



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

AGENDA 2024-25 AGM of CHHA-BC May 26, 2025

- a. Call to order of the AGM – Ruth Warick
- b. Quorum count
- c. Approval of agenda
- d. Approval of Minutes of the 2023-24 CHHA-BC AGM
- e. Annual Report - Ruth Warick
- f. Financial Report - Elwood Major
- g. Waive the requirement for a CPA audit
- h. Appointment of accounting firm
- i. Engage a peer auditor
- j. Nominations report - Miron Gazda and Charles Laszlo
- k. Branch Updates:
 - North Shore
 - Vancouver
- l. New Business
- m. Motion to adjourn



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

AGM of CHHA-BC May 15, 2024

- a. Ruth Warick called the AGM to order at 6:36pm
- b. Quorum count - confirmed to be met with 12 members present: Ruth Warick; Gael Hannan; Jessica Niemela; Rosalind Ho, Leslie Scott; Mike Hocevar; Charles Laszlo; Nagmeh Samenirad; Eva Kwan; Janno Lim; Elwood Major, and Don Champion.
- c. Approval of agenda – Moved by Gael Hannan; seconded by Mike Hocevar. Carried.
- d. Approval of Minutes of the 2022-23 CHHA-BC AGM. Moved by Charles Lazlo; seconded by Elwood Major. Carried.
- e. Annual Report presented by Ruth and Henry. Moved by Nagmeh Samenirad; seconded by Jessica Niemela. Carried.
- f. Financial Report presented by Elwood Major. Moved by Elwood Major; seconded by Leslie Scott. Carried.
- g. Branch Reports:
 - Abbotsford - Elwood Major.
 - Vancouver - Rosalind Ho.
 - North Shore - Mike Hocevar.
 - Comox Update - Ruth Warick.Reports were moved by Gael Hannan; seconded by Rosalind Ho. Carried.
- h. Report of the CHHA-BC Program Coordinator Shehana Mirza. Moved by Charles Laszlo; seconded by Jessica Niemela. Carried.
- i. Waiver of the requirement for a CPA audit was moved by: Elwood Major;

seconded by Mike Hocevar. Carried.

j. Appointment of Auditor (Peer Review); Miron Gazda to be appointed. Moved by Leslie Scott, seconded by Elwood Major. Carried.

k. Appointment of accounting firm of Michael Waldkirch & Company, Vancouver to prepare the 2024-2025 year-end accounting statements, annual report, and filings as required by the CRA and BC Societies Act. The motion was moved by Charles Laszlo; seconded by Mike Hocevar. Carried.

l. New Business: Jessica presenting on the current exhibition "The Way We Hear It!" in Maple Ridge and showed a video of the exhibition.

m. Adjournment was at 7:30pm. Moved by Naghmeh Samenirad; seconded by Gael Hannan. Carried.



Signed Ruth Warick, President CHHA-BC

Dated May 28, 2024



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025

In 2024-25, CHHA-BC continued to implement its Action Plan focused on three themes: Advocating for Accessibility; Communications, Awareness and Education, and Self-help and Sustaining CHHA-BC.

Accessibility and Advocacy

Under the theme of advocacy, we held an on-line session in July 2024 to provide feedback for the Provincial Government's consultation on accessibility standards. In January 2025, we intervened with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission about captioning for online streaming undertakings.

We held a meeting with Provincial Language Services in December 2024 and are working on increasing awareness of this free service. We have added this information to our website (<https://chha-bc.org/captioning-access/>) and our *Hearing Access Health Guide for people with hearing loss*.

We continued to promote our policy paper on *Access to Hearing Aids* available on our website (https://chha-bc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CHHA-BC-HEARING-PAPER_LN_2024-Published-final-version.pdf)

Education, Awareness and Communications

As part of our second New Horizons project, we developed a workshop on Living Well with Hearing Loss. The first one was piloted in person in June 2024 at the Regency Southwood Resort for Seniors' Week. Others were planned for in-person delivery in March 2025 in Prince George, Kelowna and Sidney. The workshop focused on communication strategies, resources and collaboration with CHHA-BC.

Our groundbreaking *The Way We Hear It! Exhibition* was held at the Albion Centre in Maple Ridge in May 2024. Project coordinator Jessica Niemela undertook to arrange videos of the exhibition as a lasting legacy. Numerous groups, including from schools, toured the facilities and several workshops were held in conjunction with the Exhibition including a Mix-n-Mingle educational event for employers and participants from the hard of hearing community, discussing workplace rights in Canada.



We also spent a considerable part of this year planning to host the third Exhibition in Prince George in May, 2025.

CHHA-BC participated in the *Impairments Open House* on April 15, 2024, hosted by the Maple Ridge Lions Club, whereby awareness about hearing loss was shared with the public. We were a guest speaker for a presentation to alumni, faculty and current students of the School of Audiology and Speech Sciences at UBC on March 5, 2025. We continued to highlight World Hearing Day of March 3rd by holding a joint online webinar with Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility. The theme for the session was *Ensuring Hearing Health for Living Well* in recognition of the importance of ear and hearing health.

Our Youth Peer Support Program included a Family Weekend Camp held at Camp Jubilee from September 13-15, 2024. Seven families and two young adult coordinators enjoyed outdoor and indoor activities, including a campfire sing-along following dinner. Many meaningful interactions and connections were built among the families and youth participating in the event.



Communications

The Loop, our electronic newsletter, was produced four times during the year. We launched a new social media strategy to enhance our online presence and engage more effectively with our community through [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) in addition to our website.

In February, 2025, we conducted a membership survey, obtaining valuable feedback from interested persons. This was the first of such survey undertaken in the last few years.

We continued our liaison and mutual work with the Vancouver Branch and the North Shore Branch, the two remaining active CHHA branches in British Columbia.

Self-Help and Sustaining CHHA-BC

We continued a wide variety of representations to provide a perspective from hard of hearing consumers. Our representations were as follows:

Council of Service Providers - Jessica Niemela and Nicole Leung

Breaking Barriers Research Project - Gael Hannan

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

Virtual Communications Research Project of Wavefront Centre - Naghmeh Samenirad

Membership

Membership in the Chapter is automatic for individuals who sign up with CHHA National and with branches in British Columbia. Our membership numbers were 209, compared to 135 members last year as well as the previous year. We also have almost 200 "friends of CHHA-BC" on our mailing list.

Administration

Henry Kutarna served as a half-time Operations Manager until the end of August 2024, completing almost five years in that role. We thank him for his service to CHHA-BC. In January 2025, Joy Borgonia assumed the role of Operations Manager working alongside Purti S. Kannan. Purti joined us in

September 2025, filling the position of Finance Coordinator, previously filled by Ravi Katari. At the same time, Shehana Mirza left the position of part-time program coordinator, due to a move out of province. In May 2024, Narada Thomas joined us as a Social Media Coordinator. Vivian Zhang, Office Assistant, and Karen Stierhoff, Communications Coordinator, continued their work for us.

We are grateful to our staff for their support. We are also pleased to be an equity employer with a majority of our staff having a hearing loss.

Our annual fundraising campaign was affected by a postal strike which occurred at the height of the campaign, affecting the income generated during the campaign. We also continue to face challenges that telemarketing fundraising which relies on contact by landline telephones are not reaching audiences who rely on mobile phones. Regardless, our financial picture was buoyed by a substantial bequest. As well, we received grants from The Caldor Foundation, Provincial Gaming Authority, and Seniors New Horizons Program of the Government of Canada. We thank these sources for their support of CHHA-BC.

GOVERNANCE


Our thanks to CHHA-BC's board members for their stewardship and service:

President	Ruth Warick
Vice-President	Gael Hannan
Secretary	Jessica Niemela
Treasurer	Elwood Major
Member-at-large	Nicole Leung
Member-at-large	Naghmeh Samenirad

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Miron Gazda for his work undertaking a Peer Audit and for chairing the Nominations Committee. Our thanks to Charles Laszlo for serving on the Committee.

None of our work would be possible without you, our members. Thank you for your support and dedication to the cause of improving access, support and services for hard of hearing persons to participate in all aspects of society.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the CHHA BC Board and Staff



Ruth Warick, President

May 24, 2025



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

Financial Statements 2024-25

Balance Sheet

As of February 28, 2025

Assets	\$
Current Assets	221,424
<u>Total Assets</u>	<u>221,424</u>
Current Liability	9,308
Equity	212,116
<u>Total Liability and Equity</u>	<u>221,424</u>



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

Income Statement

March 2024 - February 2025

	Budget	Actual
	\$	\$
Revenue	257,400	284,942
<u>Expense</u>	<u>343,157</u>	<u>280,283</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	(85,757)	4,659

REPORT OF THE CHHA-BC NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Nominations Committee recommends that the following candidates be acclaimed as the new Board of Directors of the CHHA-BC Chapter:

President:

Ruth Warick

Directors:

Gael Hannan

Nicole Leung

Jessica Niemela

Naghmeh Samenirad

Submitted by Nominations Chair Miron Gazda on behalf of the Nominations Committee composed of Miron Gazda and Dr. Charles Laszlo

Dated May 15, 2025

Nominations for CHHA-BC 2025-2027

President: Ruth Warick

Bio: Dr. Ruth Warick is a founding member of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, a former national president and a former President of the CHHA Vancouver Branch. She currently serves as President for the BC Chapter of CHHA. She is also immediate past president of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing Persons. Ruth is a past president of the formerly named Western Institute of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the BC Family Hearing Resource Society.

Ruth was born hard of hearing and received her first hearing aid at age 11 although her significant hearing loss warranted earlier intervention. She is passionate about accessibility, awareness, education, and inclusion for persons with hearing loss.

Ruth was employed for over 25 years at The University of British Columbia, working as an Advisor on accessibility for students, faculty and staff of all types of disabilities. She is currently employed as Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives + Impact, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility.

Ruth has edited the IFHOH publication on *Realities Facing Hard of Hearing Learners in Nepal and Uganda* (2020) and the CHHA publication, *Hearing the Learning, A Postsecondary Handbook for Students who are Hard of Hearing*. She completed her doctoral degree at UBC in 2003; her Dissertation was titled *Voices Unheard: The Academic and Social Experiences of University Students who are Hard of Hearing*.

Along with Marilyn Dahl, she was instrumental in developing an On-Line Mentoring Program for hard of hearing persons which was piloted provincially and then became a national program. She is a founding and steering committee member of the WHO World Hearing Forum.

She is a member of the Technical Standards Committee on Employment for the Province of British Columbia and a member of the Technical Standards Committee on Transportation for Accessibility Standards Canada.

Statement: I am privileged to have served as a President of CHHA BC and would be honored to continue in this position. We are at an important juncture in the growth and development of the hard of hearing movement. At the provincial level, we have a committed group of volunteers and newly hired staff who are passionate about working for CHHA-BC and it would be my pleasure to continue working with them. I can offer my experience, commitment and steadfast determination to bring about change systemically and individually for hearing accessibility.

Board Members

Gael Hannan

Bio Gael Hannan is a celebrated hearing health advocate, writer and speaker/performer who lives with profound hearing loss. She creates award-winning awareness projects that help people live more successfully with their hearing challenges, including the acclaimed one-woman show “Unheard Voices”. Her writing includes a humorous memoir/survival guide, “The Way I Hear It: A Life with Hearing Loss”, regular articles for hearing-related media and a regular blog for HearingHealthMatters.org that has a passionate international following. Her second book, “Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss” (coauthored with Shari Eberts), is the supportive how-to guide she wishes she’d had at the start of her hearing loss journey. Gael has been a member of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association since 1995 and has served both on the National Board of Directors and the board of CHHA BC. Gael is bimodal, using a hearing aid and a cochlear implant, lives with the Hearing Husband in North Saanich, BC.

Statement: Gael is passionate about helping CHHA BC further its impact on improving hearing healthcare for people with hearing loss.

Nicole Leung

Bio: Nicole Leung is a dedicated advocate for the hard of hearing community, bringing both lived experience and professional insight as a full-time bedside nurse. Passionate about improving accessibility and inclusion, she continuously seeks opportunities to foster dialogue, advocate for systemic change, and empower others.

Through her work with CHHA BC, Nicole has organized and led a wide range of events covering topics such as *Living Well with Hearing Loss*, *Empowerment*, *Focus Group Feedback on BC's Accessibility Standards*, and CHHA BC's mission and values. Notably, she collaborated with an autistic, hard of hearing thirteen-year-old entrepreneur—an often-overlooked demographic—inviting him to speak at a workshop on employment and education.

Nicole has grown as a leader by learning alongside respected advocates like Gael, Jessica, Naghmeh, Elwood, Ruth, Narada, and Joy. Her experience spans fundraising, social media engagement, and participation in committees such as the standards of practice under the Accessibility Act and medical captioning available under Provincial Language Services.

Internationally, Nicole served as organizer, facilitator and mentor for numerous six-day leadership workshops for 20-30 young adults with the International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People (IFHOHYP). The first was held online in 2021 during the pandemic, the event was successfully hosted in

Budapest in 2022, and then France in 2024. Each event had various advocacy topics, and each day of the workshops focused on subtopics.

Her earlier contributions include speaking about disability challenges on UBC's All Access Pass radio show in 2020 and mentoring health sciences students in the UBC Interprofessional Health Mentors Program in 2018 to 2020. One of her first roles was with CHHA BC's Youth Peer Support Program, where she led workshops on empowerment and employment education both in-person and on YouTube, in which she created six videos herself.

Nicole continues to be inspired by the power of community, collaboration, and the belief that change begins with conversation.

Statement: Since my last nomination in 2023, I've taken the initiative to enhance CHHA BC's programming and operations. I organized a workshop and developed digital feedback forms for events, enabling data collection in a format that can be easily replicated by others. These tools are meant to streamline how we gather community insights—something our board has expressed growing interest in, especially as we work to increase engagement.

I remain optimistic about our ability to connect with the community in more meaningful ways. If elected, I would like to focus on three key areas: education, engagement, and hearing loss awareness. One idea I'm eager to pursue is a series of presentations at VGH on hearing loss, open to both healthcare professionals and the public.

While CHHA BC has made great strides—through projects like the interactive exhibit, Accessibility Act efforts, and improved captioning—we've also faced staffing challenges. This has inspired me to explore modern solutions, such as adopting more efficient communication platforms for the board and staff. I am passionate about giving back to the hard of hearing community, and I hope to contribute to something lasting and impactful. My long-term vision is to help CHHA BC establish a permanent, visible presence that champions the needs and voices of hard of hearing individuals.

Jessica Niemela

Bio: Jessica Niemela is a pediatric audiologist in Vernon, British Columbia. Jessica's previous career was as a registered nurse, most of which she spent in the emergency department. At the age of four, she was diagnosed with bilateral, moderate-severe sensorineural hearing loss, however she did not start wearing hearing aids until she was 20 years of age. She quotes "My experiences accepting my own deafness, coping with communication challenges, and ultimately wearing bilateral hearing aids shapes a big part of who I am today." As a person living with hearing loss, Jessica is a proud member of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA). She volunteers currently as one of the CHHA-BC board directors and is the developer of CHHA-BC's "The Way We Hear It! A Community Engagement Exhibition."

Statement: It is an honor once again to be nominated as a board member for CHHA-BC. My experience on the board has been so rewarding. I thoroughly enjoy being involved in the advocacy work that we do on the board for our deaf and hard of hearing community. I would especially love to continue the work on "The Way We Hear It!" CHHA-BC science exhibit which has proven to be a much needed initiative to

spread the awareness of hearing health for our general population. The exhibit is currently being hosted at the Prince George Public Library for May 2025. This helps us fulfill our mission to bring this project to different regions of the province. I continue to represent CHHA-BC amongst other organizations for the deaf and hard of hearing which include The Council of Service Providers and the Provincial Language Services. I plan on continuing this representation throughout the year.

Being a board member of CHHA-BC gives me the opportunity to continue to share our hard of hearing community in a way that is active and current. Thank you for considering my nomination.

Naghmeh Samenirad

Bio: I am a hard of hearing teacher with sensorineural hearing loss. I have been teaching French in a primary French Immersion school in Vancouver for the past 10 years. I have a strong educational background with a Master of Education (MEd) focused on Early Childhood Education as well as a degree in Teaching from UBC. I have worked for 7 years in various early childhood centres in different age programs from 0 to 5 years old.

Statement: I am a volunteer at CHHA Vancouver branch for the past 8 years as a secretary. I have been a volunteer at CHHA-BC as the Member-at-Large for the past 2 years and still want to continue this role. It is my passion to make a difference in the hard of hearing community, to advocate for better accessibility and services for people with hearing loss and to connect with others in a diverse community. I find that CHHA-BC is very dedicated in supporting people with hearing loss and works so hard to advocate for accessibility such as Captioning in medical settings and hearing aids. The team is made of incredible, strong and positive team and I want to continue working with them.

CHHA North Shore Branch Report 2024-2025

The North Shore Branch would like to report another year of successful programs and activities. At this time we are winding down for our summer break in July and August and will be starting up again in September.

On April 21st we had a Zoom presentation from Ruth Warick, President of CHHA BC on the topic of "Hearing Your Health Care". On June 16th at 7:00 PM we will be having a Zoom presentation from Ken Jones, President of the BC Tinnitus Association and Facilitator of the Greater Vancouver Tinnitus Self Help Group. The title of the talk will be "Love Your Tinnitus for Success".

Through the year we have held Sound Advice Sessions on the first Friday of each month at West Vancouver Seniors' Centre. These were hybrid meetings both in-person and on Zoom at 10:00 AM. We also held in-person meetings monthly on the last Monday of each month at the Silver Harbour Seniors' Centre in North Vancouver each at 10:00 AM.

We have also produced our quarterly newsletter "Mountain Ear". The June issue is to be sent out next week.

We also have maintained a website at www.chha-nsb.com.

We look forward to seeing everyone again in September.

Hugh Hetherington, President
CHHA – North Shore Branch
May 21, 2025.

Annual Report 2023-2024 of the CHHA Vancouver Branch

CHHA Vancouver is a self-help, consumer group which provides advocacy, support and educational activities for successful living with a hearing loss. With a combination of virtual and in-person activities, we are actively engaged in hearing loss issues at the local, provincial, and national levels and continue to reach out to our membership.

Walk2Hear



Our 14th annual Walk2Hear closed on October 31, 2024 with \$1,945.00 raised via our CanadaHelps platform, which we are continuing to use for the eighth year.

The fundraising campaign culminated in a gathering at Jericho Beach Park on Sunday, October 6, 2024.

After welcoming everyone and very important stretches, led by Keelin Livesey, participants set out to walk a 2 km loop around the park.

Awards were distributed at the closing ceremony. Ruth Warick was the top individual fundraiser. Wavefront Centre for Communications Accessibility Walk2Hear 2024 was the top fundraising team. Draw prize winners were: Catherine Siegler, Ruth Warick, and Sharon Adelman.

Many thanks to our event volunteers: Jess Eaton, Anjo Aranas, Kennedy Mailloux, Dawn Chandler, and Cecil Ramsay. Thanks also to Keelin for serving as our First Aid attendant.

The Walk2Hear event was made accessible with CART and ASL interpreting.



Congratulations to the draw prize winners!



Many thanks to our Walk2Hear event volunteers!

Website Update

Thanks to a generous donation from the Caldor Foundation, CHHA Vancouver is currently working on updating our website, which is now also ad-free. So far, old information has been updated, the home page has a new welcoming message, and navigation is easier. We are also expanding our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Looking Ahead to 2025

While 2024 was a relatively quiet year for CHHA Vancouver, we're looking forward to an active 2025. The board will be meeting early in the new year for planning. If you have any particular interest that you'd like to know more about, whether a webinar topic, activity, or something else, please contact us. We'd love to hear from you!

Governance

Membership is at 18 persons. An annual report was submitted to CHHA-BC, and members attended the virtual CHHA-BC AGM on May 15, 2024. Members of the CHHA Vancouver Branch Executive are:

Rosalind Ho, President
 Marco Chiaramonte, Vice-President
 Naghmeh Samenirad, Secretary
 Miron Gazda, Treasurer
 Mary-Ann Livesey, Member-at-Large
 Heather Enns, Member-at-Large



Thanks go to my fellow Board Directors on the CHHA Vancouver Board for their commitment and awesome work. A special thanks to Accurate Realtime Inc. for continued excellent captioning for us.

Rosalind Ho, President, CHHA Vancouver Branch
 Report respectfully submitted on December 3, 2024