



**The Way We Hear it! Exhibition**  
Prince George Public Library  
May 2025

CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION - BC CHAPTER'S

**THE LOOP**

# Message from the President



**DR. RUTH WARICK**  
*President, CHHA BC*

Dear colleagues,

Our elected board members began a new term of office following the CHHA BC annual general meeting on May 26, 2025. Thank you to fellow board members Gael Hannan, Nicole Leung, Jessica Niemela, and Naghmeh Samenirad for embarking on a new term to bring about awareness, accessibility, and inclusion for hard of hearing people. As well, thank you to Elwood Major for having served us as Treasurer for two terms; your expertise, wise council and support was much appreciated.

I also want to acknowledge the work of our staff: Joy Borgonia, Operations Manager; Puri Kannan, Finance Coordinator; Narada Thomas, Social Media Coordinator; Karen Stierhoff, Communications Coordinator; and Vivian Zhang, Office Assistant. They are essential to our work.

You, our members and friends, are also essential as we work for you and value your support. Thank you.

Please take a moment to review our [Annual Report, which is posted on our website](#). It highlights the achievements of our board members and staff during the past year:

- Hosting the second *The Way We Hear It* Exhibition at the Albion Centre in Maple Ridge in May 2024 and planning to host a third one in Prince George in May 2025.
- Undertaking the development and delivery of workshops on *Living Well with Hearing Loss* in Kelowna, Prince George and Sidney.
- Promoting the provision of free captioning for eligible medical appointments in British Columbia by Provincial Language Services; we advocated for this service. Our website is updated with information on this topic, as is our publication on *Hearing Access Health Guide*.
- Intervening on policy matters concerning accessibility standards with the Provincial Government and on captioning of online streamed undertakings to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

As we begin a two-year term, we have our work cut out for us to ensure that past gains are not lost while making further progress. We are still faced with a huge lack of public

awareness about the issues, as well as the solutions, for hard of hearing individuals. All too often we are a forgotten disability.

As a society, we are in an economic climate where budget cuts are happening. Close to home, the captioning program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) in Alberta has been suspended due to funding cuts. Most of the captioners for BC come from NAIT, so the program is important for us; we cannot afford to see the demise of it. Your CHHA BC Board has written to the college to express its concern. [Read our letter to the college here.](#)

Rising costs have affected individuals, reducing their financial status and potentially impacting on charitable donations, which has a ripple effect on CHHA-BC. Tariffs have contributed to this economic situation.

Despite the external environment, I am optimistic that the dedication and hard work of the CHHA BC board and staff will enable us to continue to make headway in creating a more hearing accessible society. As a board, we are revisiting our Action Plan to be current, relevant and responsive to your concerns. We will report on these developments and welcome your input and feedback so that we can better serve you. It is our honour and privilege to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Warick  
President  
[President@chha-bc.org](mailto:President@chha-bc.org)



# Message from the Operations Manager



**JOY BORGONIA**  
*Operations Manager, CHHA BC*

*Time flies when you're having fun!* It's hard to believe we are already halfway through 2025. These past few months have been a whirlwind of activity, learning, and meaningful engagement. Every day brings new challenges and rewarding experiences.

March was a busy month, especially with the ongoing efforts to manage tax receipts. We experienced an influx of requests for duplicate tax receipts, as many donors had not received their initial receipts. Coordinating these requests required meticulous attention to detail and prompt communication to ensure everyone's documentation was accurate and delivered promptly. I also worked on the New Horizons for Seniors project called Living Well with Hearing Loss, which included delivering a workshop at the HART Pioneer Association in Prince George. As well, I was involved in the “*The Way We Hear It*” exhibit project at Prince George Library.

The momentum continued into April, with similar activities focused on tax receipts and supporting our donors' needs. Additionally, I began to familiarize myself more deeply with the day-to-day operations of CHHA BC. I am grateful for the team's support and the opportunity to learn from the president and board members.

May was a milestone month, beginning with my first participation in the Annual General Meeting held on May 26th. It was an insightful experience to observe how the AGM was conducted, including proper meeting decorum, voting procedures, and the importance of transparent communication with our members. During the meeting, we elected new board members, and I am genuinely excited to collaborate with this dedicated group to advance CHHA BC's mission.

On June 2nd, I had the pleasure of hosting another Living Well with Hearing Loss workshop, this time on Zoom, alongside Gael Hannan, an esteemed advocate, speaker, author, and CHHA BC Vice President. The event drew over 40 registered participants and was designed to be accessible and inclusive. We provided American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services to ensure that everyone could fully participate and benefit from the session.

As we move into the summer months, I am eager to continue supporting our community through various programs and initiatives. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication. It's a privilege to serve as your Operations Manager, and I look forward to what we can accomplish together in the coming months!

# Planting Seeds: Sharing Opportunities at UBC's Speech & Audiology Program

**NICOLE LEUNG**

*Board Member-At-Large, CHHA BC*

In February 2025, I delivered a hybrid-format presentation to a group of students, alumni, and faculty at the University of British Columbia's School of Audiology and Speech Sciences (SASS). My presentation focused on raising awareness of the challenges faced by deaf and hard of hearing (HOH or "DHH") individuals in British Columbia, highlighting CHHA BC's ongoing advocacy efforts, and identifying meaningful opportunities for future partnership between clinicians-in-training and the HOH community. SASS is a master's program that prepares students to become either Audiologists or Speech-Language Pathologists. As the only program of its kind in British Columbia, it provides a strong foundation through a research-informed curriculum, hands-on clinical experience, and a deep emphasis on cultural competence and adaptability in an ever-evolving healthcare landscape.

My presentation sparked rich conversation and reflection among attendees. Personally, I was pleasantly surprised by the level of engagement from the audience. One student shared their current research on senior depression and isolation, emphasizing how critical communication and social inclusion are to overall well-being. Another participant echoed the importance of accessible services and expressed interest in exploring how they might integrate advocacy into their future practice.

The welcoming spirit of the participants was felt throughout the session. Faculty and students alike invited me to tour UBC's state-of-the-art Audiology Lab, where we exchanged insights and explored potential avenues for collaboration. During the visit, I presented a copy of the CHHA-BC Healthcare Hearing Kit—an outreach tool developed to support communication accessibility in medical settings. The warm smiles and enthusiastic responses from those present reflected their genuine appreciation. Several attendees mentioned they would share the resources with peers and clients alike.

Feedback from the session was encouraging. One audience member commented that the presentation "...clearly describes steps and actions to take to support the HOH community," while another highlighted the value of my "personal experience and the advocacy efforts by CHHA BC."

By sharing real stories and practical tools, this event planted important seeds for future collaboration, awareness, and inclusive care. It was a reminder that bridging the gap between advocacy and clinical practice can—and should—start early in a clinician's training journey.

Interested in inviting CHHA BC to your school or workplace? Contact us at [info@chha-bc.org](mailto:info@chha-bc.org)

# Prince George Welcomes *The Way We Hear It! Exhibit*

**JESSICA NIEMELA**  
Secretary, CHHA BC

## **We did it again!**

CHHA BC's *The Way We Hear it! A Community Engagement Exhibit* was a huge success up north in Prince George, BC. The Prince George Public Library was the perfect space to host, as it was accessible, free, and welcome to all patrons. It was held in a large open area on the second floor where patrons could view the exhibit while also perusing books and other library resources. It was especially impactful to see all the books on special display that are geared towards deaf/hard of hearing subjects. We had the pleasure of working closely with the library staff, who shared the utmost enthusiasm for our cause for hearing health awareness.

The exhibit was launched by a special gathering in the library's Keith Gordon Room, where we had opening remarks from library staff, a thoughtful speech from Katy Suik from the Northern BC Children & Families Hearing Society (NBCCFHS), and remarks from Ruth Warick and myself. After some refreshments, I led a private tour of the exhibit, and explained each display in detail from the perspective of a person who has hearing loss and wears hearing aids, and through the lens of an audiologist. The tour was well received and will be a highlight in future exhibit showings. Private tours were also offered during the month for school groups visiting the library. We are grateful to our volunteers who help with these tours!

On the very last day, we held an exhibit tour with families who have deaf/hard of hearing children. This group was brought together by NBCCFHS. Families came to visit from remote areas such as Chetwynd and Burns Lake. They spoke about how important these opportunities are to be able to get together with other families who have deaf/hard of hearing children. The kids were especially intrigued by the walk through of the auditory pathway, being able to see large displays of ear wax, ear bones, and the magical lights of the inner ear.

This final event has brought the exhibit tour for 2025 to a close. We are looking forward to the next opportunity to present this very special display. If your community is interested in hosting, be sure to inquire with CHHA BC!

## **Testimonials:**

*"Thank you, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and Northern BC Children & Families Hearing Society. Jessica Niemela: waving hands for your incredible work. Had the privilege of meeting several wonderful people, Judie Russman from AimHi, Katy Suik from NBCCFHS, Dr. Ruth Warick, President of CHHA BC, and special thank you to Twyla Thompson for interpreting .. and of course to Terry Thompson for his balloon sculpting!!"*

-Kirsten Ward

*“Thank you so much for bringing the exhibit to the North and sharing your passion with us! Word on the street tells us this exhibit was very popular! Cheers and big thanks!”*

*-Katy and the Northern BC Children & Families Hearing Society.*

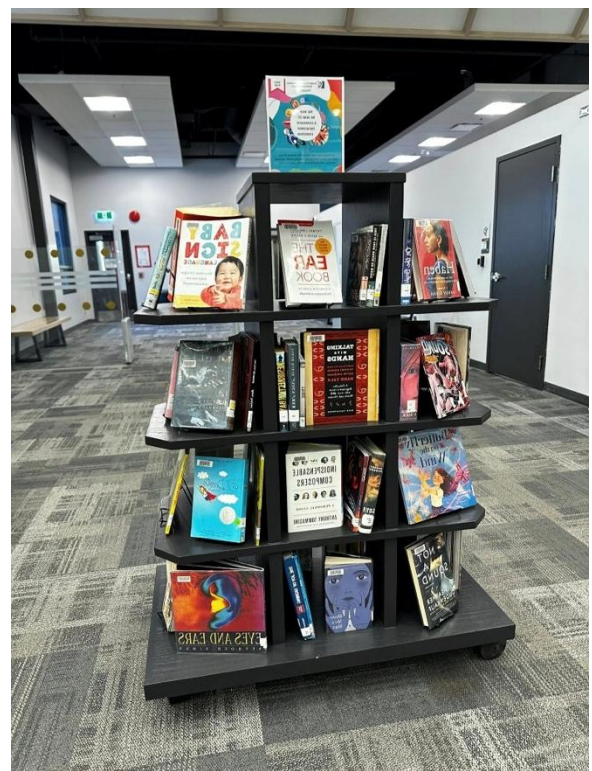


*“The Way We Hear It!” exhibit at the Prince George Public Library.*



*Left: Jessica Niemela with a young participant at “The Way We Hear It!” exhibit in Prince George.*

*Right: Books about Deaf and hard of hearing in the Prince George Public Library.*





# Living Well with Hearing Loss: Presentation in Kelowna

NICOLE LEUNG & NAGHMEH SAMENIRAD

*Board Members-at-Large, CHHA BC*

Through the federal grant program called New Horizons for Seniors Program, CHHA BC is working to educate and spread awareness about hearing loss. The grant, along with CHHA BC's vision, seeks to address social isolation, promote engagement and collaborate with groups like seniors with hearing loss outside of metropolitan areas in the province. The series is called "Living Well with Hearing Loss in BC." Below are summaries of several presentations by Nicole Leung and Naghmeh Samenirad, two CHHA BC board members.

## Seniors' groups in Kelowna

In March 2025, two different groups of Kelowna seniors gathered to learn about ways to improve communication and relationships in living with hearing loss. The first was at a seniors' retirement home and about 13 residents attended, all over 75 years of age. The second was at a seniors' recreational center where about 19 individuals attended. Approximately 78% of all participants at both events were female. A majority were individuals with some degree of hearing loss, while the remainder were individuals who knew someone with hearing loss.

They utilized *automatic closed captioning* via Microsoft PowerPoint, which displayed real-time speech-to-text transcription. Participants were able to read the captioning that was positioned above the PowerPoint on screen. Jessica Niemela, CHHA BC Secretary, loaned an *amplified sound field system*.

Attendees quickly and easily adapted to the equipment despite not being familiar with the technology. At the seniors' retirement home, participants were pleasantly surprised by the auto-captioning and were inspired to bring the feature to their monthly meetings. One individual jokingly shared that she had stopped listening to the presentation and instead was reading the captioning. (Listening fatigue is real!) Laughs were shared because regardless of listening or not, it was primarily important that seniors gained communication strategies, empowerment, and ideas for improving their daily lives in terms of hearing accessibility.



*Top and Bottom  
Photos: Naghmeh  
Samenirad talking  
to Kelowna  
residents at the  
Living Well With  
Hearing Loss event.*



# Living Well with Hearing Loss: Presentation in Abbotsford with the Cochlear Implant Support Group



*Bowen Tang of the Cochlear Support Group presenting to Abbotsford-area residents.*

In April 2025, Bowen Tang of the Cochlear Implant Support Group warmly welcomed Nicole Leung and Naghmeh Samenirad to co-present an engaging seminar that drew particular interest from the local community and brought together a diverse group of participants eager to learn, share, and connect.

Seventeen attendees filled the room on a sunny day. Among them was a mother with a newborn, thoughtfully balancing parenthood with her commitment to the group, and a curious woman who asked insightful questions about tinnitus and cochlear implants - especially relevant as her husband awaited his own implant surgery. The group also included three experienced cochlear implant users who generously shared their personal journeys, challenges, and successes with warmth and

honesty. A significant portion of the audience consisted of older adults, some diligently taking notes while others listened attentively, demonstrating a genuine interest in understanding and navigating hearing loss.

To ensure accessibility for all, the seminar was equipped with an *amplified sound field system* and *automatic closed captioning*. The latter added moments of levity when humorous captioning errors sparked shared chuckles, helping to foster a relaxed and friendly environment.

Adding to the event's energy, CHHA BC's Social Media Coordinator, Narada Thomas, and fellow CHHA BC board member, Elwood Major, joined the gathering. Their presence underscored CHHA BC's commitment to community engagement and offered attendees an opportunity to connect directly with advocates familiar with the unique experiences of people living with hearing loss.



This collaborative event exemplified the power of community partnerships and peer support in promoting awareness, education, and resilience among those affected by hearing loss. Through shared stories and practical information, attendees left better equipped to navigate their hearing journeys with confidence and hope. The session ended with promises to stay in touch. Collaborative efforts like these are certainly vital in building a stronger, more informed, and supportive hearing loss community across the province. And hopefully, a more accessible society for deaf, deaf and blind, and hard of hearing individuals.



*Nicole Leung, front, Bowen Tang, and Naghmeh Samenirad in front of the Abbotsford-area residents attending the Living Well with Hearing Loss presentation.*



# Bridging Communication in Health Care: Christian Vasquez Presents on Provincial Language Service

At CHHA BC's recent annual general meeting, Christian Vasquez, Sign Language Service Coordinator, gave an informative presentation on the vital role of the Provincial Language Services (PLS) in improving communication access across British Columbia's health care system.

PLS provides free, professional language services to patients and/or their designate, doctors, health authorities, and other health care professionals to ensure equitable access to health care for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing individuals. The service specializes in American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) - immediate, verbatim, voice-to-text transcription. Interpreting services are offered in approximately 240 languages all over the province and can be done remotely if necessary.

Mr. Vasquez's presentation highlighted the importance of language accessibility in ensuring that all individuals - regardless of hearing ability - can fully participate in their health care journey with dignity and understanding. He noted that patients could request their health care provider to book an ASL interpreter or CART provider through PLS; the booking responsibility should not fall on the patient. If this is an issue, PLS is happy to provide the health care provider with education around these interpreting and communication tools. If the facility does not have access to video equipment for CART, a video team can be brought in, although this does not apply to private clinics. For those requiring an ASL interpreter, interpreters are trained to bridge communication across many languages, cultures, and communication styles, and PLS recently added staff to serve First Nations' patients.

For more information about PLS, email [pls@phsa.ca](mailto:pls@phsa.ca) or visit their website: [www.phsa.ca/pls](http://www.phsa.ca/pls)



*Christian Vasquez,  
Sign Language Service Coordinator,  
Provincial Language Services*



# Who Tells Us How to Be Good at Hearing Loss?



**GAEL HANNAN**

*Author, Speaker, and Vice President, CHHA BC*



Living well with hearing loss is not instinctive. We must learn how to do it.

Nothing in a person's personal experience prepares them for the emotional, life-changing impact of even a mild change in hearing. We don't just hop to it, adopting strategies that will help us deal with communication barriers that we never realized existed. Even if we've had hearing loss for a long time, possibly our entire lives, this is no guarantee we're good at it. We often still struggle with frustrations and listening situations that seem designed to cut us out of the conversation, every time.

Why aren't we better at having hearing loss?

Because we don't know how. We don't know what we don't know. Perhaps we feel we don't have the right to ask for accommodation, or we feel too embarrassed. Maybe because no one explained it to us, or maybe because we didn't ask.

I was 40 years old before I had a transformational meeting with other people with hearing loss. What I learned in a two-day conference stuffed my toolbox, which previously only had a hearing aid and the ability to speechread, with new tools and a new confidence.

Hearing loss doesn't come with a how-to manual. People with hearing loss aren't helpless – but we need help from somebody or somebodies to tell us what we can do. Here's the secret: the job starts and ends with us. Correction – the *journey* starts with us and continues with lots of help along the way.

Whether we are pushed from behind by our family or friends, it is we who make the appointment for a hearing assessment. We choose to follow up on our hearing care professional's recommendation of a hearing aid.

However, our audiologists and hearing instrument specialists should be doing more than this (although many are). They know that hearing aids don't fix hearing loss, the way that wearing glasses corrects vision while being used. A good professional will dig deeper and be concerned with our struggles. They will point us towards developing other strategies such as:

- Being comfortable in self-identifying with hearing loss
- Understanding how to create positive listening environments, with good lighting, low noise, and face-to-face communication.
- Understanding that we have the right to let people know what we need and don't need
- Using resources such as other people with hearing loss, books, articles, social media, etc.

There is no shame in having hearing loss, so instead of apologizing for it, we can stand tall and create good communication. And that starts with learning what will make our personal hearing loss journeys as smooth and productive as possible.

Who can tell us how to be good at hearing loss? We can. Our hearing care team can. Other people with hearing loss can. And so can the people we love...





## Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

# 2025 Family Weekend Camp



CHHA BC is undertaking a review of its program offerings, as well as its operational capacity. As a result, we will not be holding a Family Weekend Camp in the Fall 2025.

As we re-examine our initiatives, we are seeking feedback about the Family Camp. We invite camp participants and families who have participated in the past to take a few minutes to complete a survey at this link: <https://go.radd.ovh/familycampsurvey>. We would appreciate responses by July 20, 2025.

We thank you in advance for your time in completing the survey. You are also welcome to send comments to [info@chha-bc.org](mailto:info@chha-bc.org).

Thank you,  
Ruth Warick, President  
On behalf of the CHHA-BC Board



## Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

# VOLUNTEER JOB OPPORTUNITY

## Position of Treasurer for CHHA-BC

Are you passionate about supporting the hard of hearing community? Do you have a background in finance or accounting? Are you interested in contributing to the hard of hearing community? CHHA-BC is seeking a Volunteer Treasurer to join our board.

CHHA-BC is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for and supporting individuals who are hard of hearing across British Columbia. We strive to improve accessibility, awareness, and resources for our community.

### We are looking for candidates who:

- Are hard of hearing and reside in BC
- Have a background in finance, accounting, or related fields
- Are willing to contribute time and expertise to our mission

### Interested?

Please send your resume and a brief statement of interest to [info@chha-bc.org](mailto:info@chha-bc.org). Join us in advocating for accessibility and inclusion.



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association  
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YOUNG ADULTS NETWORK

## CALL FOR YOUNG ADULT (18-35 YEARS OLD) VOLUNTEERS

### CHHA YAN Director of Standing Committee

CHHA Young Adults Network is issuing a 'Call for Volunteers,' for the position of Director of the Standing Committee, to work alongside its President/Chair and Young Adults Network Representative.

Please review the [Instagram post \(https://www.instagram.com/p/DLNeYkAPQk0/\)](https://www.instagram.com/p/DLNeYkAPQk0/) for an overview of the available role, expectations and the application process. CHHA YAN is looking to recruit 2-3 volunteers currently.

All interested candidates, paid or unpaid Members of CHHA are encouraged to submit an application, which includes a Resume and Statement of Reason, electronically to the Standing Committee for consideration.

While the procedure set out for recruitment is intended to help ensure broad geographical representation on the Standing Committee, the Directors represent the interests of all young adult Canadians who are Hard of Hearing, and not only those of members in their home jurisdiction.

Questions/Inquiries: Please email [yanbod@chha.ca](mailto:yanbod@chha.ca)

Please submit applications to Keegan Noxell, President/Chair via email at: [knoxell@chha.ca](mailto:knoxell@chha.ca).

Application Deadline: **Sunday, July 6, 2025** (or until vacancies are filled).

All applications will be reviewed and approved on a first come, first served basis. All appointed Directors shall serve a minimum of three months and up to one year and may serve unlimited appointed terms until after the age of 35, with terms beginning at the first scheduled Standing Committee Meeting following approval of their application.