



THE STAR

WINTER 2023



Developmental
Disabilities Association

WHEREFORE ART THOU, COMMUNITY?

By Alanna Hendren



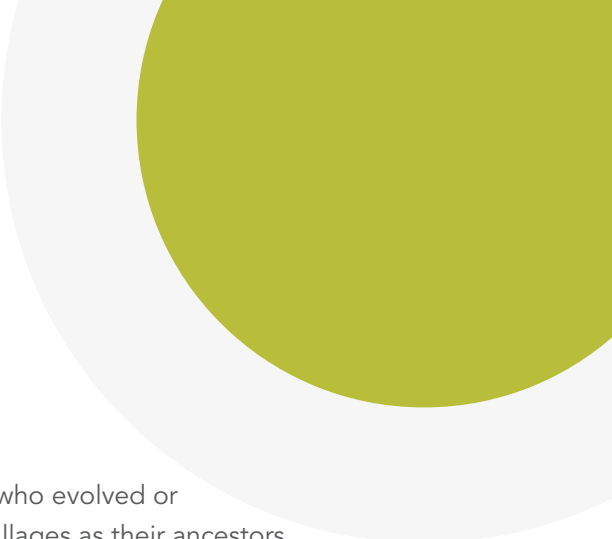
I'm not sure what 'community' means anymore although the word is used quite liberally in the "Community Living" community. It used to mean "community living" instead of "institution living" and made more sense back in the day. Today everyone lives in the community and all institutions are closed other than prisons.

When I think of 'community', I think of neighborhoods or groups of people who live around places like grocery stores, hospitals, schools and other services. By this definition, Vancouver has lots of communities, like Kerrisdale, Kits, the West End, the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Langara, Strathcona, The Drive, Shaughnessy, UBC, on and on. Each of these communities has a distinct history and its own set of cultural norms that have evolved over the last 150 or so years. Richmond is much newer than Vancouver, having been built up only over the past 50 years or so, but some of its earlier farms still remain.

Most Canadian communities these days are transient. People buy homes, sell homes, move out, move in. Some communities are more stable than others but very few British Columbians today live in the same home as their grandparents did. Vancouver and Richmond are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic cities. A lot of residents live thousands of miles away from their extended families, even if they're just from Toronto but people come to Vancouver and Richmond from all over the world.

Communities also exist on-line for every recreational, professional, business, political, religious, sexual and common interest. People in these communities can also be global.

Traditional Indigenous communities in Canada were severely disrupted and many were destroyed when Europeans showed up and threatened their histories, languages, traditions, interests, and identities. Although the British signed no treaties with the Indigenous people of B.C. they still swept them out of their homes and into reservations. Colonizers sent Indigenous children to alien European schools and sold their ancestral lands to new settlers. Many Indigenous communities are now becoming prosperous but this cannot compensate for all they lost when they lost their lands, languages, customs and traditions. Today Indigenous people come to Vancouver from a diversity of First Nations, often without settling for very long. They are all far away from their extended families and sources of mutual support.



Geographic communities grew organically from the earliest homo sapiens who evolved or otherwise settled there thousands of years ago. People lived in the same villages as their ancestors did. As populations grew though, land and natural resources became increasingly scarce, so some people began to move on, literally looking for greener pastures. This is how the planet became populated and we now know that Homo sapiens arrived in North America from Asia 40,000 years ago. Some people settled and some moved on, changing, adapting and creating new genetic variations as they moved south. Indigenous people knew how to meet their needs from the undisturbed bounty of nature, but Europeans did not and so brought new technologies and other adaptations with them.

The Europeans who settled the New World and places like Vancouver were all people who found it more attractive to take long, risky journeys across the world than to stay in the communities they came from. New settlers formed communities of migrants and we are still pretty transient. This makes us good at welcoming and including immigrants, although we're not perfect, but the downside is that we cannot create communities of people who are related and therefore feel compelled to help each other. Urban Canadian neighbours often don't know each other. In older settled communities like those found in Europe, most everyone has lived in the same place as their ancestors for centuries, everyone knows each other and their family history. People feel compelled to help each other because they have been helping each other for generations. There is a strong social commitment between families and neighbours. These communities take care of their own but are hugely challenged by immigrants. It is difficult for new residents with no extended family to fit in with a homogenous population that has the same language, traditions, social norms, customs and celebrations and where everyone else knows each other.

"Community Living" made sense 50 years ago but I'm not sure what it means today. People with developmental disabilities live and work in so many different communities these days, just like everyone else. Maybe it's time for a rebrand?

Thankfully, the DDA community is here to help support people in our geographic and virtual communities. Our clients come from all over the world and our staff, who also come from all over the world ensure they are connected to all their potential communities of interest and support. We could not do this without government funding but nor could we provide the supports we do without our employees, whose diversity gives us great strength and creates great opportunities for the people who we support.

INCLUSION ART SHOW

In October, DDA participated in the 19th annual Inclusion Art Show at Heritage Hall. It was nice to gather again in person and see all the incredible art produced by over 200 individuals with diverse abilities from across the Lower Mainland. DDA had 23 artists submit paintings for the show and many more participating with pieces of pottery and the show attracted many people all day. DDA sold about 20 pieces of pottery and a few paintings. One former staff member from West 8th purchased Crazy Cats completed by multiple artists from West 8th and proudly hung it in her apartment with her own crazy cats in the photo.

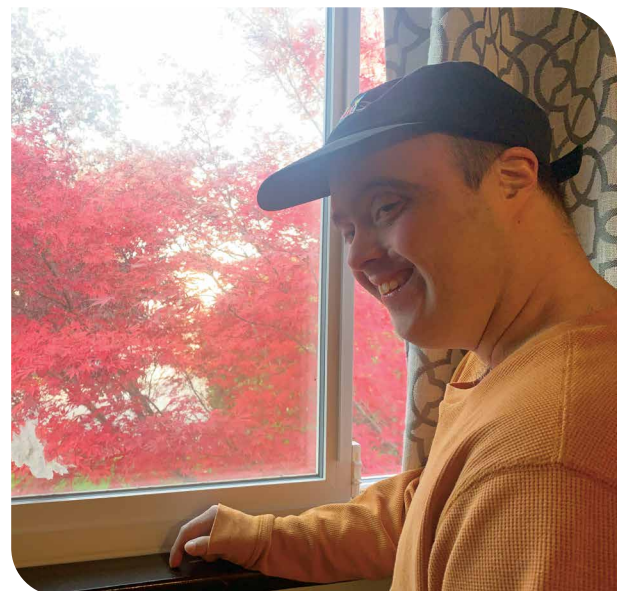
Thanks to everyone who came out and supported us at Heritage Hall and to Kim Almond for all the hard work she does for our art program.



BEAUTIFUL BRITISH COLUMBIA

BY RATNAM MATHUR

During this season in British Columbia, the picturesque city is adorned with splendid displays creating a festive ambiance. Curzon's residents revel in the charm of their homes and neighborhood, visibly expressing their deep appreciation. Whether gazing from their bedroom windows or stepping outside, the undeniable love for their home is palpable, reflecting the sense of pride and joy within the community.



CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AT CURZON HOUSE

BY RATNAM MATHUR

Residents at our Curzon group home have been learning Chinese Calligraphy from Jiliang Yao, a Richmond artist from China who teaches this specialized art form. Chinese Calligraphy, serves as a means of self-expression and cultivation. Yao and his wife both teach in the City of Richmond and organize events where they give away calligraphic Chinese words, a tradition that symbolizes the act of giving blessings. Curzon residents are thoroughly enjoying this distinctive art form.



HALLOWEEN FUN 2023

Another spooktacular Halloween has come and gone! DDA staff and clients alike had a great time from carving pumpkins and getting dressed up to having a huge pizza party in the Cambie and King George Park. It ended up being a warm and sunny fall afternoon. Many of our group home clients dressed up and had pizza and cake in the park. Thankfully, the rain gods stayed away and everyone had a great time.

The kids at our Champlain Child Development Centre got busy carving their Jack 'O' Lanterns. Staff got in on the action and went as Plain M & Ms (no nuts allowed).

The youngsters from Brock Junction went to Richmond Farms Pumpkin Patch before heading out to trick or treat.

Our CORE program threw a huge Halloween bash and 60 clients showed up!

In addition, and as they do every year, Curzon residents conducted a Halloween food drive for the Richmond Food Bank. The neighbors now recognize Curzon residents and appreciate their efforts as they go door-to-door collecting canned food. It's a great way for the neighborhood to come together for a cause and get to know each other. The Richmond Food Bank workers always greet them with big smiles and express great appreciation for our contributions. Curzon residents and staff feel humbled to play a small part in helping our community.

Thanks to all of our staff for making Halloween 2023 a wonderful day.



JOBS WEST SUCCESS STORY: CHRISTIAN MAKES IT HAPPEN!

BY EDITH SCOTT-MORTON

Christian embarked on his career journey as a student at VCC. In May 2023, he graduated with a sense of accomplishment and a clear vision of his career path. He had a strong desire to work at Shoppers Drug Mart, where he had previously completed a short work experience through the college. He and the Employment Specialist began working together to make his dream a reality.

Christian was successful and secured paid employment with Shoppers Drug Mart and initially worked one shift a week. However, he soon demonstrated his dedication and commitment to his role and in August was given an additional workday. This expansion of his responsibilities speaks volumes about his performance and the confidence his employer has in him.

Christian's growth and success have been truly impressive. He has demonstrated exceptional independence and adaptability in his new role, requiring minimal support from his Employment Specialist and always receiving positive feedback from his manager. In October, we celebrated a significant milestone in Christian's journey as he graduated from Jobs West!

Christian's success story demonstrates his determination and hard work. He is an inspiration, and his story serves as evidence of what can be achieved when employers and Employment Specialists work together to empower individuals in their pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling careers.



CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

**M.P. WILSON MIAO FOR RICHMOND CENTRE
CSJ PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATION APPRECIATION DAY**

It was another successful year with the Canada Summer Jobs program and DDA! In Richmond Centre, over 150 jobs were created in 70 organizations for young people just out of school. Fourteen of them joined DDA, and six of those stayed on for further employment with our association! A big thanks to MP Wilson Miao and DDA's Donna Cain for their continued support of this excellent program that enables young people to get a head start in their fields.



STAFF PROFILE:

JO ZOLEIKHAPOUR

The Developmental Disabilities Association has wonderful employees, over 500 in fact! In this edition of Star we met up with Jo Zoleikhapour to talk about how she brings music and music therapy to DDA clients at our West 8th location.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I am a recent graduate of the Capilano University music therapy program and I have been working for the DDA since May of 2022. I have a strong interest in music and arts as a medium for creativity, healing, community building and social justice. My primary instruments are the piano and the guitar, and I sing a little bit as well! I am also a Kurdish-Iranian immigrant and have been living in Canada since 2011.

What are your musical aspirations?

Well, I have a background in jazz studies so I have always been interested in improvisational music as an art form, but my current musical involvements mostly include composing, arranging and producing music for film, media, and private clients, so I would say that my aspirations are to continue to expand my portfolio and take on a variety of composition projects in the future.

What got you into working with people with developmental disabilities?

Getting the opportunity to work with different populations during my music therapy education allowed me to discover where my strengths lie and what populations I enjoy working with the most. These experiences allowed me to find out that I am invested in and comfortable with working with this population, so I simply trusted that instinct. Not only that, but I also have a lot of personal experience in providing care for my immigrant parents (who also have disabilities) while growing up in Canada, so I naturally developed a set of skills that are well-suited to working with the clientele that we serve at the DDA.

What is music therapy?

The best way I can define music therapy is the clinical use of music to help people progress toward and achieve their goals. Music therapy can include group or individual sessions, it can be structured or unstructured, and it can include a wide variety of active and passive interventions such as instrument-playing, drumming, music appreciation, song-sharing circles, musical games, song writing, and sing-alongs.

How does music therapy help the people we support?

Even within the population of people that we support, how music therapy can help a client can vary based on the individual's needs and strengths. For adults with developmental disabilities, goals in music therapy often focus on communication, socialization, self-regulation, and quality of life goals among others.

Tell us about the process of using music therapy at DDA?

I currently facilitate one small group comprised of individuals with a common goal of developing self-regulation skills. We often begin our sessions by reviewing the group rules together. Then, we usually engage in some type of relaxation activity, such as music supported guided meditation. From there, the clients participate in a variety of different musical activities using instruments. For instance, one activity involves playing different coloured boom whackers based on colour cues, which works on the goal of maintaining sustained attention during tasks. Another popular intervention is a song-sharing circle. Clients take turns suggesting their favourite songs to be played on a speaker, and we all play our chosen instruments along with the track.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

My long-term career goal would be to hopefully open my own music therapy practice someday. My dream is to be able to offer affordable music and wellness services to everyone who may need or benefit from it.

What do you like about working at DDA?

My favorite aspect of my job is the incredible people I have the privilege of working with. Over time, I have formed immensely meaningful and rewarding relationships with the clients and staff here at the DDA. Our clients bring me so much joy everyday, and my coworkers work so hard to cultivate a strong sense of community in our work environment, which is something that is very important to me.

Thanks Jo! We are proud to have you on Team DDA!



DDA MILESTONES

We are extremely proud of the work and dedication everyone brings to DDA. This year we wish to recognize a few of our amazing employees who have reached some pretty amazing milestones with the association. Congratulations to these wonderful employees who call DDA their second home.

40 YEARS

Kim Almond

30 YEARS

Edna Bond
Kristin Gimenez
Tasia Alexis
Sandra Chow
Graham Chaplow

25 YEARS

Katrina Shannon
Hui Lan Wang
Katharine Naughton
Amy So
Yang Dai

20 YEARS

Angela Donald
Daniel Paget
Yumi Kobe
Tonee Skala
Elizabeth Bertuzzi

35 YEARS

Leanna Logan

FREEING TERESA

FROM DDA'S ENCOURAGING ABILITIES PODCAST

A book by Franke James, Bill James, and Teresa Heartchild

The following is a snippet from the DDA podcast.

“Franke James immediately objected when she heard that her siblings were planning to put their younger, disabled sister into a nursing home. She was told that Teresa, who has Down syndrome, had been declared “incapable” by a social worker. With the stroke of a pen, Teresa had lost her right to decide where she would live. Two of Franke’s siblings acting as Teresa’s “guardians,” insisted they had all the power. Franke refused to believe this. She got a team together and they helped Teresa get properly discharged from the nursing home. That’s when all hell broke loose. And so the two sisters stood together against their siblings, the medical system, and the police to defend Teresa’s right to be free.”

The above paragraph is the synopsis of the book *Freeing Teresa*, written by Franke James, her husband Bill, and Franke’s sister Teresa. The true story tells of how Franke’s siblings wanted to put their sister Teresa into a nursing home after their dad could no longer care for her. Franke knew Teresa’s rights were not taken into account. The result, apart from Teresa not being in a nursing home, is a fractured family that is likely beyond repair.

DDA’s communications manager, Evan Kelly, caught up with Franke and Bill to talk about their new book, the first of three. The following is a snippet from DDA’s podcast.

Evan: This is a heavy topic, Franke, where does this all begin for you?

Franke James: It’s a dilemma that many families will face if they have someone with a developmental disability and their caregiver can no longer care for them. In my dad’s case, he thought he could care for Teresa, but my siblings did not. Their response was the group homes were all full and a nursing home was a solution. I thought Teresa is only 49 she didn’t need a nursing home! I tried to get them to see Tere’s possibilities. Unfortunately, my siblings could only come up with a nursing home and I opposed it every step of the way. I stepped forward and said Teresa would live with us. Within days, they had put her in a home. On November 20th, 2013, we signed her out and brought her home.

Evan: From the get-go, Teresa didn't want to be in a nursing home.

Franke: No she didn't. Nursing homes are really unsuitable for people with Down syndrome. What would she do all day?

Evan: Are staff even trained to deal with people like Teresa?

Franke: They're not. I thought it was just a place to park Teresa and it was writing off her future and limiting what she could do with her life. She was described as needing 24/7 and that wasn't true.

Bill: One of the problems is Power of Attorney. Franke's siblings felt they had total control. Franke asked what Franke's dad and Teresa wanted to do. They did not desire or intend to be in a long-term care home. The siblings felt that didn't matter and they could put her in a home without consent.

Franke: Her rights were taken away in September 2013.

Bill: I'm sure that they thought and still think they were doing the right thing.

—
Franke and her husband Bill moved with Teresa to B.C. several years ago where Teresa spends her days creating art, writing books, and being part of the community, enjoying life and not in a nursing home.

The rest of the podcast can be heard here:
<https://shorturl.at/coqG9>



Franke and Teresa in front of Teresa's art work



NATIONAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION – RHYTHMS OF RESILIENCE: VIBRATIONS OF HOPE AND HEALING.

On September 27th a group of 21 people from DDA Residential went to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at the Vancouver Japanese Hall National Historic Site in Vancouver. The name of the event was called Rhythms of Resilience: Vibrations of Hope and Healing. The event celebrated survivors and intergenerational survivors while commemorating children who never made it home.

We listened to a lineup of music, dance, spoken word, and speeches. We were uplifted with diverse musical performances that left us feeling inspired and encouraged. The event took place on the traditional and unseeded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The event was sponsored by the YWCA Metro Vancouver.



STARBUCKS: 15 YEARS OF DIVERSITY

Every year, DDA recognizes those businesses that are leading the charge when it comes to inclusion and community. For the past 15 years, Starbucks in Kerrisdale has been fostering an inclusive workforce with the help of DDA's employment service Jobs West.

With the support from Jobs West and Starbucks, Shane has been a proud member of the team in Kerrisdale for all of those years.

"I have special needs but I don't really think that matters. No one treats me any different," says Shane.

"We love working with Shane. It's the way he connects with others," says Graham, the Starbucks store manager. "When he shows up he wants to know how we're doing, and we want to know about how he's doing. There's a really good relationship there."

"I just want to be included, just like anybody else," adds Shane. "And they have done that at Starbucks."

"Our mission is to nurture the limitless possibility of human connection, and I think Shane embodies that mission," asserts Graham.

Delia Meinhardt is the Assistant Director of Employment Services at the Developmental Disabilities Association.

"It's a really proud moment for me to be able to recognize the efforts Starbucks is making to create an inclusive environment," says Delia. "But at the end of the day, it comes down to Shane's amazing ability to really make this work."



To see the presentation video, or any of our other videos, you can find us on YouTube @develop604

RIVERSIDE LEAVES

Fall gives way to winter and that means tree shed their leaves in anticipation of spring. DDA's Riverside Child Development Centre in Richmond has six huge trees in the playground and the leaves have mostly fallen. There was a huge pile waiting for the kids one day. The children had lots of fun playing in them!



RIVERSIDE VISIT

On October 24, City of Richmond employees Omar and Philma came to visit Riverside Child Development Centre to talk to the children about what workers do when they come into our building.

They showed us what tools they use such as knee pads, headphones, stud/metal finder, helmets, vests, steel-toed shoes, and more. They wanted to educate the children that these workers are friendly and are here to help us and how we can keep the workers and ourselves safe. They have had children at other centres who are scared when they go in to do repairs so Omar and Philma go around the City-owned buildings to do these visits and Riverside was their third centre for the presentation. After their talk, they brought out some cardboard blocks for the children to build with. Plastic helmets were handed out for the children to keep. The kids learned a lot and had fun building with blocks. Thanks, Omar and Philma!



TECH REVIEWS

BY KEEGAN NEWBERRY

Product Summary

The CalmPalm device is a self-soothing and self-regulatory tool designed to help individuals who experience anxiety and related insomnia. The CalmPalm uses micro electro stimulation pulses to trigger acupuncture points associated with calming the 'fight or flight' response.



Highlights

- Once turned on, it is simple to position in your hand and use - including a wrist strap to support while you fall asleep;
- The pulses are highly rhythmic and shift patterns allowing your mind to focus away from anxious thoughts and concentrate on the sensory input;
- You can vary the intensity of micro electro stimulation pulses to personalize for each user's comfort level;
- Comfortable to hold and automatically turns off after 20 minutes to ensure a safe user experience.

Lowlights

- Uses multi-purpose buttons (i.e. same button to turn on and change modes) to control the device which can be confusing without a screen;
- The micro electro stimulation pulses may be uncomfortable for individuals who experience touch sensitivity.

Last Word

The CalmPalm device is not suitable for everyone and should be carefully trialed in advance of using it for sleep to ensure the safety and comfort of the user. Though for some individuals this may be an effective solution to focus and reduce bedtime anxiety that can disrupt sleep.

Star ratings

Ease of Use: User Guide Required



Adaptability: Some Personalization Possible



Accessibility: Broad Range of Users Served



Cost vs. Value: You Get What You Paid For



Overall Rating:



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