



### **A Message from the Chair**

As our school year winds down, our families are gearing up for a summer full of fun activities and get-togethers with family and friends – AND activities to boost (and maintain) their children’s learning skills while school is not in session. Be assured, that our dedicated network of LDA chapters/branches are here to help you throughout the summer. The national office at LDA-Canada is similarly abuzz with activities through the summer – thanks to our wonderful volunteers and staff. We look forward to unveiling some new initiatives in the fall. Enjoy your summer!

Thealzel Lee  
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

### **A Message from the Executive Director**

This year has been a busy time at the National office with a lot of activities and movement on several fronts. Below is one of several activities that LDAC is currently involved in.

Have a safe and relaxing summer everyone!

Spotlight on Invisible Disabilities (Consultation on the Federal Disabilities Legislation) a 2 year consultation project

Project Lead:

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)

Advisory Committee:

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC);

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS);

Royal Canadian Legion (RCL);

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW); and

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

Partners

Arch Disability Law Centre

Brain Injury Canada

Canadian Academy of Audiology

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

Canadian Deaf

Blind Association

Canadian Hard of Hearing Foundation

Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario)

Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind

Communicaid for Hearing Impaired Persons



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The Hearing Foundation of Canada  
Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University  
Mental Health Commission of Canada  
Media Access Canada  
Neil Squire Society  
Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC)

The goal of the “*Spotlight on Invisible Disabilities: Community Consultations on Federal Accessibility Legislation*” is to conduct consultations with members of 20 partner organizations and the public to provide recommendations to the federal government on issues affecting the lives of persons with invisible disabilities that will be improved with new federal accessibility legislation in Canada.

New federal accessibility legislation will apply to areas under federal jurisdiction, including banking, broadcasting, telecommunications, cross-border transportation, federal courts, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and federal government departments, agencies, institutions, crown corporations and other federally-regulated businesses and industries. The focus of the first year of this project was to reach out to transitional groups and individuals to gather their perspectives on the barriers they face as persons with invisible disabilities and to understand how the federal government could better accommodate their needs to ensure that they learn, live and work in a more inclusive and barrier-free Canada.

The Spotlight on Invisible Disabilities consultations provided 15 recommendations in its yearend report to the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities. For the complete first year report on the Spotlight Project please visit <http://chha.ca/documents/CHHASpotlightReportYear1EN.pdf>

The second year of this consultation project will begin in the Fall 2017. Based on priorities recommended in this report as well as those set by the federal government, consultations will further explore ways that the federal accessibility legislation can create an environment in which all Canadians have the resources they need to thrive and the support they need to be full participants in Canadian society.

Claudette Larocque  
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada  
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## Reports

### Prime Minister's Teaching Excellence Awards

Incoming LDAC Professional Advisory Council member Kim McLean, who is an Instructional Coach at Calgary Academy, represented LDAC on the selection committee for these awards. She shares her thoughts about the experience below. The teachers were nominated by colleagues, students or parents.

As a fellow educator I was very intrigued by the qualities that others saw in these teachers that resonated with them and prompted the nomination. It didn't matter if they were urban or rural, with many resources or few these teachers went beyond with whatever was available to make their students' educational experiences engaging and memorable, while setting high standards and helping their students reach their personal goals. Their expertise went beyond their subject area as many reached out to their communities, former teachers or individuals with special expertise to enhance the learning experience. There was also ample evidence of creativity and "thinking outside the box" in the delivery of their lessons. These teachers were themselves lifelong learners always looking for opportunities to improve and learn more, and they modelled this attribute for their students. They also acted as their student's best advocate, building strong relationships, celebrating every success and cheering them on even after they were no longer in their classroom. Most of all the sheer joy these teachers brought to the classroom and their unconditional commitment to their students' achievements and happiness came through in all the nominations. Reviewing these nominations was a rewarding and humbling experience.

Kim McLean

### Advocacy Brief

Barbara McElgunn is a volunteer Health Policy Advisor for LDAC, and she has been advocating on health and environmental issues on the developing brain since 1976. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Barbara wrote to the Minister of Health, Jane Philpott. The topic of the letter was **maternal exposure to marijuana**, a timely issue in light of the Federal Government's proposed legalization of the drug in 2018.

McElgunn's key point is that what is missing from the proposed legislation is which level of government will be responsible for product safety - developing regulations and testing for impurities, pesticides, and the strength of the product. Another important issue is other sectors of the population that should not use recreational pot at all, or be in the vicinity of side-stream smoke. The emphasis on protecting kids under the age of 18-19 is not enough.



Furthermore, her letter states: “Follow up studies of fetal exposures (to THC in marijuana) have shown lasting effects on cognitive abilities, planning, impulse control, and visual-motor abilities in children aged 6-12 years old. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fact Sheet on maternal exposure to marijuana provides a clear warning to the public. To protect fetal neuro-development, this warning should have been included in legislation permitting recreational use, alongside adequate legal age cut-offs for buyers.”

It will be very important for the Canadian public to receive public-service ads and information from Health Canada about the risks of pre and post-natal exposure to health and development as soon as possible, well ahead of legal non-medical marijuana use next year.

### Committee Reports

#### Legal Committee

The 2017 **Equality in Education Symposium** was held on February 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and was hosted by the University of New Brunswick Law School in partnership with the LDAC Legal Committee and the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. Spearheaded by LDAC’s Legal Committee member, Kelly VanBuskirk, the free symposium explored the rights, opportunities and challenges that impact learners, parents of learners, educators, lawyers and other advocates in the pursuit of equitable access to education.

There were about 80 people attending at any given moment Friday or Saturday, including professionals, parents and law students.

The keynote speaker on Friday evening was Dr. Bill Howatt, Director of Research for Morneau Shepell and a Globe and Mail columnist, on **‘How Teachers Can Cope with Inclusive Education Environments’**. He emphasized the necessity for teachers to learn coping skills, to be resilient and to protect their own stress levels so they can be prepared to meet their students’ needs.

There were various speakers on topics such as bipolar and mental health, gender equality in school sports, bullying and the LGBTQIA community in education.

This brings us to Jody Carr, a law student who has been on LDAC conference calls, an MLA and a former NB Minister of Education, under whose watch Policy 322 was published to a positive response. Jody spoke of the Moore Case, outlining how previous decisions were reached and then going on to the **stipulations of the Moore Case**. His talk was clear and well received.



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Kelly Lamrock, former Minister of Education in NB, also based his talk on the Moore Case indicating where he felt we should go from here, especially in New Brunswick. He implied that the decision of Moore obliges government to take action. However, we must be prepared: 44% of cases lack justification, 29% have no measurable goals, 26% have no benchmarks, and 30% have no specific interventions. He reminded us that the Supreme Court of Canada in Moore tells us that the child has not only the right to educational help, but the right to advance to his or her full potential, and that right extends to all children. Governments will not be able to keep cutting education budgets, according to Lamrock.

All in all, the Symposium was a very successful event with solid food for thought.

### Research Portal Rally Project

In 2013, in response to the Supreme Court's decision on the Jeffrey Moore case, the LDAC established a committee to review the research completed or in progress at the major Universities in Canada that focused on Learning Disabilities, and thus relevant to our membership. The current committee of volunteers is able to use the internet directly to review university websites, focusing mainly on Education and Psychology departments (also Ed Psych) and to locate faculty members researching topics related to learning disabilities.

As most of the original committee members were located in the western provinces, the investigations began in British Columbia and Alberta Universities, but now has been extended to include research undertaken at Universities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland /Labrador, and will soon review Universities in Quebec and Ontario.

Recognizing that much more investigative work needs to be completed, the committee members note some trends that are emerging. Certain general topics such as Inclusive Learning, Classroom Diversity, Interventions for Writing/Reading/ Spelling/Fluency disabilities, and Assessment protocols remain of primary interest to researchers. But some highly specific research is being done on: visual and auditory processing; morphology and reading; Rapid Automatic Naming; orthographic and phonological processes related to reading and spelling; the longitudinal effectiveness of early literacy assessment and instruction; and academic accommodations at the post-secondary level.

Plans are underway for the creation of a database to collect the research information and make it available on the LDAC website. Once established, such a database might serve to both inform our readers, and support the researchers in their work.



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### Communications Committee

Along with its ongoing work on items like the newsletter, the Committee has developed a Strategic Communications Plan for LDAC, and has recently completed a survey for provincial/territorial Executive Directors about how we can play a more helpful role with respect to LD Awareness Month next October.

The Strategic Communications Plan has a stronger focus on advocacy and awareness in keeping with the feedback we received from all of you in our last membership survey regarding what you saw to be the priorities. It is also closely integrated with LDAC's Fundraising Plan, because we have to find new and better ways to raise money if we are going to carry out some of the goals we have identified.

The survey of Executive Directors regarding LD Awareness Month revealed that most provinces and territories still strongly support the awareness month but are struggling to find the resources to do much. They would like LDAC to do more to help them. With that in mind, we are pursuing the possibility of using materials developed by a couple of provinces for the benefit of all provinces and territories. In addition, we hope to form a national committee this fall to conduct some longer-term planning regarding awareness month.

Bob Cram – Chair

Members: Lorrie Goegan, Brendan O'Neill, Claudette Larocque, Doug Symington, Brent MacPherson, Scott Patterson.

### **Provincial/Territorial Updates**

#### Quebec

#### **Institut des troubles d'apprentissage (Quebec) 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Conference on Learning Disabilities**

##### ***Call for papers***

The scientific committee of Institut TA is currently reviewing various paper proposals for inclusion in the official program of the 2018 Conference to be held in Montreal **March 21-23, 2018 at Westin Montreal**. Would you also like to submit a paper?

Forward us your submission before June 20, 2017 at

<http://www.institutta.com/congres/congres-2018/appel-a-communication-congres-2018/>



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### **2018 Rates and Program**

Our official conference program, under the theme “Learning disabilities and tomorrow’s challenges”, will highlight topics such as learner diversity and the use of new technologies for the benefit of learners. It will be posted on our site [institutta.com](http://institutta.com) as of **September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017**.

To find out how you can take part in this event, please go to <http://www.institutta.com/congres/congres-2018/tarifs-et-inscriptions-2018/>

Registration will officially begin on **October 2, 2017**.

### Saskatchewan

#### **Neuroplasticity: Changing the Brain Conference**

Participants will develop a better understanding of Neuroplasticity and the brain’s ability to change its structure and improve its functions through the following curricular objects:

- A basic understanding of the brain structure and functions
- Case studies of individuals who have recovered or partially recovered from traumatic brain injury or brain birth defects
- The role of abuse and neglect on the developing brain
- Diverse brain functioning in individuals with a variety of disorders including: Learning Disorders, PTSD, eating disorders, ADHD, anxiety, depression
- Approaches to improving individual neuroplasticity (including neurofeedback) including evidence supporting the efficacy of these various approaches

A review of an MRI study documenting the changes made to brain structures of children participating in the Arrowsmith Program.

Featuring: Dr. Norman Doidge, M.D.; Dr. Ed Hamlin, PhD, BCN; Dr. Lara Boyd PT, PhD; and Barbara Arrowsmith-Young, BA Sc, MA.

**Date:** October 2-3, 2017

**Where:** Sheraton Cavalier, Saskatoon, SK

**Early Bird:** \$375/person (**Prior** to September 8, 2017)

**Registration:** \$400/person (**After** September 8, 2017)

To register or for further information please visit: [www.LDAS.org](http://www.LDAS.org) or call 306-652-4921