



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

INTRODUCTION

Our year was a busy one, focused on projects, educational events, fundraising, and communications, including updating our website to be attractive as well as current. Major projects were our first-ever awareness exhibition on hearing loss with the Okanagan Science Centre and our first professional publication as part of our revamped Hearing Health Kit. In addition, our Youth Peer Support program continued with a myriad of activities and hosted an in-person family camp for the first time in two years. In keeping with new norms due to the coronavirus pandemic, all meetings of the board and all educational sessions were held online. As well, our staff had a combined virtual and in-office schedule which worked well in maintaining our operations.

GOVERNANCE

CHHA-BC held an online 2021 Annual General Meeting on May 18th. Ruth Warick was elected President and four members were elected to the board. In keeping with our bylaws, at the first meeting of the board, the board elected its officers. The board consists of:

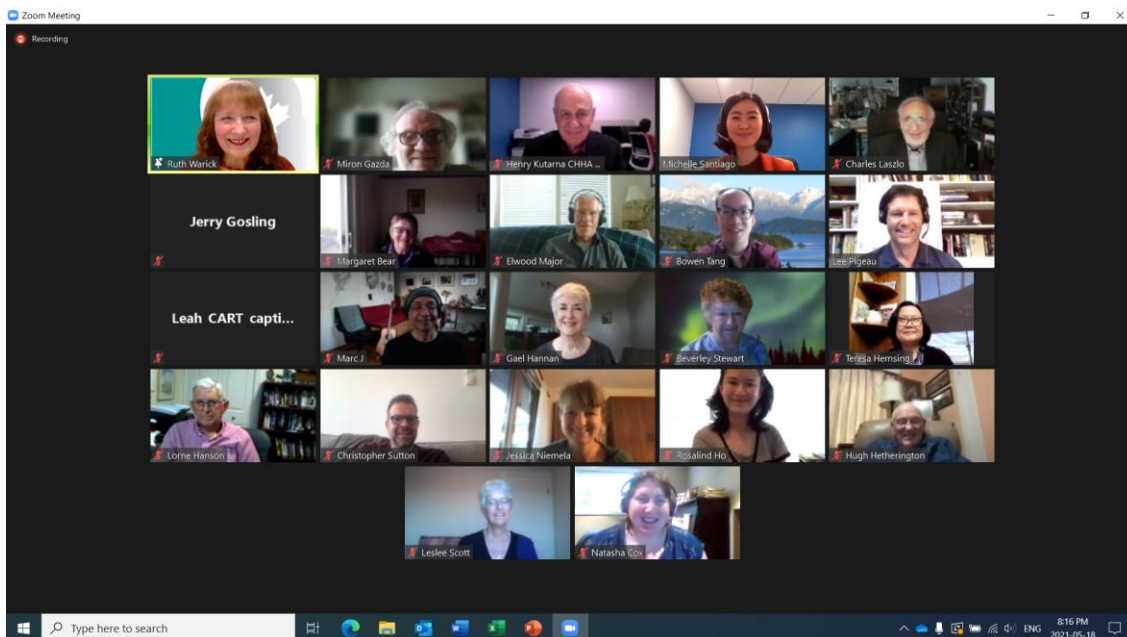
President – Ruth Warick

Vice-President – Gael Hannan

Secretary – Jessica Niemela

Treasurer – Elwood Major

Member-at-large – Nicole Leung



Screen shot from 2021 Annual General Meeting of CHHA-BC

PROJECTS

Hearing Access Health Care

A new publication for healthcare professionals on *Making Health Care Accessible for People with Hearing Loss* was developed and included in our revised Hearing Health Access Kit. The Kit also contained a new *Hearing Access Health Guide for People with Hearing Loss*, providing strategies for reducing communication barriers in health settings for consumers. The Kit was distributed to all of our members and interested persons.



As well, we developed a resource guide on cochlear implant funding for our website, which complements the information about hearing aid funding. We also developed a calling card promoting *Clear Mask, Clear Communication* and encourage our members to provide to key communication partners, along with a clear mask.

Accessibility

Accessibility continued to be a major concern with the adoption of new Accessibility Legislation by the Provincial Government and the formation of an Advisory Committee. We registered our disappointment to the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction that no person from our hard of hearing community was named to the Committee, but this will not deter us from taking an active role in providing input and monitoring developments on accessibility.

We were also in contact with Provincial Language Services regarding captioning to be available for medical appointments. We were pleased to see them issue a call for proposals in the Fall 2021.

Awareness Project

The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition was a major focus for the year. This interactive, innovative project consisted of an exhibition of displays and information on hearing loss in the Okanagan Science Centre, open to the public for the entire month of May 2022. It is the first time such a project has been undertaken in our province and our thanks goes to Jessica Niemela who developed and spearheaded the project. As well, special thanks to our funders, the Caldor Foundation and the City of Vernon.



Two guests view exhibits at the Okanagan Science Centre



Student Sam Poulin tries out hearing sounds at different levels.

Educational Sessions

We continued to collaborate with CHHA Vancouver in hosting online educational sessions. We celebrated World Hearing Day of 2021 with a webinar on the *World Report on Hearing: Implications for Future Policy*. Speakers were Dr. Carolina Hommes of the World Health Organization regional office for the Americas, Dr. Pichora-Fuller, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto, and Dr. Kelly Tremblay, retired Professor of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington.

On April 22nd, 2021, a webinar on the latest updates at the BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program and advances in Cochlear Implant technologies was presented by Grace Cheung and Jowan Lee of the Cochlear Implant Program at St. Paul's Hospital.

On November 16, 2021, Richard Einhorn, a composer, music producer/engineer, and a hearing technology consultant, provided a session on *Assistive Hearing Tech: Tips, Apps, and More*. His talk included how to use captioning apps and devices such as Smartphones to hear better.

Felicia D'Amato, a Mental Health Social Worker from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Well-Being Program of BC, delivered a session on *Mental Health - Wellness and Interpersonal Relationship Skills* on February 22, 2022.

In June 2021, CHHA-BC hosted a webinar on Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility's Better at Home program featuring Marco Chiamonte and Dashan Kaur.



On-line sessions continued to be popular; photo is from the session with Richard Einhorn.

REPRESENTATIONS

Council of Service Providers

Jessica Niemela represented the Chapter on the Council of Services Providers network which meets twice yearly. Established in 2003, the Council shares information and determines mutual advocacy activities among organizations and agencies providing services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafened and Deaf-blind persons in British Columbia.

Research Projects

Gael Hannan was our representative to the Breaking Barriers research project of Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility and the University of British Columbia. The project aims to research the role of primary health providers, namely doctors and nurses, in facilitating hearing health care for patients.

Ruth Warick participated in a focus group organized by an Education and Outreach Coordinator for the BC Centre for Elder Law on decision-making by people living with different disabilities. She also participated in a focus group about the City of Vancouver’s accessibility goals.

CHHA

Ruth Warick represented the Chapter at Network meetings of CHHA National, held every two months. She worked closely with Gordana Mosher of CHHA National to deliver a national Online Mentoring program and co-edited a special edition of *Listen* magazine on mentoring, as well as moderated a webinar on April 14th, 2021. She also continued support for CHHA Vancouver Walk-to-Hear, held virtually on October 17th, 2021.

We were delighted that long-time volunteer Miron Gazda (shown below) was awarded the Marilyn Dahl Award of Merit by CHHA National. Miron was formerly on the board of CHHA-BC and serves as our peer financial advisor; he also serves on the board of CHHA Vancouver.



MEMBERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Membership

Membership in the Chapter is automatic for individuals who sign up with CHHA National and with branches in British Columbia. As of the close of our fiscal year, Feb. 28, 2022, we had 188 members; in 2021 we had 137 members for the same time period.

Fundraising

Fundraising continued almost on par with previous years. We worked with a new donations software platform to augment our regular fund-raising efforts. We were successful in grant applications to the BC Gaming Authority, City of Vernon, and CHHA Foundation for our *The Way We Hear It* exhibit at the Okanagan Science Centre in Vernon. We continued to provide oversight for the CHHA-BC Youth Peer Support Program and were pleased to see the camp return to in-person status in September, 2021.

Administration

We wished farewell to our Information and Technology Coordinator, Michelle Santiago. After a search that yielded many excellent candidates, we welcomed Alexandre Batista to the role in December.

We hired Ian Yuen and Vivian Zhang for fractional roles in social media and general administration. We thank our volunteer Sophia Mincheva who joined us a few months ago.

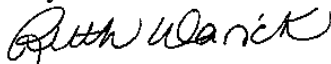
As well, thanks to Miron Gazda for continuing to do our Peer Audit and for chairing the Nominations Committee this year, and to Dr. Charles Laszlo for serving on the Committee.

Communications

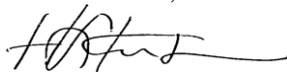
The development of the new website was successfully completed and we have expanded our social media presence. The Loop newsletter was published electronically every two months and the number of pages per issue was expanded. Important notices were sent regularly to our distribution list.

Thank you to our members of the CHHA BC branches, individual members of the Chapter, and the general public for their support and continuing commitment to our cause. We also thank our board members and staff for their commitment to hearing accessibility and inclusion for hard of hearing persons.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the CHHA BC Board and Staff,



Ruth Warick, President



Henry Kutarna, Operations Manager

May 16, 2022