# transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC





# This is Who I am

Respecting Disability Language and Identity







The Right Fit is a multi-partner service designed to address the crisis in wheelchair accessible housing by matching affordable, accessible homes and independent living supports with people who need them in the Vancouver region of British Columbia.

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) is the Right Fit's sponsoring organization and oversees the program. The Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) is responsible for client management.

If you are a wheelchair user or an organization representing wheelchair users and would like more information about vacant accessible units, please contact:

Isabelle Groc
Right Fit Coordinator
rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org

If you are a housing provider and have an accessible vacant unit or if you would like to learn more about our Accessibility Checklist, contact:

Dalton Finlay
Project Manager / Navigator
Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society
RightFit@IFRCSociety.org
604-777-7576

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## editorial

#### by Lauren Stinson

The history of the language we use around disability was created by doctors and the medical model, not the disabled community itself.

aining ownership over the language within our community is a crucial step toward creating agency over our identities and our narratives as individuals.

But, I've found that the discussion around disability and language is sometimes seen as taboo, so the complexity that surrounds it isn't explored as much as I think it should be.

There are many types of disabilities, from visible to invisible, mental to physical, and the way people choose to express their identity is incredibly varied. There is no right or wrong way for that expression. A person's disabled identity is unique to them and chosen by them.

The history of the language we use around disability was created by doctors and the medical model, not the disabled community itself. Many of us feel it's of utmost importance that disabled people reclaim or create new language that speaks for us and not about us.

Doctors have historically been seen as the experts on the disabled experience with the unsurprising result that the disabled community has been objectified by language that focused on medical care and "fixing" the individual. Disability was not seen as a natural phenomenon or just part of human experience. Instead, the language focused on disability as negative—something to be cured.

## Reclaiming and Recreating Language

There are two major divides in the language landscape about "disability." One group wants to reclaim the word "disability." The other wants to replace it with new language. Both groups want the same thing: power over their own identity as members of the disabled community. You can read more about these language choices on page 17.

I use "identity-first" language and will use it throughout this piece. I identify as a disabled person. I also identify as a proud cripple.

Through personal acts of reclaiming and recreating language, we take

pride in our own identity as disabled people. This is actually quite a radical act. It's in direct defiance of society's dominating views on disability.

Taking pride in your disabled identity disrupts the idea that being "able-bodied" or doing things the "able-bodied" way is the ideal. This creates an opportunity to redefine how disabled people can function and take part in society.

Having pride in your disability makes disability visible, instead of something to hide or ignore. And, with visibility, comes the opportunity to create fundamental change.

Taking pride in your disabled identity allows you to fully accept yourself and to no longer see your disability in a negative way. Disability becomes an aspect of what makes you who you are as a person. Language plays a crucial role in building the self-love and acceptance that are essential for living a healthy and fulfilled life as a disabled person.

#### My Own Evolution

As a child with a disability, I wanted to be what society saw as "normal," but I did not fit into the box of perceived normalcy.

I never embraced or thought much about my "disabled identity." It was just something that was there and often needed to be dealt with in a practical way.

It was not until I went to university, where I studied disability issues more closely and experimented

with language, that I began to explore my disabled identity more deeply—academically and socially.

I was intrigued by the Cripple Punk movement that appeared on Tumblr during my undergrad in 2014. Cripple Punk defied society's notions of what disability was and could be.

I tried it out! I enjoyed the fact that I could use the word "cripple" to describe myself and able-bodied people could not. It gave me power and control over my identity as a disabled individual that I had never experienced before. It gave me the mental space to become more accepting of and embrace the disabled part of myself.

I wanted to share this new empowering language with disabled friends, so I created Cripple Crew hats for us to wear (please see How Cripple Punk Changed My Life on page 16).

I remember talking about creating these hats with an able-bodied coworker who warned me that they would be seen in a negative light. I ignored their advice and said, "Just watch me."

It didn't concern me too much whether my expression would make able-bodied people uncomfortable. The Cripple Crew hats were not about how **they** perceived me. The hats were meant to shatter ablebodied perceptions and help broaden the discussion around disability and language. I had the power over

my own narrative around my disability. That is what mattered most to me.

## Embracing Language Diversity

By reclaiming or creating a new language around disability and the disabled narrative, we can learn to embrace the differences that exist within the larger disability community.

Our varied perspectives can all contribute to creating fundamental changes in shared oppressive systems. After all, the disability community is the largest minority group in the world, making up 15–17 percent of the population—and almost a quarter of British Columbians identify as having a disability. If we can promote the range of positive expressions of our disabled identities through language, we can create solidarity in our community and work toward social change.

I hope that this Transition will be part of the forward-looking discussions around individual expressions of disability and identity. Language is constantly evolving and changing, mirroring the process of discovering your own identity.

Regardless of how you identify, being proud and accepting of who you are is truly beautiful.

LAUREN STINSON IS A COMMUNITY ADVOCATE WITH THE ACCESS RDSP PROGRAM AT DABC. 1

Through personal acts of reclaiming and recreating language, we take pride in our own identity as disabled people. This is actually quite a radical act. It's in direct defiance of society's dominating views on disability.





## Spoonie Life and Language

■ BY ROWAN BURDGE

My experiences of ableism, and the stigma around illness and disability, have taught me that trying to express the challenges of chronically ill life is sometimes as complex as the actual medical challenges themselves.

When it comes to talking about bodies, I've found that language is challenging and nuanced.

As someone living with a chronic illness, the line between disabled and non-disabled is not always clear. I've struggled with how to identify and describe myself, and it's changed over time.

When I first became disabled, I absolutely did not use disability language because it did not seem appropriate, even though I was on life-sustaining therapy. I assumed "disabled" referred only to specific disabilities, not illness, or any kind of cultural or political identity.

I was worried I wasn't "disabled enough."

Trying to navigate jobs, school, friendships and communities as someone who has a chronic illness is not easy. We tend to think of disability as a static, unchanging, binary category, but to me it just isn't.

My disability, and the way the external world treats it (and me) is dynamic. It's ever-transforming and in movement on a spectrum of wellness far more subtle than "disabled" vs. "non-disabled."

#### A Disabling World

My experiences of ableism, and the stigma around illness and disability, have taught me that trying to express the challenges of chronically ill life is sometimes as complex as the actual medical challenges themselves.

My body is not a problem. The way the world treats and defines me and my disability, and the ridiculously expensive medical bills, are the actively disabling parts of my disease. I experience ableism that disables me which is why I now claim the word "disabled."

#### **Spoonies**

One of the terms I use for myself is "spoonie." For lots of us spoonies, disability is interwoven into our lives. Spoon theory (coined by Christine Miserandino) is a less binary way of understanding disability.

It's a shorthand way to say I'm having a bad day or need extra support, without having to medically explain.

If I'm drained, I'm low spoons. I can say, "sorry, out of spoons" or "my spoons are low, so I'll be leaving early" to help navigate my access needs and quickly explain my wellness/energy levels. I've noticed even non-disabled people who have low capacity for other explanations can identify with and easily understand this language.

#### Are Our Needs "Special"?

I see a lot of people use terms like "special needs" or "special abilities." In my opinion, these expressions add a layer of confusion.

My pancreas doesn't work. It means that one of my regular needs is to inject insulin—that's just a part of my norm. It's not "special."

When we frame needs as special, it makes it seem exceptional to require different needs from other bodies, even though all bodies are unique and require different supports.

Disability is a normal part of life, but ableism has undermined that normality.

## Finding Your Unique Identity

There is a lot of debate about person-first (person with a disability) vs. identity first (disabled person) language.

One part of the debate is how ableism teaches us to be ashamed of

disability. I've spent a lot of time unpacking this and unlearning that shame.

For me, person-first language locates the disability in the individual, whereas I see disability as a cultural, shared experience of lives which are valuable, unique, brilliant and a part of diverse human experiences. Disability has also become a part of my political identity and how I move through the world. I'm proud of my disabled experiences and identity.

find it fascinating to think about the implications of having a mechanical body part. What a wild thing—that a small part of me is robotic.

## It's an Important Conversation

Everyone's experience is different and individuals have their own creative language for how they describe themselves. For me, it isn't insulting to be called disabled, it's just a fact.

When we frame needs as special, it makes it seem exceptional to require different needs from other bodies, even though all bodies are unique and require different supports. Disability is a normal part of life, but ableism has undermined that normality.

Now, I use the word disabled to indicate this pride in the collective experience of non-normative ways of being in the world.

Other language I love and am growing into more is "crip." I see cripping as a verb — a way of cripping things up, unsettling, de-norming and adding that extra flair that only disabled folks can pull off. Crip and mad folks (see the box on this page) that I know are creative and resourceful, and some are downright hilarious.

There is a softness, tenderness, and solidarity in the community care I feel with other spoonies, crips, mad folks, disabled folks and wider disability (justice) spaces.

I'm also growing into the language of cyborg, but I'm still grappling with that. One of my human organs (pancreas) is replaced by a beeping plastic machine (my insulin pump). I My illness is part of my everyday life and my identity. It is always a relief to spend time with other people with non-normative body-minds, be it sick/disabled/spoonie folks, trans and gender non-conforming people, people who live with chronic pain or poor folks who understand there are complicated barriers that people can't see until you are in a position where you require access.

People deserve to be humanized, respected and cared for, regardless of disabilities. Using the appropriate and chosen language of each person is such a simple way of doing this. If you don't know, ask what words people prefer!

Disability, illness and impairments are part of human life — and most of us at some point will grapple

#### Mad Folks

The Mad Pride movement began in 1993 in Toronto.

Mad Pride believes and advocates that people with mental illness should be proud of their "mad" identity. "Mad folks" is used by some to selfidentify with pride.

Activists want to reclaim this term and others, and use them in a positive, empowering way.

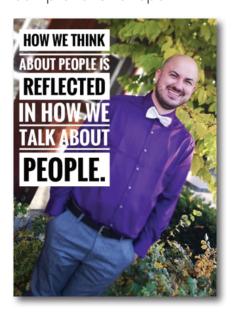
with them, whether in temporary form, acquired disability, age-related changes or as ongoing integrated parts of our lives.

De-stigmatizing disabled language helps de-stigmatize disability itself and gives us more tools to talk about it.

ROWAN (SHE/THEY) IS A WHITE
SETTLER ON TRADITIONAL, ANCESTRAL
AND UNCEDED X\*MƏÖK\*İYƏM
(MUSQUEAM), SKWXWÚ7MESH
(SQUAMISH), AND SƏLILWƏTA?+ (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) TERRITORIES, HOME OF THE
HUL'Q'UMI'NUM' SPEAKING PEOPLES. A
QUEER, CHRONICALLY ILL AND DISABLED
ADVOCATE AND ORGANIZER, ROWAN IS
PASSIONATE ABOUT DISABILITY JUSTICE,
EQUITY, LAND BACK AND QUEER
LIBERATION. THEY CURRENTLY WORK AS
THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR WITH THE BC
POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION.

### Self-advocates on the Importance of Language

In 2020, the Self-advocate Leadership Network (SALN) went on a "journey through thinking about language." These discussions led to the report, "Thinking About Language. Words Matter. Words Have Power." Here is a sample of SALN's comprehensive report.



The Self-advocate Leadership Network (SALN) took a journey to explore language with a simple idea: that how we think about people is reflected in how we talk about people.

SALN believes it is time to have a serious conversation, help people to think differently, and support self-advocates and people with disabilities to lead the changes in language that is imposed on them.

We had a meeting to discuss, share and educate each other on the history of language in the disability world. We were led through a series of brainstorming exercises facilitated by Nolda Ware to identify words and terms people or organizations use to describe people with disabilities.

Through discussion and small group work, we decided what we like, what we don't like and, what is ok. And the reasons why.

The purpose of the report was to address how the system and service providers refer to people who use their services.

We also wanted to share our report and the process we used to think about the use of language to keep this conversation alive. So, what can people in support services and programs keep in mind around the language they use when talking with and about people living with disability?

- Ask people what words and terms they like and don't like to describe themselves.
- Ask the person you're talking with if they understand the words and terms you are using.
- Ask people if the words are easy to say.
- Try to use the person's name as much as possible.
- Try to use the word "person" or "people" as much as possible.
- Ask yourself, are the words you use positive, respectful, meaningful, helpful?
- Ask yourself, do the words you use promote inclusion or foster exclusion?

You can see a few of the many ideas that came out of our workshop on the opposite page. And, you can see other comments from participants in this Transition.

THE SELF ADVOCATE LEADERSHIP
NETWORK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA IS
A GROUP OF SELF-ADVOCATES FROM
LEADING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE LOWER
MAINLAND AND VANCOUVER ISLAND.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SALN OR TO GET A COPY OF THE FULL REPORT, PLEASE VISIT <u>HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SALNBC/</u> OR CONTACT SALN DIRECTLY AT <u>INFO@SALNBC.COM</u>.

Terms We Liked Best	Participants' Thoughts About These Terms
• People/person	<ul> <li>We are no different than other people and everyone has some kind of disability or barrier, even if it is unseen.</li> </ul>
People with diverse abilities	I like that this term was created by people with disabilities, not by others.
<ul> <li>People we support</li> <li>People the organization supports</li> <li>The person I support</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>I like this because everyone needs support or some kind of help, and they are people first.</li> <li>When support workers describe us as people they support, I strongly believe it causes us to be more confident, secure and valued.</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>People or person with a disability</li> <li>People or person with a developmental disability</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Some people embrace the word disability. They don't see it as a negative, but as a part of who they are as a human being. People should not be judged if they want to use disability to define or describe who they are.</li> </ul>
Self-advocate	I like it because it says that we are speaking up and we have power to change things.
<ul> <li>People who communicate in different ways</li> <li>People who speak in different ways</li> <li>People who don't use words to communicate</li> <li>People who don't use words to speak</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>These are easy to understand and easy to say.</li> <li>They describe the person instead of labelling them.</li> <li>All people communicate in different ways, so let's just describe it that way and honour people .</li> </ul>

www.disabilityalliancebc.org Disability Alliance BC



Tax Assistance & Information for People with Disabilities







## Contact Tax AID DABC for Free Income Tax Assistance

SPECIALIZING IN MULTIPLE YEARS OF RETURNS

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

#### Appointments During COVID-19

You can book your remote appointment with DABC online at http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/. We also offer our services by email and mail. Please send your tax slips and photo ID to taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org. We will contact you for follow-up.

Tax AID DABC helps people with disabilities in BC file their income taxes. Please see details on the opposite page for our eligibility criteria.









#### CONTACT THE TAX AID DABC REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- METRO VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY I VANCOUVER I 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 provide free tax-filing support to people receiving disability supports including: Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB), Canada Pension Plan (CPP-D) Disability, WCB or the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). We also assist individuals with incomes below \$35,000 and those with family incomes below \$42,000.

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

**Disability Alliance BC** 

### The Most Personal Choice: Defining Self

BY JASON SCHREURS

My name is Jason and I live with bipolar. I didn't say, "I'm bipolar" or "I have bipolar." I also didn't use the word "disorder" or "illness." I choose to say I "live with" my condition: "bipolar."

This is my personal preference and I would never judge anyone else on theirs. I'm not alone in the disability community questioning the language that I use and how it helps to form my identity. It's a fascinating and important discussion.

## What I've Learned as a Group Facilitator

As a support group facilitator for the past two years, I've seen that many people living with disabilities use many different ways to describe themselves. Some use terms that detach them from their condition. They want to say they're not defined by something that's beyond their control. They didn't ask for it, it's not who they are. They're not ill, disordered or diseased.

People in another camp, just as validly and just as passionately, want to acknowledge their illness for the many ways it affects them. For them, terms like "illness" and "disorder" validate the struggles they face in day-to-day functioning, while softer terms like "health issue" or "health condition" minimize those struggles.

Much of the disability community has moved toward first-person language that emphasizes the person, not the disability, and how disability is just one aspect of who they are. Others argue that this can discredit a person's lived experience.

"I want [people] to know I have a diagnosed illness and not a general health issue," says Jennifer Ann de la Torre, who has schizoaffective disorder. "An illness means I require special accommodations, as well as empathy, compassion and sensitivity."

Isha Sharma has diagnoses of bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and borderline personality disorder. She reflects on why she has come to refer to herself as someone who "has" or "lives" with disabilities.

"It took a couple of years of therapy and consistent work on myself to understand and accept that I can



"I want [people] to know I have a diagnosed illness and not a general health issue," says Jennifer Ann de la Torre, who has schizoaffective disorder. "An illness means I require special accommodations, as well as empathy, compassion and sensitivity."

live a life that is healthy. Language has been an important part of that," says Sharma. "Being kind to myself has never been easy, but I am working on it, and saying 'I have a condition' versus 'I am a condition' makes a massive difference."

#### My Own Questions About Language

I often wonder if I'm downplaying my own diagnosis by telling people I have a health condition, rather than an illness. As an advocate for mental health, I can see both sides of the issue.

While normalized language may help some people to accept me for who I am, a more immediate form of advocacy would be to raise awareness about how illness affects me and people with other conditions—and what our communities and services can do to support us.

I know that how people with disabilities self-identify is not a closed issue. How we use language around disability to formulate our identities is a fluid process, and that's okay.

Courtenay McLeod has been living with bipolar for 21 years and would like to see more acceptance around

people's choice to use whatever language empowers them.

"There is no universal 'one size fits all' when it comes to articulating your own experience," she says. "Being open-minded and understanding how personal conditions can be—and how that may affect the language [we] use—needs to be accepted."

Even as I type words like "condition" to describe what I live with, I know others out there are at their own desks typing words like "illness" to define their own experiences.

"I don't care how other people say it," says Michael Frenette, who has a mental disability. "I'm not a language police officer, and I don't believe anyone should be. My personal struggles do not take priority over other people's lives and truths, and most people who are not informed only want to learn."

JASON SCHREURS IS A MUSIC AND MENTAL HEALTH WRITER, HOST OF THE INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED SCREAM THERAPY PODCAST, AND SELF-PROCLAIMED PUNK WEIRDO. 1

According to Nicholas
Simons, Minister of Social
Development and Poverty
Reduction, the BC Government has developed
regulations, policies and
programs with updated
and inclusive language
that reflect all British Columbians.

"Our government works from the principle of person-first language, meaning that we focus on people, not their disabilities or health conditions, while also respecting a group or individual's preference about how they wish to be addressed and referred to," says Simons.

Disability Alliance BC



## Language Choices are Individual and Fluid I by Jake Anthony

It was difficult for me when I realized that the way I had personally identified for so many years—as "high functioning"—could have offended people or seemed to place myself above others.

n 1997, when I was four years old, doctors at Sunny Hill Hospital gave me the diagnosis "high-functioning" autism, as well as having traits of Asperger's." Like many people on the spectrum who were diagnosed at that time, I spent most of my life identifying that way.

Since becoming AutismBC's Program Ambassador, I've discovered just how much diagnostic language has changed in the last 20 or so years.

In 2013, the Diagnostical and Statistical Manual 5 used by medical professionals in North America to form a diagnosis created a new umbrella diagnosis, Autism Spectrum Disorder, that includes diagnoses that were previously separate.

We have also moved away from using labels like "high functioning" and "low functioning."

Labelling a person as low functioning implies they are somehow "less than" and puts the focus only on what they are unable to do. Labelling a person as high functioning creates the impression that they may face few or no challenges and therefore do not need support.

We can be aware of a person's challenges and acknowledge their strengths without the use of dehumanizing labels. I'm a big believer in using respectful, inclusive language—that words matter. The way people of all diverse abilities choose to identify should be honoured.

It was difficult for me when I realized that the way I had personally identified for so many years—as "high functioning"—could have offended people or seemed to place myself above others.

It was a wake-up call that inclusive and respectful language can change over time.

Different people find different, more positive ways to identify themselves and it's our job as a society and as allies to roll with it.

When you're unsure of the language to use when you're talking with someone on the spectrum, just ask, "When you talk about yourself, do you prefer person-first or autism/identity-first language?"

That's what I do in interviews for AutismBC Talks or an AutismBC Connects blog piece. Then I try my best to respect their choice and stick with that preference throughout our conversation.

I believe that all of us, regardless of whether we're on the spectrum or not, can work together to create a more inclusive, respectful community for everyone. We just have to be willing to make the effort, listen to each other and keep an open mind!

## A Conversation with Jake

### How do you personally like to identify?

Now, I just choose to identify as a person with autism. My autism is part of who I am as an individual, but it doesn't define me. There's so much more that makes me the person I am! Referring to myself using person first language helps me make the point.

### Do you think most people with autism share your view?

More and more members of the autism community are choosing to identify using identity first language. But there are still many people who feel that, since autism is a part of their identity, they should embrace it, so they prefer to say, "I'm autistic" or "I'm an autistic person."

### What do you think of the term "neurodiverse?"

Usually "neurodiverse" refers to a group of people and "neurodivergent" to one person. Neurodiverse is being used a lot to refer not only to people with autism, but also to people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, and various learning disabilities. It's used a lot in the autism community because many people with autism have various co-occurring challenges that they live with along with their autism—like those I just mentioned. The word also properly recognizes

Different people find different, more positive ways to identify themselves and it's our job as a society and as allies to roll with it.

these separate co-occurring challenges and encourages neurotypical (non-autistic) individuals to become aware of them. People can have some knowledge about autism, but not know a lot about a particular learning disability.

## What would you say is the most problematic language that the public uses to describe someone with autism?

I think some of the stories in this magazine show how what's "acceptable" changes over time and depends on who uses the terms. There are, of course, some words that shouldn't ever be used and, thankfully, we hear them less and less often. Basically, any use of language that demeans, disrespects or sees someone as "less than" anyone else shouldn't be used.

JAKE IS PROGRAM AMBASSADOR FOR AUTISM BC. HE ALSO SITS ON DABC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS. 1

#### I TRANSITION

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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## Connect with DABC

#### **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.

#### **SERVICES & PROGRAMS**

Our Advocacy Access Program
provides one-on-one assistance
with provincial and federal (Canada
Pension Plan Disability) income
supports and other benefits. The
Disability Law Clinic provides free
legal advice to people with disabilities about human rights and discrimination. We also offer advice to
people having problems with their
disability benefits. Tax AID DABC
helps people with disabilities living
on low incomes 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 programs and 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 capacitybuilding, self-help guides and advocate resources, in readerfriendly 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 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).

You can also become a member or donate online at: <a href="http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/about-dabc/become-a-member">http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/about-dabc/become-a-member</a>.

Please return your payment/donation with this form to: DABC, 1450-605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3.

#### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Please check the applicable boxes:  ☐ New membership or ☐ Renewal
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Voting members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability.
Name
Organization
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#### SUPPORT DABC!

The rent for our new office space has increased by 100%.

If you support DABC's work, please consider a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor. Our monthly donors help us to create a funding base we can count on.

Please visit our Support page at <a href="https://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us">https://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us</a> for ways you can give.

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

Icons designed by EpicCoders from Flaticon



#### How Cripple Punk Changed My Life

by Stacey Francis

Before I learned about Cripple Punk, I didn't want to date other people with disabilities. In my mind, having a relationship with another person with a disability would somehow make me seem "more disabled." I learned about the Cripple Punk Movement from my dear friend, Lauren Stinson, who gave me a hat with Cripple Crew on the front.

To hear that other people out in the world were struggling with their identities as a disabled person like I was, but were embracing it in such a big way, was fantastic. Receiving the hat was a defining moment in my life.

That moment, and some that followed, made me realize that I needed to come to terms with my identity as a disabled person. I needed to fully embrace who I was in all aspects of my life.

#### **Becoming Visible**

When I started wearing my Cripple Crew hat, it was so liberating. The reactions I received were a mix of praise and disapproval. Some people offered high fives and said, "Right on!" Others glared at me and didn't say nice things. I was even verbally abused during a trip to Las Vegas.

But I continue to wear my hat. It's a symbol of reclamation and strength for me, and I hope it sparks some in-depth conversations around disability.

#### A New Meeting Place

Lauren and I created the Disabled Community Connection Network (DCCN) for the North Shore Disability Resource Centre. It gave me and other people in the disability community the space to have some of those difficult and much-needed conversations. It became a community where people with disabilities could come together, connect and learn from one another.

#### Changing My Outlook

Cripple Punk also helped to change my outlook on dating and disability.

Before I learned about Cripple Punk, I didn't want to date other people with disabilities. In my mind, having a relationship with another person with a disability would somehow make me seem "more disabled."

Looking back on that time saddens me. Maybe I missed out on what could have been great relationships because of my own messed up views.

Fortunately, my views on dating and relationships changed, and I am happily in a committed relationship with another disabled person.

My experience with the Cripple Punk Movement has been lifechanging. I owe all of it to a hat and a good friend.

I've been given permission to reclaim my identity as a disabled person, share my stories and not feel as much shame as I once did. In doing so, I hope to continue to empower others with disabilities.

STACEY FRANCIS IS PASSIONATE
ABOUT ASSISTING AND EMPOWERING
OTHERS WITH DISABILITIES. SHE
IS A WRITER, FACILITATOR, AND
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT FOR THE
VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD.

#### The Many Sides of Disability, Language and Identity I by Lauren Stinson



What are some of the conversations people with disabilities are having around language? Here are some of the most common threads in the disability community today.

#### Reclaiming

Some people want to reclaim language. By reclaiming words, like "cripple" or "disability," the community is taking back control over their own oppressive history, as well as acknowledging our oppressive past.

Identity-first language puts the focus on disability first within a sentence, e.g. "I am a disabled person." Disability is presented as part of your being, not separate from what makes you who you are. The word disability is seen as factual, not negative.

**Cripple Punk** is a counter-culture movement created by people living with disability. It purposefully uses the word "cripple" and its expressions of disability differ from mainstream society's views of disability.

The creator of Cripple Punk defined the movement this way: "It rejects pity, inspiration porn, [and] all other forms of ableism. It rejects the 'good cripple' mythos. Cripple Punk is here for the bitter cripple, the uninspirational cripple, the smoking cripple, the drinking cripple, the addict cripple, the cripple who hasn't 'tried everything.' Cripple Punk fights internalized ableism [and] fully supports those struggling with it. It respects intersections

of race, culture, gender, sexual/ romantic orientation, size, intersex status, mental illness/neuroatypical status, survivor status, etc. Cripple Punk does not pander to the able bodied."

#### Replacing

Some people want to replace the word "disabled" believing that, by doing so, the negative associations with the word "disability" are also removed.

Person-first language puts the focus on the person first within a sentence, e.g., "I am a person with a disability." The person is seen as more important than their disability. Their disability doesn't define them; their humanity and personhood are the focus.

DiverseAbility or Diverse Abilities are substitutes for the word "disability." People in this camp see disability as a negative word — a word that was imposed on us by the ablebodied community. DiverseAbility, on the other hand, was created by the disabled community to express their positive connection to their own disabled identities.

#### Other Expressions

Deaf culture separates itself from the disabled community at large. The Deaf community has a vibrant expression of their identity and being Deaf is seen as a positive aspect of a person. They capitalize "Deaf" when speaking about their identity and culture, and use lower case "deaf" when speaking about deafness medically.

Spoonie identity comes from "Spoon Theory," created by Christine Miserandino. It is a metaphor used to express the amount of mental or physical energy a disabled person has available for daily activities and tasks. For example, "I only have enough spoons to go a movie, not to go to both dinner and a movie." or "I am running low on spoons."

www.disabilityalliancebc.org Disability Alliance BC

#### Free Financial Tools from Prosper Canada

Prosper Canada offers a range of tools, resources and webinars to help Canadians living on a low income.

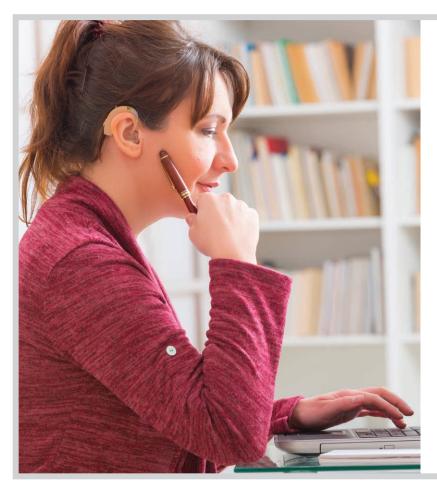
Trove is a bilingual online portal providing free financial tools, worksheets and educational resources on how to budget and save, file taxes, access government benefits and tackle debt.

At Trove, you can also find:

- My Money in Canada—a website offering simple, easy-to-use, learning modules on a range of topics.
- The Financial Relief Navigator— a search tool that enables users to search for emergency benefits and financial relief.
- The RDSP Calculator for Canadians—a way to explore the benefits of opening a Registered Disability Savings
- You can also use the comprehensive Benefits Wayfinder—your guide to both provincial and federal government benefits.

yourtrove.org | prospercanada.org | benefitswayfinder.org/







Funding is available for hearing aids, restorative supports such as canes and crutches, vehicle modifications, and other assistive devices you may need for work!

1-844-453-5506 workbc-ats.ca





This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

#### Cabo How to Access DABC Services

At the time of writing, DABC continues to evaluate when and how to open our office safely to clients. We're listening closely to current provincial health recommendations, as well as consulting with staff and volunteers. For now, we are providing remote-only services and will use social media, our blog and Transition to keep you updated.

Thank you for your patience and stay safe. Please see below how you can contact our core programs.

#### **Advocacy Access**

If you need help with provincial disability benefits or CPP Disability, contact Advocacy Access:

advocacy@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

#### Tax AID DABC

If you are a person with a disability who needs assistance filing your income taxes, contact Tax AID DABC:

taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org

236-477-1717 or 1-877-940-7797 (Toll-free)

Book an appointment online at <a href="https://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-">https://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-</a> service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/

#### **Access RDSP**

If you need help with the Disability Tax Credit or Registered Disability Savings Plan, contact Access RDSP:

rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

https://www.rdsp.com/supports-and-services/

#### **Disability Law Clinic**

Our Disability Law Clinic can help with legal issues related to disability rights:

LawClinic@disabilityalliancebc.org

(236) 427-1108

personally prefer the use of person-first language. I think it's more respectful.

Whenever possible though, I prefer that people try not to label my disability at all because labels like "cerebral palsy," "epilepsy" or "disability" often come with lots of misconceptions.

Instead. I think it's better to be specific and identify how the disability affects the person. Like, "Melissa is a person who has mobility issues that limit her ability to climb the stairs." This gives much more helpful information than, "Melissa has a disabilitv" which can come with the prejudgements about what I actually experience.

DABC e-news reader. Melissa Lyon

"I don't like terms like client, service user, etc. I am not being served, I am getting supported. It sounds like I'm in a restaurant or a hotel!"

"Special needs' makes people sound needy. What makes me or my needs more special than anyone else?"

"What is a developmental disability? We are always developing. And intellectual disability sounds like I am stupid or dumb. It does not sound nice and it sounds degrading."

From a report by the Self-Advocate Leadership Network (see page 8).

#### Offering New Perspectives to Tomorrow's Medical Professionals

I by Salina M. Dewar, BA, LL B

nyone with a disability who has ever applied for related government benefits or formally requested accommodation knows just how important doctors and other health care practitioners are to accessing the supports they need.

That's why I and some of my colleagues were keen to participate in a pilot workshop with UBC.

In February of this year, several DABC staff members had the pleasure of participating in the project with UBC's Patient and Community Partnership for Education (PCPE) program. The workshop was attended by students of social work, occupational therapy, nursing and dietetics.

We started the workshop by talking about our personal experiences with disabilities and our challenges accessing health care. We held smaller virtual breakout rooms to discuss issues such as the prevalence of traumatic brain injury and its impact on people's ability to access care, and preconceptions and practices that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access health care.

We used fictional case studies to help students imagine what it might be like trying to access health care,



The workshop was attended by students of social work, occupational therapy, nursing and dietetics.

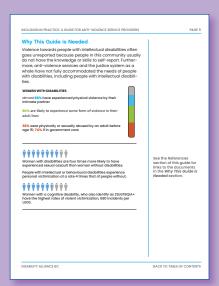
and asked them to consider how they might make health care and related services more accessible to people with disabilities once they are serving clients. Students were keen to share their ideas.

As a person affected by both visible and invisible disabilities, who hears from many clients who have huge difficulties accessing the health care they need, I saw this as a unique and important opportunity. We were able to encourage new medical professionals to advocate for their patients and make their services more accessible, so their patients have a better chance at health and well-being.

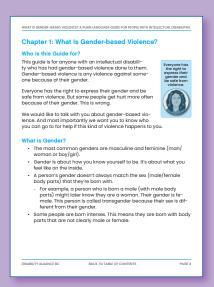
I wouldn't hesitate to participate in similar events with my colleagues in the future!

SALINA IS A LAW CLINIC ASSISTANT AT DABC'S DISABILITY LAW CLINIC.

## Anti-violence Resources for People with Intellectual Disabilities



#### FROM THE SERVICE PROVIDERS'



FROM THE PLAIN LANGUAGE GUIDE

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) partnered with Inclusion BC and Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA) to conduct focus groups with anti-violence program representatives and those providing services to people with intellectual disabilities in the community living/independent living sector.

The purpose of the focus groups was to identify challenges, gaps, and solutions for people with intellectual disabilities, especially those with Complex Needs, who experience gender-based violence.

Based on what we learned, we created two Community Education guides.

#### Service Providers Guide

The project developed a resource guide for anti-violence programs. The *Inclusion in Practice: Building Capacity to Support People with Intellectual Disabilities Experiencing Gender-Based Violence* guide is a tool to enable programs to build capacity, enhance their supports and improve service outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities.

Download the Guide here https://disabilityalliancebc.org/inclusion-in-practice-guide/

#### Plain Language Guide

To further support this work, we developed a plain language information guide on gender-based violence for people with intellectual disabilities: What is Gender-based Violence? A Plain Language Guide for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Download the Guide here <a href="https://disabilityalliancebc.org/gbv-plainlanguageguide/">https://disabilityalliancebc.org/gbv-plainlanguageguide/</a>







## DTC RESOURCES FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Access RDSP has created two 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.

In 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 <a href="mailto:rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org">rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org</a>. You can see all our RDSP/DTC publications at <a href="https://disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/rdspdtc">https://disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/rdspdtc</a>.

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.



vancouver foundation





## Autism Canada on Collaborative, Inclusive Language

Autism is a complex issue. It intersects with many other social issues such as health and wellbeing, education and employment, as well as acceptance and identity. So it is important not to fall prey to simplistic narratives about autism, both positive and negative. We need to acknowledge both the variability of autism and the complexity of our relationships with it.

While there has been a great deal of debate over "person-first" and "condition-first," terms like "adult with autism" and "spectrum adult," what is ultimately important is that the person is acknowledged. An autistic person, speaking in the first-person, might simply say, "I am autistic," given that their personhood is self-evident.

Similarly, medical terminology such as developmental disability, disorder or comorbidity, while entirely appropriate within the context of medicine and medical research, is often misused or carries stigmatizing connotations in everyday usage.

The discussion over terminology like "neurotypical," as a replacement for "normal" and "non-autistic," is still in progress. It's too early to say there is consensus or an easy answer for how to express the idea of non-autistic neurology as one type of human experience rather than the default.

Language is a living thing, built and rebuilt individually and collectively, and we fully expect the conversation on how to create an inclusive, mutually beneficial language to continue into the future.

EXCERPTED FROM "WORDS MATTER: COLLABORATIVE LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE AUTISM FIELD" BY AUTISM CANADA 2016. WITH PERMISSION. 1

ost people don't realize almost every one has some type of disability. When I feel most judged or vulnerable is when people ask what I do for a living. I don't always feel comfortable telling them I receive disability benefits. I don't feel like it "describes" me. It's an answer I still struggle with when people ask me.

DABC e-news reader, Krista

FROM THE "WORDS	S MATTER" REPORT
Undesirable Language	Preferred Language
Suffers from autism	<ul> <li>Has autism, is autistic, is on the autism spectrum</li> </ul>
Slow, simple, special, disabled	<ul> <li>Thinks/understands differently, neurodiverse, neurodivergent, autistic</li> </ul>
<ul><li> "What's your hidden talent?"</li><li> "Are you a genius?"</li></ul>	<ul><li> "Do you have any special interests?"</li><li> "What are you interested in?"</li></ul>
<ul> <li>Normal looking, not autistic looking, doesn't seem autistic.</li> <li>"You don't look autistic"</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>"How does autism affect you?"</li> <li>"What accommodations do you need?" "Is there anything I should know to make things easier for you?"</li> </ul>

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1 column   mini	\$200	\$175	\$150

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1 column   mini	\$155	\$135	\$110

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#### A Message From the Youth Leadership Initiative

ost-secondary students with disabilities experience greater difficulties with gaining employment in comparison to their peers, and typically have higher unemployment and underemployment rates.

The Disability Foundation's Youth Leadership Initiative empowers youth with disabilities to lead a national three-year project to identify and articulate often overlooked attitudinal barriers to transitioning from studies to the workplace, as well as producing solutions to help break down those barriers.

This project is run by a diverse group of young, paid interns including those with disabilities. They are working together to perform research and identify barriers, brainstorm solutions, and create a multimedia toolkit to support employers and post-secondary students with disabilities in the job-seeking process.

We are proud to have partnered with Royal Roads University for this project. They will be providing a Leadership Foundations program and peer mentorship in a Community of Practice.

#### Our Results Are In

After months of survey collection, responses, reviews and multiple focus groups, the YLI team is excited to share our research report with you.

Here's what 450 Canadians aged 17-29 have to say about their employment journeys.

Only 56% of youth with disabilities are confident in their ability to perform work tasks as well as their colleagues without disabilities

- 51% of surveyed youth with disabilities (YwD) aged 17-29 are unemployed
- The main barriers preventing YwD from getting work include low self-confidence, discrimination, lack of workplace accommodation, and hesitation in disability disclosure
- Only 56% of YwD are confident in their ability to perform work tasks as well as their colleagues without disabilities
- 54% of YwD believe they need more hours than their peers to perform work tasks
- Chances of getting hired jump over 50% when YwD feel confident in their ability to perform job tasks
- Programs offering vocational training or hands-on work opportunities are more likely to help YwD find work than those only teaching job-search skills.

You can see the full project and survey details at <a href="https://disabilityfoundation.org/yli.">https://disabilityfoundation.org/yli.</a>

"We need to be careful about what we say."

"Language is so important — it shows how we treat people."

"When we are offended by a word or term, we can take the opportunity to let people know and tell them why. We can offer alternatives."

From a report by the Self-Advocate Leadership Network (see page 8).



#### **Programs and Projects**

BC Housing
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
City of Vancouver
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Insurance Corporation of BC
Law Foundation of British Columbia
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Ministry of Public Safety
Vancouver Coastal Health
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And many generous donors like you!

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





## Disability Supports: One Box Does Not Fit All I by Cynthia Minh

As a cross-disability organization, Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has always recognized the diverse voices and identities within the disability community.

"Disability" does not have just one meaning. Some people have disabilities that are congenital, while others are acquired. Some people have disabilities that affect mental health or mental functioning, while others experience physical symptoms. Symptoms can be enduring or episodic.

The wide range of limitations and needs this diversity represents is not well recognized by government disability supports. As a result, people living with some types of disability face added barriers to accessing the supports they need.

At DABC, our advocates work with clients to navigate through the different eligibility criteria of principle disability benefits like the Persons with Disabilities designation (PWD), Canada Pension Plan-Disability (CPP-D), the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) and the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

The differences in the eligibility critera for these benefits means that some people will qualify for some supports, but not others. Someone who has been living with their restrictions for two years or longer might be able to access the PWD, but the DTC can be accessed by someone living with their disability for one year or more.



Most current disability supports require applicants to have "severe" mental or physical impairments, but this term is defined and measured differently among these programs.

Other differences mean that some supports are available to people with health conditions who may not identify as having a disability. The DTC and RDSP can be accessed by those requiring therapy to sustain a vital function—like people with Type-1 diabetes who undergo insulin therapy.

Applying for government disability supports can be a complex and confusing process. While governments are trying to expand eligibility criteria so that more people can benefit from these programs, there's still a long way to go before these benefits can adequately support all people with disabilities.

DABC will continue to advocate for changes that address prevailing gaps in these supports. These changes will only happen through the understanding that the disability community is not homogenous; it is made of individuals with diverse needs.

CYNTHIA MINH IS DIRECTOR OF DABC'S TAX AID AND ACCESS RDSP PROGRAMS.

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A gift in your Will to DABC will help us 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.

#### We're Here to Help

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 Helaine at DABC at <a href="helaine@">helaine@</a> <a href="mailto:disabilityalliancebc.org">disabilityalliancebc.org</a> or 604-875-0188. She will send you DABC's Planned Giving information to review with your financial planner or lawyer, family and friends.

#### Planned Giving Resources

- Brochure (<u>https://tinyurl.com/yxbmn3b2</u>)
- Information Sheet (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yxnhgs5f">https://tinyurl.com/yxnhgs5f</a>)

#### Learn More About Us

https://ww.disabilityalliancebc.org

Disability Alliance BC www.disabilityalliancebc.org

# Other Benefits of The Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

You may know that being approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) can enable you to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). But did you know about the other benefits and credits it can help you access?

Contact DABC's Access RDSP Staff at Local: 604-872-1278, Toll-free: 1-800-663-1278 or rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org.

#### If you're employed

The DTC will allow you to claim:

 Up to \$713 through the supplement to Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)



#### If you have children

The DTC can help you claim:

- The Disability Amount for Children
- amount of **\$2,886**

• The Child Disability Benefit

- Increased child care deductions
- Age limit extension to Children's Fitness and Art amount (no longer available after 2016, but may be claimed for the previous year)

#### If you have a trust

The DTC might help you save on the taxes you pay on your earnings through:

- Eligibility for qualified disability trust status
- Preferred beneficiary election option

## **If you own a home** You may be eligible for:

- Home Buyer's Amount of up to \$5,000! People with DTC do not have to be first-time home buyers
- The Home Accessibility Tax Credit, which covers certain expenses concerning accessibility-related renovations



## If you have medical or caregiver expenses

The DTC can allow you to claim:

- Certain medical expenses (can also claim a Disability Supports Deduction)
   e.g. Attendant Care Services
- Caregiver Credit: People with DTC do not have to provide another supporting document from medical practitioners

#### If you're a full-time student

The DTC can allow you to claim:

 Certain education-related benefits, such as the \$500 Scholarship Exemption



www.rdsp.com

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## O V E R



YEARS OF ADVOCACY

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

