



# Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023 Fiscal Year March 1, 2023 to February 28, 2024

### INTRODUCTION

CHHA-BC experienced a year of stability in 2023-24 with its operations and programs. As a result, we continued to flourish and developed our first ever New Horizons project, created a new advocacy document on *Access to Hearing Aids – CHHA BC Position Paper*, maintained a robust offering of youth programming, and continued our various partnerships and strong involvement at the national level.

Our Action Plan guided us in our work, which consist of three themes:

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

## Advocating for Accessibility

Our Advocacy document on hearing aids outlined the current situation in British Columbia and called for:

- Equitable access to ear and hearing care services for all, including those living in remote areas or belonging to vulnerable groups.
- Financial risk protection and reduce out-of-pocket expenses for ear and hearing care.
- Provincial government financial support of required assistive listening devices such as hearing aids.
- An awareness campaign on the importance of hearing health.
- An end of misleading sales tactics by hearing aid retailers toward consumers.

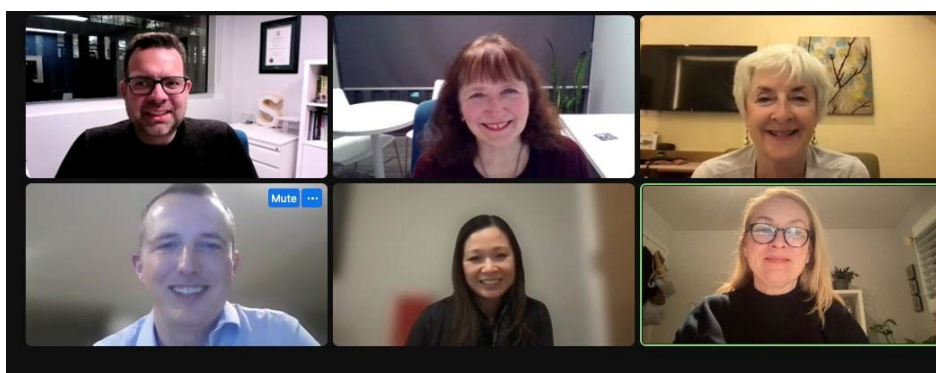
Our advocacy work was carried out in conjunction with:

- Help BC Hear Better Group, a team of healthcare professionals, researchers, and people with hearing loss who want improved access to hearing health care, including more affordable hearing aids.
- Hearing Health Alliance of Canada, which promotes better awareness of hearing loss and calls on the Government of Canada to adopt a National Hearing Health Strategy
- The Breaking Barriers research project of Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility and the University of British Columbia, which aims to make primary physicians more involved in hearing healthcare of their patients.

## Communications, Awareness, and Education

### World Hearing Day

We held several on-line webinars including the annual webinar with Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility and CHHA Vancouver on World Hearing Day of March 3. The theme of the Day for 2023 was *Hearing Care for All* and featured panelists speaking about consumer needs, and what can be done better for hearing care personally and systemically. Also discussed was research is being carried on to improve health care by family doctors and primary care nurses.

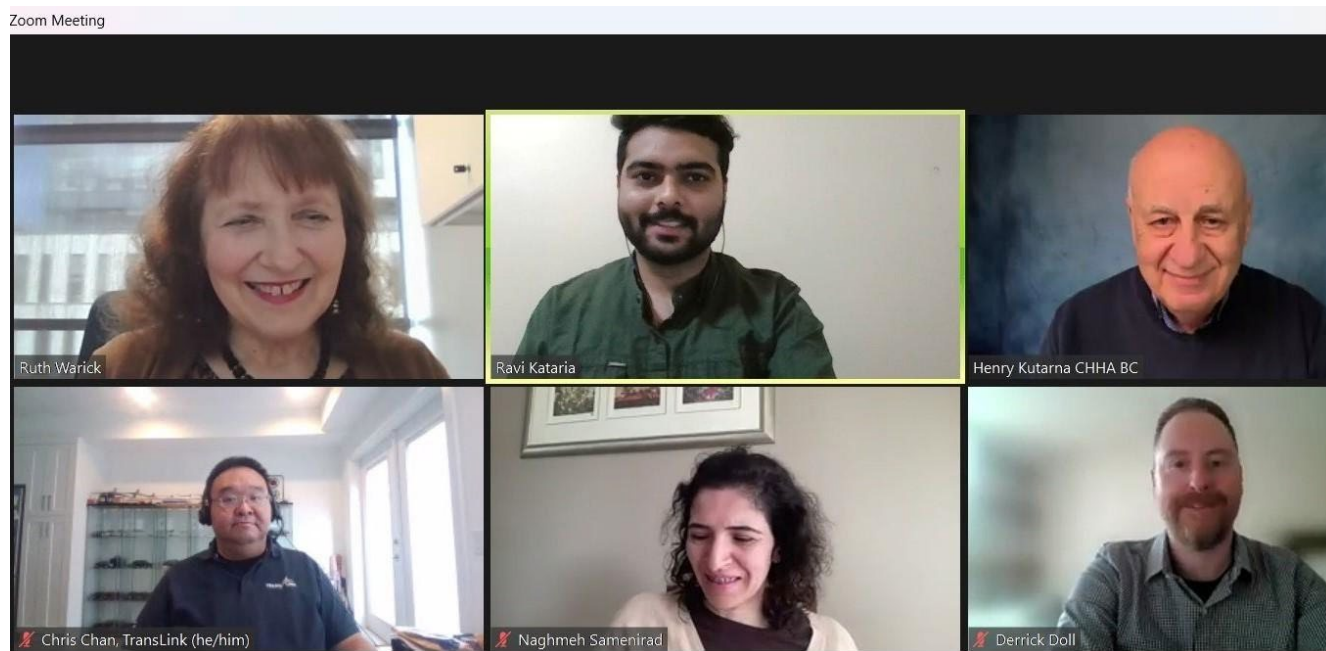


Top Row: Christopher Sutton, Ruth Warick, Gael Hannan; Bottom: Hugh McCormack, Brenda Poon & Gordana Mosher

## Educational Sessions

May 18: First BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie was the keynote speaker at the CHHA-BC AGM.

April 26 202: Transportation Access Issues of Hard of Hearing Persons, featuring Chris Chan from Trans Link, Sam Turcott of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty, Hans (Uli) Egger for the Rick Hansen Foundation, and Derrick Doll from Advanced Listening Systems. The event was co-sponsored by CHHA Vancouver. See below for photos.



June 13, 2023: Felicia D’Amato, a registered social worker, on Communication and Relationships between Friends/Partners with Hearing Loss. Co-sponsored with CHHA Vancouver.



October 30, 2023: Professionals who are Deaf and hard of hearing shared their experiences and challenges at work. The panelists were Jessica Niemela, a Pediatric Audiologist; Robin Sim, an engineer; Jen Andersen, a teacher for the Deaf and hard of hearing; and Jackie Lindsay, a human resources manager. Co-sponsor: CHHA Vancouver.

## The Way We Hear It! Exhibition

In May 2022, we launched this groundbreaking exhibit, *The Way We Hear It: A Community Engagement Exhibition*, at the Okanagan Science Centre. In 2023 and in the first part of 2024, our energies were focused on the second launch of the exhibit at the Albion Centre in Maple Ridge in May 2024. New developments by project coordinator Jessica Niemela was a video of the exhibit as a lasting legacy.

**The Way We Hear It! A Community Engagement Exhibition at the Albion Community Centre - MAY 1-31 Everyday**

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - BC Chapter presents

**THE WAY WE HEAR IT! A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXHIBITION**

**MAY IS BETTER HEARING AND COMMUNICATION MONTH**

This a great time to come and learn about our hearing system, hearing loss, hearing protection, accessibility and so much more. This exhibit is geared for all ages and there is a little something for everyone to explore, all through the lens of BC's own hard of hearing community organization.

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED :**

- What it would look like to walk through your auditory system?
- What it sounds like for someone with hearing loss?
- Have you asked yourself if you are a good communicator?
- Do you know where to find your deaf and hard of hearing community?

Now more than ever we are being called to spread awareness of hearing health and reduce the stigma. With the launch of BC's own Accessibility Act and the recent pandemic creating pronounced communication challenges for those with even a mild degree of hearing loss, our hearing health is truly becoming everyone's affair!

Schools can register to come see the exhibit during the school day <https://www.mapleridge.ca/2756>

**Activities for all ages!**  
**MAY 1-31 Everyday**

**Come join us to find the answers!**  
**Albion Community Centre | 24165 104 Ave., Maple Ridge**

**Sponsors:** CALDOR FOUNDATION, CITY OF VERNON, OKANAGAN SCIENCE CENTRE, Cochlear (Hear now. And always.), SCIENCE WORLD, BC Early Hearing Program (A service of BC Children's Hospital and the Provincial Health Services Authority), PHONAK, WORK SAFE BC, 3M, Neil Squire, oticon, Interior Health, VPA, WATERFRONT CENTRE FOR COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter, Maple Ridge.

## Project on Seniors Ageing in Place

For the first time, we received a New Horizons grant. Our project was on *CHHA-BC Seniors Ageing in Place through Technology*. Participants in the program were provided with such assistive listening devices as fire and alert alarms to enhance their independence in their own homes.



## **Information Displays**



In May 2023, board treasurer Elwood Major and Program Coordinator Shehana Mirza made a CHHA-BC presentation and hosted an information table at the Maple Ridge Lions Club.

In July 2023, we participated in the conference of the Say What Club, held in Vancouver. We hosted a display and presented about CHHA-BC. In addition, Gael Hannan and Ruth Warick were presenters and many of our members participated in the three-day conference. It was a much-welcomed in-person event in this post-COVID era.



## **Youth Peer Support Program**

The Youth Peer Support Program continued to flourish under the new management of a program coordinator following the retirement of volunteer coordinators Bowen Tang and Joy Gong. Shehana Mirza was hired to take on responsibility for the program, as well as new initiatives for seniors and assisting with “The Way We Hear It” exhibit. She has expanded our services to youth by adding new events and activities for youth.

Peer support events held throughout the year included coffee meet-ups on various occasions, an Escape Room Fiesta in August, the Family Weekend Camp in September, an art-themed holiday party in December, and a panel discussion entitled *A Dialogue on the Hard of Hearing Experience*.

## Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

Council of Service Providers - Jessica Niemela and Nicole Leung

Breaking Barriers Research Project - Gael Hannan continued

CHHA National Network - Ruth Warick

Provincial Language Services' Community Advisory Group – Jessica Niemela

Technical Committee on Employment Accessibility – Ruth Warick

Cochlear Implant Committee of CHHA National – Ruth Warick

In other representation, in 2023 CHHA National embarked on the development of a new strategic plan. Henry Kutarna represented the Chapter on the Committee and continues in the first year of operationalizing the plan.

### **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, 135 members. We also have almost 200 “friends of CHHA-BC” on our mailing list.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Henry Kutarna continues as our part-time operations manager and works closely with the board on leading CHHA-BC efforts. The CHHA-BC board approved a new part-time contractor staffing strategy. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 part-time basis to prepare content for our newsletter, “The Loop”.

### **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 - social media and mobile phones contribute to the declining usage of the typical landline telephone.

Currently, CHHA-BC receives grants from The Caldor Foundation, the Vancouver Foundation, Provincial Gaming Authority, and Seniors New Horizons Program.

## **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.

We liaised with Comox Valley about its closure given the retirement of several board members.

## **GOVERNANCE**

CHHA-BC's board members, elected in 2023 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	Member-at-large	Naghmeh Samenirad

Thanks to our board members for their dedication and commitment.

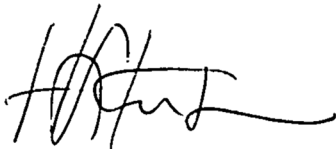
Our thanks to Miron Gazda for continuing to conduct our Peer Audit.

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 15, 2024