



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

THE LOOP NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020 | VOL. 24



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY RUTH WARICK, PRESIDENT OF CHHA-BC

In recent weeks the COVID-19 pandemic has eclipsed all other events and news, and continues to do so. We all look forward to when this pandemic is behind us but, meanwhile, must do our best to cope with it, following the advice of our health authorities to do our part to flatten the curve.

CHHA-BC, like other organizations, has been impacted. Fortunately, for us, most of our contact with the public is through emails and phone calls which continue to be handled by our two staff members. They are able to do so from their homes, having applied ingenuity to access office files at a distance. As a result, we are fortunate to be faring well as an organization in keeping up and running.

We have postponed our annual general meeting to this fall, assuming that public meetings can resume then. We are able to comply with our constitution that calls for a meeting during the year but does not specify a date.

We continue to take our advocacy work seriously. We have issued a press release to the media and our members which is included in this publication. The release deals with essential elements for accessibility for our community; we particularly urge all captioning of media and event broadcasts. We also discuss strategies that hard of hearing persons can employ to reduce the distance when meeting with health providers or other key

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(Continued from page 1) persons. One of our challenges relates to hearing people when at a distance and/or wearing a face mask. I have found a need to resort to pen and paper on a few occasions.

Another challenge some may face is getting essential hearing aid service during this time. Audiologists are still meeting with clients in such cases. Hearing aid batteries are being mailed out. If you are encountering difficulties, please let us know.

Above all, please attend to your own well-being. If you are missing human contact, reach out to family, friends and your CHHA friends by email or for on-line chats. Use community resources. The Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Deaf-Blind Well-Being Program offers counselling and support services; they can be contacted by email at WellBeing.Staff@vch.ca. As well, other organizations provide well-being supports such as the Crisis Centre of BC <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>

Remember, you are not alone and, in the words of national and provincial public health officers, we will get through this together.

Ruth Warick

President, CHHA BC
president@chha-bc.org

Important Information on Provincial Supplement For Low Income Seniors and Persons With Disabilities (Excerpt from the Vancouver Sun)

British Columbians living on income and disability assistance who aren't eligible for emergency federal support programs will receive a \$300 crisis supplement for three months during the COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement was made earlier this month by Social Development and Poverty Reduction Minister Shane Simpson.

The supplement will also be provided to low-income seniors who get the \$49 B.C. Senior's Supplement and recipients of income assistance or disability assistance who reside in special care facilities.

The money is part of the \$5-billion COVID-19 plan to provide income supports, tax relief and direct funding for people, businesses and services during the crisis.

The province will also provide all B.C. Bus Pass Program users receiving income assistance with the \$52 of a transit card while transit fees have been waived. The money will be added to their April assistance cheque and for each subsequent month while the fare suspension remains in place.

Note from CHHA-BC: The Honorable Shane Simpson and his Ministry have been hosting webinars for representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, keeping us updated on government initiatives for persons with disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic.)

RELEASE FROM CHHA BC TO MEDIA



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
British Columbia Chapter

April 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world as we know it and has altered many plans in efforts to face this challenge.

CHHA BC would normally hold its annual general meeting in May or June; however, this year we will be postponing the meeting to a date in the fall. We will still be in keeping with our Constitution which requires that we hold the AGM during the year but does not specify a date.

Our two staff members will be working from home as much as possible during this period. We will be guided by health authorities in regards to when the period of self-isolation is lifted. Most of our contact with members and the public is by telephone and email, and this will continue without interruption.

Your board of directors will continue its advocacy and oversight work and will meet via Skype. We have already been meeting in this manner with some success.

We have prepared the enclosed media release regarding Covid-19.

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for you and wish you well. Please reach out if you have concerns related to your hearing loss during this period as per our email addresses given below.

With warmest regards,

Ruth Warick
President, CHHA BC
president@chha-bc.org

Henry Kutarna
Operations Manager, CHHA BC
operationsmanager@chha-bc.org



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

Release: March 30, 2020

Accessibility for Hard of Hearing Persons During the Coronavirus Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented situation impacting on everyone. For people who have a hearing loss, the impact of social distancing and the common use of face masks has created additional challenges. Typically, we need to be in close proximity to others and to read their lips so that we can communicate effectively. The good news is that there are solutions to our challenges as listed below.

Use of Face Masks

- Guidelines on use of face masks have been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and professional associations.
[The use of protective masks - WHO](#)
[AEA Guidelines for Professional Hearing for COVID-19](#)
- Transparent face masks are also available and information about suppliers is available on the website using the search words "transparent surgical masks".

Communication Alternatives

- Speak at a moderate rate and repeat oneself if asked. Exercise patience during communication.
- Try text interpretation of speech through cellphone apps or pen and paper.
- Employ text messaging or video apps with the captioning feature enabled where personal interaction is not possible.
- Use assistive listening devices; the speaker uses a transmitter and the hard of hearing person wears a receiver. The device has a range that allows for social distancing.

Captioning and Sign Language Interpreting for the Media

- Caption TV news and social media as this is essential for many hard of hearing persons.
- Provide public messages with sign language interpreting which is the main means of communication for some deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Kudos

We thank our media, health care and allied workers and everyone for doing their part to create a safer community while attending to the communication access needs for those of us with a hearing loss.

The British Columbia Chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is a non-profit organization of individuals who have a hearing loss. CHHA BC and its branches are self-help organizations committed to creating awareness of the nature of hearing loss, accessibility needs and strategies for enhancing better hearing.

Ruth Warick, President, CHHA BC

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"SOCIALLY DISTANT AND SPIRITUALLY CONNECTED."

BY GAEL HANNAN, WRITER, HUMORIST, ADVOCATE, AND SECRETARY
ON THE CHHA-BC BOARD

"Socially Distant and Spiritually Connected."

I heard this attributed to Andrew Cuomo, the Governor of New York State whom I've decided will be my husband in my next life, but it doesn't matter who said it first.

They are words to accept, right now, to help us through this nightmare of a global pandemic and our necessary physical isolation from the rest of the human race.

People with hearing loss are no strangers to isolation. When conversations swirl around us, when we are not connected to speakers through assistive devices, when we don't have visuals of a speaker's words on their mouths or through captions, we are isolated. We get this.

Some of us cope better than others. Yesterday, someone texted me: "It's hard to find anything good to say about being stuck inside except that I haven't had to ask anybody to repeat themselves."

We'll take any glimmer of positivity And it helps to remember that we are all in this together. We might be physically distant, but we are spiritually connected – as well as technically connected, which works to our communication advantage.

It amazes me how the internet doesn't crash with the magnitude of people using Zoom, FaceTime, FaceBook, Skype and all those other apps that connect us visually in real time. Essentially, the entire world is on the internet at the same time, waving to their friends, sharing stories, and having virtual cocktail hours and meals together. This is a big WOW!

I empathize with those who are in sheltering by themselves in their homes. I also feel for those who have young children with them now 24/7. But I also want you to understand that there are pitfalls in being confined to barracks with just one other person, a person who you do still need to ask to repeat him or herself; in my case, it's the fabulous Hearing Husband. You might have someone similar hiding out from the virus with you, someone who you always said there is no one you would rather be stranded on a desert island with more than them.

This is the same person who you really loved in January and most of February, but now by, at the end of March, you may be looking at them and thinking: if you breathe that way one more time, I may do violence. If you keep doing that annoying thing that I never noticed you do before but apparently you always do it and now it's driving me insane, I will have to rethink our marriage vows. And where does it say that in the list of Covid symptoms that says that those with hearing loss will now hear perfectly, so that you are no longer required to face me when TALKING TO ME?!

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) The Hearing Husband and I are lucky – we have spaces in our house that we can retreat to for alone-time. Our house is in the woods, with trails that we are able to get out and hike along on most days. When we meet someone on the trail, we all step off the path and give each other the required passing space.

For people with hearing loss, staying connected means using technology that has been designed to help us communicate. Our TVs and computers have captions, either done live or by ASR (automatic speech recognition). The apps allow us to read a person's lips while watching their words on the screen. Our Bluetooth devices bring the audio directly in to our hearing aids and cochlear implant sound processors. Also crucial to my mental health is the Otter ASR app on my cellphone that I can put next to the computer when playing a non-captioned video.

Do you want another way to connect let the world know you're still here, still staying healthy and still waiting for the day when we can rush out into the streets like they did at the end of WWII? At 7:00 pm (or 7:30 in some places), every night, open your window or go out on your balcony or on your driveway – and MAKE SOME NOISE. This noise is a way to demonstrate our thanks to everyone working to get us through this alive. It also shows your neighbors and the universe just who is still alive and well! Clap your hands, bang a pot, ring a bell, yell thank you and bravo to the universe. You. Will. Feel. Great.

And. Grateful. Stay safe, stay healthy, and remember, even if there's no person in your house to whom you can say pardon, you can ask someone on FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or any other app to repeat themselves. And then it will feel like the good old days.

Used by permission of Gael Hannan and HearingHealthMatters.org

A Note From CHHA Vancouver

CHHA Vancouver has been closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19. Our main goal is to serve our membership, including by protecting their health and safety. Therefore, CHHA Vancouver will not be hosting any in-person workshops for the foreseeable future.

We remain committed to serving our membership and we can be reached by email at chhavancouver@gmail.com and on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/chhayvr/>. We also have a website at <https://chhavancouver.ca/>. We regularly check our email and Facebook and will get back to your inquiries as soon as we can.

Stay healthy and stay connected with us on Facebook or by email.

Thanks,

Rosalind Ho
CHHA Vancouver President



AN AUDIOLOGIST'S PERSPECTIVE

CONTRIBUTED BY JESSICA NIEMELA

An Audiologist's Perspective: Supporting our students with hearing loss during online learning.

School breaks this spring are over and students are resuming studies, but in a different way because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students are being set up with online learning platforms in order to continue their education all over the country and in other parts of the world . After consulting with a few Hearing Resource Teachers in British Columbia, I would like to share some information that I found helpful:

- The type of online platform that students will use will vary from school district to district. The common ones are Google Meet (a part of google classroom) or Zoom. Google Meet has automated captioning, whereas Zoom does not. If teachers are using Zoom + Google slides, then captioning is possible with this platform.
- In the regular classroom setting, students with hearing loss often opt to use a remote microphone system. This equipment is usually the responsibility of the school district and is not sent home with the student. As online classrooms are now in the student's home, they may be accessing the online platforms without their remote microphone equipment (Roger systems) that could give them better audio input when connected to the computer. Some school districts have a waiver in place that releases this responsibility of equipment loss or damage to the parents if parents are willing to sign the waiver; other districts do not have this in place.
- When the regular Roger systems are kept with the schools, Bluetooth methods may allow a student to gain better audio access and improve their online learning (for Phonak hearing aid users: Compilot and Compilot Air are two examples). Audiologists may consult with their hearing resource teachers and parents about whether this is an option. Clients may have been given a Compilot as an accessory, but they have not found use for it in a while. This may be a good time to pull it out and re-familiarize with its use for online learning.
- There are many Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) apps that provide captioning in real time and that can help facilitate learning; the captions can be saved for future use. The more popular ones are Google's Live Transcribe (if using on a cell phone it is only available on Android) or Otter (can be used on an I-phone and Android). There are many other free options, but these two seem to provide the most accurate service, according to those contacted. For best accuracy, the transcribing device should be as close to the speaker as possible while allowing for reading of captions, and the volume of the speaker should be set at a comfortable level.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7) Pediatric audiologists and audiometric technicians who work in the public sector in British Columbia have been deemed as an essential service for urgent hearing needs and newborn hearing screening; as a result, they are still working. As one of them, I am proud to be recognized as an essential service because if hearing needs of infants and children are not being met, speech and language development is at risk for delays that can be detrimental. Our hard of hearing clients may also be at great risk of losing access to education during the sudden transition to online learning in our education system.

In my opinion, audiologists and hearing resource teachers can further work together to ensure that children have the best access they need for online learning during this big change in our education system. As we know, hearing loss can be an invisible disability; families, hearing resource teachers and audiologists are the best advocates to ensure hearing needs for children are met for learning.



A NOTE FROM THE OPERATIONS MANAGER

BY HENRY KUTARNA

Certainly topical these days is the unprecedented crisis facing most people for the first time in their lives. This virus and its impact on business and life in general may be top of mind for quite a while.

Yet the work of CHHA-BC remains as important as ever. Today I want to add my voice to that of our president and board in proposing that we need now to redouble our efforts to promote the real needs of the hard of hearing community.

Some will know that my work here has great personal meaning. Several members of my own immediate family have lived lives with all the inherent challenges of hard of hearing persons. One family member was a musician, church organist, piano teacher, and music theory teacher – for over 40 years. Another is in the midst of a thriving professional career as a music therapist. These family members inspire not only because they have toiled in challenging careers but also because they have in turn interacted in their professional lives with persons with other disabilities, learning challenges, etc. A hard of hearing person working as a music therapist with autistic children as clients, for example, brings to mind both concepts of “challenge” and an amazing “sensitivity”.

Our work here has meaning. Michelle Santiago and I intend to continue to develop our programs, our fund raising, our systems, and our response to you to a level of the highest professional capability. One interesting project we are working on these days is to update our website, our publishing software, our mass email software and our financial/accounting system. In a small way perhaps but in a direct way, Michelle and I believe that we can help the organization ready itself for future challenges and creative initiatives by assembling the best technology in our office and procedures. In this way we can help CHHA-BC stand ready for new challenges and new responses to those challenges. At any time we are ready to dialogue with you on matters that concern you the most. Call us at 604.423.3247 or toll-free at 1.866.888.2442. Michelle’s email is info@CHHA-BC.org and mine is operationsmanager@CHHA-BC.org. The office is at #208, 2005 Quebec Street, Vancouver. We’re open Mon and Thurs 8:00 am to 4:00 pm; Tues, Wed, and Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Thank you for your support of our work.

CHHA BC CELEBRATES WORLD HEARING DAY 2020

World Hearing Day was celebrated by CHHA-BC on March 3 2020 at a public presentation and open house of our new office in the Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility.

Isobel MacKenzie, Seniors Advocate for British Columbia, addressed over 30 persons about the importance of having the ability to hear and to listen as essential elements to meaningful engagement in the community. Her talk was in keeping with the theme for World Hearing Day of the WHO: Hearing for Life: Don't Let hearing Loss Limit You.

Ms. MacKenzie noted that 19% of Canadians from 20 to 79 years have a hearing loss and the figure goes up dramatically to 65% of persons between 70 to 79 years (Statistics Canada, 2021/13).

She stated that the personal consequences of hearing loss may include social isolation, depression, safety issues, mobility limitations and reduced income and employment opportunities. There is a greater risk for medical errors due to communication challenges with health care professionals. Quality of life is significantly diminished when people are unable to hear, and it can be mistaken for dementia and lead to isolation.

Her office, the Office of the Seniors Advocate, received a thousand questions about hearing aids last year, most about finding low-cost hearing aids.

Ms. MacKenzie noted that older adults can have a quite pronounced hearing loss without actually being aware of it. She called for a hearing screening program as the earlier a hearing loss is detected and attended to, the better the person's adaptation is likely to be.

She also called for an improved system for hearing aid support, observing that British Columbia lacks access for anybody who doesn't have the financial means to purchase a set of hearing-aids. Organizations and charities are trying to fill that gap, but it's a fragmented system as opposed to a robust and consistent system.

The session was chaired by CHHA BC President Ruth Warick; volunteers assisted staff with hosting the reception and providing a tour of the CHHA-BC office.



WORLD HEARING DAY EVENT PHOTOS

Photos taken by Marc Johnston



***Isobel MacKenzie flanked
by Ruth Warick and Henry Kutarna***



***Michelle Santiago, Marco Chiaramonte
and Henry Kutarna (left to right)***



Jerry Gosling thanking the speaker



**Audience members showing left to right
Hugh Hetherington, Marilyn Dahl,
Charles Laszlo**



Event in action



**Our captionist at work,
Catherine Siegler**



**Reception showing left to right Marilyn Dahl,
Rosalind Ho, Clovis Bernard, and Miron Gazda**



**Clovis Bernard takes a break
from his volunteer duties.**



APPOINTMENT OF CHRISTOPHER SUTTON, NEW CEO OF WAVEFRONT CENTRE

Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility announced today that, after an extensive nationwide search, its Board of Directors has appointed Christopher T. Sutton as its Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately. Christopher most recently held the position of National Executive Director of Canadian Hard of Hearing Association.

"We're very fortunate to gain a leader with Christopher's experience, talent and vision," said Barbara M. Brown,

Christopher Sutton

Wavefront Centre's President of the board of directors. "Today's announcement is about advancing our organization's growth. It's about our future: establishing concrete relationships with our community and policymakers. It's about advocating for change, a better change, synonymous with Bill C-81: An Accessible Canada Act, that ensures a barrier-free Canada."

Christopher joins Wavefront Centre at a unique and opportune time. Christopher says, "Together, we will move forward in making Wavefront Centre the premier non-profit organization in Canada at the forefront in providing consultation, services, advocacy, and programs that enable Deaf and hard of hearing and hearing people achieve barrier-free communication accessibility everywhere."

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE CHHA BC BOARD TREASURER POSITION:

This is a call for nominations for the position of CHHA-BC board treasurer. Our treasurer, Mike Phelan, who has ably served CHHA-BC, is coming to the end of his term. We warmly thank Mike for his diligence and professional care for the finances of CHHA-BC. Thank you, Mike! The board treasurer is responsible for accurate financial accounts of CHHA-BC and for advising the board and staff on appropriate financial procedures. The treasurer is a bank signing authority. The ideal candidate will have financial/accounting accreditation and will be able to come to the CHHA-BC office in Vancouver regularly to sign cheques and meet with staff. Please forward nominations to Ruth Warick, President at president@chha-bc.org.

A NOTE FROM BOWEN TANG ABOUT THE YOUTH PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Dear families and friends,

We hope this email finds you safe and healthy. In keeping with the best interest for all our participants and volunteers, all PSP events planned up to June 30th are suspended.

We recognize that this will be a particularly stressful time for students who are now transitioning to an online format for their continuity of learning, which poses certain communication challenges. We encourage you to get in touch with your service providers (TDHH, accessibility advisor, captionist or interpreter) to work out a plan to ensure you or your child have optimal access through use of technology such as direct audio or Bluetooth connection, remote captioning, Google Live Transcribe apps, etc.

In the coming weeks we will strive to post resources on our website and Facebook page on effective strategies to navigate the virtual world. We will also make ourselves available to answer your questions about access or any other general inquiries during this period. Please do not hesitate to contact us. For mental health services, Deaf Well-Being Program is the best resource: <http://deafwellbeing.vch.ca/>.

Lastly, we would like to share info about our Geroezemoes game, which will be a fitting activity for your child to practice communication and self-advocacy at home. Click here <https://www.chha-bc.org/youthpsp/geroiezemoes/> for details. To echo what our government leaders have said, please continue to follow advisories from our public health officials. Together we can get through this.

Take care,

CHHA-BC Youth Peer Support Program



ANNOUNCEMENT

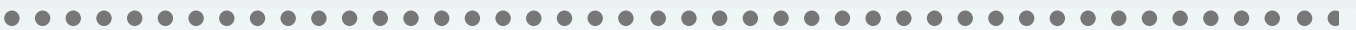
CANCELLATION OF SPEECH READING CLASSES

Jerry Gosling of the Abbotsford Branch of CHHA-BC advises that all speech reading classes have been cancelled for the duration of the virus situation. As soon as the classes are resumed we will advise members and friends by a direct email. Thank you for your patience during this time.



AGM POSTPONED TILL FALL 2020

The CHHA-BC annual general meeting (AGM) is postponed to the fall due to the present virus crisis. As soon as we have a date we will advise you in The Loop and by an email that will be sent to all members. Please stand by. Thank you for your patience during this time. If you have any input or wish to discuss any matter relating to the upcoming AGM please do not hesitate to contact President Ruth Warick at president@chha-bc.org.
Thank you.



CHHA SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE EXTENDED

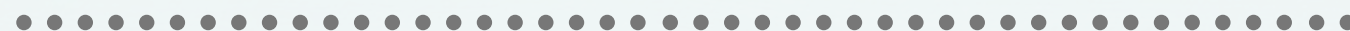
This is a note for students with hearing loss who might benefit from CHHA scholarships. This program was established in 2002 by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and to date has awarded \$50,000.00 to ensure students with hearing loss have equal access to educational opportunities.

Due to the current situation throughout North America (and the world), the deadline for applications for the 2020 academic year has been extended. Applications must now be submitted by June 1, 2020 at 3pm EDT. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered nor will applications be accepted by mail, e-mail or fax.

For more information about CHHA's scholarships, eligibility requirements or to apply, please visit the CHHA website: <https://www.chha.ca/get-involved/scholarships/>.
Thank you.

WHY IS THE ADDRESS ON CHHA-BC TAX RECEIPTS DIFFERENT THAN THE CHHA-BC OFFICE LOCATION?

Donors and supporters of CHHA-BC will notice that the address on CHHA-BC income tax receipts differs from the CHHA-BC office address. This is because the contracted professional fundraiser's office is a separate business with its own location, staff, and offices. It is a private company specializing in fund raising for not for profits like CHHA-BC. The fundraiser's address is: S & K Enterprises, Box 175, 720-6th Street, New Westminster, BC V3L 3C5.



CHHA BC Acknowledges Provincial Funding for The Loop

CHHA BC gratefully acknowledges provincial funding for The Loop newsletter. This financial support makes possible regular and direct communication with members and friends.



CHHA BC Board Members

RUTH WARICK

President

JERRY GOSLING

Vice President

MIKE PHELAN

Treasurer

GAEL HANNAN

Secretary

MARILYN DAHL

Past President

JESSICA NIEMELA

Member



Want to stay up-to-date on events happening near you?
Follow CHHA-BC on Facebook and Twitter!
(Click the icons to visit our pages)



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

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Mon and Thurs 8 am to 4 pm
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🖱 **Website:** <https://chha-bc.org/>

CONNECT WITH A LOCAL BRANCH

ABBOTSFORD BRANCH

Tel: 604-864-2916

Email: abbotsfordretiree@gmail.com

CHHA BC YOUTH PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Email: chhabcypsp@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.chha-bc.org/youthpsp/>

COMOX VALLEY BRANCH

Tel: 250-339-4706

Email: cvhardofhearing@gmail.com

HEAR BRANCH (COQUITLAM)

Tel: 604-939-0327

Email: anna.r.bernard@gmail.com

NORTH SHORE BRANCH

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VANCOUVER BRANCH

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