has recently published a book on Paul’s journey, What Time is the 9:20 Bus? A Journey to a Meaningful Life, Disability and All.

She hopes the book will stir people to see individuals who have a disability in a new light—as people who are “the same on the inside, with the same desires and longing to belong as everyone else.”

She would also love to see people moved to reach out and support those who have a disability in developing reciprocal relationships, not only for the benefit of the person being supported, but the supporter and the broader community—so that everyone can flourish.

“We all have challenges in life to overcome, and a need to be accepted for who we are. People like Paul have something to teach us about belonging, forgiveness, emotional honesty, acceptance and unconditional love. I hope this message reaches as many people as possible,” Lucinda says.

We'd like to thank the many people who contributed their experience and insight for this TRANSITION edition on Lifelong Learning.

In no particular order, our sincere thanks to:

Suzanne Smythe, Simon Fraser University

Betsy Alkenbrack, Carnegie Community Centre

Johanna Johnson

Jewelies A. Smith

Carolyn Bauer, Vancouver Taxi Association

Susanne K. Raab

Elina Chiu
My life went in a different direction about two years ago when I began to work as an outreach worker. An organization I worked for offered me some leadership skills training. I decided to take advantage of the opportunity and took charge of my life. It was out of my comfort zone, but the training brought me back to reality.

I used to live like I was breathing underwater; no matter how hard I tried, there were some things always dragging me back into the water. It was dark and breathless. But I told myself I was going to open myself up to a different view of life and it would be worthwhile.

The training was a four-day program in a camp far away from the city. The night before I was struggling with my feelings from my past life. I sat on my bed in the dark, suffocating from the bad dream I had created for myself. It was not easy to fall asleep that night.

I got out of my bed before the sun rose and started to pack my clothes for the training. I washed my face with cool water and the cold shook through my body. My reflection in the mirror seemed tired. I looked into my own eyes and said to myself “I can do this and I believe in you!” I hadn’t looked into my eyes in the mirror for a very long time.

The sky had not brightened yet. I sat down in front of the window, battling with my thoughts. I stared at my own shadow dancing on the wall; if there was anywhere I could hide at the moment, I would jump into that shadow land.

I stepped out of the building where I lived, I smelled the fresh air and the wind brushed my worries away. It showed me there is nothing I had to worry about but to take some positive action. I was ready to learn. When I arrived at the centre, many people were there I had not met before. I was a little frightened at first, but they were friendly. I felt welcome and I made a lot of friends.

After getting settled in my room, I went to the opening circle. It was hard to remember everyone’s name, but in this new friendly environment, I was cheerful and full of excitement. I had earned a nickname in the training already—I was told that I have energy like a fireball.

There were a lot of workshops all day long. I had a lot of chances to watch other people run their workshop before I did mine. I was nervous.

I wrote a story for my workshop—I had to act and do a speech. The first time I spoke in front of a room full of people was almost terrifying. My legs were shaking badly and my back was sweating like I was in a bath. But I was...
somehow able to step out of my comfort zone again. I wanted to see what came out of making different decisions.

The connections between us didn’t end after the four days; a lot of us became friends. On the way home, I took one last look before I got on the bus. Our footprints stayed there and I walked away with fortitude.

Going to these training sessions was the best decision I had ever made for my life. After I went home, I looked at myself in the mirror again. I found a smile on my face and said to myself “I did it.”

“I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work.” —Plato

Elina Chiu is a Vancouver artist who loves painting watercolours. She is a facilitator for the Self-Management Program at Vancouver Native Health. In January 2015, she is returning to school to complete her high school education.
Unleash Your Inner Geek and Volunteer

Free Geek takes old computers and other gadgets, fixes them up and gets them back into use (or recycles them).

The group also teaches volunteers skill sets that are applicable in the real world such as:
- Electronics Dismantle: Take apart electronics for recycling
- E-waste Processing: Receive E-waste, process metals, circuit boards and wire for material recycling
- Refurbishment: Refurbish computer components and electronics for reuse
- Building: Build and refurbish desktop and laptop computers
- Outreach: Promote Free Geek to the public.

As a Free Geek volunteer, you will:
- Make connections, build relationships and find friends with similar interests
- Gain experience and skills with computers and electronics
- Learn about the computing industry, E-waste and recycling practices
- After 24 hours of volunteer time, qualify for the Adoption Program
- Receive a 40% discount on regular items at the Thrift Store, 20% discount on laptops.

Once you volunteer 24 hours at Free Geek, you are entitled to a free desktop computer, called the Adoption Box. You can choose a $50 gift certificate for the Thrift Store instead.

For more information, please visit http://www.freegeekvancouver.org/volunteer.html.

We couldn’t do it without you.

Thank you to these organizations, government departments and companies who support our work on behalf of people with disabilities.

A1 Wheelchairs Unlimited
BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities
BC Government and Services Employees Union
BC Housing, HAFI Program
BC Hydro Employees Community Services Fund
Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC
City of Vancouver
Council of Canadians with Disabilities
Government of Canada’s Social Development Partnership Program-Disability Component
Health Sciences Association of BC
Homelessness Partnership Strategy: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
Hospital Employees Union, People with Disabilities Committee
Klein Lyons
The Law Foundation of British Columbia
Murphy Battista LLP
No Frills Pharmacy (Loblaws)
Notary Foundation of BC
Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network
Post Polio Awareness and Support Society of BC
Provincial Health Services Authority
Shoppers Drug Mart Life Foundation
Simpson Thomas and Associates
TELUS Employees Charitable Giving Program
Trial Lawyers Association of BC
United Way of the Lower Mainland
Vancity
Vancity Credit Union Fairview Community Branch
Vancouver Coastal Health
Vancouver Foundation
Vancouver Taxi Association
Wheelin’ Mobility
WorkSafeBC

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### Contact Us

For more information on advertising or sponsorships,
This Transition is proudly sponsored by:

Our association is a leader in providing safe and respectful taxi service for people with disabilities and seniors.

In 2012, we began a project with other community and government stakeholders, including DABC (formerly BCCPD), to create a new program for drivers. Earlier this year, we launched the Ask, Listen and Act: Enhanced Taxi Driver Training for Customers with Disabilities and Seniors. Hundreds of drivers have already completed Ask, Listen and Act.

We look forward to continuing to work toward the best possible taxi service for people with disabilities and seniors.

Thank you to the Province of BC for their continuing support.