

I want to thank everybody that has joined us today for this Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter's 2020-2021 Annual General Meeting. For the second time we are meeting online via zoom for our AGM and I'd like to thank everyone for the effort that you've taken today to be with us today.

As an organization that values supporting and caring for children, we would like to acknowledge the atrocities committed at Indian Residential Schools across Canada that were done in the name of education. We grieve with the discovery of the 215 children who were taken from their families and communities and died at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. We stand in solidarity with our Indigenous colleagues and Indigenous communities throughout our province and we support and will work to advance reconciliation.

To say that this year has been a journey would be an understatement. We could never have predicted that the Covid-19 pandemic would be affecting us for this long. I would like to acknowledge that it has been a difficult year for many of our families, staff members and board members with added stresses that we've never seen in years past.

For example, our deafblind community had to try to remain socially distanced but still required access to supports. Everyone needed to limit personal interactions and possibly had to sacrifice family or friend time adding to feelings of isolation or anxiety. Or maybe you were a parent weighing the choice for your child whether to be in school or possibly being home schooled. It was a difficult year with many difficult decisions that had to be made for each and every one of us.

It was also a challenge for our staff, Theresa, Sue, and Allison, to try to support our members, our families, and children in the best way possible with the restrictions of no traveling and no in-person consultations. I personally want to thank them for their resourcefulness and their creativity with the ways they came up with to help support our families virtually. From having online activities with sing-alongs and art projects, to even having a wonderful time meeting Santa at Christmas. I know this was one of the highlights of our family this year. They came up with great activities and continued to engage families all over the province and we thank them for the effort and work this all entailed.

Is with cautious optimism that we look to having our province open back up once again in the hopes that we will once again be able to meet up face to face and offer in-person consultations, but also taking the lessons learned from this challenging year and possibly continuing to offer new ways of providing service going forward. As always will be taking direction from our provincial health authority and how and when this will happen and always with the goal of keep families and staff healthy.

I would like to thank our Board members for their continued support and the time and effort they continue to give to the Canadian Deafblind Association of British Columbia. Thanks goes out to Crystelle, John, Leslie, Linda, Paul and Wanda. Your contributions are appreciated.

I am very pleased to acknowledge that June is Deafblind Awareness Month and all the efforts from Government, communities, schools, students, families, and staff members that have contributed to this awareness campaign. For our Provincial Government declaration of June being Deafblind Awareness Month, to the many locations around the province lighting up in blue in recognition, to a giant Peach in Peachland declaring Deafblind Awareness Month, and to everyone who has, and is, contributing to the yarn bombing campaign we thank you.

As we look to the future, we hope that we will continue to be able to provide services to families and children that are meaningful and beneficial and that through our efforts we will continue to spread awareness of deafblindness, share knowledge to those in our communities and help to build communities within our membership.

With warm regards,

Linnea Cudmore

President
Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter