

17th National Conference on Learning Disabilities



Yukon Convention Centre/High Country Inn, Whitehorse, Yukon **September 24-26, 2009**

Special Edition: Conference Highlights from Yukon

The 17th National Conference on Learning Disabilities (www.lday.leafsolutions.ca) in Whitehorse, Yukon, on September 24–26, proved to be a resounding success attended by close to 400 participants representing all aspects of LD. The program included renowned keynote speakers and compelling themes:

▶ **Dr. Martin Brokenleg**—At Risk Youth: differences and similarities

Richard Lavoie—Tales from the road

Gabor Maté—Peer orientation: why children are stressed, why parents and teachers are disempowered, and how to restore a healthy balance in adult-child relationships

Fraser Mustard—Why are the early years so important?

Ben Polis—ADD/ADHD for professionals and parents

Barbara Wilson—Can we truly make a difference with scientifically based prevention and early intervention efforts?

- Effective Instruction—multisensory language instruction, math, engaging students in culturally appropriate contexts, behaviour and early childhood education settings.
- Advocacy—human rights, self advocacy, effective parent advocacy and personal experiences of parents and consumers.
- Research and Technology—the latest research in LD around mental health, early learning and development, assessment and assistive technology.

Rita MacNeil Sings for LDAC

Rita MacNeil, longtime favourite Canadian songstress, played an emotional fundraising concert that raised the roof of the Yukon Convention Centre on September 25. The concert resonated with many in attendance,



as MacNeil's songs are often rooted in the difficulties of her early personal life. A percentage of the profits will be donated to LDAC for its program delivery.

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The Learning Disability Association of Canada

More about the Conference

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- Community Partnerships—the need for an interdisciplinary and co-ordinated approach to prevent and mitigate the personal and social costs of LD. Session topics included early literacy, culturally appropriate approaches to education from a First Nation perspective, community literacy partnerships, health and justice.



Yude Henteleff (1974-76) and Elinore Frederickson, (1992-94) Past Presidents of LDAC



Mal Malloch, President, LDA Yukon, and Master of Ceremonies

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www.ldac-acta.ca/stigma

Tips for Teaching ADHD Students

Gordon Bullivant, Executive Director of the Foothills Academy Society (a centre for students with LD and ADD) in Calgary, broke down the characteristics of ADHD—excitability, hypoactivity, hyperactivity, inattention and impulsiveness—into recognizable symptoms and then explained that the same symptoms may also lead to other diagnoses, such as sensory deficits, allergies, anaemia, lack of maturity or even social/behavioural/emotional problems.

With these symptoms in mind, Bullivant recommended ways in which teachers could manage classes that contain overactive, restless ADHD children. Essentially, he recommended balancing structure and flexibility, however, he gave a long list of individual suggestions among which were

- Provide a consistent routine and short work periods;
- Give clear rules and directions using both pictures and words. Avoid complex sentences;
- Provide incentives for improvement;
- Be positive: tell the student what he should be doing, recognize accomplishments;
- Schedule academic tasks for the morning;
- Minimize noises or other stimuli when teaching new concepts;
- Repeat instructions often;
- Provide an extra set of textbooks for home;
- Preview new concepts at the beginning of a lesson and review them at the end to reinforce learning;
- Provide legitimate opportunities for physical movement;
- Encourage the student to ask questions and establish a positive feeling about asking questions and repetition.

“Drawing” Out Children

Ray Appel said that, in its earliest forms, drawing as a basic human activity consisted of making marks and patterns. Although all children enjoy drawing, they become disappointed when they realize that primal, unrealistic drawings are not appreciated or valued. And since teachers feel they themselves cannot draw, they do not encourage children to continue their own efforts.

Appel recommended drawing as a powerful means for developing children’s perception and thought, and suggested



teachers foster this development by consulting books and websites on teaching children to draw. He also promoted introducing drawing into classroom activities through sketches, diagrams, cluster maps, visual studies and drawings.

Young children who are at the scribbling stage, he said, should be allowed to work with various drawing tools and materials often enough to become sufficiently skilled in handling them. When they start to develop and use symbols, teachers should focus on encouraging them to express themes that relate directly to their experiences and lives.



As they begin to be concerned about realism, they should be given opportunities to expand their drawing vocabularies by working from observation and recollection to help them perceive and describe their world in more detail, and from their imaginations for creative expression. Teachers should make both types of drawing opportunities available in the elementary years.

Meaningful Access to Education

Yude Henteleff presented his paper on the right to meaningful access to education in the context of LD. He recommended applying three principles to determining that access: the importance of education, the best interests of the student and the right to accommodation that best meets the student’s needs.

Henteleff said that discrimination occurs when positive steps to ensure that disadvantaged groups benefit equally from services offered to the general public are not taken. In this context, students throughout a province should have access to a comparable level of education, as promised by all Public Schools Acts.

Although most provinces and territories have addressed the expectation that some students

need specific accommodations to access public education programs, discriminatory qualifying words such as “so long as resources are available” remain. The threshold of accommodation for some students such as LD students may vary significantly by the very nature of their disability, but the necessary accommodations are nonetheless determinable. Provinces and territories must offer gradient levels of accommodation to meet the needs of all students with disabilities.

Henteleff concluded that if accommodations do not allow a student to access a service to his fullest benefit, the service is essentially denied, leading to discrimination and a breach of his right to equal opportunity.

World Summit: A Call to Action

Brenda Martin presented a paper prepared by Burke & Associates for the organizing committee of the World Summit on Learning Disabilities that summarizes the collective wisdom of the delegates to the summit.



The paper describes the basics of LDs, how they are identified, possible interventions, human rights in the context of LDs and proposes simple, effective measures to minimize the negative impact of LDs and maximize the human potential of people with LDs. It recommends establishing public policies to achieve.

- The earliest possible diagnosis of LD and continued diagnosis throughout life;

- Improved education of health and education professionals to enable them to identify and support people with LDs;
- Differentiated support and intervention throughout life;
- Support for accommodations for people with LDs at school and in the workplace;
- Clearer written communications from public sector agencies to enhance accessibility and comprehension of that material;
- Strict and unwavering adherence to human rights;
- Prevention of neonatal and post-natal exposure to neurotoxins; and
- Continued and active support for research on the causes, interventions and implications of LDs.

For more information or for a copy of the white paper, visit <http://communityservices.foothillsacademy.org>.

Facts and Stats on Mental Health and ADHD

James Koller presented a fact-filled PowerPoint deck about mental health, LD and ADHD.

He said that the basic structure of personality is established by age 4 and 50 percent of all lifetime problems of mental illness begin by age 14. As well, certain factors can predict a risk for developing mental illness. These include poverty, exposure to environmental toxins, traumatic events, mental illness in a parent, LDs and ADHD.

Koller noted that 90 percent of children who commit suicide have a mental disorder, usually a mood disorder. As they grow, these children, especially those with LDs, are more prone to loneliness, depression and suicide.

Koller presented critical facts that relate to ADHD. The incidence of the condition is 3-5 percent

although estimates vary between 1-20 percent depending on the definition and the severity. Four times more males are affected than females. As many as 65 percent of ADHD children demonstrate significant ADHD

symptoms as adults. Thirty-three percent of ADHD children also have LDs; up to 90 percent have poor internal language-processing skills; and up to 35 percent drop out of high school. Twenty-five percent of people with ADHD have antisocial personalities and 35 percent are substance abusers. Most significant for their adult lives, only 2 percent obtain college-educated positions





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About the Conference Host

The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon (LDAY) concentrates on direct client services, supporting children, adults and families by advocating for appropriate accommodations at school, work, and home.

Among its many services, the association offers tutoring, diagnostic services for adults, camps for children and youth in winter and summer, and workshops for parents, educators and other professionals, etc.

Based on feedback and ongoing comments in the community, the organizers feel that the conference generated a significant amount of positive energy and momentum that will be kept alive. *Send your ideas on how to do this to ghgreen@northwestel.net or joelhugh@hotmail.com.*



Joel Match and George Green, LDA Yukon, Conference Co-chairs

New Appointees to the Board

The following people were appointed to LDAC's board of directors at the Annual General Meeting held on September 25 during the National LD Conference.

Executive Committee

Lynn Green, NL, Chair
Lorrie Goegan, AB, Vice Chair
Susan Kennedy, ON
Mel Phelan, Treasurer
Mal Malloch, YK

Directors

Philippa Slater, BC
Danielle Brûlé-Lungren, SK
Ray Ali, MB
Edith Mélançon, QC
Joachim Stroink, NS
Cindy Grant, NB

Members at large

Chris Canavan, BC
Gary Mooney, ON
Debbie Oster, BC

Since the AGM, Joanne McCabe has been appointed director representing PEI. The NWT is not currently represented on the national board.

Mark your calendars ▶

**LDA PEI will host the next National LD Conference on
September 29 – October 2, 2011
Charlottetown, PEI**

Stay tuned for more details