

**STEPS
FORWARD**

BC INITIATIVE FOR **INCLUSIVE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**



WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

Staying True to the Vision

1-2

Advice from an Alumni

3

Straight from a Campus
Facilitator

4 - 6

Stories of Inclusion in the
Classroom (Audio)

6

Post-secondary and the Quest
for Friendships

7 - 8

Staying True to the Vision of Inclusive Post-secondary Education

Arden Duncan Bonokoski,
Executive Director, STEPS FORWARD, BC Initiative
for Inclusive Post-secondary Education

I have been working with STEPS Forward, and towards the vision of making it unremarkable for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be included in the academic and social life of campuses across BC, for 14 years this summer.

Over more than a decade, the landscape of post-secondary Education in BC has continued to shift and evolve as well as the culture in which it exists. What has remained the same in our work, is the unwavering commitment to staying focused on the goal of supporting students to assume the role of post-secondary student.

(continued)

This singular focus involves understanding what it means to be a student at one of the 10 campuses in BC that have embraced inclusive post-secondary education. And, understanding and pushing back against the ways in which students, because of a label may be offered other or different experiences; often because it is believed that it is better for them.

What we have consistently seen, over the last 20 years of doing this work in BC, are the incredible contributions that students have made to their campuses. As well as the benefits that students experience by being in the same spaces and places, with the same resources that any other post-secondary student has access to.

I was asked by a facilitator what I have learned over the last 14 years of doing this work. I believe my greatest learning is how powerful the vision of inclusive post-secondary education is, and the long-term commitment that is required to advance the vision. Consistently asking the question “what would this look like for any student” enables post-secondary education communities to unlock new opportunities for belonging identity and contribution that are challenging the dominant professionalized understanding of disability. Remaining clear and committed to the vision has also supported the goals of our post-secondary partners who value the diversity that students with intellectual disabilities bring to their classrooms and campus life. Inclusion makes campuses more human and the contributions that students are making, across the province are creating a new understanding of intellectual disability that focuses on connection and belonging as a means to personal achievement, rather than an emphasis on fixing an impairment or eliminating difference.

As we move into our 22nd fall semester of facilitating inclusive post-secondary education, my hope for the organization is that inclusion becomes so interwoven into the very fabric of academic and social life on post-secondary campuses that we become irrelevant. As we continue to work with post-secondary institutions, students, and their families, we strive to create a world where the uniqueness of every individual is not only acknowledged but celebrated, where the academic journey represents all students, and where inclusion moves from being an “initiative” to becoming an intrinsic part of our educational fabric.



Advice from an Alumni For New Students & Families

Roneesha convocated from UBC in 2019. She prepared the following list of advice to help prepare incoming UBC-Vancouver students and their families as they begin their post-secondary education this Fall.

Advice for Students

1. Remember to bring your Photo ID to the bookstore when you pick up your UBC ID.
2. If you are afraid of getting lost on your first day, ask a staff to follow you to class.
3. If you're coming from Richmond: try taking the 480 bus, it is faster than the skytrain.
4. Lunch lines are really long between 12:00PM- 2:00PM, 2:00PM is a better time to buy food if you need it
5. Grand Noodle Emporium is awesome.
6. Sign up for a Campus Tour if you want.
7. Go to Imagine Day!
 - a. Don't lose your phone! There are a lot of people around, and it can be easy to lose it. You get to see around campus, you get a free lunch of Subway Sandwiches. Good way to meet new people.
8. Go and see the Anthropology Museum and Beatty Biodiversity Museum. With your UBC ID, you get in for free.
9. The UBC Pool is awesome!
10. Be careful about your exam times:
 - a. Exams can happen during the day and at night
 - b. Exams can happen on weekends.
11. If you have an early class, try to stay with friends on campus if you are not an early riser.
12. If you like painting: there is an Arts Club at UBC that you can join.



Advice for the Parents/Guardians of New Students

1. Just breathe; no matter what happens you can get through it.
2. Your kids know what they want.
3. There are lots of people on campus who can help you out.
4. Encourage your new student to join clubs, events, and to volunteer. Students can learn a lot from volunteering.

Straight from a Campus Facilitator

Emily Carr University of Art and Design
Facilitator, Erick Jantzen

Erick has been facilitating inclusion at Emily Carr University of Art and Design since 2022. He recently graduated from ECU with a degree in Fine Arts. He was involved in student activism and is still involved in the university community. His art explores nature and environmental issues. In his free time, he enjoys climbing, playing music and the outdoors.



What does Emily Carr have to offer to a student who is interested in pursuing a career in the Arts?

Emily Carr offers both art and design programs. Art students can take painting, sculpture, illustration, 2 D and 3 D animation and many other disciplines. There are also opportunities for students to take design classes. One area is Communication design which covers graphic design and typography. Students can take advantage of work integrated learning, co-ops, and independent studies to name a few.

What does a day at Emily Carr look like?

Every student experience is different but a typical day could look like this. Student classes may start at 8:30am and run till about 2:00pm. This time could be spent in class lectures or in the studio working on projects. During the lunch hour there could be a variety of events a student could participate in and artist talks to listen to. After class, students might hang out at the library and continue working on assignments.

From approximately 4pm to 6pm, students can attend clubs or continue working on their assignments on or off campus. Some students who I work for have jobs on campus and fit these in before or after their classes.

What should 1st year students expect when they participate in Emily Carr's student orientation?

Campus tours at Emily Carr provide a very thorough tour of the different art studios, faculty spaces and specialized equipment on campus. In first year, students are part of what is called Foundation Orientation, students are part of smaller cohorts that provide a variety of opportunities to explore their major and connect with their peers.

This is a great time for students to be proactive about this experience and attend the information sessions in the areas they are interested in.

What do you feel are some of the biggest changes students experience over time while attending Emily Carr?

The biggest change I see for the students that I work for is the shift in learning from being told what to study (which is often the experience in elementary and high school) to the student taking ownership of their studies and learning. Students decide what they want to get out of their classes and lead to what extent they want their course material to be modified. I also see students embracing what the campus has to offer which can lead to students having a full and rich post-secondary experience, in addition to their academics.

What would you recommend students do to get the best experience at Emily Carr?

Shifting expectations from PSE being just about classes to PSE being a plethora of opportunities for students. As I said before,

it's not just about academics, there are social opportunities, speakers, and clubs; a lot of valuable stuff can happen outside of classes. 1st and 2nd year students benefit in getting involved in many things, this helps them explore and discover what their interests are and helps them find their people. 3rd and 4th year students have usually found those activities that interest them and will try to get involved more deeply in those social activities on campus.

What growth do you see in students who are attending university?

At university or college there are a lot of opportunities for students to accomplish new things and find out what they like or don't like. Students will discover more about who they are and have the opportunity to embrace the many identities they hold including that of a university student. As an art school, Emily Carr is a place for self-expression where students can explore who they are and what career they want to pursue when their studies are complete.



What do you want people who are reading this Newsletter to know?

It's the little things that count a lot when supporting students to be successful at PSE. Facilitators cannot do this work alone. For example, a student was going to meet with professionals in their industry and they needed a ride to make this happen. Public transportation was non-existent in this area and so the family volunteered to drop them off. The role of the family was to support the student in the background, and then step back to allow the student the autonomy they needed to make the meeting a success. Trusting in the process and knowing that facilitators may have to rely on others to fill in some of those gaps contributes to the student's success.

What do professors share with you about their experiences leading inclusive classrooms?

Instructors will often share how they enjoyed teaching the students we support, how the experience challenged them to think more critically about their pedagogy, and that in the future they hope to tweak their course materials to include more exposure for issues related to disability advocacy. In summary, it is usually a challenging but rewarding experience for instructors, peers and students alike.



Stories of Inclusion in the Classroom

Produced by Beth Miyanaga

Inclusive post-secondary education is a movement in western Canada to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have largely been excluded from higher education have the same opportunities to enroll in programs of study that reflect their career goals and provides the opportunities for them to contribute and benefit from their campuses through the role of post-secondary student. The opportunity to pursue post-secondary education has led to significantly greater employment outcomes and social connectedness for students and alumni. It has also challenged assumptions about what people need and where they belong in our society.

Having a student in the class from the perspective of professors and instructors is often a new one and one that can impact how instructors understand and respond to diversity in their classrooms.

We wanted to capture the experience of professors who are working to build inclusive classrooms in BC. Here are their responses.



[Audio: Stories of Inclusion in the Classroom](#)

Post-secondary & the Quest for Friendships

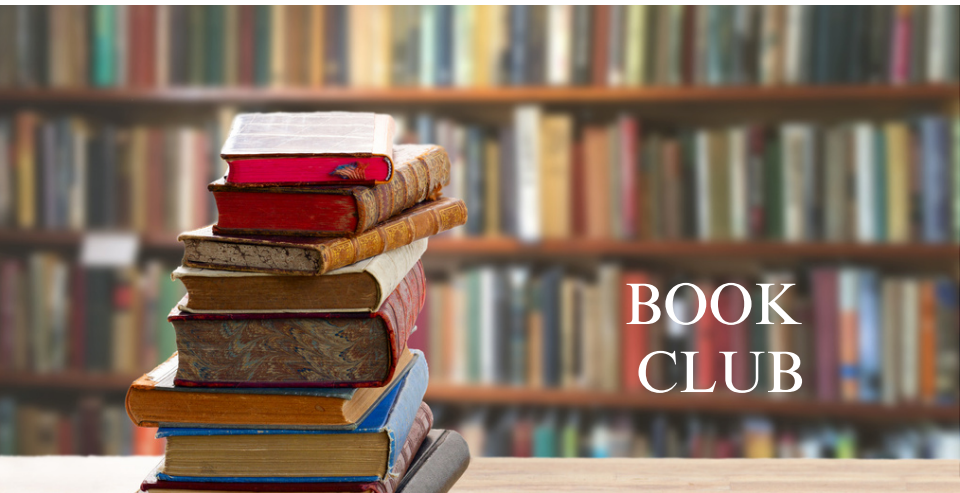
Marta Carlucci, Family Organizer, STEPS FORWARD BC
Initiative for Inclusive Post-secondary Education

Marta has worked at STEPS FORWARD in varying capacities over the last 3 years and is currently working along side families to support their vision of an inclusive life. Marta completed a degree in Community Rehabilitation at the University of Calgary and is one of the founding family members of a new family organization called, Regular Equitable Authentic Lives (REA-L).

Friendship is a fundamental aspect of the human experience, and in the age of technology and increasing distractions, making friends has become a complex endeavour. Over the summer I've been reading Dr. Marisa G. Franco's, enlightening book **"Platonic: How the Science of Attachment can Help you Make-and Keep-Friends"**. She provides the reader with invaluable insights into the delicate art of making friends. Her extensive research underscores that in a world marked by pervasive loneliness, the need for belonging remains of

utmost importance. Regardless of the number of friends we have, cultivating these connections can have a positive impact on our longevity. For students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who often face societal barriers to forming natural, freely given friendships, making friends on campus represents a significant step in combating the isolation they often encounter. These connections can pave the way for enduring friendships that offer mutual benefits to all parties involved.

Non-romantic friendships hold a unique place in our lives, as Dr. Franco's research highlights, and spending time with friends often brings more happiness and joy than some of the more mundane chores and activities that we do with our family members at home. Dr. Franco also points out that friends contribute to the forming of our identities and the ongoing self-discovery of who we are. What better time than the post-secondary years to start making friends?



BOOK CLUB

When I think back to my first year at college it appeared so easy to make friends. However, Dr. Franco's findings emphasize that making friends necessitates initiative and intentional steps. Perhaps the reason it seemed so effortless in my college years was the fact that colleges and universities naturally provide the opportunities that Dr. Franco's research identifies as vital for nurturing friendships.

Dr. Franco's book suggests that consistency in interactions facilitates friendship. Campuses across the province offer numerous opportunities for students to meet the same group of people regularly. Whether it's through weekly anthropology classes or gatherings like the Wednesday night anime club, familiarity with peers increases the likelihood of forming bonds. Yet, the journey doesn't stop here. Once you identify individuals you'd like to get to know better, it's crucial to step out of your comfort zone and initiate a connection. For students that we work for this may require support from a classmate, professor, or facilitator. Research indicates that people tend to like us more than we assume, so silencing those self-doubts and embracing vulnerability can pave the way for meaningful connections.

The post-secondary journey is a transformative chapter in the lives of students, marked by the excitement of new beginnings and the anticipation of forming lasting friendships. It is a time when shared vulnerability and enthusiasm serve as bridges, connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences. These connections not only enrich the post-secondary experience but also offer support, joy, and lasting memories. As students with intellectual and developmental disabilities embark on their post-secondary journey, now is the perfect time to reach out, build friendships, and create bonds that will last throughout their university/college years and beyond.



JUDITH MOSOFF SCHOLARSHIP

The Judith Mosoff scholarship recognizes high school students who are fully included in high-school and who plan to pursue an inclusive and coherent post-secondary education after graduation. Applicants are asked to describe how they are working towards this goal through inclusive academic and extracurricular opportunities in their school and through contributions to their community. School and community references are asked to describe how they are promoting inclusion through their work.

Award recipients are acknowledged at their high school graduation ceremony. For more information visit:

www.bc-ipse.org/judith-mosoff-scholarship-fund.html