

**STEPS
FORWARD**

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



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WELCOME BACK

Arden Duncan Bonokoski, Provincial Coordinator

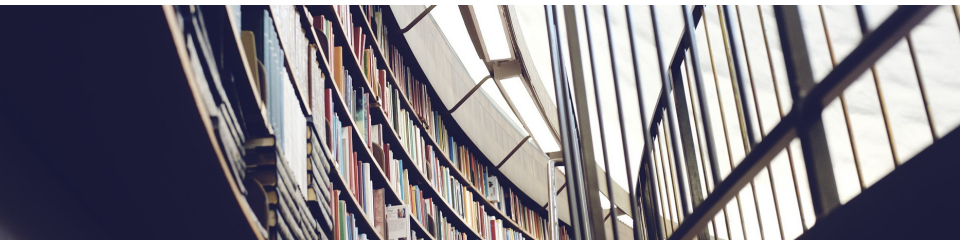
We are thrilled to be resurrecting our dormant newsletter. And, excited to share the exciting work that is happening to include students with developmental disabilities in the mainstream academic and social life of post-secondary campuses. Through these stories we also hope to show the ripple effects that this work has on the lives of students, their families, and communities at large.

A key theme in our work is to embed students in what we refer to as the normative pathway* which means the ordinary life avenues pursued by people without a disability.

* The normative pathway is a term that was coined by Dr. Anne Hughson and Bruce Uditsky (who you will read more about later)

The concept of the normative pathway is what led to the idea that students with developmental disabilities could and should be included in post-secondary education. This concept also helps us understand that quality inclusion at post-secondary should impact all aspects of a student's life. The benefits to the students we support should be comparable to the benefits that any Canadian hopes to achieve by pursuing their education. These benefits include increased employment, both in the compensation and the meaning that it provides, enriched social networks and opportunities to figure out what you like and don't like, and what you want to contribute. Quality inclusion must be more than simply attending classes for a few years.

We hope that this newsletter will provide readers with a glimpse into the work of Inclusive Post-secondary Education and will help us to communicate what we hope to achieve at the individual level of the student as well as at the societal level. Sadly, many people today with the label of developmental disability are excluded from the opportunities that most Canadians take for granted: the opportunities that help us become full and contributing citizens. This exclusion is the main factor in the increased levels of poverty, marginalization, and violence that people experience. Through our work, we are hoping to take up both a moral and practical imperative to address these inequities and to create new possible futures for people with developmental disabilities to take their place in society as students, employees, employers, and in all the ways that they see fit.



INCLUSIVE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Joe Greenholtz, President

STEPS Forward's BC Initiative for Inclusive Post-secondary Education hosted the first conference of practitioners of inclusive post-secondary education from across Canada, in what we hope will become an annual series.

The welcoming address to open the conference was given by Dr. Kris Magnusson, Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University. We are very encouraged by his support and the support of SFU. We are looking forward to the publication of the proceedings from this conference by the Centre for Expertise, the first of what we hope will be many joint academic and research initiatives by SFU and STEPS Forward.

Dr. Magnusson's remarks drew parallels between the exclusion of people with developmental disabilities from the education system and the exclusion of First Nations learners, reminding all of us that the inclusion movement is a multi-faceted one.

The goal of this inaugural conference was to bring together practitioners who work from a common understanding of what inclusion is and what it is not. Their initiatives and efforts conform to the commitments and benchmarks elucidated in the Government of Alberta's Evaluation Tool for Inclusive Post-secondary Education: Measuring Quality and Improving Practice. Many traditional post-secondary programs claim to be inclusive without reference to the benchmarks, so it was our goal to gather authentic practitioners with a shared understanding of inclusion in order to develop a community of practice to safeguard and strengthen the principles and implementation of inclusion. Through the community of practice, we will work to ensure that inclusive post-secondary education initiatives are focused on embedding students within a web of relationships, routines, and campus activities that are coherent with the experiences of other students, as one link in the chain of life-long inclusion.

We were thrilled to be joined by practitioners from Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and of course Alberta, the living laboratory for the long-term and enduring benefits of inclusion. Each of the initiatives had an opportunity to describe its institutional contexts and to describe its successes and challenges.

In terms of overarching themes, one of the thought-provoking discussions we had at the conference was led by Dr. Anne Hughson from the University of Calgary, and Bruce Uditsky, a recently retired Executive Director of Inclusion Alberta – two of the pioneers of Inclusive Post-secondary Education in Alberta and in Canada. They reminded us of the multi-generational commitment required for the project of inclusion, reinforcing the importance of family involvement, leadership, and activism and that achieving the goal of life-long inclusion requires the involvement of communities far beyond post-secondary campuses.

Building on this first annual conference, we are already in the process of planning for the next one, but in the interim we plan to publish the proceedings, establish a listserv to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experience within our community of practice, and start to assemble, organize, and make available resources on inclusion. We hope that these efforts will make the Centre of Expertise not only an archive and clearing house for information on inclusive post-secondary initiatives, but also a reference point for defining and researching inclusion. Stay tuned for the launch of our website for the Centre of Expertise in the coming months.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

THE GREAT GRIP

Marylou Rivard

Marylou has been working in her role as an Inclusion Facilitator at the University of British Columbia for three years. One thing she has learned while being an Inclusion Facilitator is the motto “What happens on campus, stays on campus”. She used to think this only applied when going to Vegas.

In her spare time, she enjoys finding treasures by browsing the free section on Craigslist.

This summer, a UBC Theatre student worked at the Great Northern Way Scene Shop. The Scene Shop, previously located at the Great Northern Way Campus, has now set up shop within the Arts Factory at 281 Industrial Avenue. The Arts Factory is a cultural hub for artists and operates to create affordable spaces for local artists to work under one roof. The vision of the Arts Factory is to create an inclusive space for emerging artists and established artists to create connections, and opportunities for collaboration.

The Scene shop creates custom scenery and fabrication for theatre, dance, opera, industrial design, and trade show installations. They employ a team of quality, exceptional crafts people in a diverse range of fields. From painters, to carpenters, to welders, the Scene shop was an exciting and fast-paced working environment for the student to be immersed in.

The student worked as a grip, which in shop terms means that they worked as a general helper. The job description and hours were modified for the student to match their interests and strengths. The student worked under the supervision of the Head Scenic Painter who allocated tasks for the student to take on.

The student helped clean, sort, and reorganize paint brushes and rollers in the paint room and helped repaint sample tiles that the shop would use to show their clients. The student's role took pressure off of the other staff which made their role quite valuable as it helped the team move on to their next projects more quickly. Coworkers mentioned how they really valued the newly created role because it increased their overall efficiency. The position was the first paid job related to theatre for the student and allowed them to be exposed to different career pathways in theatre and scenic production.

I asked the Great Northern Way Scene shop administrator, Melanie Wickes, a few questions to find out more about why they wanted to hire the student:

1. Marylou: *Why did you say yes when you were approached about hiring a student?*

Melanie: *“We were impressed by the student's enthusiasm for theatre and scenic production elements such as sets and costumes. It was also quite compelling that the student was specifically interested in working at our company.”*

Our CEO and founder, Elia Kirby, had taught Production Management at UBC and so has a personal connection to students who are keen to learn about our industry."

2. Marylou: How was the customized role made possible? What did the process look like internally?

Melanie: "Knowing that the work would take place over the summer made it easier to imagine supporting a job carving request. Although normally we don't have a full roster of staff over the summer because there are less projects, we still wanted to provide one shift per week. We were able to make arrangements to support this additional staff person.

Once we had approval from our CEO, we took the request to our lead staff members and made sure they were supportive of the plan. It was important that at least one or two lead staff on the shop floor would have the time to support the student in their work, even if they were completely supportive in spirit.

Our work tends to be constantly changing and fast-paced so we needed to make sure it was logistically possible to support a new person."

3. Marylou: What advice would you give to other potential inclusive employers?

Melanie: "Ensure the work is available, put in place key staff members to support the incoming worker, and have fun supporting an enthusiastic new employee."

As an Inclusion Facilitator, what I took away from this interview was that the recognition as a theatre student at UBC was the catalyst for her employment at the Scene shop. The personal connection that the CEO felt to theatre students made the opportunity possible. This opportunity was a perfect illustration of how important inclusive post-secondary opportunities can be for building a career identity, establishing relationships in a field of interest, and displaying how these key elements can lead to meaningful employment opportunities for the students we work for.



FINDING "THE ONE"

Soh-yon Park

Soh-yon is a relatively new Inclusion Facilitator at Emily Carr University, and she learned that one of the hardest job at an arts university is being a janitor: you don't know if a mysterious ball of fur in the corner is art or garbage.

Throughout the school year, I get the privilege of getting to know the students I work for very well, from what their usual lunch menu is to what their dream career is. As a new facilitator at Emily Carr University, I learned something new every day; actually, I am still learning something new every day. Trying to navigate how inclusion is meaningfully normalized into the post-secondary education system, and beyond, is like rearranging, erasing, and redrawing all the lines you've been boldly scribbling on a blank piece of paper.

When February started, I was told to start working on securing summer employment. I sat down with one student whose dream is to work in the animation field and asked him which animation and visual effects studios he knew of in Vancouver. And I made a list.

I started cold-calling these companies by sending emails to explain what our initiative is, and why the student is interested in the field. I asked to meet to further discuss inclusive employment and carving a position out that would benefit both the employer and the student. Most of the responses were that it was "too early" to offer any job positions to anyone, and they asked me to contact them again in summer, so I did. Then it goes: "Contact again in September," or sometimes, silence.

It wasn't too long after I realized cold-calling is not the best way to approach employment, even though it does work from time to time. I had to talk to these people in person. I started networking in person, casually dropping by events or intentionally attending job fairs. At one visual effects job fair, I got connected with every studio on the list. At another networking event, I was able to discuss inclusive employment with companies that weren't responsive by emails.

Often times, employers would offer a volunteer position instead of a paid position. Volunteering is valuable in itself, but it does not provide the fulfillment and community that we get through being employed. I have supported students in their volunteering positions, but I question more and more how effective these opportunities are in building community for students compared to the sense of community found through employment. It became clear to me that we shouldn't be looking for opportunities just to fill the student's day in order to make ourselves feel like we have accomplished something. Instead, we must be patient and intentional about finding opportunities for the student to work towards their career dreams. We, as human beings, all strive to find a career that gives us a deep sense of satisfaction and a sense of belonging in society. So why settle for less, when we can do the same for each student we work for?

Finding the right job for a student takes time, but once it happens, we get to see the momentum in how meaningful their lives become. They have a sense of belonging, they earn money, they build relationships with their coworkers, and they gain experiences to develop their career path. It's a promising trajectory to witness.

I always think about my own personal experiences and all the valued roles I have in society as a facilitator, sister, daughter, hiker, and cyclist. And that's something I would want the students to cherish and experience as well as they continue to explore their interests and passions through all aspects of a post-secondary education (courses, campus events, friendships, and employment).



JUDITH MOSOFF SCHOLARSHIP

Arden Duncan Bonokoski, Provincial Coordinator



This year thousands of students in BC crossed the stage to celebrate their graduation from high school and the beginning of their adult lives. This past spring also marked the awarding of the first scholarship sponsored by the Judith Mosoff Scholarship Fund. These scholarships recognize students who plan to pursue an inclusive and coherent post-secondary education, and these are made accessible through the partnership between the college or university and the BC Initiative for Inclusive Post-secondary Education. Award applicants were asked to describe how they are working towards this goal through inclusive academic and extracurricular opportunities in their school and contributions to their community. This year's scholarship was awarded to a high school student from Merritt Secondary School who is very eager to continue her education at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

The Judith Mosoff Scholarship Fund was founded by her family, with contributions from friends and colleagues, to honour the work and dedication of Judith Mosoff to include students with developmental disabilities in the mainstream of post-secondary education in BC. Judith was a parent, founding member, and President of STEPS Forward and its BC Initiative for Inclusive Post-secondary Education.

Over the next year, we are excited to work on connecting with school districts to share information about the scholarship and raise awareness of inclusive post-secondary education. We hope that knowledge of inclusive post-secondary education opportunities will raise expectations about the potential future for students with developmental disabilities in BC. One education assistant said that the scholarship suddenly made it real for her that the students in the resource room could also have the expectation to continue their education after high school and go on to post-secondary.

For more information about the scholarship, visit our website:
<https://www.bc-ipse.org/judith-mosoff-scholarship-fund.html>

The background of the lower half of the page is a photograph of several graduates in blue gowns and black mortarboards, seen from below as they throw their caps into the air against a clear blue sky. The image is partially obscured by a white, cloud-like shape containing text.

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

We are currently accepting applications from prospective students interested in attending the following campuses for Fall 2019: UBC, SFU, NVIT, UBC-Okanagan.

Please visit our website for information on how to apply:
<https://www.bc-ipse.org/>