

# BC HANDS & VOICES

May 2013 - Issue No. 12



**BC Hands & Voices** is a parent-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

We are a parent/professional collaborative group that is unbiased towards communication modes and methods, believing that families will make the best choices for their child if they have access to good information and support.

Our goal is to support families in achieving successful outcomes for their children.

## Hornby Island Experience

**By Joy Amor, Burnaby**

In the summer of 2012, my daughter, Teanna, and I decided to check out the Annual Family Deaf Camp which is held at Hornby Island at the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre operated by Gord and Allison Campbell. I had learned about this particular event in the previous year, but declined to join due to work commitments, and frankly, the amount of travel involved was a bit daunting at first, especially when having to travel with a child. This year, however, I felt that I had enough camping experience under my belt to give me the confidence to attempt this adventure.

As we set off on our first further-away-from-home mother-daughter trip, I felt both excited and slightly nervous as I was not sure what to expect, especially around the issue of communication with other attendees. The apprehension stemmed from knowing that my experience with ASL was mostly comprised of communicating with a preschooler, and an extremely patient and forgiving instructor.

It took three ferry rides and roughly three hours of driving to get to camp, and upon arriving, Teanna immediately noticed that some of her friends were already there. She was excited! I was

able to set up our site with the help of another family. The itinerary for the next three days consisted of activities in the daytime for both children and adults, and a group dinner followed by a gathering at the communal firepit. Daytime activities ranged from kayaking, rock climbing, yoga, ASL stories, and powerboat tours by our host, Gord. None of these activities are mandatory, but they are available to all, and are included in the Family Deaf Camp experience.



rience. There were also separately scheduled outings for moms/adult female attendees and dads/adult male attendees. The women were taken on a tour around the island and had the opportunity to shop at the local farmer's market, while the men took a trip to the local pub. These provided great opportunities to make new acquaintances sans children. There is also a long stretch of white sand beach, where one can choose to stay and relax throughout the entire stay. At night, the gathering around the firepit was filled with entertainment provided by the camp counsellors, through comedic skits and stories which kept the audience engaged by encouraging participation from both children and adults.

The anxiety that I had initially felt regarding communication quickly subsided, as there was an ample number of interpreters available,

and they were very keen on making sure they were readily accessible when needed. There were interpreters present at each activity in the daytime, they circulated during dinner - which helped promote conversations and initiate budding relationships, and the evening programmes were always interpreted as well. *This* was the epitome of bridging the gap, and it added to the comfortable, inclusive atmosphere. It was literally as easy as calling out "I need an interpreter, please!" or discreetly motioning for one of them to approach you.

Introductions and housekeeping rules were made during the first communal gathering. It was here where I had an epiphany, and knew that I had made the right choice in coming here. Terry Maloney, the head counsellor at camp, had mentioned something that really resonated

with me. He stated that the most important rule during our time here was that at this camp, everybody is to have equal opportunity to *everything*. This meant that no one was too young, too old, too small, or even too big to partake in *any* activity. I was glad to be in an environment that believed in and actively practiced equity, it made me feel welcome.

Attending Family Deaf Camp at Hornby Island was greatly beneficial to my daughter and I in so many ways. We met many different families, and I feel that despite the uniqueness in each situation, we all still shared many things in common, and I felt such a sense of community. It was comforting to know that I was not alone in some of the fears and struggles I faced, and it was inspiring to hear about and witness firsthand the successes from overcoming these. I met



other mothers who were more seasoned in raising a Deaf child, and it had me looking forward to the journey ahead with my own daughter. It was exciting to learn that many of the talented camp counsellors had grown up attending this camp, and it resulted in lifelong friendships and cherished memories. What great role models and mentors for the children who were currently attending to have! In such a short amount of time, I was able to watch my daughter blossom socially. Each night I would watch her march proudly to the front, participating in the nightly skits. At camp she was able to create new friendships, and strengthen existing ones! She

seemed happy and confident, and was most definitely in her element. This is where Teanna will have her own memories of time spent with friends to look back on and cherish. Here, everyone looked out for one another - my daughter was safe. Everyone spoke, understood, and had access to ASL, Teanna's first language - my daughter was respected. A parent cannot ask for anything more. To this day, photos or TV clips of beach and nature scenes trigger camping memories for Teanna, causing her to fondly recall the experience.

Three ferry rides and roughly three hours of driving. That is all

it took for an amazing time. It was a learning experience, a social experience, and a bonding experience. It was well worth it, and we would do it all again in a heartbeat.

### Save the Date!

This year, Hornby Island Family Deaf Camp is from Thursday June 27 to Sunday June 30, 2013. For more details, go to:

[www.fndc.ca/media/k2/attachments/family camp flyer 2013.pdf](http://www.fndc.ca/media/k2/attachments/family%20camp%20flyer%202013.pdf)

## 2013 Parent Coffee Nights

**May 27 / June 17** (Check for upcoming fall dates on [www.bchandsandvoices.com](http://www.bchandsandvoices.com) soon!)

Come and get to know other parents of kids with hearing loss. Share ideas that support your deaf or hard of hearing child... or just come to listen. Enjoy a night off with warm drinks, yummy treats and good conversation. We'll save you a seat on the couch!

**WHEN:** 7-9 pm

**WHERE:** Victory Hill Site, House #3

4334 Victory St, Burnaby  
(Look for the blue & orange balloons)

*Thank you to Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for allowing us to use this space.*

**CONTACT:** Anja Rosenke at [arosenke@telus.net](mailto:arosenke@telus.net) to RSVP or with any questions







# MAGGIE and the RACCOON

Written by Patricia Trottier  
Illustrated by Kathleen McPhail



by Jenn Kipling, Victoria

“Maggie and the Raccoon” is a children’s tale about a curious dog – Maggie – and her adventure on a hike through Mt. Douglas Park in Victoria, BC. On the hike, Maggie picks up a scent and is off and away trying to find what or who the scent belongs to.

This tale was written by Patricia Trottier – my mother – after creating the story for my first son, Connor. My mom has always had a great imagination and a gift for telling stories. Once this tale became Connor’s favorite she decided to take it a step further and have it illustrated and then self-published.

As all three of my children are hard of hearing and I am currently the treasurer for BC Hands and Voices, my mother has kindly donated the proceeds from book sales to ensure that BC Hands and Voices can continue to support families. If you are interested in purchasing a copy for \$10 please let us know by email at [info@bchandsandvoices.com](mailto:info@bchandsandvoices.com).

*“One of the great aspects about being a grandparent is you get a second chance. I love story telling and began making up stories for my daughter Jennifer when she was a child. But like most young mothers, life was busy so I never recorded any of her favorite stories. When our first grandchild was born, the storytelling began anew. ‘Maggie and the Raccoon’ soon became one of Connor’s favorites because the characters are a real part of his life.”*

~Patricia Trottier

# Fall Workshop in Review

By Anja Rosenke, Richmond



Each year, BC Hands & Voices is proud to host a full-day educational workshop for parents, providing parents with an opportunity to learn, connect and socialize while offering childcare for the youngsters. This year on October 27, 2012, Children's Hearing and Speech Centre of BC graciously provided the venue for our fall workshop. And what a turnout! Approximately 100 people attended, and it was great to see parents, grandparents and children alike in the mix. The interesting and revealing stories of our two presenters and board members – Alayna Finley and Felicia D'A-mato – had our audience riveted in the morning. And in the afternoon, a question-and-answer period with a panel of deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) young adults, facilitated by Teresa Kazemir, was eye-opening and informative.

Since the vast majority of deaf and hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents – I believe the statistic is around 90% or so – it can be difficult for

parents to fully understand their child's experiences, as hard as they might try. And we know our dedicated parents really try! That's why it was so great to see so many people out at the workshop. You can't get much better than firsthand stories about growing up deaf or hard of hearing than from individuals who have done so themselves.

It seemed that the main message taken away that day was yes, there will be challenges and yes, at times obstacles may present themselves, but dream BIG for your child and shoot for the stars! Our children are capable of greatness. Each person is born with a gift, and as parents, we can help our children discover and develop it, whether it's a love of language, the gift of listening and empathizing with others, a passion for music or athletic talent.

Though parents generally tend to play a positive role in their deaf or hard of hearing child's life by

**Two web links that were mentioned at the workshop are listed below for your enjoyment. Check them out!**

**"A Perspective On Hearing", a short documentary by Kelsey Grazier on Vimeo**  
<http://vimeo.com/44541800>

**"We Are Going to be Friends" song by the White Stripes, D-PAN Music Video with ASL on YouTube** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbLz9-riRGM>

being involved and providing good educational and extra-curricular opportunities, limits can still come from within. They may take the form of holding back, feeling ashamed about their hearing loss, avoiding group situations, resorting to social bluffing, or simply thinking limiting thoughts. A lack of positive older d/hh role models can also contribute to this.

In particular, Felicia and Alayna talked about group situations, which can be very challenging for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Just trying to lip-read and keep up with the pace of conversation as it shifts from person to person can be exhausting. And if you miss something that is said, it's easy to lose the overall meaning of the conversation. Quite often, people don't want to draw attention to themselves when this happens, so we carry on, nodding and laughing on cue even though we can no longer follow. At some point, we've all done this – it's called social bluffing. But for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, this experience can be even more frustrating, and one might be tempted to avoid group situations altogether.

Enter the paradigm shift: *"...a change in your way of thinking, a revolution, a transformation. It doesn't just happen, rather is driven by an agent of change."* – Thomas Kuhn

There are, however, ways to feel more successful in these situations – if you can change your outlook, or shift your paradigm. Start out by telling the people that you're with what you need, how you communicate or what you understood. This is a big first step, and we can encourage our children to do this from a very early age. "Can you come closer so I can hear you better? Do you mind facing me so I can see your lips?" It was pointed out that with deaf or hard of hearing people who speak well, it can be easy to forget that they can't hear so well. And as hearing aids and cochlear implants get sleeker and smaller, it may not always be obvious that a person is hard of hearing or deaf. Felicia found that once she started opening up about this, she was able to build more trust with people and forge stronger relationships.

Developing strategies to initiate conversations and setting up a social environment to your benefit can help too. Alayna suggested that families

think ahead before going to family gatherings and think of some activities or even games they can bring. This allows for hands-on fun and connections to be made between family members regardless of communication styles.

The presenters both mentioned that they also try to balance out their environments. They explained this to mean having different circles of friends, and depending on how they feel on a given day, choosing to spend time with either hearing or deaf/ hh friends and family.

Felicia and Alayna also expressed the importance of introducing your child to deaf and hard of hearing role models. Many children don't meet deaf or hard of hearing adults until they are older. And if you look, there are deaf and hard of hearing people doing some amazing things out there!

Some better-known examples are:

- Vincent Serf – recognized as the father of the Internet.
- Stephen Hopson – Wall Street stockbroker, motivational speaker, bestselling author and first every deaf pilot in the world.
- Gertrude Ederle – competitive swimmer, Olympic champion, and in 1926 became the first woman to cross the English Channel.
- Heidi Zimmer - mountaineer who has climbed 3 of the Seven Summits (the highest summit on each continent) and aims to reach all 7!
- Sean Forbes – American deaf hip-hop artist, performer, songwriter, co-founder of the non-profit organization D-PAN, Deaf Professionals Arts Network.

*"What a caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly."* – Richard Bach.

Role models closer to home, who participated in the afternoon guest panel, ranged in age from 17 to 30 years of age. They included Kelsey Grazier, Jesse Kazemir, Bowen Tang, Felicia D'Amato, Cole Sanderson and Alayna Finley. These remarkable young adults had much to share about how technology helps them communicate, special interests, how they practice self advocacy and the role their families played in their acceptance and inclusion over the years.



The group agreed that technology plays a key role in their lives – from vibrating alarm clocks and flashing smoke detectors to the FMs they had worn during their school years. They all rely of course on cell phones and mobile devices for texting and messaging. Software applications like Skype and FaceTime have changed the way ASL-users communicate, as the ability to have face-to-face conversations in their chosen language is not only convenient but also more personal and natural.

The Internet has also brought so much information to our fingertips. Parents were urged to prepare their child in advance for special events, outings or new experiences by gathering material online. One example was looking up song lyrics before attending a music concert. In addition, the panellists suggested to parents to switch on the captioning option on your TVs even if your child can't read yet. And speaking of captioning, what kid doesn't like to go to the movies? So the move towards more and more captioning in theatres is great too.

Growing up, all of the young adults on the panel had taken part in a great variety of extra-curricular activities and sports. Be it swimming, volleyball or baseball, playing instruments, taking part in clubs at school or traveling – nothing stopped them. And this is a good reminder for us parents! By trying out different activities, our children will discover for themselves where their interests lie. And adaptations can always be made in order to accommodate a child's communication needs in a chosen activity – like hand signals with the baseball coach or one-on-one swim lessons.

With regards to traveling, one participant mentioned that although a language barrier in a foreign country can be intimidating, she deals with communication challenges every day, so traveling has fostered a real confidence in her. On school trips, with a sports team, music troupe or independently, the panellists have each sought out opportunities to see the world.

In travel or everyday life, a concept that kept coming up was the need for self-advocacy, or speaking up for yourself and your communication needs. This is a skill that we begin to introduce to children at a very young age and it takes time, practice and self-awareness to develop. Self-



advocacy will also take different forms at school, at a sleepover or at swim lessons. One panellist pointed out that advocating for yourself isn't easy. "You're putting yourself out there, exposing yourself". She remembered at school sometimes friends would say "oh, never mind" when she missed something, but for her that wasn't ok. It was important for her to hear everything that was said by her friends – even the trivial stuff.

Self-advocacy can also mean telling the airline staff that you won't be able to hear the intercom announcements on the flight and ask that someone come and tell you what is said. In sports, one panellist mentioned it was helpful to not go first in swim lessons so that he could watch a few kids do it first. Another tip was to tell the instructor or coach that you need a clear line of sight so you can understand their instructions better.

*"I don't really see hearing loss as a disability; it's just a different way of being. We just need to ask 'what do these kids need in order to communicate and understand?'"*

– Kelsey Grazier

As the presenters and panellists shared their stories throughout the day, one thing was obvious – these young adults had first and foremost been loved and accepted for who they were by their families. And they each spoke of this with gratitude. One panellist remembered the long conversations his parents had with him as a child. Another said, "Growing up, I was just Alayna" and only realized later that she communicated differently. Another said that in his family everybody learned to sign, so that was the norm for him. Yet another said that her parents never set limits as

to what she could do, letting her try whatever interested her, and this carried over into how she perceived herself.

As parents, the perspective – or paradigm – we take towards our children’s potential can play a big role in shaping not only their self-image, but also their outlook on their abilities and their future. Realistically parents know that challenges will arise as our d/hh children participate in and explore the world around them. So by recognizing these “limits” and teaching our children to re-frame their approach and work through them, we provide them with important life skills needed to persevere and succeed. And by demonstrating assertiveness, a positive attitude and creative problem-solving skills ourselves, our children start to believe from a very young age that anything is possible. Our children can and should reach for the stars and have lots of fun along the way!

*“Deaf people can do anything...just not hear.”* – a quote from a past president of Gaulladet University and personal mantra of Cole Sanderson.

*BC Hands & Voices would like to extend a big thank you to the BC Early Hearing Program, BC Children’s Hospital Foundation and the Gwynn Morgan-Patricia Trottier Foundation and to Children’s Hearing & Speech Centre of BC for the use of their facility.*

*We are also grateful to Dan Paccioretti for supplying the audio equipment, setting up the gym for optimal hearing and for being available to our audience for questions and information.*

*And as with all events such as this, we recognize and appreciate the many hours put in by board members and volunteers, our presenters and panelists.*

*Thank you everyone for your time and hard work. Your contributions all helped to make the Fall Workshop 2012 a big success!*

## A Big Thank You

**We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous donation:**

**Connor Kipling**

**Kim Shauer**

**Patricia Trottier (donated copies of her book Maggie and the Raccoon to BC H&V)**

**All donations help us to provide more support to families with deaf/hard of hearing children in B.C.**

Drop us a line at [info@bchandsandvoices.com](mailto:info@bchandsandvoices.com)

We welcome your stories, questions, news, thoughts, or suggestions!

Let us know how we can support you!





11:00 am to 3:00 pm  
at Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services  
4334 Victory St., Burnaby BC

Hosted by:

BC Hands and Voices  
Guide By Your Side Program  
CHHA BC Parents' Branch  
Family and Community Services  
Family Network for Deaf Children

Registration:

Pre-registration is required so we know how many people to expect!  
**REGISTER ONLINE by May 31**  
at [www.CHHAparents.bc.ca](http://www.CHHAparents.bc.ca)

Parking:

Parking is available on Victory Street and on McKay Avenue

Coming from out of town?

- Travel grants available for people coming from outside of the Lower Mainland.  
- Limited accommodations available at Victory Hill.

Please contact us for details at:  
[info@CHHAparents.bc.ca](mailto:info@CHHAparents.bc.ca)

Join us for a fun day!

We will provide:

- Hot dog lunch
- Entertainment and games for the kids
- An opportunity to mix and mingle with other families and with youth/young adults who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Please bring with you:

- a dessert to share (note no freezer/fridge/oven)
- drinks for your family (No alcohol, please)
- lawn chairs or blanket to sit on

**Rain or Shine! Free admission!**

Donations gratefully accepted at the event.

Register today at [www.CHHAparents.bc.ca](http://www.CHHAparents.bc.ca)

# It's a Big World Out There!

## Looking Ahead at the Post-Five World

By Alayna Finley, Langley

In the last issue, we featured three resource programs available to families entering and experiencing the K-12 world - Canada Deafblind Association – BC Chapter, Canada Hard of Hearing Association - BC Parents' Branch, and Family Network for Deaf Children. In this issue, we feature two more programs: Family and Community Services and the Provincial Outreach Program.

### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (FCS) under Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (PDHHS)

Interview with Melissa Mykle (formerly Campbell), Program Coordinator

#### Who does your organization serve?

We focus on families who have deaf and hard of hearing members with children ages 5-19. Our office is located in Burnaby, BC; however, we serve families in the province of British Columbia. Our services vary in different regions. Please contact us to discuss services that meet your family's needs. Also, please feel free to contact us once your child has turned 4 and we can set up a meeting between your early intervention agency and ours to ensure smooth transition to services and resources.

#### What resources and supports are available from your organization for families with children turning age 5?

Our services include but are not limited to: Parent Coaching, Parent Support, Family Days, Sign Language Development, Literacy Development, Children and Youth Programs. Depending on families' goals and criteria, all of the above services are available on an individual or group basis.

#### Contact FCS at

[http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/pdhhs/community\\_services.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/pdhhs/community_services.htm)

[Melissa.Mykle@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Melissa.Mykle@gov.bc.ca)

V/TTY: 604 660 1800

### PROVINCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM under BCSD

Interview with Lisa Meneian (formerly Cecile), Program Coordinator

#### Who does your organization serve?

POP provides programming consultation and support to BC school districts.

#### What resources and supports are available from your organization for families with children turning age 5?

- **Consultation** with teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and regular classroom teachers, parents,

and other educational team members;

- **Facilitating Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**
- **Assessing** students' strengths and needs with recommendations for educational programs
- **Video-conference** opportunities for staff, students and families
- **Curriculum support** through the use of technology
- **Literacy and social responsibility** direct support to connect students across BC
- **Assisting with in-service district resource people**
- **Interpreter and educational assistant support and professional development**
- **Professional development support to TODHHs**
- **Networking among parent groups, service organizations and school programs**
- **Workshops** for staff and parents of D/HH students with topics including types of hearing loss, indications and educational implications of hearing loss, language development considerations, using and maintaining hearing aids and FM equipment, myths and expectations of D/HH students, and strategies for communication.

**Contact POP\* at**

[http://www.sd41.bc.ca/programs/provincial\\_outreach\\_program.htm](http://www.sd41.bc.ca/programs/provincial_outreach_program.htm)

[lisa.meneian-cecile@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:lisa.meneian-cecile@sd41.bc.ca)

V/TTY: 604 664 8300

*\*Should you want to contact us – you can contact Lisa Meneian, or your school district's Director of Special Education, or you can write a short request to the Principal for the BC Provincial School of the Deaf requesting a consultation visit.*

## It's Time to Renew Your Membership

Please show your support for BC Hands & Voices by mailing in your membership fees (\$15 for an individual or family, \$25 for an agency). Our membership form is available online at [www.bchandsandvoices.com/sign-up](http://www.bchandsandvoices.com/sign-up).

Paid members of BC Hands & Voices receive a colour printed copy of our BC newsletter as well as the larger Hands & Voices newspaper, called the Communicator, three times per year.

We are a non-profit, charitable organization and depend on donations and membership fees – these allow us to offer workshops, family events, and maintain our website ([bchandsandvoices.com](http://bchandsandvoices.com)). Please send your cheque, made out to BC Hands & Voices, to:

BC Hands & Voices  
1965 Rodger Ave.  
Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 1B8



## Donate Now

Your donations will go towards providing more support to families with deaf/hard of hearing children in B.C.

BC Hands and Voices is a registered charity  
(Charity Registration Number: 83838-4428 RR0001).

To make a donation, please issue a cheque to  
BC Hands and Voices, and mail to:

1965 Rodger Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V3C 1B8.

A tax deduction receipt will be issued for any donation of \$25 or more.



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Contact us via email:

[info@bchandsandvoices.com](mailto:info@bchandsandvoices.com)

Visit our website:

[bchandsandvoices.com](http://bchandsandvoices.com)

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