

JUNE 2026

VOL 54

CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION - BC CHAPTER'S

THE LOOP



Message from the President



DR. RUTH WARICK
President, CHHA-BC

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to share that we have been awarded funding from the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program for a Peer Support project. This initiative is designed to build a province-wide peer support network of hard of hearing leaders, with a particular focus on seniors and communities outside major metropolitan centres. As reported in this issue, CHHA-BC members have already been helping to bring this work to life through presentations in Powell River, Penticton, and Terrace. These sessions are an important part of expanding connection, sharing practical information, and strengthening local support for people living with hearing loss.

CHHA National's Spend to Save Canada campaign has released Canada's First Adult Cochlear Implant Report Card, shining a spotlight on the need for more equitable access to cochlear implant care across the country. The campaign highlights persistent gaps in wait times, geographic access, and financial coverage, while also pointing to promising progress in some jurisdictions. This initiative reflects the informed, practical advocacy that can help improve the lives of adults living with significant hearing loss and strengthen our collective voice for change.

Just last week, the Ministry of Health announced a regulatory change to approve the retail sale of non-prescribed hearing aids for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss, without requiring a hearing test, professional fitting, or prescription. BC is the first province in Canada to adopt this approach. A Ministry release stated that the BC Government would "continue to work with the hearing health professional regulator, associations and other system partners to ensure hearing health professionals are supported in this policy change."

As part of the Ministry consultative process leading up to the new policy, CHHA-BC and CHHA Vancouver made a joint submission, which is available on our website (<https://chha-bc.org/over-the-counter-hearing-aids/>). Our three key recommendations were that:

1. a hearing assessment should be required, with credible documentation that meets acceptable standards;
2. OTC hearing aids should be limited to adults with mild hearing loss only, not those with moderate, severe, or profound hearing loss;
3. Health Canada regulations for non-prescribed hearing aids should be strengthened, including clear labelling, safe output levels, and recommended pathways for resolving hearing problems.

We will be watching closely how the new policy unfolds and what its impact will be on consumers.

We lost an important leader earlier this year when North Shore's Hugh Percy Hetherington passed away in January. At a memorial held at the end of April, tribute was paid to Hugh, with remembrances of his unselfish volunteerism, technical savvy, big heart, and kind manner. Hugh helped so many people over the years, and CHHA is stronger because of his dedication. We are working on establishing a scholarship in his name as



Memorial for Hugh

a legacy to Hugh. We are also working with the current North Shore Branch during its transition to transfer administrative duties to the Chapter while continuing its valued Sound Advice programs.

As we look ahead, these initiatives remind us of the importance of staying connected, informed, and engaged. Our advocacy, peer support, branch connections, and remembrance of those who have shaped CHHA-BC all reflect our shared commitment to improving the lives of people with hearing loss.

Finally, please mark our AGM on your calendar for Tuesday, August 18th, from 7:30 to 9 pm. We will share further details on our website as plans are finalized. Thank you, as always, for your continued interest, support, and engagement in CHHA-BC's work.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Warick
President
President@chha-bc.org

Community Celebrates World Hearing Day with Hearing Health Fair



JOY BORGONIA
Operations Manager, CHHA-BC

Dear Colleagues,

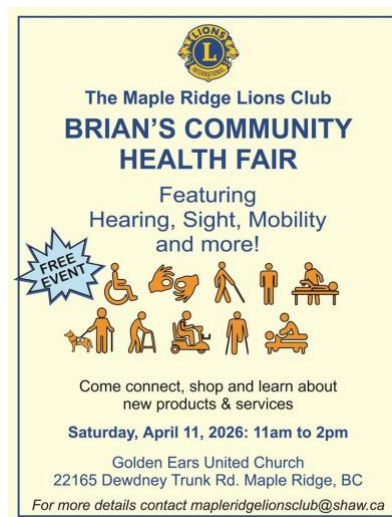
Here’s a snapshot of CHH-BC’s 2nd Quarter activities in 2026! This engaging period featured a variety of workshops and exhibits aimed at educating and inspiring the hearing loss community. It was a great opportunity for members and the public to explore new ideas and deepen their understanding of hearing health. Let’s highlight what made this quarter one of our most active and impactful yet!

CHHA-BC participated in the Community Health Fair on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at Golden Ears United Church in Maple Ridge, BC, to honor Brian Hetherington, a beloved member of the Maple Ridge Lions Club. Following his passing in January 2026, the fair aimed to celebrate his legacy with an expanded event. Lions Club members were present to assist attendees. The fair featured booths focus on hearing and vision loss, as well as mobility, providing opportunities to connect and learn about health and well-being products and services. It was a meaningful gathering in memory of Brian.



Top: Joy at Brian’s Community Health Fair.

Bottom: Event poster.



BC Hydro Pioneers

I had the pleasure of presenting the "Living Well with Hearing Loss" workshop on April 13 at a luncheon hosted by the BC Hydro Power Pioneers at the Salvation Army's Cascade Community Church in Abbotsford, BC. About 30 members attended.

The luncheon included a catered meal, followed by my hour-long presentation, where I shared tips on technology and communication strategies for managing hearing loss. The feedback was positive, and I believe it was a valuable experience for everyone. I look forward to sharing this workshop with more Power Pioneer branches in the future.

HEARD – Exhibit Table. Joy Borgonia and Naghmeh Samenirad

CHHA-BC proudly sponsored the world premiere of "HEARD" on April 14th, which was a tremendous success with a sold-out audience. The evening fostered community connections and shared stories. Ruth Warick and Gael Hannan hosted the table at the first showing; Gael also moderated the question period. Naghmeh



Top: BC Hydro Pioneers workshop attendees

Bottom: HEARD movie poster.





Joy and Naghmeh posing from the CHHA-BC table at HEARD film screening

Samenirad, a CHHA-BC board member, and I attended the second screening on April 19th, finding it a powerful and inspiring experience. The storytelling and engaging Q&A session highlighted the importance of understanding hearing loss.

The film follows filmmaker Brian Ceci’s journey to accept his lifelong hearing loss as he connects with others with similar experiences. CHHA-BC also provided brochures about hearing loss for the guests.

Living Well with Hearing Loss in BC with Gael

Gael Hannan, the Vice President of CHHA-BC, is an advocate, speaker, and author. She hosted a workshop titled "Living Well with Hearing Loss" at the Powell River Library in Powell River, BC on April 24th.

The event aimed to improve communication and accessibility for individuals with hearing loss in the Powell River community. Mark Merlino, the Adult Services Coordinator, noted that the workshop was well-received and benefited many attendees. The library staff appreciated the valuable insights gained from this impactful session.

Most attendees rated the session as "Extremely" or "Very" engaging and informative. They praised Gael’s lively delivery and the practical strategies provided for improving communication and reducing stigma.

Living Well with Hearing Loss
in British Columbia

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
British Columbia Chapter

Author Gael Hannan with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association will discuss improving communication and accessibility in your life with hearing loss

Friday,
April 24, 2pm

At the Library

PR POWELL RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY prpl.ca

For more details contact
Mark: mmerlino@prpl.ca
or call 604-485-4796

Living Well with Hearing Loss in BC workshop poster.

Other CHHA-BC Living Well presentations were delivered by Jessica Niemela in Penticton on June 9th and in Terrace by Ruth Warick on June 11th.

In conclusion, as we close out the second quarter, I am pleased to reflect on our progress. Our board members have successfully organized workshops and activities that benefit the hearing loss community. The positive feedback from participants highlights the value of our efforts and inspires us to achieve an even greater impact in the months ahead. ***We are open to hosting similar events for other communities – just contact us!***

Joy Borgonia

CHHA BC Workshop in Terrace Brings Community Together

On June 11, CHHA BC held a “Living Well with Hearing Loss” workshop in Terrace, BC, for 20 attendees at Knox Church, a welcoming location that helped make the day feel both comfortable and community focused. It was a lovely day in Terrace, and the setting provided a positive backdrop for meaningful



President Ruth Warick with workshop attendees.

conversation about hearing loss, communication access, and practical strategies for daily life.

The session focused on CHHA BC’s commitment to education, self-empowerment, advocacy, and accessibility. Participants explored ways to live well with hearing loss, including communication strategies, the role of hearing aids and assistive technology, captioning, and supports available in British Columbia. A key message was that good communication goes beyond hearing aids: it involves self-advocacy, practical tools, supportive communication partners, and inclusive environments.

The attendees were very interested and engaged throughout the workshop. Their questions and comments reflected both the challenges people face

when living with hearing loss and the strong desire for more information, peer support, and accessible services. The discussion also highlighted the importance of reducing isolation, increasing confidence, and helping people connect with resources that support fuller participation in community life.

Local organizers played an important role in making the workshop possible and have expressed support for continuing this work in Terrace and the surrounding area. Their commitment is encouraging and points to the value of building local partnerships so that people with hearing loss, their families, and service providers can continue to learn from one another and strengthen community-based support. CHHA-BC considers the workshop a start in an on-going connection with Terrace.



From left to right: Ruth Warick from CHHA BC; peer supporter Betty Stewart of Terrace, and Florencia Schade, Community Law Advocate, Terrace and District Community Services Society

Okanagan DHHDB Amazing Race Camp Day



Jessica Niemela
Audiologist, and CHHA-BC Secretary



Okanagan DHHDB Student Camp Day poster

Over 30 Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (DHHDB) students from Grades 1–12, representing communities from Revelstoke to Penticton, came together for an unforgettable Camp Day on May 22nd 2026!

Students worked in teams to complete fun and engaging challenges as part of the DHHDB Amazing Race, planned and led by our wonderful DHHDB community partners and student leaders. The day ended with hotdogs, freezies, laughter, and celebration.

Most importantly, new friendships were formed and old friendships grew even stronger.

Creating safe and inclusive DHHDB events are key to building community and student identity. A heartfelt thank you to CHHA-BC and British Columbia Provincial Outreach Program Deaf Hard of Hearing (POPDHH) for their generous financial donations and to PDHHS, POPDB and SD 22's indigenous education department for their support in making this meaningful and memorable day possible.



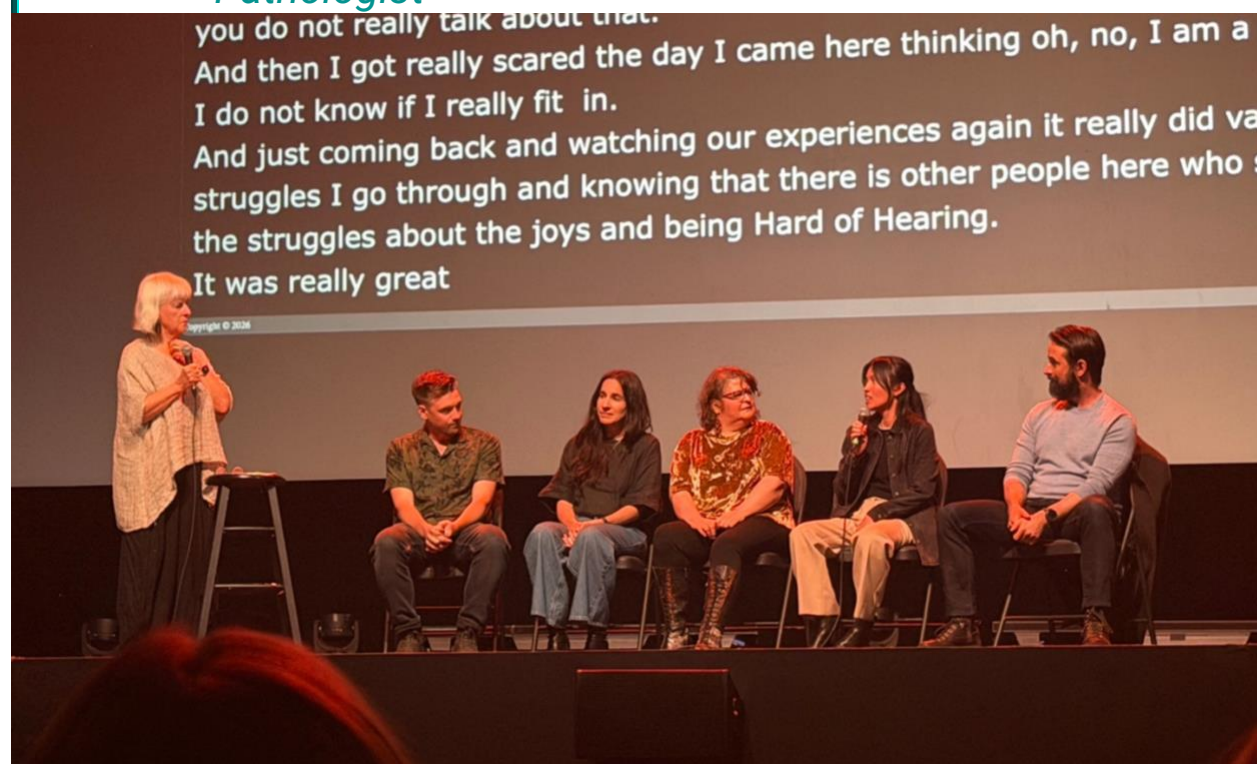
Attendants at Okanagan DHHDB Student Camp Day

The Vulnerability of Being Seen: My Journey with HEARD



Ruzzelle Gasmen

Hard of Hearing and Registered Speech-Language Pathologist



Ruzzelle answering a question at the panel discussion during the HEARD film screening

Everyone's journey with hearing loss is different. We each have our own unique story of when we get diagnosed, why we experience it, and how we come to terms with it. It is an ever-evolving journey with numerous feelings attached to it. Hearing loss shapes how we move about in the Hearing world, and for me it was not always easy finding community. When I was first identified with hearing loss, I learned CHHA had existed and even had a scholarship for students with hearing loss, but I felt like a fraud and did not apply because I was not part of the community. Years later, after sharing my

story about creating hearing aid accessories, someone at CHHA reached out, and I haven't looked back since.

Members from CHHA's Young Adult Network created an inclusive communication environment in social settings, something I struggled a lot within the Hearing world. It was through CHHA that cinematographer Brian Ceci, had reached out regarding his film HEARD. His story resonated with me, an artist at heart. Although I was apprehensive about the vulnerability that came with filming, seeing the final movie come out and the wider impact it had was worth it. Being able to connect with other Hard of Hearing artists across the spectrum, sharing our struggles and the joys of our individual and collective experiences, it all felt so comforting. I truly felt heard and I hope others do too.



Hearing Aid Accessories made by Ruzzelle.

Editorial Note: HEARD is currently available on-demand on Telus Optik TV and via the Telus TV+ app. To catch future screenings across Canada and more information about the film, visit www.heard-film.com.

You can also find and order Ruzzelle's custom-made hearing aid accessories from her Instagram [@puzzlewithanr](https://www.instagram.com/puzzlewithanr).



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

SAVE THE DATE: CHHA-BC Annual General Meeting

The CHHA-BC Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 18, 2026, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM via Zoom.

Further information will be posted on our [website](#), social media, and email.



Staying Connected: Do social support, social participation, social isolation, and loneliness affect hearing care access and outcomes?

The research team is holding a community meeting to gather feedback from older adults who are hard of hearing. Your lived experience will be used directly to strengthen and shape their ongoing research.

Who Can Join? Persons 60 years or older, who have hearing loss, are able to communicate in English and take part in a group discussion.

What Is Involved?

- **The Session:** A 2-hour session (including breaks) with a small group of 6 to 8 participants in person at SFU Harbour Centre (Vancouver), with a virtual option available if needed.
- **Accessibility:** Conversation supports (such as captioning) will be provided as needed.
- **Compensation:** Participants will receive a \$50 gift card as a thank you for their time.

How to Sign Up?

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact the research team:

- Contact Person: Dr. Julie Beadle
- Email: julie_beadle@sfu.ca
- Phone: (604) 212-1571

Share your experiences with the community

For each edition of the newsletter, CHHA-BC reaches out to the hard of hearing community and asks if anyone would like to tell us a story about themselves and how they have dealt with being hard of hearing.

If you would like to contribute a short story, an article, or a future community event for a future edition, please email operationsmanager@chha-bc.org.



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
British Columbia Chapter

CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION BRITISH COLUMBIA CHAPTER

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LINKEDIN: linkedin.com/company/chhabc/

CHHA-BC ACKNOWLEDGES DONORS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION

It is through such generous contributions that we can continue to offer programs and services for hard of hearing persons. Thank you for your donation.

CHHA-BC ACKNOWLEDGES PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR THE LOOP

This financial support makes possible regular and direct communication with members and friends.