

THE STAR

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Developmental
Disabilities Association

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BY: ALANNA HENDREN
DDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Just when we thought a viral, global epidemic that only the likes of our distant ancestors had experienced, fires caused by Global Warming are raging through North America, Europe, Siberia, North Africa and Israel like they never have before. Fires had already destroyed parts of Australia during their summer season. In the meantime, the planet is also experiencing more floods and rising sea levels, like the one that indirectly caused a waterfront building to collapse in Miami.

The United Nations released a report in the middle of all this that basically said our house, Earth, is on fire, the warming that is causing these fires and rising sea levels has been fueled by humans, and we must eliminate our reliance on fossil fuels immediately. Even if we could do this, some of the wounds we've already inflicted on Mother Nature could take 1,000 years to heal.

It is clear that we need to kill the oil industry and use advanced technology to let that happen without total global disruption. But the people in charge of oil in the world – dictators, tyrants, corrupt politicians, trans-national corporations – have a great deal of power to keep us oil-dependent and show no interest in giving it up. The situation seems hopeless, but one rather feeble power some of us still have left have is the vote. Environmental messages and the warnings of indigenous elders who know the land don't seem to work but if we held our politicians accountable for sacrificing much of the life on our planet for the sake of oil and a few fast bucks, it could be a start.

This effort would have to be international but if it is not expended, all humankind will be lost. We know this now. Most world religions through history warned that spiritual forces would destroy the world in something like an apocalypse but it turns out that human forces are destroying the world, only humans can solve the problem, and yet we are not acting to save ourselves. The planet will hopefully survive and replace us with less destructive creatures.



NEW CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE: FRASERVIEW

DDA, the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver School Board have joined forces to create new, inclusive childcare spaces in Fraserview, Vancouver. Now open is the Fraserview Child Development Centre located on the rooftop of seismically replaced Sir Sandford Fleming Elementary. The Fraserview CDC offers 69 spaces for infants, toddlers and children ages 3 to 5. As part of DDA's mandate of inclusion, we will be using the space to run programs that also support children with developmental disabilities and their families.

"DDA is thrilled to build on our partnership with the City of Vancouver to open this new Child Development site, which will support a diversity of children with a wide range of abilities. At DDA, inclusion means everyone," says DDA Executive Director Alanna Hendren.

Operating and managing this beautiful facility will be DDA's very own Leanna Logan who has been managing DDA CDCs for over 30 years. The ultimate purpose is to help families in the neighbourhood find care for their children, ease the transition into kindergarten and further strengthen community bonds.

"Childcare is critical to the economic recovery from COVID, as it allows parents, particularly mothers who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, to participate in the labour force knowing that their children are well cared for in a safe, learning environment," says Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart in a City of Vancouver media release.

Consisting of over 16,000 square feet of both dedicated indoor and outdoor space, the facility was meticulously designed and decorated with the wellbeing and care of children in mind. The colourful outdoor play area is meant to provide a safe play environment and create learning opportunities in nature. The indoor area thoughtfully uses unique tools and supplies to foster creativity and expression. More importantly, the entire space delightfully recreates a feeling of home for everyone, especially the children.

Developmental Disabilities Association would like to thank the City of Vancouver, Vancouver School Board and the Government of British Columbia for helping us move this project from the drawing board and into reality. Developmental Disabilities Association is a community living agency that provides over 50 community-based programs and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in Vancouver and Richmond. We create extended networks of support, invest in individual needs, and strive for an inclusive and safe community.

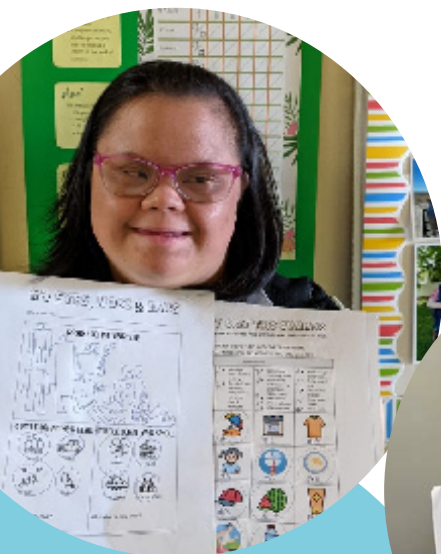


MAIN ST. WALK-IN: SUMMER WALKING CHALLENGE

This summer, the Drop-In challenged everyone to put their best walking shoes on and head outside to take on the Summer Walking Challenge!

Over 12 weeks, participants went on adventurous scavenger hunts and took on other exciting activities like fitness bingo and "Tune into your five senses". Participants would go on epic journeys with the goal of completing as many challenges as they could. At the end of summer, we counted up the number of challenges that each participant completed.

Congratulations to Dana Faris and Alexandra Yee who triumphed over all the challenges this summer! Also a special mention to Jocelyn Nolasco and Raymond Zhou, who both did amazing work. Thank you to all other participants who took part in this challenge!



CREEKSIDE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE: COMMUNITY GARDEN

Creekside Child Development Centre, DDA's childcare program located within Olympic Village, recently acquired a community garden plot at Hinge Park. This space was kindly donated to us by The Village on False Creek Community Garden Society. The children and staff have slowly started to plant herbs and strawberries. The children were taught what hose to use when watering and how to care for the garden they were given. Each classroom has set up a schedule in order to ensure that the garden can grow and flourish in the upcoming months. Everyone at Creekside is looking forward to adding garden decorations and doing more planting. The children and staff have met other friendly faces within the community garden and are excited to be a part of this neighbourhood project. It has been such a warm welcome from the other garden members; the children were even gifted extra plants and seeds to help start this gardening adventure.



VICTORIA DAY PROGRAM

A few months ago, Victoria Day Program (shared with Main St drop in) was fortunate enough to acquire a garden box at Brewer's Park. After helping plant a variety of vegetables, watering weekly, and caring for them, our clients were finally able to harvest some zucchini, radishes, and cucumbers! We have enjoyed using the zucchini to bake muffins in cooking class, and compare the cucumber to store-bought. Our tomato plants are full, and we are patiently waiting for them to ripen! We are looking forward to see what else we can cook up with the garden box goodies!



DDA CELEBRATES DIVERSITY WITH: INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH

By: Ratnam Mathur

On a lovely summer day in June, through a Zoom get-together, we celebrated Indigenous History Month. It was a lively event, presented by our special invited guests, Ms. Gilakasla Nugwaun and her daughter; both belong to the LaDonna Wiks Stars of the North Drum Group.

Gilakasla started off with a First Nations prayer and then showed us her blankets, drums and dream catchers. She told us the story of their group's origins and that they represent the Northwest Coast people from Tlowitsis Mumtigala Nation of Alert Bay on Vancouver Island and the Sto:lo people of Seabird Island in Chilliwack, BC.

She told us that Stars of the North Drum Group started in August 2009 with the guidance of their elders sharing their wisdom and knowledge. They passed down the stories that their mother, LaDonna Wiks Joseph, put into her own songs. The songs are mostly written in English but incorporates their Kwakwaka'wakw language.

Gilakasla and her daughter were not raised on reserve nor with their native people or culture, so they started on a learning journey of their language and culture through songs with the guidance of their grandmother, Christine Joseph Twance and the elders of the community.

In her own words Gilakasla describes the traditional blankets, "The button on the blankets we wear are all hand stitched. Every bead, button, sequence, and every stitch by our mother LaDonna Wiks Joseph with the guidance of our Auntie Elizabeth Dawson, represent who we are and where are we from."

We all raised our hands as she gave thanks to their community event facilitators for the invite, to the First Nations People for the territory we stand on and for allowing them to share a cultural journey through their own songs.

We ended the event with a First Nations' meal of rice and salmon. It was such a wonderful day of learning, joy and friendship!



NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: SEPTEMBER 30TH

The Federal government has passed legislation creating a new holiday, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to recognize the tragic history and lasting effects of Canada's residential school system, and to honour Indigenous survivors, their families and communities.

The date will be September 30th this year. The B.C. government is consulting with Indigenous leaders on whether or not to keep this date for future years or whether to choose an alternative date.

About Truth and Reconciliation – from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Website:

For over 150 years, residential schools operated in Canada. More than 150,000 children attended these schools. Many never returned. Often underfunded and overcrowded, these schools were used as a tool of assimilation by the Canadian state and churches. Thousands of students suffered physical and sexual abuse. All suffered from loneliness and a longing to be home with their families. The damages inflicted by these schools continue to this day.

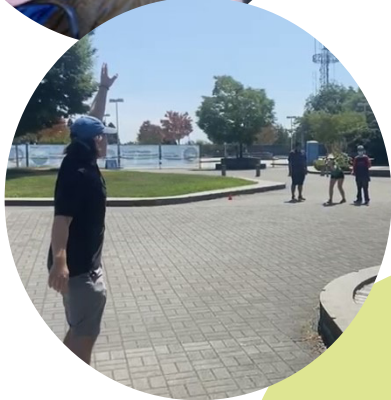
In 2009, the TRC began a multi-year process to listen to Survivors, their families, communities and others affected by the residential school system. In 2015, the NCTR officially opened and the statements, documents and other materials collected through the TRC formed the sacred heart of the Centre.



DDA OLYMPICS: GRANDVIEW

By: Mahima Kakadekar

The Grandview Olympics—or as the folks at Grandview called it, “the Great Grandview Games”—were held on July 29th during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. There were many great games to be observed and even better competitors. Our host’s Dexter Allen and Chung Da Hsu did a good job narrating the epic highs and lows of the day and riling up the crowd of spectators. We had the 100 meter dash, discus golf throwing, paperboat sailing, pool noodle javelin toss, and so much more! Gordon Peers came out on top with four gold medals, but all the clients at Grandview put on an athletic performance to be remembered. Excitement is already building for the next Great Grandview Games!



BRIGHTENING OUR HEARTS: THE CARNIVAL AT GRANDVIEW

By: Liliana Tsui

Sure, it is true that life is about all the memories we create, and the carnival was definitely a great occasion for all Grandview clients and staff to create some memories together. The weather didn't disappoint and Beaconsfield Park was the perfect place to make this carnival a successful event. Lots of games, prizes, food and smiles were part of this celebration, where clients and staff showed their best skills playing egg and spoon race, water relay, molky, lawn bowling and more.

A special shout-out to staff and clients that worked behind the scenes for this outdoor event that created lots of excitement and fun.



TILE PAINTING: MAIN ST. DROP-IN

This summer Main St. Drop-In teamed up with United Way and helped paint 28 tiles for an art display for Vancouver's Sunset Neighborhood. We are excited to see the fired tiles displayed on picnic tables in the neighbourhood this fall.



DDA EXPLORES: VANCOUVER MURAL FESTIVAL

By Ratnam Mathur

The Vancouver Mural festival is a great way to know your local artists and see their works. Curzon House explored the artists and took a walk around town to see the beautiful, fantastic artwork and appreciate the local artists. We were amazed at their works, one of the clients from Curzon said, "Oh! He paints just like me."

Vancouver Mural festival is non-profit and dedicated to artistic and cultural development in Metro Vancouver. There are 60 beautiful Murals in 11 neighborhoods of the city.

We did not get to see all of them but what we could was a unique learning and satisfying experience for all of us. A great way to convey the message and stories through their art.

Kudos to all our gifted local artists!



VPD: WHEN PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES GO MISSING

In April 2021, a boy with autism and limited ability to communicate went missing in Vancouver and was later found unharmed by the VPD. To further understand the police department's protocol around investigating missing persons cases that involve individuals with disabilities, DDA's Communications Manager, Evan Kelly sat down with Lori Hemm, Program Coordinator with the Diversity, Inclusion & Indigenous Relations Section of the Vancouver Police Department.

Does the VPD have a protocol in place when looking for someone who has a developmental disability?

Yes – Any diverse abilities individual including developmentally disabled are considered “high risk” and so certain protocols are put in place. The principles of respect, compassion and empathy must guide all missing person investigations.

A missing person incident is inherently a stressful situation for family members and this cannot be overlooked by investigators. When conducting these investigations, individual circumstances and individualized risk factors must be considered, especially for more vulnerable persons who are likely to face societal challenges that increase their risk of going missing and may act as barriers to reporting.

You mentioned that individuals with developmental disabilities are considered “high risk”; in the cases of missing people, what usually defines an individual as “high risk”?

A “high-risk missing person investigation” is defined within B.C. Provincial Policing Standards as one in which the missing person's health or well-being may be in immediate danger due to being a much younger person or much older person, persons with physical illness, disability, addictions or mental health concerns, persons who may be suicidal and persons involved in activities that may place them at increased risk of harm. It may also be they are a member of an identifiable group that is at an increased risk of harm or if they are believed to be the victim of a crime.

What are some topics covered by the training police undertake, specific to working with individuals who are neurodiverse?

Many organizations in B.C. are invited to teach and raise awareness about certain developmental disabilities. For example, we've worked with the Huntington Society of B.C., the Parkinson's Society of B.C. and Alzheimer's Society in the past. Our frontline officers have also received presentations from Geriatric Mental Health and the Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

In addition, these officers are all enrolled in an Autism eLearning course, which was created by the Pacific Autism Society in collaboration with numerous police departments. The course includes training videos that are specific to police work and autism, as well as distinct modules on neurological and neuromuscular diseases.

And when officers encounter an individual who is non-verbal, how do they handle that?

Since 2012, the VPD, along with many other policing jurisdictions in the lower mainland have signed a memorandum of understanding with Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility, which gives us access to American Sign Language interpreters at any time of day. Family members and Support Workers may be called in, specifically if it is a high-risk situation. A child with ASD, an individual with mental health problems, and an elderly person with dementia for example.

We are also working on new visual aid cards that officers can provide onsite to diverse ability individuals who may be deaf or hard of hearing

When searching for a missing person, how much is a person's family or caregiver involved?

Family members, caregivers, friends, and anyone associated with the missing person are asked to participate proactively in the search for the individuals and are utilized in the search by providing answers to certain questions, such as where the person likes to spend time, do they use transit, can they drive and what is the best way to communicate with them.

Can you elaborate more about who you connect with to get the information when working with people with developmental disabilities?

In addition to the ones I've mentioned, the VPD has developed partnerships with Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Pacific Autism Society, and your organization, of course, DDA. With the community members at VRS Communities Director of Support Services, we have also implemented a survey regarding their experiences with police and what we can do better. We are looking at providing safety and information presentations to VRS Communities starting in the fall of 2021 based on these surveys.

How do you convey messages to the public when someone with a disability goes missing?

Our primary goal is to provide enough information to the public to quickly and safely locate the missing person. This is usually done through news releases, statements, or social media posts. It may also require the release of personal and sensitive information if a person's disability is relevant to the search. It may be important to tell the public about it, as this information could lead to the quick recovery of the person.

When releasing information or conveying messaging, how does the VPD ensure the protection of privacy for people with disabilities?

We are alive to the stigma that exists around people with diverse abilities and issues that could be caused by making this information public, and we are careful with the wording we use to avoid appearing as if we are labelling people based on their disability. Support is requested from experts in these areas if necessary.

Once a person is located, we quickly privatize online and social media posts to make their personal information invisible to the public.

Thanks for all this great information Lori!



JOBS WEST SUCESS: ANNIE C.

Congratulations to Annie on her return to Cineplex! Annie has shown resilience and commitment while waiting for the theatre to reopen due to the pandemic. Since 2017, Jobs West has supported Annie with preparing, finding and obtaining employment. At Cineplex, Annie can often be found at the front desk scanning tickets and helping customers find their seats. She has also been keeping everyone safe as she is responsible for sanitizing and cleaning. Since she has returned to work she has taken on new duties, way to go Annie! Annie has a real passion for customer service and helping others. We wish her all the best!



TECH REVIEWS

BY: KEEGAN NEWBERRY

MITA (Mental Imagery Therapy for Autism)

MITA (Mental Imagery Therapy for Autism) is an app based on Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT), one of the best supported therapies for individuals with Autism. Developed by Boston University, this game-like app contains both verbal and non verbal "brain exercises" aimed at improving response to multiple cues, motivation and self management. The app specifically targets a cognitive ability known as prefrontal synthesis; combining mental objects. This ability is fundamental in developing complex language like noun-adjective combinations and is typically impaired in individuals with autism, leading to what is commonly known as tunnel vision. Hence, MITA is targeted towards individuals with special needs or struggling with delayed language.

PRODUCT MITA	Ease of Use: Easy with Practice ★★★★☆
PRODUCER: ImagiRationLLC	Adaptability: Wide Variety of Settings Available ★★★★☆
COST Free (with options of in-app purchase)	Accessibility: Suitable for Almost All Users ★★★★★
COMPATABILITY iOS/Android	Cost vs. Value: Free ★★★★★
SUB-CATEGORY Support	

MITA starts with simple exercises like matching and sorting that trains the user to attend to a single feature such as size or color. Over time, the exercises increase in difficulty and encourage the user to attend to 2 or more features simultaneously, such as both color and size. By offering a multitude of pictures and puzzles, from orientation to the type of puzzles, it can keep a user interested for a longer period of time, helping to maintain attention. However, for some users, this can be overwhelming. In this case, caregivers can adjust the number of puzzles and games the user needs to complete their daily session. Additionally, since it is a cognitively challenging app, caregivers can encourage users to take physical breaks too.

The app gives instant praise after solving a puzzle as well as the big "Play Time" reward, which includes games like popping balloons, coloring, and basketball. All these games are targeted to improving motor and spatial recognition. This feature can motivate a user to be consistent with the app.

The verbal exercises offer a more conventional, verbal approach for facilitating language acquisition, starting with simple vocabulary, and progressing towards higher forms of language (such as adjectives, prepositions, and flexible syntax). It only uses a dozen or so words that can be learned fairly easily. MITA employs a drag and drop feature over a tap interaction in all the exercises. As with most tap features, users end up intentionally tapping all answers until the correct one is found. Alternatively, drag and drop forces the user to invest a lot of attention into holding and dragging it to the correct position. Providing users to solve the puzzles first mentally.

It is important to note that MITA does require caregiver intervention when setting up the app. Once it is downloaded, caregivers are asked to complete an evaluation of the user's language and cognitive skills. Then every 3 months, caregivers are asked to reevaluate the user's skill. Progress reports are presented through charts and success rates. This quality is a double-edged sword: on one hand, caregivers are able to completely personalize the settings by choosing the exact level of difficulty, number of activities presented and frequency of playtime. On the other hand, caregivers will need to remain diligent to monitor if a user's difficulty level has changed, and adjust the app settings.

SEPTEMBER IS
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT MONTH
WWW.JOBWEST.CA

Jobs West enables people with developmental disabilities to prepare for, find & maintain community-based employment placements.

We hold workshops for employers on:

- Unconscious Bias
- Disability Awareness
- How to Become an Inclusive Employer - Tools and Accommodations

NEWSLETTER

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