



# figuratively speaking

The National Newsletter of the Canadian Chapter of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

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Let's say you've had a stroke or you've been in a serious car accident. You're full of feelings, thoughts and questions, but you have no way to communicate. You want to tell your loved ones you're the same person you've always been; it's just you can't move or speak in the same way. People assume you don't understand anything they say, and you have no way to tell them you understand everything. Imagine the isolation.

Or imagine this: You can communicate with a computerized speech generating device, but it's exponentially slower than typical speech. It takes extraordinary effort, but before you've had a chance to finish saying what's on your mind with your communication device, the people around you get impatient, and walk away. You know they don't intend to hurt your feelings, but when they walk away, you're left alone and hurting.

Or perhaps you're a child, with an active, inquiring mind. You don't speak, and you're placed in a classroom with others who are unable to speak, and no one seems to know how to help any of you communicate. They have no idea about your abilities and capabilities. Can you imagine your despair? What do you do? Scream? Withdraw? Go to sleep?

Perhaps, as a reader of *Figuratively Speaking*, you've been in one or more of these situations yourself. Or chances are, if you haven't, you have family, friends or clients who have been. You are likely very aware of the estimated hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have limited or no speech. You know that each one is a human being who needs to speak and be heard, love and be loved, to belong, contribute and participate—just like anyone else. You know too that the situations above are real, and all too common. They are the stories that have inspired Kilometres for Communication, a national public education, awareness and fundraising campaign. We have partnered with ISAAC Canada to put equality in motion for all Canadians who have little or no speech, and for all people with disabilities.

There are three of us who initiated Kilometres for Communication: Kerr Wattie, Skye Wattie and Gail Fisher-Taylor. Kerr is at the heart of what we're doing. He's an artist, activist and presenter. He has cerebral palsy and speaks with AAC. Kerr knows from personal experience that the misconceptions about people without speech are as harmful as they are rampant.

What do we do to change this? Skye, Kerr's proactive younger brother, came up with the best suggestion yet. His idea: cycle across Canada to meet with alternative communicators, change attitudes and raise funds. It was decided: from May through August, 2011, Skye will cycle from coast to coast, accompanied by Kerr in a bike trailer for some parts of the journey when it's safe and possible. Skye's and Kerr's mother, Gail Fisher-Taylor, will travel on different wheels.

From B.C. to Newfoundland, we will wheel into communities large and small to meet with people who are communicating in all kinds of creative ways: by blinking, nodding or raising their eyes to indicate the word or letter they want, by using head pointers, switches or eye gaze on sensitive computers to speak or write. With the help of local and national media we want Canadians to hear the stories of people who speak with AAC. People who write plays and books, artists who paint with their index fingers, men and women who earn their master's degrees one slow letter at a time. Social activists. Entrepreneurs. Filmmakers. And the people whose potential was never rewarded with opportunity. We are asking each of them to tell their stories so that no one in Canada will ever again equate not being able to talk with not having anything to say.

As we travel across the country, we're inviting people to wheel, walk, run and cycle with us to help raise awareness and funds for vital AAC services, supports and technology. We'll also be gathering signatures on a petition for a National Accessibility Act. We're partnering with ISAAC Canada. Together we want to put equality in motion for all Canadians with disabilities, and to ensure that the voices of those without speech are enabled, empowered and heard.

### **What You Can Do**

The more people involved in Kilometres for Communication, the more successful we will be in reaching our goals. We are a grassroots, volunteer effort, and we need your help to make a significant difference. There are many ways you can participate. Here are some suggestions:

- First, please visit our website at: <http://kilometresforcommunication.com>, and read more about what we're doing. Spread the word.
- If you speak with AAC, or if you are close to someone who does, click on "Tell Us Your Story", and send us your story and photos to publish on the website.
- Please encourage those you know who speak with AAC and those close to them to visit our website, and to submit their stories to us.
- Go to the National Accessibility Act page on the Kilometres for Communication website, and click on the link to sign our petition for a National Accessibility Act, and send your MP an email about the need for a National Accessibility Act.
- Contact us at [kilometresforcommunication@gmail.com](mailto:kilometresforcommunication@gmail.com) and ask us to email you a petition that you can have your family, friends, colleagues, and other community members sign. If you live on or near the route we will be traveling, you can deliver your petition to us as we travel. If not, you can mail your signed petition to us. (At the end of our journey, we'll be delivering the petitions we've gathered to Parliament.)
- Wheel, walk, run or cycle with us as we travel across Canada, and help us raise funds and awareness about AAC and about the crucial need for ready access to vital AAC services, supports and technology and about the importance of a National Accessibility Act. The details about how to become a part of the Kilometres for Communication team are on our website.
- Get together with your family, friends, co-workers, community centre, place of worship, neighborhood school, and start your own event to raise funds and awareness for Kilometres for Communication. Set up a lemonade stand, have a bake sale, barbeque or art show. If you're not on our route, hold your

own wheeling, walking, running or cycling event—or if you prefer—a canoeing, kayaking or sailing event. Be creative, do what you love to raise awareness and funds. Please visit our website for more information.

- If you're on Facebook (FB), visit the Kilometres for Communication FB page, take part in the discussions or start your own discussion topics. Send us information, resources and ideas. While you're on our FB page, please click "Suggest to Friends" and if you like us, let us know by clicking "like". We need your assistance to make this a vital interactive Facebook page. You will also be helping us to demonstrate to politicians, potential sponsors and media that there is significant interest in accessibility, equality and AAC, which will improve the success of our campaign.
- Follow us on Twitter at km4communicat.
- If you are representing an organization, please send us a short supportive message and your organization's logo (in a jpg file) to: kilometresforcommunication@gmail.com. We will post these on our website.
- If you're a business, consider becoming a sponsor. Go to "Become a Sponsor" on our website or request a sponsorship package by emailing kilometresforcommunication@gmail.com.
- Ask businesses you patronize—particularly if they have a special interest in accessibility, equality and AAC—to become a Kilometres for Communication sponsor.
- Contact Gail Fisher-Taylor at: kilometresforcommunication@gmail.com to find out how else you, your organization or business can partner with us to ensure the voices of those with little or no speech are enabled, empowered and heard, and that equality is put in motion for all Canadians with disabilities.

**Thank you!**

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**Kilometres for Communication website:**

<http://kilometresforcommunication.com>

**Facebook page:** Kilometres for Communication

**Twitter:** @km4communicat

**Please sign our petition for a National Accessibility Act and forward this link to your contacts:** <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/nationalaccessibilityactincanada>.

## **AAC AWARENESS 2010**

**"Many Cultures, One Dream: Communication without Barriers"**

A few AAC clinics across Ontario submitted information detailing the events they hosted to promote AAC Awareness - demonstrating and showcasing communication without barriers.

### **Hamilton Health Sciences, Technology Access Clinic - Shelley Deegan**

The Technology Access Clinic (TAC) in Hamilton, Ontario Canada borrowed an idea from the Holland Bloorview Centre in Toronto, Ontario. We held an AAC World in the building that we just moved into a few months ago. We thought that this would be a good way to make the staff in the building more aware of AAC and our clients who use AAC. We set up AAC stations on the first floor of the building. We used the coffee shop and the reception area of the building for two of our stations. The hospital volunteers who work in these areas were involved in the event. They used the communication devices and displays themselves as well as

interacting with visitors who were using the AAC strategies. We also had stations for a Bank, Library and Clothing Store. TAC staff manned these stations and visitors used AAC devices and displays to interact with the TAC staff. We had over a hundred visitors. Visitors included staff from the hospital, families coming for appointments that day, and community people including staff from our local school boards. We also had a reporter from our local TV station. He did an excellent job reporting on the event. His story ran on the prime time 6:00 p.m. news that night. It was a great day and probably our most successful AAC Awareness event in four years. View the news segment at: <http://www.chchnews.ca/index.php/home/item/948-todays-the-day-for-those-with-alternative-communication-needs>



### **Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab, Communication & Writing Aids Service - Laurel Robinson**

On October 15, 2010, the Communication and Writing Aids Service (CWAS) hosted AAC Awareness events in our cafeteria. The theme of the event was "The Sounds of Silence." A number of communication displays, books, letter boards and devices were placed amongst our cafeteria tables and participants were encouraged to chat amongst themselves during their lunch breaks using these methods. The Tim Hortons kiosk also housed a mid-tech device and coffee go-ers were encouraged to use it to order their drinks. In addition, stations from our previous AAC World event were set up to showcase various communication modalities such as a clothing store that used partner-assisted auditory scanning to purchase a clothing item. Participants were also able to test their skills at AAC Cranium by answering AAC facts and/or spelling using a letter board. In addition, there was an adaptation area that demonstrated the many ways to adapt leisure and academic activities to make them more 'AAC friendly.' Finally, a museum was available which reviewed the history of AAC dating back from the 1960's to the present. Our goal was to expand awareness of AAC, by demonstrating a variety of communication methods. Participants included OT's, PT's, S-LP's, teachers, medical staff, parents, siblings and students. Thank you to all who contributed to making this event the success it was!

If anyone is interested in receiving and using the AAC World event materials, please feel free to contact me at [lrobinson@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:lrobinson@hollandbloorview.ca)

### **Thames Valley Children's Centre, Augmentative Communication Service - Lisa Evans**

To celebrate AAC Awareness Month, and to increase awareness at our Centre, we hosted a Quiet Coffee hour on October 7th, 2010. All staff were invited to enjoy a mid-morning cup of coffee (donated by Starbucks) and a small taste of what it is like to use augmentative and alternative communication. ACS staff were at the door asking our guests to not use their voices. Low-tech display vocabulary let guests order coffee just the way they liked it, please and thank you. An ice-breaking activity challenged participants to learn specific information from others, non-verbally. Speech-generating devices, core vocabulary and alpha/qwerty displays, pen and paper, and a lot of gestures were used throughout this event. Afterwards, many people commented that this fun experience was both difficult and valuable. We look forward to hosting a similar event next year.

The names of the people who submitted a story to *Figuratively Speaking* about AAC Awareness activities were put in a draw for a free ISAAC membership for a person who uses AAC in 2011.

**The winner of the draw was:**

**LAUREL ROBINSON from the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Communication and Writing Aids Service**

# ISAAC BARCELONA 2010

Robert Jean  
Author-Speaker

Marc Saint-Cyr  
Attendant-Interpreter

Members of the Local Organization Committee, ISAAC Montréal 2008

The idea of attending this Conference came to us during the closing ceremony of the 13<sup>th</sup> ISAAC Conference held in Montréal in 2008 and, from that moment on, nothing could stand in our way! We have been attending conferences on Communication since 1998 – Pittsburgh, Neufchâtel, Toronto, Montréal – and the opportunity to give a presentation adds strong feelings of personal accomplishment to our sense of belonging to this major international organization with more than 57 member countries worldwide.

## **Presentation Preparation**

We decided on an original thematic presentation since we already had some video material and could rely on the Gingras-Lindsay Rehabilitation Institute of Montreal (*Institut de Réadaptation Gingras-Lindsay-de-Montréal*) for professional audio-visual assistance.

We divided our allotted time in three, starting with a PowerPoint presentation of my history with communication devices, followed by the screening of two DVDs, the first featuring my initial attempts and successful use of a webcam and Skype, and the second, exciting footage of my first skydiving experience. Thanks to my attendant and a close friend, my original presentation, written in French, was translated into English. I was elated to learn that our presentation was accepted by the Barcelona Committee!

## **Fundraising**

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I did my first parachute jump ever! This incredible adventure was the launch of our ISAAC Barcelona fundraising campaign, and our contacts were quite excited and very supportive. Given the success of it all, we had high hopes.

Over the six months that followed, we ran a successful fundraising campaign, obtaining precious grants from ISAAC Canada and the Centre for Alternative Oral and Written Communication (*Centre de suppléance à la communication orale et écrite*), as well as generous donations from individuals, various groups and businesses. Thanks to the invaluable logistic support of the Quebec Society for Disabled Children, we also received much needed financial support from three Foundations and two specialized Companies. The campaign went beyond all expectations!

## **Travel Plans**

**Registration and Hotel Reservation.** In order to benefit from major discounts, we registered more than six months prior to the Conference. Since I need lots of time for my daily morning routine, I had to find the closest hotel to the conference venue. This would save me traveling time. Could I afford it? The more the money filtered in, the more relieved I was! Would I manage to get a room with two single beds and a bath? I have learned through my travels that the product advertised may be different in reality: so it was when I

realized that I would not be able to have a bath for a week because a permanent glass panel prevented safe access to the tub. To compensate, we were given free access to the pool and sauna, and breakfast was delivered to our room for free, which was rather enjoyable!

**Flight: Booking and Arrangements.** We decided on Air Transat because that company offers a direct flight with free seat selection – first row economy class near the window to avoid disturbing other passengers and cabin crew. Because of my positioning special needs, I had the free use of four blankets for cushioning. I was able to use my motorized wheelchair right up to the door of the plane at both airports, although upon our arrival in Barcelona, we had to wait 45 minutes onboard the aircraft because the shuttle had broken down. Fortunately, the flight attendant was quite charming and the cleaning crew kept us entertained!

**Manual or Motorized Wheelchair?** Concerns for accessibility in unknown locations and potential damages by the airline baggage handlers led my attendant to suggest that we bring a manual wheelchair, but I was reluctant to give up the precious freedom provided by my motorized wheelchair. So I used the latter, which resulted in a few squabbles that we are still laughing about, considering that my slow locomotion is out of synch with the faster gait of my attendant. Once the decision was made, we had to deal with the issue of keeping the batteries charged, so we borrowed a voltage converter and a plug adapter suitable for Spain.

**Airport/Hotel Transfer.** We contacted the hotel by telephone, in English, our second language. We asked the clerk to book an adapted transport service for the time of our arrival, and since the driver had been waiting during our “mishap” with the broken-down shuttle, he remembered to charge us for the extra time! However, we were relieved to see him when we finally emerged from the terminal, because on one occasion, we were stranded at an airport for more than two hours!

Once we were all comfortably settled in his vehicle, we proceeded to make arrangements with our very pleasant driver for our return trip to the airport and contacted a professional French-speaking guide to book a four-hour private tour of the city for the following Friday. We had not yet reached the hotel and we had already organized a tour!

## **Conference**

Our presentation was scheduled to take place on day one. Unfortunately, we were unable to fully load my Pathfinder communication device. Our thanks to a representative from Liberator, a European counterpart of Prentke-Romich, who managed to adjust the connections.

I was able to play an active role during the Town Hall meeting and to appreciate the input of all my non-verbal colleagues. When my turn to speak came up, a volunteer offered to click on the slides, so Marc and I were free to express ourselves in turns.

I found out afterwards that I was the only Canadian user of a communication device to make a presentation at this Conference. It's quite an honour! I was flattered that some forty people came to hear me, especially as I recognized several ISAAC Canada individuals.

I received positive feedback and even praise, which made me very proud. I had performed really well with my communication device, pressing the right keys at the right moment, which is not so easy to do with your head! The exchange with my attendant made our presentation livelier and the screening of our two DVDs made it more instructive and inspiring.

As part of the Official Program, the 1200 delegates were invited to a Welcome Reception at the Congress Centre, including the screening of the fascinating documentary film “Only God Could Hear Me”, dazzling flamenco dancing and human pyramids shows, and an unforgettable evening of dance at the Hilton Hotel. We had the opportunity to admire the splendid gothic architecture at the Maritime Museum,

to appreciate the impeccable organization of group accessible transportation and to enjoy the warm welcome of smiling volunteers.

We experienced so many powerful moments at the Conference that filled us with wonder and wisdom. There are no words to describe how we felt when we met with colleagues from Quebec, Canada, and the United-States, as well as French-speaking Europeans. How wonderful also to add new Brazilian, Italian, British, Norwegian and Chinese friends to our circle of contacts! We had the opportunity to satisfy our interest for new technology with the eye movement driven devices! The silent auction was also a lot of fun! Our sincere thanks to the Organizing Committee for running such a successful event!



## Tourism

Thursday evening, we joined a few other people who were hanging around the hotel lobby for an impromptu outing. We selected a restaurant on La Rambla and embarked on an expedition in the subway that we will remember for a very long time. Finding our way in the maze of several subway stations, getting on and off inaccessible trains: we had a ball! However, it was well worth the effort because we enjoyed the most delicious melt-in-your-mouth steaks once we got to the restaurant!

On Friday, as planned, we did a guided tour, which took us to the Playa, the hill overlooking the city where the scenic view is superb, the Sagrada Familia basilica, an architectural masterpiece, and the famous residences designed by Gaudi.

On Saturday, we ventured out by ourselves to explore this fascinating city, and for eight hours, we traveled by subway and strolled through the streets: the cathedral, the charming La Rambla pedestrian street, the busy Mirador de Colom roundabout, the calm marina. We ended the day with a delightful meal of paella and sangria. How can you not fall in love with this city?

That evening, we forgot to ask for a wakeup call. As a result, we had to rush through our morning routine, and to cap it all, there were connection problems with a credit card. After signed several forms, we left the hotel having promised to pay the balance of our bill upon our arrival in Canada. The taxi driver was very happy because he could charge us once again for his waiting time! We ate breakfast at the airport and were browsing through the duty-free shop when we saw an airline employee gesturing frantically in our direction. We were the only ones missing: all the other passengers were already onboard! No wonder it took us so much time to leave Spain, because we left part of ourselves behind!

The inspiration that we gained from such an experience motivates us in our daily struggles and urges us to continue raising awareness among the general public to the reality of non-verbal individuals. Are we now dreaming of Pittsburgh 2012? Of course we are!

# Another Use for Quillsoft's WordQ

By Al Sunisloe

WordQ is a piece of software developed at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Centre in Toronto, in cooperation with Quillsoft, a software company. The primary task of this software is to facilitate communication for augmentative and alternative communication users. It also has a great word prediction feature. This software is very useful for me in my general writing - emails, notes, and letters – but I discovered a very powerful way to use this package.

If you have it on your computer, get a piece of text in a word processor or Notepad. Highlight the text in the usual way, generally Ctrl-A. With WordQ running, push F11 and WordQ reads the text, as all users have learned.

What's the big deal? Usually users communicate their thoughts this way. Generally our thoughts are short, not many words if one is a person who uses AAC engaged in day-to-day communication. But I found WordQ very useful in reading texts of other people. One can use it to read short emails sent to you, sure. But I found the power of WordQ is in its ability to read a long text to you, albeit it a long letter or even an entire book to you. This is the crux of my article.

I have observed that people with cerebral palsy are not avid or great readers, or those that require AAC are not. I read well enough to function as an adult. I managed to get a B.A. in Religious Studies but I do not read as a pastime. The only novels I have read are those that were required academically. Ah, it seems too much work. I can turn pages well enough, but it seems not worth the effort.

Other people with cerebral palsy, who often require AAC, are not that fortunate. They don't or can't read for a variety of reasons. They might have been denied an education. They might have a learning disability or their eyesight might not be the best. Whatever the reason I think they could benefit immensely by having WordQ or some other product that can read to them.

A super great reason for having WordQ or some other text-to-speech software read to you is that reading, (or hearing text read to you in our case) makes you appear better informed and smarter. This is indeed very important for non-verbal people as society views non-speaking people as unintelligent. This leads to inappropriate treatment of people who use AAC, big time. I am totally amazed at the difference in treatment I get when I use my communication board to say something profound. Boy, it feels great. However, I feel bad for people who have developmental disabilities, as they are often disrespected due to their cognitive impairment.

The world is full of fun and useful material. The vast world of novels is a wonderful world of its own. I am told that one learns a lot of knowledge by reading novels. After you have read them, you can discuss them with other readers, sharing your insights and gaining insights of others. Perhaps you can join a book club at your local library, a new weekly event you can look forward to. Novels give you insight to the minds of others and you can learn how they think, which is a very good thing to do if you are into promoting harmony with people. It is also good to learn perspectives of others for it will give you a much more informed worldview.

Another great reason to have a product like WordQ read to you is that you can learn about your disability or related medical problems by yourself before you visit your GP or specialist. Also you can learn about all the legislation and government policy to help people with disabilities. Perhaps you can find out about new funding which you are entitled to, or some new program in your community that you might want to participate in. For example, I think it would be wise for all people with disabilities to keep up with the

marvelous online publications from the ARCH Disability Law Centre; ARCH Alert is a timely publication that keeps you up to speed about disability laws affecting Ontarians. I subscribe to Accessibility News that is a weekly record of news concerning all types of disabilities and in all facets of life.

But don't stop your oral reading at the world of disability; expand your horizons. Certainly you should read stuff at [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca) or [ctv.ca](http://ctv.ca) for news. I just typed "novels online reading" at [Google.com](http://Google.com) and got to 1.3 million websites where one is supposed to be able to view novels for free online.

My pattern for online texts is to first copy all the text to Notepad in Windows. This gets rid of all the special fonts and other visual features. Now you only have text. You often see some texts at the top and bottom of the document that are not actually part of the document. I highlight such material and delete it so I don't hear this 'junk' when I get WordQ to read my text to me.

Usually websites are set up with one chapter per web page, which means you need to do multiple selecting and copying in order to get a novel or similar major work to your computer. Be persistent and finish the job. When I've got the work correctly edited (junk eliminated), I copy the text electronically to WORD. Notepad can be used with WordQ but Word is a better program to use, if you wish your eyes to follow the text you are reading. Also, if you are following the text, you can choose a font good for your eyes to view, perhaps a larger one or a bold one.

I hope that you will find WordQ or your equivalent software useful in reading texts as described. I hope you really enjoy reading this way and you benefit from it. If you have any questions, contact me at [alsunisloe@hotmail.com](mailto:alsunisloe@hotmail.com).

## **Book Review**

### *Sour Puss by Sarah Leal*

Do you every get discouraged with all the complaining that swirls around you? Madi and Colin's mom did and she quit. With no one to do the job, Madi and Colin got to work to create their own Lemonade stand and Complaint Department. Was it a good decision or not? In the end, does complaining really help or do anything for the community? How can you turn complaining into something that can help others? Try creating a Lemonade stand that welcomes positive comments and donations to "Make-A-Wish". This is a win-win situation for everyone.

Sour Puss is a great story for young primary children in grade one and two who enjoy complaining. It provides a great chance to stop and ask, "Do you complain too much? Do we really need to complain at all? How can we change and become people with a great attitude that help people and doesn't put people down?"

The children enjoyed reading and discussing Madi and Colin's adventures with a sour puss of a lemonade stand. The "kiddies" responses were great:

"I liked Madi. She has a wheelchair like me!"  
"Boy, Colin really complained too much about everything."  
"If I were Colin's mom, I would quit, too."  
"Why were people so mad?"  
"Willow the cat was best at listening to people."  
"Madi, me, vantage--- (Madi has a Vantage like me)."  
"I like lemonade."

Enjoy some time sitting and reading this with your children and think about ways you can work together to help others with “real” problems.

Cheers

Shelley Neal and Roberta Cole and their Senior Kindergarten/Grade One Class  
Bloorview School Authority

## The Canadian Corner

Congratulations to Chris Beliveau (AB) who received the Friends of Rehabilitation award. Congratulations also go out to Anne Warrick (ON) and Barbara Collier (ON) who received the ISAAC Fellowship Award. Congratulations to all the Canadian contributors, authors, collaborators and participants in the ISAAC 2010 Conference in Barcelona! Below is a listing of all the Canadians listed in the official conference program, with reference to their podium presentations and/or poster sessions. An asterisk (\*) before the name indicates active individual membership in ISAAC Canada as of June 2010. An (I) indicates association with a 2010 ISAAC Institutional Member. A total of 91 individuals produced 43 program entries. Good going, team!

(\*) Kim Adams<sup>1, 27, 35</sup>  
(I) Elizabeth Baird<sup>21</sup>  
(I) Patricia Baldwin<sup>8</sup>  
(\*) Beata Batorowicz<sup>11, 30, 37, 41</sup>  
(I) Shae Birch<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Susie Blackstien-Adler<sup>33</sup>  
Stefanie Blain<sup>6</sup>  
(I) Carl Bonura<sup>19, 22</sup>  
Jackie Brown<sup>10</sup>  
(I) Linda Buskin<sup>28</sup>  
Cheryl Cameron<sup>33</sup>  
(\*) Sandra Castro<sup>4</sup>  
(\*) Elsa Chan<sup>23, 25</sup>  
(I) Tom Chau<sup>6, 17</sup>  
(I) Charmaine Chadwick<sup>29</sup>  
(\*) Barbara Collier<sup>13</sup>  
Resi Contardo<sup>23</sup>  
(\*) Al Cook<sup>27, 35</sup>  
Dana Corfield<sup>4</sup>  
Tracey Dryden<sup>35</sup>  
Elan Dubrofsky<sup>18</sup>  
(I) Brent Duncan<sup>7</sup>  
Alex Dunn<sup>33</sup>  
Mary Egan<sup>31</sup>  
(I) Margaret Ettorre<sup>43</sup>  
(I) Tiago Falk<sup>17</sup>  
(\*) Monica Francella<sup>40</sup>  
(I) Laura Franks<sup>38</sup>  
(I) Sarah Gauthier<sup>40</sup>  
Patricia Giroux<sup>23</sup>

(I) Elaine Lu<sup>17</sup>  
Kelly Lucky<sup>1</sup>  
Olivia Hagemeyer<sup>36</sup>  
Jill Harburn<sup>40</sup>  
Stacey Harpell<sup>5</sup>  
(I) Carmen Hall<sup>29</sup>  
Catherine Hébert<sup>23</sup>  
Bruce Helmbold<sup>1</sup>  
(I) Paul Janzen<sup>32</sup>  
(\*) Robert Jean<sup>3</sup>  
Jeff Jutai<sup>18</sup>  
Lorraine Kamp<sup>34</sup>  
(I) Sara Koke<sup>42</sup>  
(I) Dan Li<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Janice Long<sup>33</sup>  
Anne MacCallum<sup>2</sup>  
Daanish Mansoor<sup>31</sup>  
(\*) Paul Marshall<sup>4</sup>  
Anne Martin<sup>12</sup>  
(I) Jennifer Mays<sup>21</sup>  
(I) Sheri McClement<sup>38</sup>  
(\*) Stacy McDougall<sup>7, 8, 9, 29</sup>  
Hilary McKee<sup>31</sup>  
(I) Cynthia Medeiros<sup>21</sup>  
(\*) Pat Mirenda<sup>34</sup>  
Taslim Moosa<sup>9, 30</sup>  
Fella Mostefai<sup>31</sup>  
Bocar N'Diaye<sup>18, 31</sup>  
(I) Tom Nantais<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Jorge Paricoto<sup>4</sup>

Sarah Power<sup>6</sup>  
Simon Pulsifer<sup>39</sup>  
Alfred Renaud<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Anne Marie Renzoni<sup>15, 32</sup>  
(I) Lorraine Reynolds<sup>26, 42</sup>  
Agathe Rhéaume<sup>31</sup>  
(\*) Jeffrey K. Riley<sup>16</sup>  
(I) Marc Saint-Cyr<sup>3</sup>  
(I) Laurie Scott<sup>19</sup>  
(I) Fraser Shein<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Tracy Shepherd<sup>9, 11, 15</sup>  
Gerry Sheppard<sup>15</sup>  
(\*) Nahum Sloan<sup>15</sup>  
Marie-France St-Pierre<sup>31</sup>  
(\*) Ann Sutton<sup>10, 14, 23, 24, 25</sup>  
(\*) Gail Teachman<sup>17, 38</sup>  
(I) Laura Thompson<sup>28</sup>  
Nadine Trottier<sup>34</sup>  
(\*) Natacha Trudeau<sup>23, 24, 25</sup>  
(I) Vivian Tsang<sup>39</sup>  
(\*) Lois Turner<sup>16</sup>  
(\*) Christine Valiquette<sup>23, 25</sup>  
(\*) Kelli Vessoyan<sup>7</sup>  
Joanne Volden<sup>35</sup>  
Lily Wainer<sup>38</sup>  
(I) Lorna Walker<sup>20</sup>  
(I) Flora Wan<sup>12</sup>  
(I) Chen Wang<sup>39</sup>  
Chana Weinberg<sup>38</sup>  
(\*) Melanie Workentin<sup>43</sup>

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- 2 «TALK TO THE DOG:» SUCCESSFUL AAC SOLUTIONS FOR A PERSON WITH A PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER
- 3 A WINNING ATTITUDE AND AN INSATIABLE THIRST FOR LIFE
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- 5 ACUTE AND REHABILITATION AAC SERVICES IN SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN
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<sup>42</sup> WORKING TOGETHER FOR KIDS AND TEENS WITH DISABILITIES IN A WORLD OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

<sup>43</sup> WORKING TOGETHER: DEVISING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE PROGRAM TO SUPPORT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM AND HOME IN STUDENTS WHO USE AAC.

Perhaps you know of other milestones, achievements and contributions of our members including advocates, and persons who use AAC. If so, please send information to be considered for a future publication of *Figuratively Speaking* to [Bruce.Helmbold@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Bruce.Helmbold@albertahealthservices.ca).

## A Tribute to Aaron Shelbourne

By Barbara Collier

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Aaron, miss him in so many ways. We miss his great, larger than life, “can’t-stop-once-he-starts” laugh; the twinkle in his eye when he thought of the slightest hint of naughtiness in what was said or meant; the way his great, big voice announced him well before he came into view!

Aaron’s presence filled a room - whether he was with his friends, joking and scheming against the establishment or seriously advocating for his rights or the rights of others who use AAC. No matter what the agenda was, Aaron was always true to himself – a determined, smart, caring guy who meant so much to so many people.

In the last few years of his life, Aaron worked with ACCPC on a number of significant projects. He was an advisor on the “Speak Up project” that explored the abuse experiences of people who use AAC and he was a presenter at many of our trainings for police, counselors, sexual health educators and clinicians. Aaron was a very impressive presenter. I often heard audience members remark that he had “opened their eyes” and changed their perspectives. In 2000, he participated in the DVD and book “Pointing it Out”: a safety resource by and for people who use AAC. With support from ISAAC Canada, Aaron presented on this project at ISAAC 2008 in Montreal.

He participated in another DVD - in “Communicating Matters”, a training program for attendants. This resource was very personal for Aaron. He felt passionately that attendants should be trained to communicate with people who use AAC because communication is the foundation of all personal services. He also advocated that attendants should be accountable not only to their supervisors but to the consumers they work with.

Since 2006, Aaron worked with ACCPC to increase accessibility for people who use AAC to services within the justice sector and his online video clips ([www.accpc.ca](http://www.accpc.ca)) are currently used across Canada to educate lawyers, court accessibility coordinators, and victim-witness services about the accessibility needs of people who use AAC. In 2007, Aaron participated in an ACCPC federal project on communication assistants. Aaron strongly believed that people who use AAC have the same right to funded human assistance as people who are deaf have the right to sign language interpreting services. Although he managed to maintain a roster of communication assistants to support him around his medical needs, he continued to advocate that others have access to these services.

Aaron's contribution to the AAC field is not limited to his project work with ACCPC. We think it is important that we share some of his life experiences with you as Aaron's life and many of his struggles reflect issues that are highly pertinent to all of us in the AAC community.

As a child of the times, Aaron lived in an institution and went from there to a small group home. From there he engaged in a long series of negotiations to get his own apartment in downtown Toronto with agency-based attendant services. Over the years he struggled to get the supports he needed to train his attendants to communicate with him. He often stated that there wasn't always the will, the time or ability to provide him with this basic right to direct his services. For many years he applied for but was unsuccessful in getting direct funding so that he could hire and manage his own attendant services.

As an adult, Aaron attended an adult literacy program at Seneca College that was taught by Sherri Parkins. Sherri remembers his amazing ability to do long division questions in his head. He was also a wonderful chess player using a custom board that allowed him to indicate his next move.

A couple of years ago, Aaron decided he wanted to address his alcoholism. With the help of his friends, he advocated for the supports he needed to get into a residential substance abuse program. These supports included his request for a communication assistant to communicate with staff and to participate in individual and group counseling sessions. Despite the existence of *Eldridge v. British Columbia* (1997), a supreme court judgment that obligates organizations to provide accommodations for communication in essential services, it took Aaron over 18 months to get the supports he needed to access the program. During that time, Aaron bravely sat through meetings where organizations tossed "the responsibility ball" amongst themselves and heard comments such as "With all this expense, how can we be assured that he will never drink again?" Despite all of this, Aaron not only persevered with getting the supports he needed, he succeeded in managing his alcoholism.

In 2008, Aaron faced the same struggles for communication assistance when he was diagnosed with cancer. He and his support circle advocated and finally got the supports he needed to communicate with his medical team during his treatments and long battle with cancer. Aaron passed away in March 2010 with his sister and his beloved communication assistant, Lamia Gibson by his side.

Aaron should never have had to work so hard to get the communication support he required to live the life he wanted to have. As members of the AAC community we must find more effective ways to make society truly and meaningfully accessible for people who use AAC. Thank you, Aaron for sharing your life lessons with us. It is our job to listen and move forward.

# Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada (ACCPC)

By Barbara Collier, Executive Director

## **Access to Justice for People who have Communication Disabilities**

On October 25, 2010, ACCPC is launching a free, online, moderated discussion forum to explore accessibility to justice services for people who have communication disabilities. The forum is not a "live" discussion. You will be able to read messages, post questions, share your opinions and experiences at a time that is convenient to you.

Join our "Access to Justice" team for discussions about communication supports for victim/witnesses with communication disabilities so that they can provide accurate and reliable information, have their

testimony recorded in ways that safeguard the integrity of their intended meaning and have equal access to the full range of justice services in their communities.

This forum will be of interest to legal professionals, police, legal aid clinics, legal educators, accessibility coordinators, victim witness services, disability advocates, people who live with communication disabilities, speech language pathologists and people who work in the area of augmentative and alternative communication. Please go to our website to login and participate in these interesting discussions.

### **Creating Accessible Businesses and Services**

**National Survey.** If you haven't already done so, please complete the communication access surveys either as a person who has a communication disability, a family member or as a service provider. We need your input so that we can present information and numbers to the government and accessibility policy makers about the significance of communication access for people who have communication disabilities. The surveys are available in French and English. Express your opinions <http://www.accpc.ca/catbs-survey.htm>

**Online resource for organizations.** We are currently developing resources for businesses and organizations about how to accommodate access to their goods and services for people with communication disabilities. These resources will be available on the ACCPC website in April 2011.

### **Communication Access Forum for People who use AAC**

ACCPC is launching a new online discussion forum for people who use AAC. The forum is a place where people can discuss issues and experiences relating to communication barriers and supports in their communities, learn about the legislation and explore ways to increase awareness for improved communication access to businesses and services. It is open to anyone over 18 years, who has a communication disability and who may or may not use AAC. Please share this information with people who might be interested.

The forum starts on Nov. 1, 2010. People can log in to view and add messages. Please go to the ACCPC website to register and participate. The forum is facilitated by Colin Phillips and Megan Henze.

### **Connecting to Communities**

Our DVD and book by and for people who use AAC is available in French and English. It is full of practical ideas that people who use AAC can use to reduce common communication barriers when meeting new people. Clinicians are telling us that they are introducing it to people who use AAC, 15 years and older. See sample clips from the DVD and order a copy at: <http://www.accpc.ca/connectingtocommunities.htm>.

For more information on all of these projects and other ACCPC activities, please go to: [www.accpc.ca](http://www.accpc.ca) or email us at [accpc@sympatico.ca](mailto:accpc@sympatico.ca)

## **Nova Scotia Regional Representative for ISAAC Canada**



Beth Parker Godin will be stepping down as the ISAAC Canada Regional Representative of Nova Scotia. She has held this position since 2003. Thank you to Beth for all of her efforts and dedication to ISAAC Canada and AAC service delivery in Nova Scotia. Beth has been instrumental in advocating for AAC services and funding for AAC technology in Nova Scotia.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



The 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial ISAAC Conference  
will be held in Pittsburgh, USA  
[www.isaac2012.org](http://www.isaac2012.org)

**Dates for your agenda:**

Pre-conference & AAC Camp: July 28-29  
Main Conference: July 30-August 2  
Research Symposium: August 3-4

## **New Editor for *Figuratively Speaking***

ISAAC Canada is pleased to announce that Ben Adaman will be the new editor of the *Figuratively Speaking* newsletter starting in 2011. Ben can be contacted at [badaman@deerlodge.mb.ca](mailto:badaman@deerlodge.mb.ca). Good luck Ben!

## **2011 ISAAC Membership Registration Package**

You will have received a Membership Registration Package in the mail. It includes a voucher that can be redeemed in the value of \$20.00 for any renewing ISAAC Canada member who enlists a new member's registration. The new member must not have been a member since before 2005. Our goal is to increase memberships of people who use AAC and their families. The voucher can be applied to the membership fees for new professional memberships, new students and for new people who use AAC and their families.

In order to redeem this voucher, you must register together:

Submit both registration forms (yours and the new members) at the same time. Provide payment for both memberships (minus \$20.00 from either membership). Include the voucher with the registration forms. This voucher can be only used once. It cannot be applied by renewing members unless renewing with a new member.

## **ISAAC Canada Representative**

ISAAC Canada is seeking a Regional Representative for Nova Scotia or any other Atlantic province. If interested, please contact Tracy Shepherd, ISAAC Canada President at [tshepherd@mail.cepp.org](mailto:tshepherd@mail.cepp.org).

## **Estate Planning Education**

Joseph Marquez from the Investors Group Financial Services Inc. would like to offer educational sessions regarding Critical Estate Planning issues for parents with adult children with a disability or mental health issues. Joseph is an educational consultant and also an active volunteer in the disabled community. He works with a lawyer from the Heydary PC law firm that provides complimentary educational sessions in the community. Please feel free to contact Joseph via phone or email if you have any questions or wish to arrange an educational session. He can be reached at 416-483-7667 x 531 or [joseph.marquez@investorsgroup.com](mailto:joseph.marquez@investorsgroup.com).

## **ISAAC Lip Balm**

Support ISAAC Canada by purchasing All Natural Lip Balm. They are only \$3.00 each and have SPF 15 for protection from the sun. If you are interested in receiving a package of 10 or more lip balms, please email [kelli.vessoyan@tvcc.on.ca](mailto:kelli.vessoyan@tvcc.on.ca) and type 'Lip Balm' in the Subject line.