



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

THE WAY WE HEAR IT! A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXHIBITION

BY JESSICA NIEMELA, CHHA-BC CHAPTER BOARD SECRETARY



For this year's May Speech and Hearing month, we are setting the stage for increasing public awareness of hearing health and hearing loss. CHHA-BC is proud to present, "The Way We Hear It! A Community Engagement Exhibition" at the Okanagan Science Centre in Vernon, BC in May 2022. This will be CHHA-BC's very first special exhibit made possible by collaboration of community partners in hearing health. This exhibit will provide an interactive, hands-on experience that will educate the general public of all ages about our auditory system, hearing health, hearing loss, diverse treatments and solutions, as well as promoting our community of people with hearing loss.



The birth of this project began when Jessica Niemela - CHHA BC secretary and Vernon pediatric audiologist, approached her local science centre executive director- Dione Chambers, with her innovative CHHA-BC branded public education idea. Jessica observed that science centres in the province host a variety of special exhibits that are interactive for people of all ages. She discussed how it would be a great opportunity for a non-profit organization such as CHHA-BC to provide a public education display in this fashion. Hearing health is a concept that ought to begin early and continue across the lifespan. Providing an exhibit that is inclusive of young children will allow families to learn together and have an experience that is engaging and memorable. Dione was all ears. She took to the project with open arms and the collaboration began!

From there, the project took off via an outreach to community partners, sponsors, and volunteers with hearing loss who were willing to participate. The vision of the exhibit was to promote a sense of intersectoral action for the cause of hearing health awareness. CHHA-BC values the bringing together of other organizations in our province who care for our community of people with hearing loss. These partnerships are now assisting in the creation of individual educational stations within the exhibit. Particular station topics and activities include: hearing screening, hearing loss simulation, hearing protection, hearing and assistive technology, sign language and so much more.

Now more than ever we are being called to spread awareness of hearing health and reduce the stigma. With the pandemic creating pronounced communication challenges for those with even a mild degree of hearing loss, and the launch of BC's own Accessibility Act, our hearing health is truly becoming everyone's affair. We are delighted to answer this call for British Columbians via "The Way We Hear It! A Community Engagement Exhibition." Stay tuned for more details!

