

Newcomers with
Disabilities Forum

MOSAIC-DABC Partnership
Supports Newcomers

Race and Disability
Canada Projects

transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC

SPRING 2024

Welcome to BC

*Challenges and
Supports for
Newcomers with
Disabilities*





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Planned Giving Brochure

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editorial

by Chantelle MacIsaac

Immigrant services have not always had training in disability-aware services and disability services may not have the tools or capacity to help newcomers settle safely in our communities.

Imagine being a newcomer to Canada. You need to navigate a new culture and new systems, with rules that are written and unwritten, spoken and unspoken—all through a second language.

Newcomers to Canada experience many varied challenges in the settlement process. The road to stable housing, employment and community inclusion can be a windy one, with frustrating detours along the way.

Then imagine also living with a disability. All these challenges are multiplied.

You will face a dizzying array of services, and complicated eligibility and application processes for government and community programs. Systemic ableism will create further roadblocks for you because services, policies and spaces are often designed without people with disabilities in mind, despite 1 in 4 Canadians having a disability.

Newcomers who are looking for information and support also find that immigration and disability services are often not available through the same organization. Immigrant services have not always had training in disability-aware services and disability services may not have the tools or capacity help newcomers settle safely in our communities.

A final and crucial piece of the settlement challenge for newcomers living with disability is mental health. Immigrants and refugees too often arrive in Canada having experienced trauma, such as social instability or violence, domestic violence or the perils of the journey to Canada itself. The ability to offer mental health supports and trauma-informed services is vital to truly meet the needs of these newcomers.

As a result of these intersectional barriers, newcomers with disabilities may find a closed door when they reach their destination here in BC and Canada.

Work Supporting Newcomers

In 2022, MOSAIC launched a program called the Accessibility for Newcomers Program to begin addressing some of these barriers.

With initial funding from the City of Vancouver and additional funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), MOSAIC has developed a circle of care approach where newcomers with disabilities complete a needs assessment with multilingual settlement workers and receive supported referrals to settlement, employment and disability services.

Participants are connected to multilingual programming within MOSAIC, such as WorkBC and employment services, violence prevention programs, legal advocacy pertaining to tax benefits, 2SLGBTQIA+ programming, seniors clubs and multilingual settlement workers.

Before making referrals to external services, staff first “knock on the door.” If no one answers, or when someone answers but doesn’t invite

the client in, we support clients to navigate their way to another door. This approach facilitates successful connections to programs and services, and reduces frustration and isolation.

In addition to this program, MOSAIC led focus groups at a 2022 newcomers' forum (please see Newcomers Speak Out at Forum on page 6). We also led a group at a 2023 forum on Mental Wellness for People with Disabilities, with the aim of amplifying the impact of people with lived experience on the services designed to support them.

The theme that emerged out of the Mental Wellness focus groups with newcomers with disabilities was the importance of community connection and belonging.

To meet this call, the Accessibility for Newcomers Program plans to enhance services in the coming year with regularly scheduled activities for newcomers with disabilities to come together, network, socialize and create community. Check out the program website for emerging opportunities to be a part of the community!


We are also jointly offering a new program in partnership with Disability Alliance BC (please see MOSAIC and DABC Partner to Support Newcomers on page 9) called the Newcomers with Disabilities project. With this program, we hope to build a service that not only better meets the needs of newcomers, but provides a model for intersectional community programs.

In This Transition

In this Transition, you'll see more pieces of the big picture for newcomers. Race and Disability Canada talks about their work gathering the experiences of racialized people with disabilities, and their calls to action for education and training. You'll learn more about the Newcomers with Disabilities forum and hear directly from newcomers about their settlement challenges. Plus, you'll see more details about our newcomers partnership with DABC.

Last but not least, you'll find out how to connect with some of the key groups offering information, support and resources to newcomers with disabilities.

CHANTELLE MACISAAC IS THE SENIOR MANAGER OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AT MOSAIC, AND OVERSEES THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES. CHANTELLE VALUES AND CREATES SPACE FOR THE VOICES OF PEOPLE WHO WILL UTILIZE THE SERVICES TO BE HEARD.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR NEWCOMERS PROGRAM URL: [HTTPS://MOSAICBC.ORG/OUR-PROGRAMS/SUPPORT-FOR-NEWCOMERS-WITH-DISABILITIES/](https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/support-for-newcomers-with-disabilities/) 



Newcomers with Disabilities Forum

In this Transition, you'll learn more about the Newcomers with Disabilities Forum held in 2022. You'll see some of the most common issues in comments from participants throughout this edition

“When you come to Canada you don't know which service is from the federal, provincial or municipal government. You don't know who to turn to for services, especially if you have a language issue. You call and get an answering machine. With so many agencies and government departments, it gets confusing.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

If an organization is not able to help you, they need to be able to refer you to someone who can. It's so frustrating to hear, “We can't help you, goodbye.” If you say, okay, we are specialized and we only do this kind of help, please just refer me to another organization that can help me.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant



Newcomers Speak Out at Community Forum

by Adrianne Fitch

If you live with a disability, you may know what it means to feel isolated, frustrated by inaccessibility, and wondering how you fit into your community and society as a whole.

If you're a recent immigrant to Canada, there is a good chance you may also face language and cultural barriers that compound the challenges imposed by your disability.

And if you're Hugo Velazquez, creator of the Accessibility for Newcomers Program at MOSAIC, you know just how underserved newcomers with disabilities are in the Vancouver area. You would approach the disability community and jump-start a conversation between disability organizations and settlement agencies to advocate for newcomers' rights.

That's exactly what he did.

In 2022, MOSAIC co-sponsored a Newcomers with Disabilities Forum with the Vancouver Disability Solutions Network, a collaborative initiative co-led by the Disability Foundation and Disability Alliance BC. Ninety-one people participated: 48 in person and 43 online.

Forum Questions

- How can settlement agencies do a better job serving their clients with disabilities, particularly when settlement workers receive little disability training?
- How can settlement agencies and disability organizations work together to prevent newcom-

ers with disabilities from falling through the cracks?

- And how can the disability service community work better to improve services for newcomers with disabilities?

To develop the forum content, we distributed a survey and conducted focus groups in English, Farsi, Mandarin, Arabic, Punjabi and Spanish. The key service gaps below were uncovered. You can see more comments and findings from the forum throughout this Transition.

Barriers to Acquiring Information

The key barrier identified by newcomers with disabilities was a general lack of awareness about existing disability services—on the part of settlement workers, newcomer organizations and even some disability organizations themselves. When contacting agencies for help, people faced frequent rejection and a lack of quality referrals. For example, some people were simply given a list of organizations and told to Google the information.

Need for One Navigator

Rather than being expected to "jump through hoops" to access services, clients overwhelmingly preferred to work with a single navigator who could help with all the necessary research and legwork. They also identified a need for better follow-up and advocacy from

disability organizations, particularly in the area of applying for benefits and for more interpreting services.

Inadequate Services

The greatest number of service gaps exist in services for the blind, mental health, caring for family members, and long waits for medical and disability services.

Blind clients reported frequent rejection and disappointment when seeking help with basic activities of daily living. Clients with mental health diagnoses identified the lack of coverage for counseling, as well as a fear of being medicated or involuntarily committed. Those caring for family members at home noted the severe lack of trained caregivers, as well as unaffordable caregiver costs.

Change Government Policy

Many clients made recommendations for changes in government policy primarily around eligibility for services and application for disability benefits. They reported being turned down for services based on age, length of time in Canada and immigration status. Applying for disability benefits was identified as an overwhelming, difficult, expensive and unfair process. Disability benefits themselves, and the policies governing them, were considered inadequate and even discriminatory.

The key barrier identified by newcomers with disabilities was a general lack of awareness about existing disability services—on the part of settlement workers, newcomer organizations and even some disability organizations themselves.

Newcomers Helping Each Other

Clients expressed a surprising amount of motivation and enthusiasm to help other newcomers with disabilities once they are settled and have access to employment and housing.

They want to support others through skill sharing, mentoring and networking. They also identified a need for help, once they arrive in Canada, to connect with their own communities and newcomers with a common language and culture.


Forum Outcomes

Asked to consider actionable solutions to these service gaps, forum participants took part in a facilitated discussion and breakout sessions, led by a panel of experts. They came up with 12 recommendations in the areas of collaboration between organizations, government funding and government policy.

You can see the final forum report, including the recommendations and

a resource list for newcomers with disabilities, here: <https://disabilityfoundation.org/vdsn/newcomers/>

Also as a result of the forum, Disability Alliance BC and MOSAIC developed a partnership to support newcomers with disabilities in receiving provincial disability assistance. Learn more about this important program on page 9.

ADRIANNE FITCH, PROJECT COORDINATOR OF THE VANCOUVER DISABILITY SOLUTIONS NETWORK, HAS A BACKGROUND IN NON-PROFIT COMMUNICATIONS, NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT, AND JOURNALISM. A WIDOW WITH TWO GROWN DAUGHTERS, ADRIANNE LIVES WITH A SEVERE-PROFOUND HEARING LOSS, AND IS LEARNING ASL. SHE IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW WORK OPPORTUNITIES AND CAN BE REACHED AT ADRIANNEFITCH.CAREER@GMAIL.COM. 

Who is the VDSN?

The Vancouver Disability Solutions Network (VDSN) is funded by the City of Vancouver and co-led by the Disability Foundation and Disability Alliance BC.

Launched in 2021 as a formal structure for disability organizations to communicate, connect and collaborate, the VDSN aims to improve policy and funding opportunities, provide integrated support services for people with disabilities, and offer a communication platform between the disability network, policy-makers and decision-makers.

Our major activity is to organize forums around specific problems affecting people with disabilities who live in Vancouver, North Vancouver and Richmond. Member organizations view a presentation about an identified problem, take part in a facilitated discussion and brainstorm to develop actionable solutions. The outcome of each forum is a set of recommendations and actionable solutions to address the issue.

We have built a database of approximately 200 non-profit organizations, private companies, crown corporations, government offices, community organizations, and more, all of whom serve people with disabilities in some way.

For more information, please visit <https://disabilityfoundation.org/vdsn/> or send an email to Adrienne Fitch at afitch@disabilityfoundation.org.

Need Information about Disability Benefits or Your Rights?

One of our free publications may help.

DABC publishes numerous free self-help resources, advocates' guides, Help Sheets and more. All publications are available to download from our website at: <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/publications/>.


Recent publications include two Help Sheets, created by our Disability Law Clinic:

- [Help Sheet #18: What Can You Do if You Experience Discrimination in Health Care?](#)
- [Help Sheet #19: The Duty to Accommodate Employees with Disabilities](#)

Four of our BC Disability Help Sheets have been updated by our Advocacy Access team to reflect changes to the Annual Earnings Exemption:

- [Help Sheet #2: The Persons with Disabilities \(PWD\) Application](#)
- [Help Sheet #3: Checklist for the Persons with Disabilities \(PWD\) Application](#)
- [Help Sheet #9: Employment, Education and Training for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Help Sheet #10: People with Disabilities on Reserve: The PWD Designation](#)

Finally, we've updated our Canada Pension Plan-Disability (CPP-D) [Application Guide](#) and are currently working on updating our Social Security Tribunal Guide

With the assistance of MOSAIC Settlement and Employment Services, we will be translating our Help Sheets and CPP-D Guides into four additional languages: Farsi, Arabic, Spanish and Punjabi. We will make an announcement through our social media, website, e-newsletter and email network when the translated resources are available. 



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MOSAIC and DABC Partner to Support Newcomers

| by Chantelle MacIsaac

In 2022, MOSAIC and Disability Alliance BC (DABC) developed a partnership called the Newcomers with Disabilities project. This joint effort will help newcomers in receiving the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit. Both our organizations recognized the need to provide this support by utilizing the strengths of each organization. We were pleased to form this partnership after a long history of collaboration.

MOSAIC's legal advocates understand the mental health challenges inherent in resettlement and trauma, and provide legal advocacy in a trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive manner. The new program has access to multilingual staff, settlement workers and interpreters to provide a holistic service.

DABC's Advocacy Access Program provides free one-on-one assistance to people with disabilities in BC. They are experts in helping people living with disability to navigate the provincial and federal benefits systems, including applications and appeals.

This new partnership successfully received a five-year grant from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to hire two advocates (one for each organization) to support newcomers with disabilities with PWD applications.


MOSAIC and DABC working together is a wonderful example of how experts in serving people with disabilities and those guiding newcomers must and can work together.

MOSAIC

Contact the program at accessibility@mosaicbc.org.

DABC

An appointment is needed to talk with a Newcomers' advocate at DABC. Please call or email the program at 604-872-1278 in the Lower Mainland | Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278 or advocacy@disabilityalliancebc.org

If you are a client receiving assistance with PWD or CPPD benefits and require interpretation assistance in any language other than English, or require ASL interpretation during your appointment, please let us know and we will arrange that for you. 

"Entering into a formal partnership with MOSAIC means we can take the next step to bring more holistic



support to our clients. I am excited to see this partnership grow and generate new ideas that will ultimately increase our impact in the disability community." Helaine Boyd, Executive Director, DABC



Find Help

MOSAIC

MOSAIC offers a range of programs, supports and resources to immigrants, refugees and people with diverse backgrounds. These programs are offered in over 50 languages. Programs include:

- A way for seniors to get support in their community
- Resources to help prevent domestic violence and embrace healthy relationships
- A space for those who identify as women living in the Metro Vancouver area to get support and counselling for violence and abuse. There is also a women's support group focused on learning and social activities
- A program by the BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS) to provide services to people settling in British Columbia

<https://mosaicbc.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 **\$737** through the supplement to Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)



If you own a home

You may be eligible for:

- Home Buyer's Amount of up to **\$10,000!** 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 children

The DTC can help you claim:

- The Disability Amount for Children
- The Child Disability Benefit amount of **\$3,173**
- 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 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 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're a full-time student

The DTC can allow you to claim:

- Certain education-related benefits



www.rdsp.com

Access RDSP
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How Disability Organizations Can Support Mental Wellness

| BY HELAINE BOYD

The Vancouver Disability Solutions Network (VDSN) typically hosts a forum once a year. The theme of the first forum in 2022 was on Newcomers with Disabilities.

In November 2023, we held a Mental Wellness for People with Disabilities Forum. The question asked during this forum was: "How can disability organizations contribute to positive mental wellness for the people with disabilities whom we serve?"

Ahead of the forum, 12 focus groups were conducted online and in person, with a total of 50 participants. These were held in English, Dari, Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and American Sign Language (ASL). An online survey was also conducted receiving 90 responses.

A final report from the forum will be available soon. Sign up for our e-newsletter or follow us on social media to hear when the report is released: <https://disabilityalliancebc.org>.

For now, here are some of the key needs participants discussed during the forum:

- More peer support workers and peer support groups are needed as standard practice within non-profit organizations

The question asked during this forum was: "How can disability organizations contribute to positive mental wellness for the people with disabilities whom we serve?"

- More opportunities for service organizations to better partner with mental health organizations for cross-organizational learning
- Broader outreach is needed within the wider community to raise awareness of mental wellness for people with disabilities
- Training is needed for service organizations to better support people with disabilities to maintain their mental wellness
- Better utilizing our connections to share information on mental wellness programming

THE VANCOUVER DISABILITY SOLUTIONS NETWORK IS CO-LED BY THE DISABILITY FOUNDATION AND DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC, AND FUNDED BY THE CITY OF VANCOUVER. YOU'LL SEE MORE ABOUT VSDN IN OTHER ARTICLES IN THIS TRANSITION.

transition

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

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Race and Disability Canada Projects

The stories, struggles and resilience of newcomers with disabilities.

BY BOUNMY INTHAVONG

When I envision Canada, I see a vibrant canvas with tales of fresh beginnings. Embedded within these narratives are the intricate stories of newcomers navigating the pathways of immigration, intertwined with journeys of race and disability.

It's a tapestry woven with hues of resilience amidst adversity, where profound experiences often dwell in the margins—the struggles of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities intersecting with the complex challenges of disability. Together, these stories paint a poignant picture, shining a light on the multifaceted realities newcomers face upon their arrival in Canada.

Canada's history, marked by colonization, enslavement, racial discrimination and exclusionary immigration policies, casts a shadow on the experiences of these communities.

From the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty to systemic racism within the immigration system, past injustices echo in the lived experiences of newcomers grappling with disabilities. These experiences call for urgent change—a transforma-

tion of policies, perspectives and a commitment to breaking down barriers.

Within this landscape, Race and Disability Canada has undertaken an ambitious review to unravel the intricacies of these intersections, spotlight stories and emphasize the urgent need for systemic changes. Our review is based on an IDEA. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA) Project encompasses:

- **Intersectional Analysis:** Understanding the unique experiences of racialized people with disabilities, including newcomers facing barriers due to their race and disability.
- **Data Collection:** Delving into literature, and gathering survey and focus group data to comprehend:
 - Challenges faced by racialized people with disabilities.
 - Barriers encountered by advocates and organizations working on race, disability, and inclusion in the non-profit sector.
 - Efforts of mainstream disability organizations to achieve diversity and inclusion goals concerning race and disability, and how we can support them.

These experiences call for urgent change—a transformation of policies, perspectives and a commitment to breaking down barriers.

Our work goes beyond raising awareness. It's a call to action. It's about reshaping policies and amplifying narratives. It's about advocating for systemic changes that acknowledge the multifaceted challenges faced by newcomers at the intersections of race and disability.

Canada's promise of inclusivity and diversity beckons, but it necessitates collective effort—crafting policies to dismantle systemic barriers, and fostering a culture of understanding, support and equity for newcomers with disabilities.

These stories, woven with hardship, speak of resilience and determination. They urge us to build a Canada where every newcomer, regardless of race or disability, finds genuine support, recognition and a true sense of belonging—a Canada

Our work goes beyond raising awareness. It's a call to action. It's about reshaping policies and amplifying narratives.

where every story contributes to the vibrant narrative of the nation's identity.

The results will catalyze further research, community-based projects and collaborations beyond the disability sector to advance accessibility and inclusion for racialized people with disabilities. As part of our commitment to change, we're actively involved in:

- **Empowering Non-Profits:** Developing communities of practice in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. These forums allow organizations to unlearn and relearn, implementing sustainable systemic changes that include racialized people with disabilities in their policies and services.
- **Education and Training:** Leveraging outcomes from research and communities of practice to develop training programs and educational initiatives supporting broader accessibility and inclusion goals for racialized people with disabilities in Canada.

Readers can join our newsletter to stay updated with the latest developments at Race and Disability Canada. Visit www.racedisability.ca to subscribe and stay informed.

BOUNMY INTHAVONG IS A RESEARCHER WITH RACE AND DISABILITY CANADA. FOLLOW RACE AND DISABILITY CANADA: INSTAGRAM @RACEDISABILITYCA FACEBOOK @RACEANDDISABILITY X @RACE_DISABILITY. T

This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program-Disability Component (SDPP-D).

Canada

RACE
& DISABILITY CANADA

THE **IDEA** PROJECT
INCLUSION | DIVERSITY | EQUITY | ACCESSIBILITY

“My issue came when I went on disability due to depression and I had problems finding counselling. Where do you go to get assistance and do I need to pay? Because I'm a man, depression was not something that was common. Whenever I turned to any government service, it was, “How can you be depressed, you look happy,” so I almost had to convince them that I was not well, and I had shame from having depression.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

I'm not mobility blind which means that I didn't have any rehabilitation in my life.... If you want to welcome people, including people with disabilities, you need to think about those who didn't have rehabilitation in the past. This goes for not just Ukrainians because in a lot of countries they have the same problems.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

2023/24 Accessibility Project Grantees

What are the Accessibility Project Grants?

Since 2018, Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has distributed approximately \$2.75 million to over 80 not-for-profit organizations around BC through this partnership with the Province.

DABC is proud to work with the BC government to remove barriers and support the contributions of people with disabilities to their communities. The Accessibility Projects Grants are an important step in this direction.

Who Are This Year's Grant Recipients?

In December 2023, we announced the recipients of the 2023/2024 Accessibility Projects Grants which will support better access to cultural, recreational, safety, educational and community participation opportunities for people with disabilities across the province.

This year, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction provided \$450,000 to be distributed

by DABC to non-profits throughout British Columbia. Almost ninety organizations applied, and twelve were selected for funding, with the help of a Review Committee made up of representatives of disability and community organizations.

"It's so heartening to see the number of strong applications we receive – it shows how important and much-needed this funding is. And it shows how many organizations want to invest their time, energy and expertise into improving accessibility for people with disabilities. We wish we could fund them all!" said Danielle Gauld, who works as the coordinator of the grants.

The following organizations were funded for projects that will take place in 2024:

- **221A Artist Run Centre Society** – **\$40,000** for community-led creative gatherings, cultural workshops and food-sharing initiatives at an Indigenous garden located in Vancouver's Chinatown and Downtown Eastside.
- **BC Association for Advancing Communications (BCAAC)** – **\$39,902** for delivery of virtual and in-person inclusion workshops for people and children with speech and language disabilities, and free online resources to support people across BC.
- **Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture** – **\$40,000** for an in-person residency in Vancouver for artists practicing in the field of disability arts and culture that gives them an opportunity to learn, have access to studio time and build community with other practicing artists with disabilities.
- **Recreation Adapted Society (RAD)** – **\$39,656** for the launch of the Langford Lake GearBox, a container full of adaptive recreation devices for outdoor activities for people with mobility disabilities, helping them maintain healthy, active independent lifestyles.
- **Stanley Park Ecology Society** – **\$40,000** for programs with experiential learning, hands-on

RAD ADVENTURERS USING GEARBOX EQUIPMENT



“It’s so heartening to see the number of strong applications we receive – it shows how important and much-needed this funding is,” said Danielle Gauld, who works as the coordinator of the grants.

education and environmental skill-building opportunities for people with disabilities to engage with and enjoy the natural world at Stanley Park in Vancouver.

- **Neil Squire Society – \$39,628** for events in Greater Vancouver and beyond, to foster accessibility and inclusivity in the world of gaming with customizable assistive technology solutions.
- **Smithers Community Services Association – \$40,000** for a project that will assist children aged 6-12 with learning disabilities to improve their reading and writing skills. The project will also support youth, grades 7-12, who have fallen behind in school academics due to learning disabilities. The project will take place in Smithers, Telkwa, Houston and Witset.
- **Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society – \$40,000** to support newcomers with disabilities in Greater Victoria to access education, allowing them to pursue new learning opportunities and achieve their educational and career goals.
- **Worker Solidarity Network Society (WSN) – \$40,000** for a project that will support low-income workers living with disabilities to build capacity for safety and well-being in extreme weather events in Fraser Valley, Metro Vancouver and the Okanagan. The project will include educational materials, ASL-interpreted video content and the implementation of an accessible educational program.
- **Kettle Friendship Society – \$40,000** for group art therapy, creative writing, choir practice, art scholarships and public performances/showcases to help people living with mental health challenges in Vancouver regain visibility and rediscover their voices in a safe space.
- **Kamloops and District Society for People In Motion – \$40,000** for an initiative to examine the role that accessible and inclusive transportation choices make in addressing issues of social and economic inclusion among



THE LANGFORD LAKE GEARBOX STORES ADAPTIVE DEVICES FOR RECREATIONAL USERS.

people with disabilities living in Kamloops, Te’kumlups First Nation and the broader Thompson-Nicola Region.

- **Northern Adapted Sports – \$13,500** to expand school awareness programming and professional development that brings adapted sports to children and youth across Northern BC.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ACCESSIBILITY PROJECTS GRANTS, PLEASE VISIT: [HTTPS://DISABILITYALLIANCEBC.ORG/PROGRAM/ACCESSIBILITY-PROJECTS/](https://disabilityalliancebc.org/program/accessibility-projects/) 



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 and 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 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). The **Right Fit Program** helps to match affordable wheelchair-accessible homes in the Vancouver region with people who need them.

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 capacity-building, self-help guides and help sheets in reader-friendly language. Resources are provided free of charge, either by mail or download.

How to Support Us

You can support our work by:

- becoming a member
- making a one-time or monthly donation
- advertising your business or organization in Transition magazine or our e-newsletter, or
- considering a planned giving legacy to DABC.

Learn more, donate or become a member at disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us. Or, fill out and return the form on the opposite page. Your support will help us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities across BC.

Follow Us

Want to know more about our work? Check us out online.





Become a Member

Numbers matter. The more members we have, the stronger our voice in the community. Your membership plays a pivotal role in helping us advance our mission.

You can become a Disability Alliance BC member today as a Core (voting) member or an Allied (non-voting) member. Core Members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability. We welcome both individual and group members.

I accept your invitation to join DABC and enclose my membership fee:

☐ Individual \$15

☐ Group \$25

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

Please check the applicable boxes

☐ New membership or ☐ Renewal

☐ Core Membership or ☐ Allied Membership

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City/Prov _____

Postal Code _____ Phone _____ Email _____

We thank you for your support!

transition

digital only advertising rates

DABC's magazine, *Transition*, has gone 100% digital! Along with this new format, we've reduced our advertising rates.

For full details or to make a booking for your organization or business, please reach out to transition@disabilityalliancebc.org.

All ads are still 35% off for not-for-profit organizations (minimum cost per ad \$50)!

Transition Publishes 3 Times Each Year Prices Shown are Per Edition			
Ad size position	Number of editions booked		
	1	2	3
COVER PAGES			
Outside back cover 7 3/8"W x 6 1/2"H	\$1,238	\$1,069	\$956
Front inside cover 7 3/8"W x 9"H	\$788	\$713	\$656
Back inside cover 7 3/8"W x 9"H	\$713	\$656	\$563
INSIDE PAGES			
Full page 7 3/8"W x 9"H	\$694	\$585	\$480
Large Vertical 4 7/8"W x 9"H	\$514	\$431	\$360
Large Horizontal 7 3/8"W x 4 1/4"H	\$488	\$416	\$349
Medium Horizontal 7 3/8"W x 2 1/2"H	\$225	\$188	\$158
Medium Vertical 2 1/4"W x 9"H	\$255	\$210	\$184
Box 4 7/8"W x 4"H	\$150	\$131	\$113
Small 4 7/8"W x 2"H	\$105	\$90	\$86
Mini 2 1/4"W x 2"H	\$75	\$68	\$60

UNwanted

I by Leyli Pedraz

This story of my life shows how someone with a physical disability can fall into isolation, and be mentally and emotionally harmed though criticism and mistreatment by family and society. And, it's a story about how unconditional love brings warmth and strength to our days.

Once upon a time, when seasons were cold, mid-January in distant lands. Mother was lonely, father a soldier, a girl was born named shorty creature.

She started walking, but legs were limping, uh mother was angry, father was afraid, blaming the mother for not giving birth to a princess, but a short creature.

As years passed by, the world was unkind, hugging her pillow, darkness, silence. The start time for her dreams, where a gentle soul was present who was not a shorty but a real human.

In the heart of darkness, under the blanket, there were comet stories, daydreams she did not know the consequences of, daydreams that may become part of her future life. But this place was the only safe land to be found, away from the reality of painful life.

Nobody was nice, but in the heart of the darkness her weak legs and hips were worthy. She was whispering, "Me, myself and I," beautiful, no one to judge me so I am the daddy's princess. All I need to do is to prove it, desperately praying please God, please my God please do not let the night be over, don't


Another girl had grown up in her heart, but she was hidden in the deep of her soul since no one was able to see it.

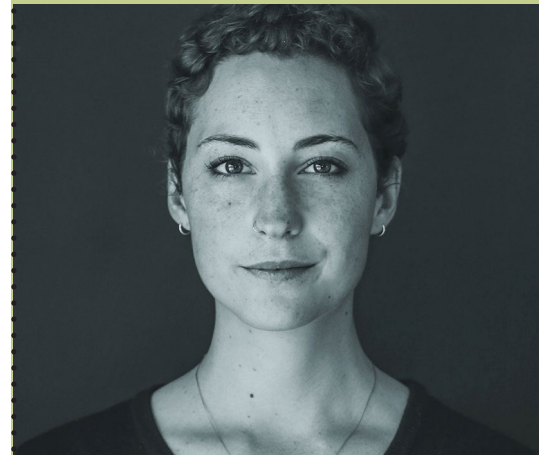
let the sun rise. Day lights were not warmth, warm for everyone but her.

Years passed by, Shorty was still short, her legs won't grow. Mother is worried, father ashamed, asking why is she ugly? What should we do with her was the question asked over and over, again, again. The world was not kind in school, no one was short, making fun of her. Why you are less than, why are you short? She had no answer, all she knew was it was not her fault.

Now under the blanket, there was a young girl with a golden but oh so broken heart, she learns to be seen. She needs to satisfy everyone, yes sir yes ma'am, to be accepted, but it was not enough. Another girl had grown up in her heart, but she was hidden in the deep of her soul since no one was able to see it.

She was tired, she was confused, she disagreed, she couldn't bear life, but she loved life, because this little creature was not paying attention to how shorty looks. After many years I, Shorty, gave birth to a little boy. She was amused by her little boy's love and affection, holding her hands and telling everyone, "This my beautiful mom. She is lovely, beautiful, tough and I am proud of her." No need to attach to daydreams in the middle of the dark nights. Now Shorty was sure about her strength and power, to accept herself as who she is.

LEYLI PEDRAZ IS A REFERRAL SPECIALIST FOR THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR NEWCOMERS PROGRAM AT MOSAIC. 



Yes, I'd Like to Donate to DABC

Your support will help us continue our advocacy and frontline support of people living with a disability.

- ☐ \$50 will contribute toward the cost of matching a disabled family with accessible housing
- ☐ \$100 will help fund disability education workshops for doctors and social workers
- ☐ \$500 will support legal representation for a person with a disability who has experienced discrimination
- ☐ Other \$ _____

How to Donate

You can donate by cheque or online by credit card. You can choose to make a one-time or monthly donation. We will send a charitable tax receipt for any donation over \$10.

Cheque donations can be sent to our office, along with this tear off donor form. You can make a secure online credit card donation in seconds at CanadaHelps.com. Or, call us at 604-872-1278 and we will help you make your donation.


You can also support our work with an annual membership fee. Memberships are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for groups. Join at disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us.

Thank you for your support.

New Personal Planning Videos

Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry (Nidus) is excited to announce the launch of their Accessibility Project Videos. These educational videos feature personal, real-life stories from people across British Columbia, highlighting the value of personal planning and Representation Agreements.

Learn the answers to these questions and more: What is personal planning? What if I have a Will and an Enduring Power of Attorney – am I covered? What will happen to me in an emergency if I can't speak for myself?

Register at nidus.ca/accessibility to attend one of the video launch and Q&A webinars, and sign up for their newsletter to stay updated on new launch events. All are welcome. 



A free online program for people with disabilities to improve their digital literacy

Work one-on-one with an instructor in a virtual classroom from the comfort of your home. Cover topics based on your needs. Resources are available for basic digital literacy hardware and software.

Contact us today!

T 1 877 673 4636 **E** info@neilsquire.ca

www.neilsquire.ca/digitaljumpstart



Digital Jumpstart
A Neil Squire Program



Neil Squire

Canada 



Find Help

Moving Forward Offers Affordable Counselling

Public services are designed to help as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time. They also tend to be restrictive in who they serve and typically have long wait times. Private services are more open with minimal waits, but are expensive.

Moving Forward attempts to bridge the gap between these two models by offering low-cost services for long-term healing.

Who Are the Services For?

Moving Forward is your low-barrier entry to mental health services. Their goal is to provide mental health services to those who slip through the cracks in our healthcare system.

- Low-income individuals, couples and families who are turned away from public services and cannot afford private therapy are welcome at Moving Forward.
- Services are provided to all ages, genders, religions, groups, no matter their financial status. They also have services offered in 20 languages (some language-specific services are with private registered counsellors, so minimum fees would apply).

- Canadian residents can benefit from online or over-the-phone services. If you're in the Lower Mainland, you can visit them in Surrey (minimum fees apply).

What Services Are Offered?

Moving Forward offers a wide range of counselling, social work and mental health services. Their unique model allows them to complement existing services instead of competing with them.

Services are provided by Clinical Counsellors, Social Workers and supervised interns in the following areas:

- Free Moving Forward Life Skills Coaching and Moving Forward Healthy Relationships Coaching Programs. Parenting and Mindfulness Coaching programs are coming soon!
- Inclusive counselling for trauma, stress, anger, substance abuse, grief, loss, depression, anxiety and much more
- Community-focused groups and workshops

hello@movingforward.help

<https://movingforward.help/>

877-485-5025 



It's difficult to find information when there's different

departments, you have to go to this doctor, that clinic, fill out a form to register. Organizations need to focus on actual needs, not just say "These are resources, here's a link, it may or may not work, go and figure it out yourself." That's not good enough.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

We have to wait for services for a long period of time. For example, after (my settlement worker) made a referral, I went to the (community support office). I was told I have to wait one year to get specialized tests for my daughter. Just try to imagine, for a child who is a little over 10 years old, to have to wait for one year.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant



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

Need a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a wheelchair user or an organization representing wheelchair users, please contact:
Isabelle Groc, Right Fit Program Manager
rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org
<https://therightfitbc.org/>

Have a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a housing provider in the public or private housing market, and have an accessible vacant unit, or you would like to learn more about our Accessibility Checklist, please contact:
Dalton Finlay, Project Manager / Navigator
Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society
RightFit@IFRCSociety.org
604-777-7576

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.

Canada Disability Benefit

DABC is involved in discussions around the implementation of the new Benefit.

by Helaine Boyd and Sharareh Saremi

In November and December 2023, DABC was invited to participate in two technical roundtables, facilitated by Employment and Social Development Canada, on the development of the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). We, and other disability organizations, were asked questions in two specific areas:

- Appointing representatives and legal capacity
- Administrative processes

Some Representation Questions

- What experiences have families had in assisting loved ones with cognitive disabilities, mental-health related-disabilities and other disabilities in applying for federal benefits and filing income tax returns?
- What information should be provided to a person when someone else applies to the government to manage a benefit on their behalf because they are considered “incapable of managing their own affairs”?

Our feedback on these questions was focused around these points:


- It should not be the role of government staff to determine whether or not an applicant is capable of handling their own financial affairs.
- A third-party organization independent of government may be better placed to address any concerns surrounding legal capacity.

Some Administrative Questions

- What powers should the government have in place to stop fraud and ensure that only eligible persons with disabilities are receiving the benefit?
- Do you have any views regarding the appeals process, including what types of decisions should be eligible for appeal or what steps would be followed?

Our feedback centred around administrative errors, overpayments and debts, to emphasize that these processes should never be punitive. They should avoid undue hardship and overpayments made through no fault of CDB recipients should not be collected. We also made recommendations around lowered debt recovery and cancellation of debt to ease administrative burden and undue hardship.

We made other recommendations to make sure people with disabilities have adequate time and assistance to file reconsiderations and appeals, including timely access to all their case material. It is also DABC’s position that CDB appeals should be modelled on already existing third-party tribunals, such as the Social Security Tribunal. CDB recipients should be given access to advocates, lawyers and/or coordinators to help them through the appeal process.

HELAINE BOYD IS DABC’S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND SHARAREH SAREMI IS THE MANAGER OF DABC’S ADVOCACY ACCESS PROGRAM. 

subscribe for free

Receive Transition in your inbox three times a year, at no charge. You can also read current and past editions online in PDF or text-only format at <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/transition/>

become a member

Receive Transition and support DABC by becoming a member. Please see the CONNECT WITH DABC page in this edition to learn what your membership means to us.

☐ Please add me to the Transition email list for free.

Name

Organization

Email

Phone (optional)

thank you

2021 Census and Newcomers

Recent immigrants are among those who are over-represented in the Census’ health and activity limitations data. | by **Lorriane Copas**

Celebrating the diversity of experiences, talents, wisdom, and contributions of all citizens is central to building and sustaining vibrant, inclusive and liveable communities.

Integral to this vision is the need to create accessible places and spaces where people of all backgrounds and experiences feel welcomed and included.

Genuine accessibility looks beyond physical barriers to the intersectional nature of disability in combination with other challenges including age, citizenship status, family relationships, race, health, and income.

Based on the 2021 Census, there were 668,675 individuals across British Columbia who reported that they experienced difficulties or challenges that limit their ability to participate in activities of daily living or challenges because of long-term physical, mental or other health-related conditions.

This included questions which asked individuals if they experienced permanent or episodic limitations related to seeing, hearing, walking or learning.

TABLE: HEALTH AND ACTIVITY LIMITATIONS (HALS). SOURCE: 2021 CENSUS AND 2021 CENSUS CUSTOM HALS DATA


	Total	HALS (Always)	%	HALS (Always and Often)	%
Total population	5,000,879	668,675	13%	946,625	19%
Indigenous population	290,210	57,320	20%	80,655	28%
Recent immigrants (2016 to 2021)	197,425	9,320	5%	14,945	8%
Refugees	97,720	11,110	11%	17,300	18%
Visible minority groups	1,689,490	126,555	7%	191,890	11%

The 2021 Census created a picture of people living with disability in BC. It showed for example that many individuals with health and activity limitations are over-represented such as those who come from different social and cultural backgrounds, and equity-deserving populations. This includes Indigenous people, recent immigrants, and individuals who come from racialized backgrounds and/or who are visible minorities.

The findings show the intersectional nature of disability and accessibility. They also show that when we work toward promoting greater accessibility and seek to build true inclusion, there is no question that we can have a significant impact in our communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Questions?

To learn more, please do not hesitate to reach out to SPARC BC by contacting Lorraine Copas directly at 604-718-7736 or by sending a message to our information email at info@sparc.bc.ca. Please include “health and activity limitations data” in the subject line.

LORRAINE COPAS IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SPARC BC.
[HTTPS://WWW.SPARCBC.CA](https://www.sparcbc.ca). 



Contact DABC Programs and Services

DABC's direct services are offered in person or remotely by phone or video. **All of these services are available by appointment only.**

Here is the contact information for our core programs—to book your appointment or ask about the services and support we can provide.

Thank you for your patience and stay safe.



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

Call or text 236-477-1717 or call toll-free 1-877-940-7797

Book your appointment online at <https://www.taxaid.janeapp.com>

Access RDSP

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

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

rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org

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

Disability Law Clinic

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

236-427-1108

lawclinic@disabilityalliancebc.org

The Right Fit

If you are a wheelchair user looking for wheelchair accessible housing in the Lower Mainland, contact The Right Fit:

604-777-7576

rightfit@ifrcsociety.org or rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org

www.therightfitbc.org

Learn More About Us

disabilityalliancebc.org/

Programs and Services

disabilityalliancebc.org/programs/

Core Program Brochures

disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/brochures/

Contact Tax AID DABC for free income tax assistance and other tax-related issues.

We can file multiple years and self-employment taxes.

We offer drop off services and one-on-one appointments in-person, over the phone, through video conference, by email or by mail.

Contact us by calling or texting 236-477-1717, or send us an email at taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org. You can also book an appointment online at <https://www.taxaid.janeapp.com>.



Find out on the next page if you are eligible for our services.
Learn more at <https://taxaiddabc.org>.



Tax Assistance & InFormation For People with Disabilities



CONTACT THE TAX AID REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU FOR LOCAL SUPPORT

- LOWER MAINLAND (AND ALL OF BC) | 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 Multiple Barriers (PPMB), Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D), WorkSafeBC (WCB) or the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). We also assist people with disabilities with income below \$35,000 and those with family incomes below \$42,000.

What if I Haven't Filed Taxes for Years?

We can help people file their taxes for up to 10 previous years.

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

Don't worry! We will help you locate tax slips that the government already has on file.

My Income is Low. Why Should I File Taxes?

There are many advantages to filing your income taxes! Our clients usually receive \$500 to \$900 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
- Canada Child Benefit
- 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.

New Drop Off Service

Have all of your tax slips ready? If you are living in Vancouver and your tax situation is straightforward, you can now drop off your tax information to our advocates for faster support. Bring in your ID and tax slips to our office. You can pick up your package when your taxes are ready.

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 REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU FOR LOCAL SUPPORT

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



More Resources

Newcomer Guides to BC From SCIBC

Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCIBC) has partnered with the BC Refugee Hub to develop guides and videos for newcomers to British Columbia with disabilities. These resources look at aspects of BC living such as:

- Adjusting to our climate
- Where to access medical services
- How to find employment
- Ways to find nutritious foods on a limited income
- How to navigate driving and public transportation in BC

The guides also link to other community organizations, such as The Neil Squire Society and the Choices in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL) program.

<https://bcrefugeehub.ca/newcomers-with-disabilities-welcome-guide-spinal-cord-injury-bc/>

Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre

The Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre (MMHRC) is dedicated to helping newcomers to Canada find mental health resources.

They link to services for finding interpreters, as well as offering a range of multilingual resources for various groups, for example:

- Caregivers
- Children and families
- Indigenous peoples
- Refugees
- Seniors
- Will makers and planners
- Healthcare professionals

The MMHRC also offers links to mental health practitioners in British Columbia and Canada.

<https://multiculturalmental-health.ca/>

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society

VIRCS supports newcomers to settle and adapt to life in Canada and the Greater Victoria region. Clients will find a wide range of holistic services, as well as resources and referrals.

<https://www.vircs.bc.ca> 

“I came to Canada six months ago from Iran. I am a transgender man and I’ve had seven surgeries. The implant in my body is now torn and I need more surgery.

When I came here I expected to have more support to find doctors and other things. My sponsor is English speaking and he didn’t come to help when I went to the doctor to talk about the surgery. I didn’t understand the details of the surgery and there was nobody there to translate and tell me what will happen.

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

For sure, there are lots of ways to make the process easier for newcomers and for people with disabilities. For instance, the workers who are dealing with people with special needs have to be trained properly...

Unfortunately, based on my experience and my friends’ experiences, most of the workers don’t know what services exist exactly. They sometimes just tell us, “Oh, I never had a client with a disability.”

Newcomers with Disability Forum Participant

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO THE DISABILITY TAX CREDIT



Created by Access RDSP in partnership with Island Health Authority, with thanks to our funders
BC's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Vancouver Foundation.

[Download the booklet.](#)



Thank you
for helping
us grow.



Program and Project Funders

BC Community Gaming Grants

BC Housing

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

City of Vancouver

Infrastructure Canada, Lu'ma Native BCH Housing Society

Insurance Corporation of BC

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And generous donors like you!

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





**we are all
connected**

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(604) 875-0188 • fax (604) 875-9227
transition@disabilityalliancebc.org • disabilityalliancebc.org

O V E R

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YEARS OF ADVOCACY

Thank you to the Province of BC – Community Gaming Grants for their continuing support.