



A Message from the Chair

As we thaw out of our deep freeze – yes, it's been a tough winter! – we look forward to brighter and warmer Spring weather to nurture the many new initiatives to support our LD community. The many activities that are underway across our country are inspiring. Are YOU a source of inspiration for positive change? If you believe you can impact our families living with LD or know someone who can make a positive difference to our LD community, please let us know. Fresh ideas and fresh talent are always welcome!

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

On November 28, 2018, Statistics Canada released the results of the Canadian Survey on Disability 2017. LDAC has developed an LD focused infographic and summary which is now posted on its blog at <https://www.ldac-acta.ca/blog/> and for a more detailed analysis, please go to Statistics Canada at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181128/dq181128a-eng.htm>

The 2019 federal budget this week did not contain more money to create inclusive public service workplaces for people with disabilities. If implemented, the budget would provide Shared Services Canada with an additional \$2.7 million per year to help identify, remove and prevent technological barriers in federal government workplaces.

To shape a more inclusive federal government workplace, the Liberal government has committed to hiring at least 5,000 people with disabilities by 2024. That's a thousand people a year, and that's not a lot when you think that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is significantly higher than the average unemployment rate. It does not encourage the private sector in creating inclusive employment opportunities? Where's the support for the private sector?

I'm hopeful more money will be allocated in future budgets to help the government meet new standards if and when Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act, becomes law.

The budget also allocates money to print new accessible reading materials, for those with print disabilities, including:

- \$22.8 million over five years to help Canada's independent book publishing industry increase its production of accessible books.
- \$3 million to produce new accessible reading materials that will be available through public libraries across Canada



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To access a copy of the federal budget 2019 please go to <https://budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>

The national office says goodbye to Scott Patterson, our Fund Development Director. After 2 years with us, Scott's last day is March 29th. We wish him all the best on his next venture. Thank you Scott!

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

Committee Reports

Research Committee

Research Committee Submission from:
Howard Eaton, Ed.M., Director, Eaton Educational Group

The brain can change, as noted in Dr. Norman Doidge's bestseller, *The Brain That Changes Itself*. From the work by the renowned founder of the Arrowsmith Program Barbara Arrowsmith-Young to the recent research from neuroscientists Dr. Lara Boyd from the Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia and Dr. Greg Rose, Southern Illinois University, School of Medicine, neuroscience is revealing the level of individual plasticity in the human brain.

Neuroscience research is focusing on whether targeted cognitive interventions can improve specific neurological dysfunctions that are the underlying cause of learning disabilities, and significantly impact school, work and social behaviour. Using this concept of neuroplasticity, the Arrowsmith Program began in the 1970s and now has over 1500 students in 102 schools in 10 countries engaged in improving the underlying cognitive weaknesses that result in learning disabilities.

Research by Drs. Boyd and Rose indicates that learning disabilities do not have to be lifelong, or at a minimum the severity of the cognitive weakness can be improved. In their independent studies of the Arrowsmith Program using imaging technology and behavioural assessment, the research teams of Boyd and Rose have concluded that the Arrowsmith Program is improving brain functioning and cognitive, academic and social/emotional behaviours. The ramifications of it being possible to improve neurological weakness has tremendous impact on reshaping our definition of learning disability, improving our educational system, and improving outcomes for those with a learning disability.



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For a more thorough analysis of Arrowsmith Program research please go to this link: <https://arrowsmithschool.org/research/>.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee continues to meet regularly to produce the quarterly newsletter and discuss other issues of interest to the national LD community, e.g. LD Awareness month. We have also been assisting with updates to the LDAC website and social media usage.

Bob Cram – Chair

Members: Lorrie Goegan, Brendan O’Neill, Claudette Larocque, Brent MacPherson, Scott Patterson

Health and Environment

The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) has taken over the leadership of Healthy schools Day 2019 campaign, which will focus on the health implications of diesel emissions (school buses) and associated exposure reduction strategies.

The Threshold of Toxicological Concern (TTC) approach is frequently used as the basis for decisions on certain chemicals’ safety. I have been involved with others across Canada interested in this process, and if/how it protects children.

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This will be my last newsletter insert for LDAC as I am “retiring from retiring” as LDAC’s Health Policy Advisor at the end of March. Just a few words on my background - it was in nursing, with a post-graduate specialty in neurological and neurosurgical nursing. I joined the South Shore Chapter (Montreal) of LDA in the 1970s and that was where I found wonderful peer support, and began working together for awareness and school programs for our child and others with LD.

Over the years I have been president of then Quebec Association of Children with Learning Disabilities and CACLD, now Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. After writing an article on the need for medical research (Journal of Learning Disabilities 1979), I was invited to join the Research Committee of LDA America and served on that committee for 20 years. We organized medical and science symposiums and roundtables at the LDA America conferences every year, met with National Institute of Health agencies and the Environment Protection Agency in Washington, and were able to have Congress fund an Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities.

Since 1982, when LDAC was the first to question the lead content in gasoline, and then with a health-environment Coalition for lead-free gasoline in Canada,



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(an eight-year struggle) my chief interest and work for LDAC and with LDA America has been prevention - to protect neurological/brain health from lead and other toxic exposures, and with CPCHE and other allies, advocating for new safety standards for chemicals, chemicals in children's products, and home furnishings for example.

Even though the wheels of regulation grind very slow, I have seen important changes in policy, and the understanding of the special vulnerability of fetuses, the brain and children to toxicants. LDAC has been an important part of my life for many years, and I will always be grateful for the amazing people I have had the privilege to know, and work with, along the way, and the warm and vital help LDAs provided, and continue to provide. Best to all!

Barbara McElgunn,
Health Policy Advisor, LDAC

Provincial/Territorial Updates

Alberta

Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta (LDAA) has had an interesting year, with the addition of a new Executive Director, Toby Rabinovitz as of September 2018. It has been a busy time as we have recently completed our five-year strategic plan as we continue to support the LD community throughout Alberta. Of particular interest may be the revisions to the Right to Read Program as we are currently revising the online course. We hope to have the new course online by late spring. We will also be focusing on enhancing our website as we hope to make it the information hub for the provincial LD community. We may be reaching out to our LD provincial partners as we seek out current research, links and resources.

In addition to these activities, the LDAA has started discussions with a leader at TELUS Spark in Calgary regarding the idea for a neurodiversity focused conference potentially taking place at the end of 2019. There is much work to do to connect with interested parties, potential speakers, partner organizations, political representatives and sponsors. We would like to hear from other provincial LD groups across the country who would like to get involved or know more about the plans. Enquiries can be sent to Toby Rabinovitz (LDAA's Executive Director) execdir@ldalberta.ca and Nick Freeman (Vice President) nfreeman@telus.net. We look forward to hearing from you.

Toby Rabinovitz
LDAA Executive Director



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New Brunswick

The New Year has brought some exciting changes to LDANB. In December, Nicole Gaumont stepped down as executive director, and Ainsley Congdon assumed the role of acting executive director starting in January. Ainsley joined LDANB in 2017 as the learning specialist managing the Barton Tutoring Program. Also joining the staff at LDANB is Jane Clohossey as the new administrative assistant. The board of LDANB is also pleased to announce Roger Duval as the new board president. Roger joined the board in June and accepted the position of president in October.

In February LDANB received sponsorship from Peterbilt Atlantic to expand the Barton Tutoring Program to the Moncton region. This exciting partnership will provide 25-30 students with the opportunity to receive one-on-one tutoring. LDANB is looking forward to continue working with Peterbilt on different projects. 2019 is shaping up to be a busy year for LDANB, stay tuned!

Ainsley Congdon
Learning Specialist, LDA NB

A Tribute to Millie LeBlanc (LDA NB/LDAC)

It is not easy to lose someone special in your life. When I got the call, my heart stopped for a moment. I met Millie through the LDANB - Moncton Chapter. She was always well-dressed with a seemingly effortless sense of style. But Millie was much more than the outside. She was lovely, kind, helpful and energetic.

It was hard to believe that Millie was in her senior years. She had an unwavering dedication to LD initiatives, including spending countless hours supporting the LINKS literacy program. Millie was the rock of the Moncton Chapter for many years. She chaired meetings, shared her vast knowledge, and volunteered in various ways as needed.

Millie served on the LDANB Board. Her passion and sageness will be missed. She also made her mark on the LDAC Board (1995-2017), as Newsletter Editor (2002-2004); workshop facilitator with an LDAC project 'Empowering At Risk Families and Their Children to Succeed'; LDAC representative during a landmark legal case involving right to access to school services; and Legal Committee Chair (2015-2017).

Millie's expertise was sought to inform the NB Premier's Council on Disabilities. Her honours included receiving a Canada 125 Medal and an Honorable Andy Scott Award for having a lasting impact on the lives of persons with LDs.



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Thank you Millie for being part of our lives! We are lucky to have known you and very sad that you have passed away. You made such an impact and meant so much to so many. You will be missed!

(<http://www.fergusonsfuneralhome.com/obituaries/131652>).

Rhonda Rubin,
LDA NB/LDAC board member

Prince Edward Island

Snow Days in Atlantic Canada cause their usual chaos with rearranging meetings, presentations and life!

Having said this we continue with positives moving forwards. Through the generosity of the Rotary Club, Charlottetown, we have funding to prepare a video piece. We plan to record local well-known individuals identified as successful and living with LDs. They will be recorded in an informal round table. This group will identify their journey/struggles/path. The video will be taken to students with LDs at the University/College, and a second roundtable will be recorded with the students identifying their journey/struggles/path. Ultimately these students will be asked to present at Junior High and High schools and to mentor LD students (and others) so they can see that there is a bright future for them. We believe that having a relatively small age gap between the students presenting and those viewing will lead to more positive interactions.

We have also made funding applications for LDA ambassadors to travel through the province during the summer to raise awareness about LDs, and in doing so provide information about ongoing supports available.

Prior to this we will be receiving nominations for the LDAPEI Educator of the Year Award 2019. This is a \$1,000 Staples gift voucher given to an individual who has shown exceptional dedication and support to the individual needs of students with LDs on Prince Edward Island. This may be a teacher but is worded as 'educator'. We believe this is more inclusive of those being nominated for educating an LD student.

Martin Dutton,
Executive Director, LDA PEI



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Quebec

Webinars

All year long, the Learning Disabilities Institute offers workshops and lectures on different topics. These are intended for a broad range of participants: parents, teachers, resource teachers, etc. Take a minute to subscribe for free to our monthly newsletter and stay up to date. Visit our website at <https://www.institutta.com/formations>

To subscribe to our newsletter : <https://www.institutta.com/nouvelles>

Christine Couston, ITA
Coordonnatrice au développement des services

Saskatchewan

Along with the spring weather I am excited to report that LDAS has been growing and expanding programming in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. We have made a few changes within the organization to meet needs within the communities we serve.

LDAS has reached a ten-year milestone in offering the Arrowsmith program. We have also increased capacity with our ABSee tutoring portfolio and our LEGO club workshops. We have onboarded a Behavioral Therapist, who will work with individuals experiencing anxiety and difficulties with anger management.

LDAS's many services include, but are not limited to, Academic Tutoring, Adult Upgrading, GED/GED Prep, ADHD Coaching, Employability Coaching, Counselling Services, Neurofeedback and Cogmed, Psychological Services, Destination Employment, LEGO Club, Summer Camps. They provide a comprehensive environment enhancing opportunities for our community members.

As we continue to grow and focus on best practices I am proud to announce that our ADHD Parenting Groups have received outstanding reviews and our LEGO Club has had the highest enrollment compared to previous years. Our 2019 summer camps will be changing to seven individual week offerings as opposed to previous years, and we are excited to announce that LDAS has received for the first time a McGillvary Grant and a Federated Coop Grant supporting our summer camps.

LDAS has also embarked on a radio advertising campaign since April 2018, and our monthly metrics have shown increased inquiries and increased use for many



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of our services, especially within our psychologist portfolio. As a result, we are expanding in this area.

I am very proud to be working with dedicated professionals who have demonstrated a strong work ethic and desire to support the community members we serve.

Wayne Stadnyk, Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan (LDAS)

Yukon

Reducing Anxiety in Kids Workshops: this past December, we hosted Jessica Minahan (<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/jessicaminahan1-706>) for two workshops, one for educators, one for parents. Jessica, author of *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students*, was an engaging and dynamic presenter. She shared very accessible, valuable and useful tools to support children experiencing anxiety. For weeks afterwards, folks would stop the LDAY team around town to tell us the difference her workshop had made in the lives of their families.

Mindfulness for Families: We are continuing to offer this program of five evenings of mindfulness training for children and parents. Children work with one facilitator, while the parents work on a similar theme with different strategies with a second facilitator.

Seeing My Time: Two of the LDAY team took this popular Executive Functioning program to a small community outside of Whitehorse and delivered it with Champagne Aishihik First Nations families over the course of two weekends. It was really well received. <https://executivefunctioningsuccess.com/>

Stephanie Hammond, Executive Director
LDA Yukon