



B.C. ABORIGINAL NETWORK ON DISABILITY SOCIETY

"To Promote the betterment of Aboriginal People with Disabilities"

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Burnaby City Council
Burnaby, British Columbia

February 6th, 2015

Re: "BC Without Barriers"

Dear Mayor Corrigan and Council,

Honourary Patrons:

Chief Andy Thomas
Esquimalt Nation

Late George Watts
Tseshah First Nation

Chief Simon Lucas
Hesquiat Nation

Grand Chief Ed John
IT'az'En Nation

Rick Hansen
C.C. OBC

Diana Fowler LeBlanc
C.C. B.S.W., D.U.

Her Honour
The Honourable
Judith Guichon, OBC
Lieutenant Governor of B.C.

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Neil Belanger and I am the Executive Director of the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS), which is an award winning, provincial Aboriginal disability and health organization.

BCANDS disability services are provided across British Columbia and available to Aboriginal individuals and families living with a disability, regardless of age, location, disability type or disability related need(s). I am contacting you today to request your community's support and participation in a new Society initiative:

"BC Without Barriers – Assisting Aboriginal Individuals and Families Living with a Disability in British Columbia"

As you may be aware, the Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) population of British Columbia is the second highest in Canada, with British Columbia enjoying the highest number of First Nation communities within the Nation. In 2011 according to the National Household Survey, over 232,000 individuals residing within British Columbia identified as being Aboriginal.¹

As reported by Employment and Social Development Canada in 2011, "The disability rate among Canadian Aboriginal people is higher than the overall disability rate. Regardless of age, Aboriginal Canadians are more likely to have disabilities than Canadians who are not Aboriginal".²

In 2012, 13.7% of Canadians reported living with a disability. Research has shown that 30% of Aboriginal adults report living with a disability and that Aboriginal adults, aged 15 to 34, have a disability rate that is three times the national rate for the same age group.³

Knowing this, we can conservatively estimate that within British Columbia there are over 50,000 Aboriginal persons who live with a disability.

It is additionally known that Aboriginal people, racialized communities and persons living with disabilities all continue to face higher barriers as it relates to economic inclusion (lower employment rates / living in poverty) which in turn, is correlated to decreased overall well-being, lower educational attainment rates and lower levels of social inclusion.

¹ <http://www.bcands.bc.ca/en/13764382783111376438050619>
² <http://www.ecdc.gc.ca/en/disability/and-federal-report2011/section1.shtml>
³ <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty/citizenship/income-security-reform-in-uniformity/appendix-c>

Understanding these factors, we see that the disabled Aboriginal population of British Columbia represent a marginalized population within an already marginalized population and have become the “invisible members” within the provinces disability sector, with minimal understanding of the difficulties, limited resources and the jurisdictional and mandate issues that are experienced by this important segment of our population.

Our Society is continually examining ways to bring awareness to the work that we do and to the needs of those we serve. As with many not-for-profit organizations, we are challenged daily in our work due to increased service requests, limited resources and increased competition for available resources from other very worthwhile and important service organizations that work within the province’s not-for-profit sector.

As such, to raise awareness and to solicit support for our work and for our clients, we have developed the “BC Without Barriers” campaign, which we are hopeful your community will consider supporting both initially and on an ongoing basis.

We are requesting your support of this initiative through your community’s donation of \$200 to the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society. All donations received will be utilized to assist in the provision of current and expanded disability related support services for Aboriginal individuals and families living with a disability within British Columbia.

Each community supporting this initiative will be issued an official tax receipt (Charity # 896694098RR0001) and will have their support highlighted on the BCANDS website, through the BCANDS Facebook Page and on the Society’s Twitter Account, as well as being issued a certificate of appreciation from the Society for your support. It is our hope to gain annual support from communities, organizations and individuals from across British Columbia, both Aboriginal and non, and illustrate across Canada and beyond, British Columbia’s solidarity and commitment to the success and well-being of these very important members of our communities.

Additionally, should you chose to support this initiative, we would request that you email a short video clip from your organization saying “**(Your community’s name) supports BC without Barriers..... join us**” Please be as creative as you wish with the message, involving as many people as you want, but we would request that you keep it the total length of the video under 50 MB, due to the limitations of our website. Your video can be sent to my attention at exdir@bcands.bc.ca and will be posted on our website.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your time and attention to our request and hopefully your community’s support of this very worthwhile and important initiative. Your community’s donation / support can be sent to:

BC Without Barriers - BCANDS

Attention: Finance Manager
1179 Kosapsum Crescent
Victoria, British Columbia – V9A 7K7

Should you require further information or clarity, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Information on our Society and our work can be viewed at www.bcands.bc.ca.

Respectfully,



Neil Belanger
Executive Director - *British Columbia Aboriginal Network On Disability Society*
exdir@bcands.bc.ca
(250) 381 7303 ext. 208