

Editorial by Wayne Pogue
at Technology for Living

Neil Squire and TELUS
Tech Partnership

DABC is Moving to
Downtown Vancouver

transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Where People Meet Technology



35% off
for non-profit
organizations

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Front inside cover			
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INSIDE PAGES			
Full page	\$925	\$780	\$640
2 columns	\$685	\$575	\$480
3 column large	\$650	\$555	\$465
2 column small	\$300	\$250	\$210
1 column	\$340	\$280	\$245
1 column mini	\$200	\$175	\$150

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Sponsors can design their own banner ad or we will design it for you at no charge. We can also design interior pages for you from text and graphics you provide.



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editorial

by Wayne Pogue

Have you ever used a device that helps you overcome a challenge?

How about rubber finger tips for turning pages, a grip to help hold your pencil or eyeglasses?

Many of us have used devices like these, so we've all used assistive technology. For a person with a disability, the benefits of using assistive technology may mean living with greater independence and more social participation.

Assistive technology is an assistive, adaptive or rehabilitative device or service that allows a person to overcome a challenge. This definition covers a lot of ground, from magnifying glasses and hearing aids to power wheelchairs and exoskeletons!

These devices are not always intended by the manufacturer to be "assistive." Assistive technology can often be the result of creative thinking.

For instance, why not use a common doorbell as an attention-getting device to call a caregiver?

There are non-profit organizations, like Technology for Living, that take ordinary products and turn them into assistive technology devices—

Assistive technology doesn't stop at the non-profit programs and makers in the community. Large corporations are also starting to see the importance of their devices to people living with disabilities.

like turning a power screwdriver motor into a window blind opener.

This is where the assistive technology "maker movement" comes into play. There are companies, programs and individuals, that adapt products or produce devices using basic electronic skills, mechanical skills, coding or 3D printing to create assistive technology for people living with disabilities.

At Technology for Living, we connect our members with local engineering students, as part of the Simon Cox Student Design Competition, to create meaningful assistive technology for people living with disabilities.

Assistive technology doesn't stop at the non-profit programs and makers in the community.

Large corporations are also starting to see the importance of their devices to people living with disabilities. For example, did you know that you can completely control a

cellphone using a single switch and/or your voice?

These large corporations, like makers of cellphones, computers and voice assistants, all have dedicated accessibility teams ensuring that their products contain assistive technology options.

With every software update, they are improving the accessibility of their devices, making them more usable by people with physical, vision, hearing and cognitive disabilities. For example:

- Voice Control: You can navigate your phone and write messages and emails using your voice.
- Reading Support: You can ask your iPhone to read what is on the screen.
- Dictation: You speak and your iPhone types what you're saying.

(See more iPhone accessibility features at <https://www.apple.com/ca/accessibility/iphone/>)

This is where advocating for people with a range of disabilities is so important.

Companies are listening and making changes based on user feedback and suggestions! You may think you have a “unique” challenge, but you can be sure there are others with similar challenges.

All the major companies are different in how they gather customer input.

The great thing about Apple, for example, is you can mail, call or chat with them if you have questions or you can visit an Apple store. They are experts in their iPhones and hold regular “Accessibility Sessions” in Apple stores. They also have feedback forms on their website at www.apple.com/feedback/iphone.html.

One community that has not had much assistive technology support until recently is the disabled gaming community.

Microsoft’s accessibility team has developed the XBOX Adaptive controller that allows someone with a physical disability to play XBOX games using a variety of commercially available switches and joysticks.

They are encouraging other corporations to jump on board and create cost effective switches to use with their adaptive controller.

It’s an exciting time for assistive technology. Small programs and large corporations are committed to using the ever-expanding range of smart technology and devices being developed, with input from the disability community.

A few years ago, who would have thought we could use a voice assistant or your phone to control your lights, operate your TV, adjust your thermostat, open your doors and play your music?

Tom Stabelfeldt, a tech expert with a disability, told an able-bodied audience that smart technology may be, “Convenience for you [but] is independence for me!” You can listen to his great talk at developer.apple.com/videos/wwdc2017/110.

I know that affordability of assistive tech is often a barrier for people living with a disability. There are not enough sources of funding for devices that could give people so much more independence and capability.

This Transition will give you some ideas for places you may find fund-


This Transition will give you some ideas for places you may find funding for specific devices or learn about those that may be affordable.

ing for specific devices or learn about those that may be affordable.

You’ll also read about some new assistive technologies and how people with disabilities are using them. You’ll find resources on where you can learn about the amazing range of devices out there, and maybe get a few ideas of your own.

If you are living in BC with a physical disability, and think you could live more independently with some assistive or smart home technology, you really should give Technology for Living a call at 604-326-0175 or email til@technologyforliving.org.

We setup, adapt and develop a wide range of assistive technology and smart home devices so that people with a physical disability can live more independently within their home.

WAYNE POGUE IS TEAM LEAD OF BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AT TECHNOLOGY FOR LIVING. 

More Independence Through Tech for Good™

■ by Priyanka Mehta

“Hey Google, turn off the kitchen lamp.” “Hey Siri, send a text to Mom.”

Phrases like these are becoming very familiar. Google Assistant and Apple’s Siri are in-built virtual assistants that are controlled with voice commands.

For people with limited or no hand function, voice control features go beyond convenience. These features can help increase people’s independence and quality of life.

They make it possible to use your phone to communicate with friends and family, use entertainment apps, and control your home. Natural language commands make it an easy learning curve.

So, Google Assistant and Siri have become important assistive technologies.

“There is an ever-increasing number of innovative apps that can help people with disabilities,” says Khatidja Malick. Khatidja is an Online Trainer at Neil Squire, an organization that has been revolutionizing the lives of Canadians with disabilities since 1984 through accessible technology.

If you don’t already have a mobile device, the program will help you choose the right device suited to your disability and set it up with the assistive features you need.

She adds, “With the help of these apps, people with learning disabilities and people with vision loss can dictate messages without worrying about spelling mistakes. Individuals who are blind can read paper documents and navigate independently with audio cues. People with hearing loss can have entire conversations transcribed.”

It is all possible with the right phone. However, not all models may have the features you need and there is a lot of variation in the functioning of different phones.

That’s where Neil Squire’s expertise comes in.

What is Tech for Good™?

In collaboration with Neil Squire, TELUS has launched a program called Tech for Good™ to help people with disabilities use their mobile device to its maximum potential.

Any person with a mobility, vision, hearing or cognitive disability who is an existing or new TELUS customer is eligible. The program is available to residents of British Columbia and Alberta.

If you don’t already have a mobile device, the program will help you

choose the right device for you and set it up with the assistive features you need. You’ll also receive training on how to use the apps and features.

There is no charge for the assessment and recommendations. You only cover the cost of the phone and the assistive technology.

To help offset this cost, TELUS is offering a \$20 monthly discount on select mobility plans. In some cases, participants can also receive financial assistance to help cover the cost of assistive technology.

Since its launch, says Khatidja, “The Tech for Good™ program has helped people with paraplegia and quadriplegia control their phone using their voice and the LipSync a mouth-controlled joystick developed by our Makers Making Change program. We’ve also helped people who are blind navigate independently using apps on their phone.”

How to Apply

The application process is as simple as giving Neil Squire a call. Our staff will do an initial assessment to determine your eligibility. In case you are not eligible for Tech for Good™,

we will do our best to refer you to another program or organization that may be suitable for your needs.

Other than apps, a range of barriers can be addressed through in-built, easily accessible and affordable technology. For example, many phones have vision enhancement features such as bigger font sizes and colour contrast options.

Other examples are styluses to help with tapping on icons and wireless headsets to help with communication, both of which can help a person with limited hand function.

“Today, a mobile device is almost a necessity considering the numerous functions it performs,” says Khatidja.

“For people with disabilities who may be unable to tap on the phone or see what they’re tapping, it blocks off their access to the world. This program is about increasing access for all.”

For more information about Tech for Good™, please contact Neil Squire at 1-877-673-4636 (toll free), email telus_services@neilsquire.ca, or visit www.neilsquire.ca/techforgood.

PRIYANKA MEHTA IS A COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT AT NEIL SQUIRE. 

Technology Lets Kaileen Be Heard

Supplied by Telus

Meet Kaileen Selig, a college graduate, self-confessed tech geek and newly emerging artist in Vancouver.



Kaileen, 28, uses her mouth to paint. Born with an extremely rare neuromuscular condition known as Charcot-Marie Tooth Type 2, Kaileen has faced a series of physical challenges stemming from a progressive loss of strength and range of motion. She is unable to walk, hold a pen, use a smartphone or breathe easily without the aid of ventilation.

It was only when she lost her voice—her best and easiest form of independent communication—that her normally unshakeable positivity wavered.

“I love to talk,” she says in a whisper.

When Neil Squire introduced her to an innovative piece of assistive technology that makes it possible for her to reclaim her voice, she embraced it without hesitation.

The LipSync enables people like Kaileen, who have limited use of their hands and fingers, to independently operate their smartphone or tablet. Users control a mouse cursor and tap keys on the touchscreen by either sipping or blowing into a mouth-operated joystick.

The device is one of several assistive tech innovations made available through Neil Squire.

To ensure even more Canadians can get the access they need to assistive technology, the organization partnered with TELUS to launch Tech for Good™.

Kaileen’s LipSync enables her to do all the things she loves best: bingeing on Netflix, texting with friends and family, and posting photos of her original acrylic and watercolour artworks to Instagram.

“When I lost my voice, I was so upset because I thought I couldn’t be heard. It was so tiring,” she says. “Now, the LipSync allows me to use my voice in a different way. It’s been life-changing for me.”

■ To learn more about Tech for Good, visit <https://tinyurl.com/t36c4f9>.

Meet James the Robot

In our last Transition, we introduced James the Robot. James was created by the UVic School of Public Health and Social Policy, one of the DABC 2018 Accessibility Project winners. Here's an update on James' new assistive skills!

The James project recently received support from the Society for Students with Disabilities at UVic to support the development of a prototype unit that will guide and escort students around the campus. We're excited about our progress and hope to secure additional support from the Ministry of Advanced Education.

One of our other tests was a photography module which allows users to have complete control over the position and operation of a digital camera. It was a great success!

Our test user, who is quadriplegic, used voice commands to take several portraits during a photo session. In his next project, he plans to take portraits of his son and wife. Overall, he is delighted with the system and loves the opportunity to express his creativity.

We are also making excellent progress in a related project to build a speech recognition engine to be used with James.

The engine will be specifically directed at assisting users who have severe speech articulation challenges (for example, people with cerebral palsy).

Our speech recognition engine is currently in testing. We would be delighted to recruit volunteers to assist us in our research by providing some voice samples.

Participants Needed for James' Research


Would you like to help James get better at voice recognition?

If you speak English and have a speech-related challenge, you are invited to participate in and enrich the research on James' speech recognition. You can also be part of our control group if you don't have any speech challenges.

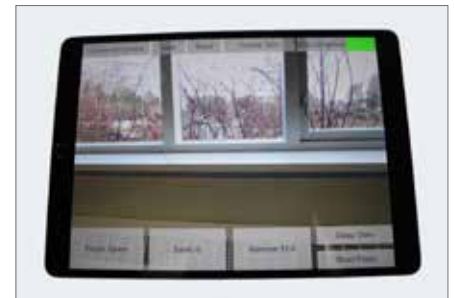
As a volunteer, you will read out words that we will record. You will then be asked to read out words to a commercial speech recognition engine (like Siri) and we will take notes on the results.

The volunteer commitment is one session, no longer than one hour including breaks. You can volunteer from anywhere in BC.

Your participation is completely voluntary and highly appreciated.

For more information about this study or to volunteer, please contact Rahal Albalkhi, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering rahla@uvic.cs. 

Our test user, who is quadriplegic, used voice commands to take several portraits during a photo session. In his next project, he plans to take portraits of his son and wife.





WorkBC Assistive Technology Services

Assistive Technology Services are available to individuals who have a work related barrier due to a disability or functional limitation. Learn about how this service can benefit you by attending a Lunch and Learn or Webinar.

Topics include:

- Workplace accommodations
- Community supports programs
- Assistive technology demonstration
- Available resources
- Funding options

Lunch and Learns take place at the Assistive Technology Services Lab, 400 – 3999 Henning Drive, Burnaby, BC V5C 6P9, on the 3rd Thursday of every month from 11:50am to 1:00pm. Lunch is provided.

Webinars take place online on the 3rd Wednesday of every month from 12:30pm to 1:00pm.

**For more information or to register, please contact Marketing Manager, Nate Toevs:
604-473-9363 ext. 122 or natet@neilsquire.ca
For more information: workbc-ats.ca**

Canada



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ABOUT TRANSITION

Editorial Statement

The views and opinions expressed within the pages of TRANSITION are not necessarily those held by the total membership or Board of Directors. The material presented is meant to be thought-provoking and to promote dialogue.

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My Personal Assistant

BY TRACE EKDAHL | For Christmas 2018, my sister bought me a Google Home Mini (now called Google Nest Mini) personal assistant. Mine looks like a cloth stone and is the size of the palm of my hand.

I wasn't sure what I'd use it for, but I set it up anyway. I found lots of information online to help with its set up.

I gave my Mini a woman's British accent because I thought my assistant should sound classy (you have the choice of a man's or woman's voice, in several accents).

The first thing I did was tell her my name and she uses it when she's interacting with me. It was fun to learn all the different things she could do.

For example, I set her up so that in the morning I say, "Hey, Google, good morning," and she replies, "Good morning Trace." She tells me what the weather will be today, what my commute will look like and plays my favourite podcast.

You can set her up to play any music or podcasts of your choosing to wake you up.

I have a smart plug for my bedside lamp that allows my Mini to control it. When I go to bed I say, "Hey

This assistive tech has changed my life for the better and she could quite possibly do the same for you.

Google, good night," and she tells me the weather now, the weather tomorrow, asks when I want my alarm to be set, and then turns off my light.

No more struggling to reach the light switch.

I've also programmed her to play soothing ocean sounds for an hour at bedtime, but she can play many other sounds as well.

It's been a year now and I can't live without her.

I set timers for cooking and ask her random questions. Did you know that a cat can learn 35 human words and a dog can learn 165?

You can set her up with free music: "Hey Google, play all-out 60s."

She sets reminders too which is helpful if you're forgetful about taking your medication.

She can tell jokes, play word games and trivia, and even play games



for kids. She can now read stories from the Frozen movies. My niece's favourite is Freeze Dance.

Google Mini has over 100 Easter eggs which are hidden skills you can find.

If you say, "I'll be back," she will often say, "Hasta la vista" from the Terminator movie.

If you say, "I am your father," she has a few replies from The Empire Strikes Back.

Not exactly essential I know, but fun!


There are so many hidden tricks and, after a year, I'm still exploring. If you look up Google Home (Nest) and Easter eggs, you see lists of things she can do.

To use the Mini, you'll need a cell phone and wifi. I have a pay-as-you-go phone with no data plan and wifi in my home. It works perfectly. You can make free calls across Canada by telling her to call someone on your phone's contacts list.

These are the things I use my Mini for on a regular basis, but she has many more functions. If you'd like to learn more, I encourage you to do an online search on her skills.

My experience is with Google Mini, but you can do basically the same things with Amazon's Alexa (also known as the Echo).

This assistive tech has changed my life for the better and she could quite possibly do the same for you.

TRACE EKDAHL IS ADVOCACY ACCESS ASSISTANT AND CO-VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR. 

I set her up so that in the morning I say, "Hey, Google, good morning," and she replies, "Good morning Trace." She tells me what the weather will be today, what my commute will look like and plays my favourite podcast.

Image credit: "Google Home Mini" by TheBetterDay is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/94977883@N08/31563555838>



Accessibility Projects

2019 Winners

Organization	City	Grant	Project Name
Fraserside Community Services Society	New Westminster	\$40,000	Safe Together; Emergency Planning & Response Project for Fraserside
Independent Living Vernon Society	Vernon	\$40,000	North Okanagan Accessibility Collaborative
MOVE Adapted Fitness and Rehabilitation Society of BC	Victoria	\$31,700	Expansion of STEP Program
All Bodies Dance Society	Vancouver	\$16,000	All Bodies Dance Kelowna
Vancouver Adaptive Snow Sports	Vancouver	\$30,000	TetraSki Program
Communitas Supportive Care Society	Abbotsford	\$38,500	Urban Cultivator meets Community Inclusion in the Valley
Salt Spring Arts Council	Salt Spring Island	\$37,200	Accessible Art Therapy on Salt Spring Island
Inclusion BC	New Westminster	\$40,000	Youth Employment Summit (YES)
Realwheels Society	Vancouver	\$20,000	Wheel Voices Tune In!
Pain BC	Vancouver	\$39,500	Pain Support and Wellness Groups
Theatre Terrific Society	Vancouver	\$25,000	IT'S US!
Langley Gymnastics Foundation	Langley	\$17,000	Foundations Program
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society	Vancouver	\$40,000	Building Bridges for Immigrant Women with Disabilities
Westcoast Family Centres	Port Coquitlam	\$35,100	Youth Development Program
viaSport British Columbia	Vancouver	\$32,800	#LevelTheField: Disability Inclusion in Sport & Recreation
Victoria Disability Resource Centre	Victoria	\$30,000	Disability Awareness Training Project

Our sincere thanks to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for funding the accessibility project grant.

we're moving!

DABC is moving downtown

After many years in our current space at Broadway and Cambie in Vancouver, we're moving to a new office downtown.

The City of Vancouver is making zoning changes in the Cambie area, so a move was necessary. We'll miss our current location for lots of reasons, but we're excited to move into a nicer, newer building right in the heart of downtown. The new building is home to a number of government offices and law firms, as well as our good friends at the Law Foundation.

When Will We Move?

Some renovations are needed to the new space, so we estimate our move will be in April or May. We will send out updates as soon as we know our move date and also when we are officially in the new offices. We will do our best to minimize interruption in our frontline services, but please stay tuned for updates on any days our office may be closed.

If you don't already follow us on social media, please sign up so you'll receive these updates. Facebook [DisabilityAllianceBC](#), Twitter [@DisabAllianceBC](#) or sign up for our e-newsletter at disabilityalliancebc.org.

About Our New Offices

We'll be on the 14th floor, with lots of windows and beautiful views of downtown. Our space will be smaller, but that just means we'll be a bit cozier! There are five elevators in the building, so we won't have access problems if one stops working. The building is fully accessible and is much more modern than our current space.

Getting There

We will be just a few blocks from the Vancouver City Centre Canada Line station and the Granville Skytrain Station. We're also just one block from the many bus routes that run down Granville Street.

Parking

There is some street parking on Seymour Street, as well as nearby parking lots.

Our New Home

1450- 605 Robson Street (at Seymour Street)
Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3



we need your support today

We're looking forward to our new and improved space. However, our rent is increasing by 100%.

If you support DABC's work, please consider making a donation.

You can make a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor. All donations great and small will make a difference!

Please visit our Support page at <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us> or contact Terry at 604-875-0188.

Thank you for helping us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities.

A Reader's Tips on Accessibility Gadgets

We put out a call on DABC's social media, asking about the assistive technology people use every day.

Our thanks to Nadine Chase who sent in these interesting ideas about some high and low tech assistive devices she uses.

I think the two biggest assistive devices I have (beyond the bigger, more obvious things, like my hearing aid, cane and wheelchair) are my FitBit and my Pedego electric bicycle.

My medical conditions make it very important for me to monitor my heart rate, and my FitBit allows me to monitor that easily 24/7. It offers real-time feedback that gives me the information I need to adjust my activity.

I haven't been able to ride a standard bicycle for years and when I discovered an electric bike dealership in my neighbourhood I got so excited. I hadn't really considered one as an option!

Less important, but still lovely, is the use of electric candles. The ambience is beautiful, but I don't have to worry about smoke or fumes, or handling matches.

Now it is my primary mode of transportation. It's increased my independence immensely and even my ability to exercise. It has "pedal assistance," which means I can use it without pedalling at all, but can use the battery for a boost while doing some pedalling myself.

The pedal assistance has five levels, so I can even adapt the amount of battery power I use based on my symptoms at the time.

Less important, but still lovely, is the use of electric candles. The ambience is beautiful, but I don't have to worry about smoke or fumes, or handling matches.

I also consider my plates, cups and bowls "assistive devices," now that I'm swapping breakable materials for things like wood, bamboo, coconut and enamel.

Not only are they unbreakable, so if I drop them they don't break, but they are also much lighter than standard porcelain or glass tableware, so they're easier to handle. **T**

DON'T BE SAD

SUPPORT OUR
VISIONARY CIRCLE



Sometimes it's hard to know what you can do to help.

When you join DABC's Visionaries Circle with monthly giving, you'll be providing the best support possible. Even a small amount goes a long way and provides a stable funding base for planning our programs and services.

Joining is easy.

- You can set up monthly donations in seconds at www.CanadaHelps.org by searching for "Disability Alliance BC."
- Or, set up a monthly credit card donation by calling Terry at 604-875-0188.

Thank you for your support!

Download DABC's Free Resources

Did you know DABC has created a library of help sheets, self-help guides and resources for individuals, organizations and community planners? Here are some of the free resources you can read and download from our website.

BC Disability Benefits

We have over 15 Disability Benefits Help Sheets which are our most popular downloads. You'll learn about applications and appeals for the PWD and PPMB benefits; health benefits and nutritional supplements; filing income taxes for people receiving PWD and PPMB; PWD applications for people with disabilities living on reserve, and more.

Canada Pension Plan Disability


In the CPP-D section, you'll find our application and appeal guides for CPP-D, as well as a benefits checklist.

Registered Disability Savings Plan and Disability Tax Credit

We've created guides and help sheets on these key financial tools for people with disabilities and for health professionals who want to help their clients access these tools.

Other

- Anti-violence resources to help people with disabilities understand the steps they will go through if they have been a victim of a crime. We have also created resources for front line anti-violence workers.
- Emergency Preparedness guides on inclusive emergency planning for community partners.



Find these and other resources at
[www.disabilityalliancebc.org/
publications](http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/publications)



Getting Familiar with Microsoft's Accessibility Features and Apps

■ BY RICARDO WAGNER

According to the World Health Organization, one in five Canadians (nearly 6.2 million of us), experience some form of disability. And, each of us will face some type of exclusion at some point in our lives, whether temporary or permanent.

Technology can play an important role empowering people who have disabilities. As Microsoft's Accessibility lead for Canada, I spend most of my time talking to our customers, and our teams who engage with them, about their accessibility needs and the importance of creating an inclusive culture.

For us, it's an opportunity to dig deep into how to make technology more accessible and help people everywhere thrive.

Here are a few of our assistive tech products we're excited about:

- Seeing AI is a free iOS app that was designed by and with the disability community to harness the power of AI to turn the visual world into an audible experience.

- The Xbox Adaptive Controller empowers gamers with limited mobility.
- Soundscape in Canada is another free app for people with low or no-vision. Unlike traditional navigation apps that provide turn-by-turn directions, Soundscape uses 3D audio to call out roads, intersections and landmarks as the user passes them. The user perceives these call-outs emanating from the direction of the point of interest which lets them make their own navigational choices.

We're really excited by the opportunity for Artificial Intelligence to transform experiences for people with disabilities. We have \$25 million over the next five years to invest in potential solutions under our AI for Accessibility program. We're seeking to extend this focus on accessibility to our partner community in Canada.

And one of our key products has accessibility features that may surprise you. Microsoft's suite of Office

365 applications offers several built-in capabilities that make it easier for everyone to create content.

Work with Assistive Technologies

Office 365 applications work seamlessly with screen readers and keyboards on most devices.

Type What You Want to Do

Tell Me lets you quickly access commands in several Office 365 applications without navigating to the command ribbon. You can even use Tell Me to help you discover its difficult-to-find capabilities.

Ensuring Content is Accessible

MailTip in Outlook tells your co-workers when content is accessible. They can run an Accessibility Checker before sending an email and fix any issues that might make the content inaccessible for people with disabilities.

Go Paperless with Office Lens

Office Lens helps you transform text on a printed page into digital content that can be read aloud. To empower you to get an image of exactly what you're trying to capture, Office Lens on iOS can tell you to move back, to the right or in other directions to get the full page in the frame.

Add Captions for Videos

Create multimedia presentations that are engaging and accessible with Office 365 applications, such as PowerPoint and Sway that enable you to add captions for embedded videos.

Type with Your Voice

Convert your speech to text with Dictate in applications such as Word, PowerPoint and Outlook.



Present with Real-time Subtitles

Display auto-generated subtitles on a presentation in more than 60 languages with the Presentation Translator add-in for PowerPoint.

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Sustain attention with Learning Tools settings, such as Immersive Reader that reads words aloud with simultaneous highlighting. You can also reduce focus to a few lines, and increase spacing between lines, letters and words.

Accessibility and inclusivity continue to be key priorities at Microsoft. That doesn't just begin and end with the products we create.

For me, it's about the culture of our workplace and the systemic approach to inclusion in everything we do. We strive to gather, listen to and include as many perspectives as possible in the work we do.

Learn more about Microsoft's Accessibility Features at <https://sway.office.com/vAdiAMXOJEQGVbqX?ref=Link&loc=play>.

RICARDO WAGNER IS ACCESSIBILITY LEAD AT MICROSOFT CANADA. 



meet our new co-executive director

We are delighted to announce that Erin Pritchard has joined DABC in the role of Co-Executive Director.

Erin's title will be Executive Director: Policy and Programs. Current DABC Executive Director, Justina Loh, will stay on as Executive Director: Operations.

This will only strengthen our already strong team and we hope you will join us in wishing her a warm welcome!

Wildfire Safety Planning in BC's North

■ by Christine Smith

While working through their wildfire plan, each person was able to ask questions, learn what evacuations would involve and what to take with them in a “grab and go” bag.

Here is an update from another 2018 DABC Accessibility Project winner.

Prince George Brain Injured Group developed an emergency preparedness program for people in the Prince George area affected by traumatic brain injuries. The program is designed to help provide a safe environment and to minimize trauma and confusion in times of an emergency.

People in the program receive a risk assessment of their home, as well as hazards in their community. With the many wildfires over the last decade, the biggest worry for our members appeared to be wildfire.

This became the major focus of the project.

Through meetings with the City of Prince George Fire Service, Emergency Management BC and surrounding regional district, we learned a great deal about what the actual process would be if the Prince George area came under an evacuation order. This knowledge was instrumental in developing group education classes and individualized wildfire plans.

Each wildfire plan included city-wide assembly points with reception centre locations, transportation planning, medical and emergency


contact information, as well as a list of common issues and barriers that someone might experience in an emergency.

While working through their wildfire plan, each person was able to ask questions, learn what evacuations would involve and what to take with them in a “grab and go” bag. Everyone received a “My Wildfire Plan” card to put in their bag for emergency support services volunteers, in case they become overwhelmed and unable to communicate effectively at the reception centre.

We learned that preparation for people in the north is very different from urban to rural and from other outlying northern communities. Each person in each area needed a different plan because of the resources in each region.

Partnering and planning with community agencies throughout the north was a great opportunity to produce a brochure, “A Guide to Assisting Persons with a Brain Injury.” This resource will be distributed to support services that may encounter someone who has a brain injury.

The emergency preparedness program has helped, and will continue to help, many people living with brain injuries to feel safe and prepared should an emergency occur.

For more information, please contact Christine Smith at Prince George Brain Injured Group at 250-564-2447 or christinesmith@pgbig.ca. 





Thank you for helping us grow.

Programs and Projects

- ♥ BC Rehabilitation Foundation
- ♥ City of Vancouver
- ♥ Council of Canadians with Disabilities
- ♥ Insurance Corporation of BC
- ♥ Law Foundation of British Columbia
- ♥ Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- ♥ Ministry of Public Safety
- ♥ Vancouver Coastal Health
- ♥ Vancouver Foundation

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of BC.



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- ♥ CUPE Local 1936 (Community Services of Greater Vancouver)
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- ♥ Hospital Employees' Union
- ♥ Klein Lawyers LLP
- ♥ Osborne Cane Personal Injury Lawyers
- ♥ Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
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- ♥ TELUS Employees Charitable Giving Program
- ♥ Tompkins Wozny, Chartered Professional Accountants
- ♥ Vancouver Taxi Association

And many generous donors like you!



Stay Connected with Us

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.

FRONTLINE SERVICES

Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one assistance with provincial and federal (Canada Pension Plan Disability) income supports and other benefits. Our Tax AID DABC program helps PWD and PPMB recipients to file their income taxes year-round. Access RDSP helps people with the Disability Tax Credit and with opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

Our projects respond to community need and increase people's ability to participate and contribute.

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

We stay 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.

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. 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 (individuals) and \$25 (groups).

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/about-dabc/become-a-member>.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVALUABLE SUPPORT

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 _____

DABC is moving to a new office and our rent is increasing by 100%.

If you support DABC's work, please consider a donation. You can make a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor.

Please visit our Support page at <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us/>.

Thank you for you helping us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities.

**donation
drive**

Getting Unbiased Information about Technology

■ by W. Ben Mortenson, BScOT, MSc, OT and Dr. Bonita Sawatzky

Ideally, I would recommend that assistive technology manufacturers be required to substantiate any claims they make about their products via independent third-party testing.

There are a staggering number of assistive technologies that are currently available and more devices are being marketed every day. This makes it very challenging for consumers to make informed decisions about which devices might benefit them.

The United States National Institutes of Health has a website called AbleData (<https://abledata.acl.gov/>) that provides information on over 40,000 devices. This is a searchable website and it allows users to provide a positive or negative rating about devices (thumbs up or down). However, the website is not always current and does not report objective third-party evaluations.

Finding Information on Assistive Tech

There are generally four sources of information that consumers can use to make purchase decisions: manufacturers, vendors, current device users and research evidence. The profit motive of the manufacturers and vendors creates a conflict of interest in this regard.

It's true that Canada's Competition Act makes it illegal to make false or misleading claims about a product. However, many manufacturers' websites make claims without providing information to justify them, so the credibility of their claims is unclear.

User experiences and reviews are a great source of information, but they may only be helpful if the reviewers have similar needs or limitations to yours. Concerns have also been raised about the potential for fraudulent reviews.

Objective third-party reviews are the most credible source of information, but they are difficult to find for most products.



How We Evaluate Device Claims

As a researcher, I have independently evaluated two wheelchair add-on devices. Our work will give you an idea of how we approach product claims.

The first device we looked at was a powered add-on called the SmartDrive™ which is a powered wheel that attaches to the axle of a manual wheelchair and helps the user by pushing them when activated. The second are geared manual wheelchair wheels, called Rowheels™, that move a wheelchair forward when the user pulls backwards on the rim.

The SmartDrive™ (<https://permobil.ca/product/smartdrive/>) website does not make general claims about the benefits of the device.

Our study about the outcomes and training requirements found the device did not negatively affect most wheelchair skills. Participants were able to ascend a long ramp and go uphill on pavement significantly faster with the device.

However, it did turn the manual wheelchair into a powered device, so users had to relearn how to stop their chairs, especially in emergency situations, so this is an important consideration.

The Rowheels™ website (<https://www.rowheels.com/>) claims one model provides the user with 25% more power and another is 30% faster. They also indicate the “unique pulling action reduces shoulder-related pain and injury.”

Our participant-based research showed that, compared to either type, of Rowheels™, normal wheels required the least energy expenditure and were perceived as the easiest to propel, by nine out of ten participants.

The website does not provide any justification for their second claim. A recent study (Lighthall Haubert et al., 2019), that looked at changes in arm movement with Rowheels™ suggested, “that reverse propulsion may redirect shoulder demands and prevent subacromial impingement.” However, neither shoulder pain nor injury were outcomes studied in that research. Interestingly, the company’s web page about research in this area does not include our study.


Independent Testing

Ideally, I would recommend that assistive technology manufacturers be required to substantiate any claims they make about their products via independent third-party testing.

They should also be tasked with producing lay summaries of their findings, so they can be easily understood by a non-academic audience. This should be part of the cost of the research and development of these devices. This would give the consumer much more confidence in their claims and ensure that the evidence reflects the most up-to-date models that are being sold.

“Buyer beware” applies to devices for people with disabilities—for many reasons from safety to cost.

BEN MORTENSON IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. DR. MORTENSON’S RESEARCH IS CONCERNED WITH FOUR OVERLAPPING AREAS: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, CAREGIVING AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT.

DR. BONITA SAWATZKY IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND WORKS AT ICORD, A RESEARCH CENTRE DEDICATED TO SPINAL CORD INJURY AND DISEASE. SHE STUDIES WHEELCHAIR INNOVATIONS IN DESIGN AND PEOPLE USING WHEELCHAIRS EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY. 

“Buyer beware” applies to devices for people with disabilities—for many reasons from safety to cost.

Lighthall Haubert, L., Mulroy, S. J., Requejo, P. S., Maneekobkunwong, S., Gronley, J. K., Rankin, J. W., ... & Hong, K. (2019). Effect of reverse manual wheelchair propulsion on shoulder kinematics, kinetics and muscular activity in persons with paraplegia. *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine*, 1-13.

Sanches R. L., Sawatzky, B., & Mortenson, W. B. (2018). Efficiency and perceived exertion of novel wheelchair wheels: A comparative study. *Assistive Technology*. February 2018. doi: 10.1080/10400435.2018.1475431

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Contact Tax AID DABC Today for Free Income Tax Assistance

• SPECIALIZING IN MULTIPLE YEARS OF RETURNS •

Program Manager
Disability Alliance BC
taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org
<https://taxaiddabc.org>

You can now book your appointment at DABC online at
[http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/
file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/](http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/)

Tax AID DABC helps people in BC receiving
PWD (Persons with Disabilities) or PPMB
(Persons with Persistent and Multiple
Barriers to Employment) benefits to file
their income taxes.



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CONTACT THE TAX AID DABC REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- METRO VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY | VANCOUVER | DABC | 236-477-1717 | Toll Free 1-877-940-7797
- INTERIOR | KELOWNA | Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society | 250-763-4905 ext. 215

 **Yes, our income tax services are free.****Am I eligible for Tax AID DABC services?**

We help people who are receiving:

- Persons with Disabilities (PWD) or
- Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers (PPMB) to Employment benefits.

What if I Haven't Filed Taxes for Years?

We help prepare simple income tax returns for the most recent tax year, as well as for previous years. One of our specialties is to help people who have multiple years of taxes to file.

What if I Don't Have All My Tax Documents (T5007, T4s)?

Don't worry! We'll contact government agencies to help you find them.

My Income is Low. Why Should I File Taxes?

There are many advantages to filing your income taxes! Our clients usually receive \$400 to \$600 in income tax credits for each year they file. People eligible for an income tax refund, and those with dependent children, often receive much more.

If you haven't filed your taxes for multiple years, your refunds may grow dramatically.

Other benefits you may be eligible for include:

- GST Credits
- BC Sales Tax and Climate Action Tax Credits
- Canada Workers Benefit
- Child Tax Benefits
- Registered Disability Savings Plan Grants and Bonds

Income tax filing can also help you qualify for MSP Premium Assistance coverage, subsidized housing, and other income-tested benefits.

What Should I do Next?

Contact Disability Alliance BC or one of our Regional Partners. We'll set up an appointment to meet with you. Call us today! We're here to help.

CONTACT THE TAX AID DABC REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- VANCOUVER ISLAND | VICTORIA | Together Against Poverty Society | 250-361-3521
- NORTHERN | PRINCE GEORGE | Active Support Against Poverty Society | Toll-Free 1-877-563-6112



Planned Giving

You've always been there for others. It's part of who you are. Now, you can continue to give beyond your lifetime.

DABC has a Planned Giving program. Planned Giving is the opportunity to think ahead about causes or organizations that you may want to financially support beyond your lifetime.

You can take the time now to gather information and leave instructions in your Will.

By planning ahead, you can research charities, or have someone research charities for you, that fit your values. You won't feel rushed or pressured to make a decision and you can ensure that your money is spent in the way you want.

Benefits

There are many benefits to Planned Giving. By writing down your wishes, you will have increased peace of mind and control over your finances.

Through Planned Giving, you can provide a significant future donation without reducing your income today.

A gift in your Will to a registered Canadian charity is tax-deductible. And, your Planned Gift helps DABC to be here in the future for those who need us.

Tax Savings

You can realize significant tax savings with Planned Giving. For example, stocks, bonds and mutual funds that you may have in a Trust can be transferred in your will to a charity and a tax receipt will be issued.

A bequest from your estate of cash or RRSPs will reduce the taxes that your estate will be required to pay.

Other ways of donating give twofold value: by naming DABC as the beneficiary in a life insurance policy, you do not incur any costs now and a tax receipt is issued when the estate is settled.

To Learn More

Our donors are important to us and we'll work with you to be recognized in the way that you'd prefer.

If you would like more information about Planned Giving, please contact Justina at DABC at jloh@disabilityalliancebc.org or 604-875-0188. She will send you DABC's Planned Giving information to review with your financial planner or lawyer, family and friends.



NEW DABC RESOURCES

Sharing Inclusive Practices with Anti-violence Workers

DABC has created new resources as part of the project, Sexual Assault Reporting Options, Increasing Access for Women with Disabilities.

The new resources include:

- a checklist for front-line workers titled, “Inclusive Communications, Outreach and Engagement: A Checklist for Anti-Violence Services Supporting Indigenous Women Living With Disabilities and a Diversity of Women with Disabilities”
- a plain language help sheet for survivors of sexual assault and a sign language video both titled, “I’ve Been Sexually Assaulted: Who Can I Tell?”


The checklist is intended for community-based Victim Services, and all community programs and services that support victims of sexual assault. The purpose is to help increase the capacity of victim-serving organizations to assist two high-risk populations:

- Women with disabilities, and
- Indigenous women living with disabilities

Our focus is to help organizations engage in effective communications and outreach to break down barriers for these women.

Women who have experienced sexual assault need easy-to-understand information to help them navigate the difficult aftermath of sexual assault. Communication formats appropriate to survivors’ needs and levels of understanding become crucial: sign language, plain language and pictorial-based. There is also a need for culturally-respectful communications and engagement.

These new resources build on DABC’s earlier anti-violence work in the project, “How I Need to Know: Help for Victims of Crime.”

You can see all of our resources in our website library at <http://disability-alliancebc.org/category/publications/anti-violence-resources/>. 

Thank you to the Ministry of Public Safety for their generous support of this project.



Your Assistive Technology Headquarters

If you’d like to learn about the latest in assistive technology, look no further than the Neil Squire newsletter.

When you sign up, you’ll receive a weekly update on trending articles about accessibility and disability, as well as developments in assistive technology.

Here are some recent articles:

Halo: Reach. A post on the Can I Play That? website reviewed the accessibility of the video game, Halo:Reach, from a deaf person’s perspective.

Autism Accessibility Toolkit. An announcement by Queen’s Hall, London, England of its goal to become an autism-friendly music venue.

“Hack” Toys for Children with Disabilities. This article describes how staff from the Neil Squire helped SaskTel employees build toys for children who do not have fine motor skills.

To subscribe or read the most recent articles, go to https://paper.li/NeilSquireSoc/1448776875#.

NEIL SQUIRE IS A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT PROVIDES SERVICES TO EMPOWER CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES. THROUGH ADVOCACY, COMPUTER-BASED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.

DTC RESOURCES FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Access RDSP has created two new booklets to help health professionals support clients with Disability Tax Credit applications:

- **A Nurse Practitioner's Guide to the Disability Tax Credit**
- **A Guide to the Disability Tax Credit for Occupational Therapists**

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) offers significant benefits for people with disabilities who qualify.

With these guides, we explain the different sections of the form and offer suggestions for supporting patients' applications.

For more information, please contact the Access RDSP Outreach Coordinator at DABC at 604-872-1278 or rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org.



Access RDSP
Change your tomorrow today



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ACCESS RDSP IS A PARTNERSHIP OF BC ABORIGINAL NETWORK ON DISABILITY SOCIETY, DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC AND PLAN INSTITUTE, MADE POSSIBLE WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE VANCOUVER FOUNDATION.

THANK YOU TO THE BC NURSE PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR COLLABORATION ON THIS RESOURCE.

Invite DABC to Host a Workshop!

Disability Benefits

DABC advocates provide workshops on provincial disability benefits – Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers (PPMB) benefits – as well as the federal Canadian Pension Plan-Disability benefit.

The workshops include information about financial and medical eligibility criteria and the supplementary supports that are attached to PWD and PPMB. They can be tailored to the needs of the organization or group.

Tax Filing

Our Tax AID DABC program provides workshops and webinars on simple income tax filing issues for people with disabilities, common tax filing credits, options for dealing with tax debt, and much more. In 2018, DABC started a partnership with three organizations across BC to expand the availability of these workshops.

RDSP/DTC

Access RDSP advocates provide workshops on the eligibility criteria for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), strategies for communicating with your doctor, options if your DTC application is denied and eligibility criteria for the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

Other topics include: tips for communicating with your bank, information about grants and bonds, best practices for maximizing RDSP benefits, and accessing the Endowment 150 grant.

Emergency Preparedness

DABC offers workshops to businesses, provincial and local governments, and community organizations on how to create emergency plans that include people with disabilities and seniors. These workshops may be provided at no cost, when funding is available.



Some of our most popular Tax AID DABC workshops and webinars

- **Step by Step Taxes DIY for People with Disabilities**
- **Step by Step Taxes DIY for People with Disabilities and Their Families**
- **Tax Benefits for People with Disabilities and Their Families**

For more information or to request a workshop, please go to: disabilityalliancebc.org/programs/workshops. Or contact Val at DABC at 604-875-0188 or feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org.



Tech Bits and Bytes

Meet Free Geek Vancouver

Are you looking for a computer or smartphone at an affordable price?

Check out the Free Geek Thrift Store.

This not-for-profit organization sells refurbished free or low-cost computers (desktops, laptops and netbooks). They also sell lots of computer hardware and peripherals, smartphones, and video game consoles.

They only sell equipment that's been donated to them, so they don't have every model or device you can imagine!

They also offer free tech support nights, recycling and volunteering opportunities.

Mission

Free Geek Vancouver is a registered non-profit community organization that started with the simple idea, that everyone should have a computer that reduces the environmental impact of waste electronics by reusing and recycling donated technology. Through community

engagement we provide education, job skills training, Internet access and free or low cost computers to the public.

Free Geek
1820 Pandora Street
Vancouver, BC V5L 1M5
info@freegeekvancouver.org
604-879-4335
<https://www.freegeekvancouver.org>


Did You Know...

... that it was a Canadian who invented the first electric-powered wheelchair?

People are surprised when they learn this leap in the evolution of wheelchairs is attributed to George Klein. He and his team of engineers were part of a program established by the National Research Council in the 1950s to help injured veterans returning from World War II.

In the process, he and his team also developed other important power chair features that are still used today, including the joystick, tighter turning systems and separate wheel drives.

You can see the prototype wheelchair in the Canada Science and Technology Museum collection in Ottawa.

For an interesting read, go to <https://www.mie.utoronto.ca/the-maker-george-klein-and-the-first-electric-wheelchair/>. 

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I'd like to receive Transition in the following format:

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- ☐ I'll read it online
- ☐ Paper (by mail)

Please make cheques payable to Disability Alliance BC and send to Transition, c/o DABC, 204-456 W. Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1R3.

THANK YOU!

Access RDSP

Change your tomorrow today



dabc



Access RDSP is a partnership between Disability Alliance BC, Plan Institute and BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society.

Information and Support on the **Registered Disability Savings Plan**



CONTACT OUR PARTNERS



BC ABORIGINAL NETWORK ON DISABILITY SOCIETY

For Indigenous people with disabilities, contact BCANDS and we can help you with the RDSP process. We can assist with the DTC application, filing taxes, and opening the RDSP account. Phone: (250) 381-7303 ext. 204 | Toll Free: 1-888-815-5511 (TTY Accessible) | rdsp1@bcands.bc.ca



DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC

To access DABC's RDSP and DTC services, or to request one of our workshops, please contact us at: Local: 604-872-1278 | Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278 | rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org



PLAN INSTITUTE

We can provide you with information on the RDSP, future planning, and the Endowment 150 (free \$150 for BC residents).

- Call our disability planning hotline at 1-844-311-7526
- Take the RDSP tutorial or apply for Endowment 150 at www.rdsp.com
- RDSP info sessions and other future planning workshops at planinstitute.ca

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we are all
connected



Did you know



Smartphones can magnify
content to improve visibility.

And did you also know?

TELUS has partnered with Neil Squire to help people with disabilities access the expertise to find the right assistive technology. Eligible participants will also receive a \$20 monthly discount on select plans.

Visit telus.com/techforgood to find out more and sign up.



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

