



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association BC Youth Peer Support Program

On March 8 to 10th, 2019, the CHHA-BC Youth Peer Support Program hosted our first youth weekend retreat: “Challenge Life”. We had a total of 18 participants, ranging from ages 15 to 30 years old, who travelled from Abbotsford, Burnaby, Chilliwack, Kamloops, Maple Ridge, Nelson, Surrey, and Vancouver. We kicked off with an ice breaker activity by asking everyone to figure out their given careers labelled on their backs and then share their actual occupations. We spent the evening with board games, air hockey, table tennis, and foosball games.



Retreat participants play an icebreaker activity called “two truths and a lie”.

The next day we had amazing presentations from two hard of hearing young adults – Yat Li and Elissa Robb from the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Yat started the morning with an inspirational story of his journey on “*Overcoming Barriers and Leading with Confidence*”. His experience reminds us that even in times of challenge, we can still overcome them with the right attitude and support. We concluded his part of the presentation with fantastic group discussions on different ways to instill confident thoughts and statements into our daily lives. Some of the

statements included phrases such as, “Never stop being my best self; Be more inclusive; Share stories; and Answer negativity with positivity”.

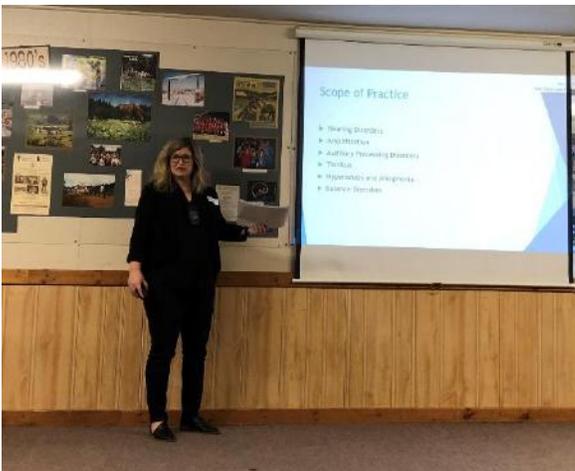


Yat Li, one of the presenters, in discussion with one of the groups.



Participants brainstorming confident, positive statements.

The next speaker, Elissa Robb, had thoughtful conversations with the group about how to develop and build positive relationships with audiologists. She also introduced a variety of cool new technology that would benefit hard of hearing people, such as modern vibrating watches that could be set to wake us up in the morning or lighting systems that can easily be connected into the home system. At the end, the group went over case scenarios with discussions on problem solving and preparedness for different situations should they occur.



Elissa Robb, presenting “Building a Healthy Relationship with your Audiologist”.



One of the groups working on different case scenarios related to working with an audiologist.



Standing in the middle are, Yat Li and Elissa Robb, our amazing presenters.

After lunch, we took part in outdoors activities in the sunny weather. There were a total of 3 different team building activities, such as: the platform, balance beam, and spider web. It was thrilling to see all the participants working together as a team to problem solve while being supportive of one another regardless of varying abilities. Finally, we completed the activities with several rounds of archery and Frisbee golf. One of the participants was experienced in archery, so she volunteered to teach less-experienced participants the proper form and use of holding the bow and firing the arrows.



In the late afternoon, we watched a Dutch documentary made by Stan van Kesteren, the creator of “Hard of Hearing, So What?!” It was a short film that followed the lives of four very different hard of hearing individuals in various stages of life – a high school student, carpenter and DeeJay, senior worker, film student, and finally the director himself. Each of them had their own challenges – such as, communication, background noise, and hearing exhaustion – but they all shared a common theme of perseverance and determination to get to where they wanted to be.

In the evening, we built a campfire, shared ghost stories, and sang while roasting our own marshmallows and devouring yummy rice-krispy squares served by camp staff. It was a memorable bonding activity for our participants – many of them had reflected that this was one of their favourites!



Enjoying a toasty campfire in the evening.

On the final day, as a concluding activity in our retreat we, as a group, wrote our own statements and filmed our own short video clips, drawing ideas from Stan’s video,. These short clips have powerful messages that will later be used to share with the public on hard of hearing awareness, and as an inspirational tool for other hard of hearing individuals across the country and the world.



Brainstorming ideas for the HOH documentary



Putting participants' ideas and statements to action in filming.

The retreat was an opportunity for youth and young adults to come together for a weekend to meet and connect with each other. It was a reminder that we are not alone in our daily challenges and that we can share in each others determination and success. Through the activities, we are empowering youth to raise awareness in their own communities and to feel proud of their own achievements. See you all in 2020!



Challenge Life Youth Retreat March 2019