

A Message from the Chair

As we welcome the warm days of summer, we're busy as ever at the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. I can't thank the many dedicated volunteers and staff enough for all of their hard work and countless hours to "re-birth" our national office. "Talk is cheap," as the saying goes, and the wonderful people from our provincial/territorial networks are "walking the talk" by communicating and collaborating on our committees and projects, with more and more of us from across the country joining together to re-build LDAC. Judging from all the activities reported in this newsletter, I'm excited with what the future will bring to us all. I hope you are too!

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

With summer already here, it's a busy time of year as many of you are preparing for your AGMs, hiring summer staff and preparing your summer programs. Others are winding down, as you close shop for a few weeks in the summer. Here at LDAC, it will be a busy summer as we try to put into place recommendations from the various committees and fundraising audit report, and prepare for our own AGM, which will be held on September 26. An AGM notice will be sent soon to invite all provincial/territorial LDA board members to participate in the conference call as voting is open to all directors of the provincial/territorial and national learning disabilities associations.

Below are some of the activities LDAC is currently involved in. Have a safe and relaxing summer everyone!

Claudette Larocque
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
Email: claudette@ldac-acta.ca

Advocacy Activities

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Working Group re: Policy Review on the CAF's Duty to Accommodate Employees with Learning Disabilities

In June, LDAC was asked to speak to the Working Group on the effects of learning disabilities on adults in the workplace and provide best practices. We also shared with the group some feedback that CAF employees and applicants have provided to us regarding accommodations and assessments.

Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) User Advisory Group

In 2014, Canadian public libraries established CELA to champion a national effort to enrich the reading experience for persons who can't easily read standard print by providing accessible formats, including audio and e-text, via local libraries. This also includes access to Bookshare, an online non-profit library of copyrighted content. LDAC is a proud member of the User Advisory Group, and in June we met with the new Executive Director of CELA to discuss the launch of the new self-registration option for services on the CELA website. Individuals with learning disabilities can register online for accessible formats through their public library as long

as they have a library card. To register, please visit www.signup.celalibrary.ca (English) or www.inscription.bibliocaeb.ca (French).

Government Funded Projects

Screening for Success: Screening Adults at Risk for Learning Disabilities Instrument

In collaboration with the Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick and the Government of New Brunswick, this screening tool was revised and is currently in a pilot format throughout the province. Practitioners will provide final feedback by the end of the summer. In conjunction with this project, the Government of New Brunswick, LDANB and LDAC will be working on developing recommended practices for assessment, diagnosis and documentation of learning disabilities based on the official LDAC definition.

Committee Reports

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee is acting on the recommendations from our external consultants to implement the Rally Projects with the help of dedicated volunteers and staff. These Rally Projects were chosen by members in the learning disabilities community as a way to connect the passion, knowledge and experience amongst members, and to provide a mechanism for new collaborative ways of working together to achieve the goals as identified by the community. Information on how you can participate and contribute to this work will come soon.

Committee highlights include:

- Continued recruitment and onboarding of talented volunteers to LDAC committees
- Implementation has begun on recommendations from external consultants to help with the Strategic Planning and Fund Development Committees
- Development of a business plan for LDAC going forward, including a review of our vision and mission, and how the Rally Projects fit
- Facilitation of Rally Projects with assistance from LDAC committees
 - Charters developed for each of the top three Rally Projects
 - Clearinghouse of activities in the learning disabilities community
 - Facilitating communications within the community
 - Portal for research activities
 - Recruitment of a Community Manager to coordinate the activities of the Rally Projects
 - Ongoing recruitment and onboarding of volunteers
 - Preparations for informational webinars

Operations Committee

The Operations Committee studied the Fundraising Audit Review prepared by the fundraising consultant hired within the Phoenix Project framework. Some of the report's comments regarding our fundraising practices were of significant interest. The fundraising database

software LDAC currently uses will be discontinued at the end of the year. Therefore, LDAC is beginning to look at other options.

While there have been no major changes yet to the website, it has also decidedly been an intense topic of discussion in the last few months. The LDAC Board and the Operations Committee have made some decisions regarding its future, although a clear timeline has not yet been determined. Work on developing a timeline will begin this summer as we develop our implementation plan with our fundraising software company. We should have a more realistic idea about this by the end of September.

Other items the Committee has discussed include progress on the Rally Projects, LDAC's strategic plan and anything else that impacts operations.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is meeting on a regular, monthly basis and is responsible for coordinating the production of LDAC's quarterly e-newsletters. The Committee is also working with the Fund Development Committee to draft messaging for fundraising proposals.

LDAC is planning on redeveloping the website in the coming months, and the Communications Committee will be working closely with other LDAC committees and the national office to ensure a smooth process. Managing LDAC's social media channels is also on this Committee's radar, and there's a need for volunteers to help with this work. If you have an interest in helping us manage our social media channels, please contact LDAC's Executive Director, Claudette Larocque (email address listed at the top of this newsletter).

Fund Development Committee

The Fund Development Committee was consulted by the Operations Committee regarding the selection and implementation plans for a new CRM/Donor Management system. This system will be installed and staff trained during the summer. At the same time, the Operations, Communications and Fund Development Committees will be working together to develop the new donor form and page on the LDAC website. A third party case for support will be completed by the fall, which will help in our search for new revenue.

Health/Environment Committee

LDAC is a founding partner of the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE), and represented by LDAC volunteers Lynn Green and Barbara McElgunn. CPCHE is a national partnership of environmental, public health, medical, disability advocacy and child-centred organizations that, since 2001, have been working together across traditional boundaries to advance the protection of children's health from the risks posed by toxic chemicals and pollutants.

In May, LDAC was a signatory on a CPCHE letter to the Ontario Ministry of Education in response to their public consultation on regulatory development under the new Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. This letter seeks to advance CPCHE's years of work in promoting children's environmental health improvements in child care settings, most notably the CPCHE Checklist for child care settings and its recent work on radon led by several CPCHE partners. Later this summer, LDAC will be attending a joint briefing with federal government officials and CPCHE partners. Other advocacy efforts include letters from CPCHE to provincial/territorial

ministries re: sound management/disposal and public awareness of mercury-containing CFL light bulbs. For more information about CPCHE, please visit www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca

In June, Barbara McElgunn attended a webinar hosted by the Canadian Network for Human Health and the Environment to generate comments about proposed exemptions to the prohibition of several flame retardants that the Federal Government's Chemical Management Plan has already declared to be toxic. For the fact sheet that summarizes the prohibitions with proposed exemptions, please visit http://nblung.ca/cnhhe_wp/en/files/2015/04/Fact-Sheet-Prohibition.pdf

Phoenix Project Update

The Phoenix Project has forced some introspection and analysis within the organization. While the project is in its final stages, it will likely be completed by the end of the year. Here are some of the activities we've facilitated:

- Hosted a public online consultation (June 2014) – for the results, please visit <https://sites.google.com/site/ldacphoenix/>
- Completed a telephone survey of people actively involved in the learning disabilities community (Fall 2014)
- Worked on developing a plan to initiate the top three Rally Projects following the online consultation and telephone survey
- Developing a webinar to introduce the process for implementing the Rally Projects
- Finalized the charters that will guide each Rally Project team
- Reviewed the fundraising consultant's report that was delivered this past March, and started implementing some of its recommendations
- Developed a draft Mission and Vision Statement for the organization, which will be forwarded this summer to the provincial and territorial organizations for their comments
- Finalized a more traditional business plan to meet our funders' needs

Top three Rally Projects:

1. Creating an online clearinghouse of network activities
2. Creating channels for regular network communications
3. Creating a research portal to connect researchers and practitioners

LDAC is working to achieve the following:

- Create an effective, sustainable, national organization that can support the efforts of the network working to support people and families affected by learning disabilities in Canada.
- Act as a coordinator and facilitator for these Rally Projects
- Implement the fundraising consultant's recommendations and move gradually towards a new strategy for fundraising
- Establish our website and social media channels as a portal for information about learning disabilities that more effectively meets the needs of the different audiences

The Rally Projects can become an effective tool to bring some of the various goals as expressed through the online survey and public consultation to fruition, as well as any other project that might surface as we continue to grow and evolve. Leadership for these projects will

come from the wider learning disabilities community. A decision regarding the exact launch date will be made this summer.

Provincial/Territorial Updates

British Columbia

Over this past year, the Learning Disabilities Association of British Columbia has expanded its committee structure and re-allocated tasks to both distribute the workload and actively engage more members. We now have our own videographer who has joined our Communications Committee and is expanding our social media presence. This Committee is in the midst of a website redesign to improve mobile access and build the content of resources. We have a treasurer at long last; in fact, we have two accountants who have joined our Finance Committee, which is building a strong foundation for our operations. We have a new Membership and Marketing Chair, who is currently working on messaging and membership, and itching to get into fund development plans.

We continue to have a wide range of inquiries for individuals wanting to volunteer with us. The challenge is our own capacity to engage and activate these offers quickly. We're considering creating liaison positions for interested volunteers in communities where no chapter exists to increase our outreach.

We continue to offer our online LiveLearning (Lexia) reading program, and are now working on ways to market it across the province. For more information about LiveLearning, please visit www.ldabc.ca/live-learning-winter-2015/

Seemingly, there's no end to opportunities to partner with organizations engaged in special education, present and speak at local events and meet with decision makers to get our message out. We continue to promote our recommendations as developed out of a data collection project, several roundtables and workshops with experts and organizations working in the field of learning disabilities. For more information about these recommendations, please visit www.ldabc.ca/parents/ldabc-recommendations/

Lynne Kent
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of British Columbia

New Brunswick

Without a doubt, this was the Learning Disability Association of New Brunswick's best and most productive year of the last three years, and we're growing and playing a more significant role in matters of consequence for those with learning disabilities. The following is an overview of the major initiatives that LDANB has undertaken in 2015, and will be the focus of our actions in the upcoming year.

Of most significance for 2015/16, LDANB will be embarking on a new initiative with the objective of creating a New Brunswick Standard for Post-secondary Education Training & Labour (PETL) Specific Psychoeducational Assessments of Learning Disabilities. In collaboration with government and select psychologists, LDANB will establish clear, consistent and uniform diagnostic criteria, diagnostic measures and a reporting format to be used by all psychologists hired by PETL for the assessment and reporting of psychoeducational assessments of learning disabilities. As part of this contract, LDANB will also establish the method by which

psychologists handle completed client career plans. Finally, LDANB will develop the framework and logistics for the timely management of PETL-specific psychoeducational assessments. Going beyond these five main objectives, LDANB will also actively manage a total of 150 PETL-specific psychoeducational assessments.

On a different front, LDANB will deliver two-day Screening for Success Training & Certification Sessions for PETL practitioners that wish to administer the updated SFS Instrument. We've already developed and successfully delivered seven such sessions this year and anticipate doing at least that many more by the end of 2015. In collaboration with select PETL practitioners and LDAC, we also anticipate completing the final version of the updated SFS instrument by the end of 2015.

LDANB is also pleased to announce its partnership with the Government of New Brunswick's Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development to host the 2015 Symposium on Learning Disabilities. The focus and theme of this symposium will be "Literacy, Learning Disabilities and Cognitive Strategies: Facilitating the Learning Process for All." Planning is now in progress and more information will be available on our website by the end of June. Finally, LDANB wishes to recognize Toronto Dominion Bank for their financial support of our new Barton Specialized Literacy Program. We're really looking forward to moving ahead on this important literacy initiative.

Based on our progress over the last few years and anticipated activities going into 2016, it's certainly a pleasure for me to be part of the association at this time and I look forward to diving into these new initiatives. Have a great summer!

André Deschênes
Executive Director, Learning Disability Association of New Brunswick

Prince Edward Island

The Learning Disabilities Association of Prince Edward Island hosted a mixer in June to allow parents, educators, government representatives and business leaders to meet our board and each other. Parents had the opportunity to discuss commonalities with a view to some peer support, and we hope that business leaders will see the benefits of supporting our programs with some direct interaction and information from parents and educators. The Neil Squire Society demonstrated low cost apps for iPads and tablets at the event as an alternative to the costs of other programs.

We're also in discussion with the University of Prince Edward Island's Departments of Education and Psychology regarding two research projects that they wish to partner with us on. Early days, but we haven't had a relationship with the university, so this is a positive step.

We're developing positive relationships with the provincial government, and hope to maintain this following the recent election, and are arranging meetings with new MLA's and deputies to discuss learning disabilities issues.

Martin Dutton
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Prince Edward Island

Québec

Lise Bibaud, Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Québec, has co-authored three new French educational books that correspond with the Québec elementary school curriculum:

Mes jeux éducatifs – 1er cycle – Grades 1 and 2

<https://www.boutiquegoelette.com/details.aspx?ID=eg9782896906529>

Mes jeux éducatifs – 2e cycle – Grades 3 and 4

<https://www.boutiquegoelette.com/details.aspx?ID=eg9782896906536>

Mes jeux éducatifs – 3e cycle – Grades 5 and 6

<https://www.boutiquegoelette.com/details.aspx?ID=eg9782896906543>

Games developed for young children from Grades 1 to 6 with learning disabilities or for those simply wishing to exercise their knowledge. Games include hidden words, sudokus, secret codes and more. There are a host of activities available to develop young minds and their skills in writing, math, observations and logic. A list of skills used is indicated for each game.

These books are available via LDAQ's website at [www. http://aqeta.qc.ca/](http://aqeta.qc.ca/) as well as through the publisher <https://www.boutiquegoelette.com/catalog.aspx>

If purchased from the publisher, 75 cents from each book sold will go to LDAQ for programs and services.

Please note that these books are available in French only

Saskatchewan

The Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan held its AGM in May. I served as President for two years (I'm now Past-president) and Lynne Wawryk-Epp is our new President. Lynne is an education psychologist who has worked extensively in the learning disabilities field for over two decades, and has been a long-time board member as well. We also amended our bylaws. When we combine this governance change with our strong financial situation and a new strategic plan developed the previous year, we believe we have a solid foundation for continuing success.

As many of you will know, we don't have a chapter system in Saskatchewan, but we do have three branch offices in Regina and Prince Albert, and our provincial office is in Saskatoon. We've seen rapid expansion of programming in all centres this year. For example, in Regina, we added an Arrowsmith program this year, complementing the one we already have in Saskatoon. In Prince Albert, where we serve a mainly aboriginal clientele, our Branch Director, Prema Arsiradam, was recognized as Prince Albert's Woman of the Year.

In the past year, we also made a major change in our annual fundraising event. We launched the LDAS Learning and Leadership Breakfast in Saskatoon and brought Patrick McKenna as our first breakfast speaker. The event was a great success, and we raised about three times the money we had in past years, and with significantly less work. I would like to thank the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario for the concept because we borrowed this fundraising idea from them. This year, we're planning to expand the event to include Regina.

We've also been expanding psychological services, and there's a high demand in Saskatoon for this service where we now employ four full-time educational psychologists. A lot of our work is focused on assessments, but we've also been expanding other services such as neurofeedback.

Bob Cram
Past-president, Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan