



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter


ANNUAL REPORT 2022
Fiscal Year March 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023

INTRODUCTION

CHHA-BC experienced a year of staff and project growth in 2022-2023. A highlight year was the expansion of medical access services to include captioning by Provincial Language Services. Thus, a person with a hearing loss who requires captioning for medical appointments or hospital visits may inform their health provider of this need to activate the service. We are pleased that our advocacy resulted in this outcome.

Another highlight last year was the launch of our first-ever, *The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition* in Vernon, BC in May 2022. The exhibition ran for the entire month and provided experiential displays, increasing awareness of hearing loss among the general public and particularly younger persons who frequented the Okanagan Science Centre with their family members, friends or as part of a school visit.

Raising awareness about the unique condition and needs of hard of hearing persons underscores all of our work. This goal guides our Action Plan. Three key themes of the Action Plan are:

	Advocating for Accessibility
	Communications, Awareness, and Education
	Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC



Communications, Awareness, and Education

The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition

As noted in the introduction to this report, one of the highlights of last year was *The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition* at the Okanagan Science Centre, managed under the leadership of board member Jessica Niemela, and partly funded by the Caldor Foundation and the City of Vernon. An opening ceremony was held on May 12, 2022 involving Vernon Mayor Victor Cumming and a video message from the Honorable Carla Qualtrough, Federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

Several workshops were held throughout the month of May. As well, in June, the Vernon Art Gallery held a workshop on *What does hearing loss look like for you?* The Gallery also displayed works related to hearing loss, which were submitted from members of the public in an open invitation process.



An exhibit for *The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition* in Vernon

Youth Peer Support Program

The Youth Peer Support Program continued to flourish under the new management of a project coordinator following the retirement of volunteer coordinators Bowen Tang and Joy Gong. A separate report is attached.



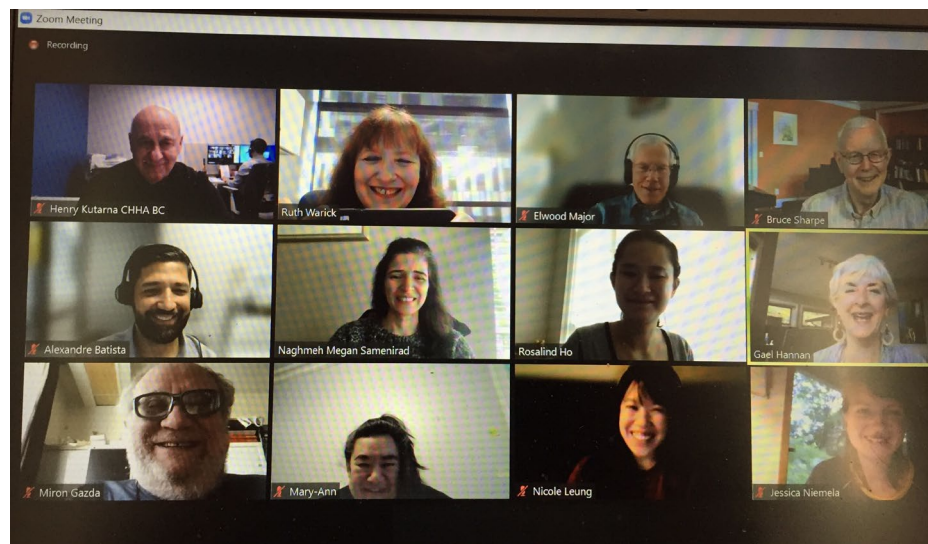
Peer support event

Accessibility Presentation

Dan Coulter, then Provincial Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility, delivered remarks about the Government’s Accessibility legislation and plans, prior to the CHHA BC AGM on May 18th, 2022.



Dan Coulter with Ruth Warick



World Hearing Day

An educational session on Safe Listening was held online on March 3, 2022 to celebrate World Hearing Day, sponsored by CHHA BC and CHHA Vancouver with Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility.

Panelists were:

Masahito Kawamori, Project Professor at Keio University, Japan, and Rapporteur for the International Telecommunication Union of the United Nations

Hugh McCormick, Director of Clinical Operations and Business Development, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility

Amarilis Melendez of Panama, MD, Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist

Connor Stewart, Community Organizer, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility

A highlight was the introduction of mobile apps for monitoring unsafe sound levels. During the webinar, four mini-polls were conducted. The percentage of attendees who rated their awareness level of safe listening practices at a 'Very High or a High level' increased from 49% to 74% after the presentations.



Cochlear Implant Session

On April 5, 2022, the topic of the on-line educational session was the Latest Cochlear Implant Technologies and Model. Speakers discussed products and making informed choices. Panelists were:

- Kimmi Dreifelds - Advanced Bionics
- Raegan Bergstrom - Cochlear Inc
- Kim Twitchell - MED-EL and
- Daniel Lee - Oticon.



Advocating for Accessibility

A priority concern for CHHA-BC is influencing the development of standards in conjunction with the passage of Bill 6, The Accessible British Columbia Act, by the Government of British Columbia. CHHA BC previously provided input in the formative stages of the development of the Bill and will continue its work to reflect concerns for hard of hearing people in relation to accessible standards.

Our work involves advocating for captioning through our website, social media and our website as well as through direct contacts. A committee has been looking into captioning for performances at theatres, including exploring different delivery methods and contacting key theatre players. Other advocacy efforts related to captioning have resulted in the provision of captioning for medical appointments and hospital visits in the Province.



Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC

REPRESENTATIONS

Council of Service Providers

Jessica Niemela and Nicole Leung represented the Chapter on the Council of Services Providers, which shares information and determines mutual advocacy activities related to deaf, hard of hearing, deafened and Deaf-blind persons in British Columbia.

Research Projects

Gael Hannan continued as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Breaking Barriers research project of Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility and the University of British Columbia. The project focuses on the role of primary health providers, namely doctors and nurses, in facilitating hearing health care for patients.

CHHA

Ruth Warick represented the Chapter at Network meetings of CHHA National, held every two months. She represented the Chapter in the annual CHHA Vancouver Walk-to-Hear, held virtually on September 18, 2022.

Provincial Language Services

Jessica Niemela was named to the Community Advisory Group to Provincial Language Services whose goal is to improve equitable access to health care services for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing patients across British Columbia.

Provincial Accessibility

Ruth Warick was appointed to the newly-created Technical Committee on Employment Accessibility for a two-year term by the Provincial Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Chapter is automatic for individuals who sign up with CHHA National and with branches in British Columbia. Our membership numbers remained the same as the previous year, namely, 188 members.

ADMINISTRATION

The CHHA-BC board approved a new part-time contractor staffing strategy. On September 1st, 2022, we welcomed Shehana Mirza as our first program coordinator with responsibility for the Youth Peer Support program, the Hearing Awareness Exhibit, and other assignments. Also in the fall of 2022 we transitioned our social media volunteer Ian Yuen to contractor status, as well as our administrative volunteer Vivian Szu. We also contracted Karen Stierhoff on a limited basis to prepare content for our newsletter, “The Loop”.

In February, we received the resignation of Alexandre Batista, our information and finance coordinator, who left for full-time employment. We wish him well in all his future endeavours. We have now welcomed Ravi Kataria as the new information and finance coordinator.

Henry Kutarna continues as our part-time operations manager, and works closely with the board on leading CHHA-BC efforts.

FUNDRAISING

Our annual fundraising campaign continued to be successful. Regular donors and the small business sector have continued to show their support and we are very grateful. During the year, we began to explore ways and means to expand fundraising to all areas of the province and to explore new

approaches in a world where telemarketing will be under pressure, a world where social media and mobile phones contribute to the declining usage of the typical landline telephone.

For the first time we applied for a New Horizons grant and were successful in receiving funding for our Seniors Ageing in Place through Technology program being implemented in the next fiscal year.

COMMUNICATIONS

CHHA-BC continues to reach its members and friends through social media, our electronic print edition of The Loop six times a year, the website, and email blasts. We increased the frequency of our social media communications and continued to research best practices in reaching an audience that increasingly relies on mobile devices rather than desktop devices.

GOVERNANCE

CHHA-BC's board members, elected in 2021 for a two-year term, are as follows:

President – Ruth Warick

Vice-President – Gael Hannan

Secretary – Jessica Niemela

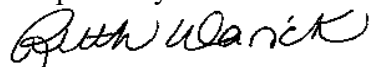
Treasurer – Elwood Major

Member-at-large – Nicole Leung

Thank you to our outstanding board members for their dedication and hard work. Thank you too to our volunteers and to Miron Gazda for continuing to conduct our Peer Audit and for chairing the Nominations Committee this year, and to Charles Laszlo for serving on the Committee.

Finally, thank you to our members for their continuing commitment and support to bring about hearing accessibility and our full participation in all aspects of society.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the CHHA BC Board and Staff



Ruth Warick, President


Henry Kutarna, Operations Manager

May 18, 2023

Attachment CHHA BC ACTION PLAN

In this Action Plan, goals and objectives are summarized under three themes:

- Advocating for Accessibility, Communications
- Awareness, and Education, and
- Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC.

	<h2>Advocating for Accessibility</h2>
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Goal: To provide guidance on accessibility requirements of hard of hearing persons

Objective One: Provide input regarding access for hard of hearing persons to the Government in the rollout of Accessibility legislation

Develop a CHHA BC Accessibility Document detailing its position on accessibility

Objective Two: Promote the provision of captioning as a form of access for hard of hearing persons

Develop a website page about captioning

Promote Medical captioning when available

Objective Three: Advocate for affordable hearing aids

Develop an advocacy statement about hearing aids

Objective Four: Promote technology for accessibility

Identify two or three medical facilities for a hearing loop project



Communications, Awareness, and Education

Goal: Raise Awareness in the community and keep members informed about hearing loss issues

Objective One: To deliver high quality print, website and social media information.

Produce Bi-monthly newsletters; Promote our website, Facebook and social media including developing a hashtag

Approach healthcare facilities to provide our Hearing Health publications

Objective Two: Generate awareness about hearing loss through educational events

Host an event for World Hearing Day of WHO on March 3.

Hold educational sessions in cooperation with CHHA Vancouver.

the Hearing Awareness project in another venue, building on the Vernon success

Objective Three: Represent the interests of hard of hearing persons on committees.

Participate on the Breaking Barriers Research Project – Gael Hannan

Liaise with Provincial Language Services about captioning – Jessica Niemela

Participate in the Council of Service Providers – Jessica Niemela

Attend bi-monthly CHHA National Network meetings – Ruth Warick



Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC

Objective One: Support the Youth Peer Support Program

Hire a part-time coordinator with responsibility for the program.

Objective Two: Provide human resource and financial support for CHHA BC

Manage the Telemarketing fundraising program

Explore a fundraising drive for the Interior of the Province

Develop new positions for the newsletter and projects; recruit and training staff

Keep up-to-date membership lists

Objective Three: Connect with our Branches

Foster a closer relationship with Branches and arrange a meeting of branch leaders

Work with CHHA National on alternate structures for smaller groups to organize

Reach out to Branches about their involvement in the Youth Peer Support Program