

Imagine!

A Season for Hope

Reflections on 2020 and how together, we can build back better.

Contributed by Monique Nelson

Seeing Peeter grin broadly while using his new computer has become a “new normal” at his home in New Westminster. Like the rest of us, Peeter and his roommates are spending a lot more time indoors these days, and are adapting to pandemic living. With caring staff there to provide support, Peeter’s laptop has become the gateway to seeing his friends and family. Alongside it, his colouring book lays open, its pages unfilled. At a glance, this photo depicts our pandemic experience throughout the past year. We have all had to get some new tools, connect to others through the use of technology, and focus on staying ‘safe,’ with more indoor activities - particularly as the weather cooled. Persons with and without disabilities, began experiencing similar shifts and changes, yet from a vastly different level of privilege. Cracks in our systems, and holes in our safety nets were exposed.

The spring, summer and fall seasons taught us how to live with COVID-19. We have all gone through personal and professional challenges, highs and lows, found our strength, and tested our resilience. This experience has stretched in our roles as workers and people, and we have partnered very differently with families who access our outreach and day supports.

When families took on the lion’s share of care for sons/daughters/siblings, motivated by love and fear

of the virus coming into their homes (potentially being passed on to their elders), we held space. We continue to hold space, and are thankful for our funders’ support in this regard. A caregiver’s selfless gift can become unsustainable without respite. Fatigue, anxiety, loneliness and longing for connection slowly deplete energy and set in.

In response, we pivoted. We have created new spaces for being, and belonging, and our partners in family led organizations like the Family Support Institute of BC, Inclusion BC, Vela Canada, and PLAN have done the same in order to better support caregivers.

Together, we have explored how to engage differently, so that the supports that families need are there, when they need them. We have compiled extensive resources online for the families of children, and those who live independently with outreach support. In particular, our Degrees of Change collective has amped up the CoMakeDo platform. The swift work of community connectors, experience designers and learning coaches, has led to a steady stream of joyful online learning and connection opportunities, helping folks continue on their paths of personal growth.

In the quiet of this winter season, I suspect that the relationships we have nurtured and the new allies we are courting, will meld into a fulsome movement for equity and inclusion. Prompted by a series of conversations hosted by PLAN to inform the development of a new [Canada Disability Benefit](#), we have seen that there are Canadians and Indigenous allies from coast to coast to coast who do not want to

Continued on Page 2

Inside this issue

Page 2

VIFF Moves Online

Page 3

Celebrating Our First Online Art Show

Alternatives Goes Virtual

Page 4

Aegis West Pottery Ninjas

Stage Door’s Pandemic Moments

We’ll Miss You Ken!

Page 5

Getting Creative and Active with Scavenger Hunts

Rosemont Winter Fun

Page 6

Holiday Greeting

Things to Enjoy This Holiday Season



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Continued from Page 1

go back to the old normal. When we hear the term ‘build back better’ as we think about how we will all recover from this pandemic, we know that it’s a new future we desire. Our common future sits on a foundation of equity and inclusion.

When we make progress there, we begin to tackle the other crises we are living with too – we are interdependent, and entwined with our natural world, and other people who are suffering from racism, oppression, homelessness, poor mental health, substance use or addiction.

With intention, and gratitude for the hard work of advocates before us, we now have a very unique opportunity. All levels of government in Canada, and our country operating within the framework of the United Nations are working towards greater equity, diversity and inclusion. On December 3rd, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we recognize and celebrate 1 billion impacted citizens. This year’s theme is [“Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World.”](#)

As 2021 is fast approaching, I would like to make some very hopeful New Year’s predictions:

- Implementing accessibility legislation in every province will level the playing field for persons of all ages living with disabilities – at school, or work, and in our neighbourhoods;
- Investing in safe, secure and affordable housing will begin to reduce poverty and homelessness, and improve health outcomes; and
- Developing a new guaranteed income support and tax incentives will help rebalance the partnership between family/community care and funded services, improving outcomes, and the sustainability of social care systems.



These really, are very basic investments in our common future. To learn more about the role that we can play in fulfilling a person’s higher order needs for things like meaning, beauty and love, read [The Trampoline Effect](#), a newly released book by Gord Tulloch and Dr. Sarah Schulman. It sets out a path forward for all of us who work in social care.

In closing, the COVID-19 health crisis has shone a light on how much greater the impact of the pandemic is on vulnerable citizens. When our government and service delivery systems get disrupted, there is also opportunity. It’s time for the community living movement to come together with allies who share our challenges, to help shape the changes that we want to see in the world. This work takes focus, energy, collaboration and patience. If we can do this, I think we can also advance equity and inclusion across Canada, and be its greatest champions here in BC.

For information about the ideas and resources mentioned in this article, please visit our community and COVID-19 specific resource pages at www.posAbilities.ca



VIFF Moves Online

For this year’s Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF), *posAbilities*, BACI and Kinsight were proud to be presenting sponsors of “The Reason I Jump”, directed by Jerry Rothwell. Awarded “The Most Popular International Documentary” from this year’s VIFF Audience Awards, the documentary is based on Naoki Higashida’s international bestseller “The Reason I Jump”. Naoki,

a Japanese non-verbal boy with autism, wrote the book to help communicate his own needs and thoughts to his family and shine a light for other autistic individuals around the world.

While things looked a little different this year, we continued our work with VIFF to provide high quality entertainment. Our usual in-person screenings were moved online to stream and enjoy. We also had the opportunity to host an online After Party – no film festival is complete without social cinema experiences! We invited folks to grab a drink, along with their family, friends, or roommates to celebrate the film release, share our thoughts, and discuss some of the themes of the film.

Some insightful and beautiful moments were shared and we captured some of those lasting impacts:

“I liked the film because it was just like me!”

“It was fascinating – breathtaking and fascinating to watch the friendship and the two people having a relationship was mindblowing..”

“Emotional. Crying happy tears...”

Celebrating Our First Online Art Show

Things looked a little different for this year's 16th annual INCLUSION Art Show. Though we couldn't have our usual gathering at Vancouver's Heritage Hall, we took the show online to safely celebrate creativity, community and diverse abilities. Our thanks to all participating artists and the guests who visited www.inclusionartshow.com throughout the month of October. Thanks also to the BC Government Employees Union and the City of Vancouver for their support. Join us in looking back at some highlights from this year's online show:

Watch "Meet the Artists of Inclusion" featuring AJ Brown's artist demo. **Watch here:** <https://bit.ly/3pJPiyM>

Take an audio journey into an art studio! We took our "Good for All" podcast listeners on a little field trip to celebrate the show and the artists who make it possible. Hear from artist, Alex Lecce, and the folks from PotteryWorks. **Listen here:** <https://bit.ly/2IPkBGH>

If you didn't get a chance to check out the online show, you still can! Visit us at: www.inclusionartshow.com. All items are for sale directly through the artists. It's the perfect time to finish up (or start!) your holiday shopping - you're sure to find one-of-a-kind gifts for your loved ones.

Thanks again to everyone who made this year's online art show a success. We'll see you in 2021!



Monique with artist, Brenna Finch, and her art card "Campfire".



Artist, Daryl Dickson, with his piece "We're All in this Together".



Alternatives Goes Virtual

Contributed by Kelly Berge, Art Facilitator, Alternative Creations Studio

Due to the world health climate this year, Alternative Creations Studio had to get creative in order to modify how we showcase our wonderfully talented and diverse artists and their art. This year, the Art Facilitators all jumped on board to put together innovative ideas in order to carry on the tradition of our annual projects.

Once again, we joined *posAbilities'* online annual INCLUSION Art Show and created new online viewing and purchasing opportunities. We also collaborated with the Pacific Arts Market to sell our whimsical Christmas Cards in their online store. You can check us out here! <https://bit.ly/3fHq3lW>

We also created an online 360° tour of the studio where guests can wander throughout the gallery to spend time with the art, and then saunter down the ramp into the studio where all the magic happens! Throughout this leisurely tour, guests can touch on anchor points to have a closer and more personal view of each art piece, as well as watch videos of our artists in their creative momentums.

All three of these newly designed platforms have made it possible for Alternatives to take part in this year's Eastside Cultural Crawl, INCLUSION Art Show, and online sales through the Pacific Arts Market – allowing the community to come together once again but in new and interactive ways while still staying safe.

Distance keeps us safe while art heals our souls.

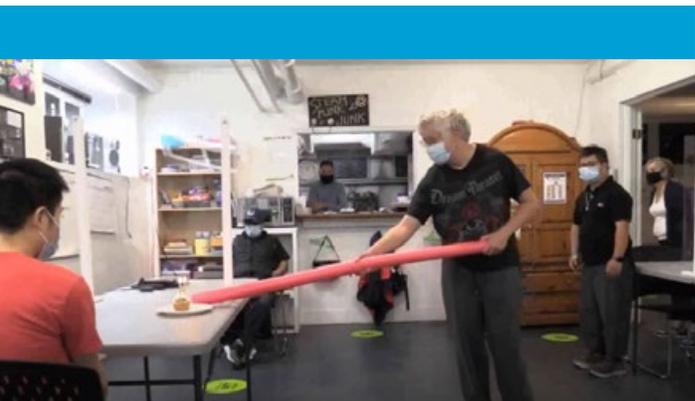
Aegis West Pottery Ninjas

"I was visited by the Pottery Ninjas! I got to my mobile boutique this morning to open up, and this little plant was sitting beside the driver's seat door. Not going to lie, I totally welled up. Such a kind gesture and beautiful handmade creation and it completely made my day. Whoever it was from, I want to say THANK YOU so much. Your act of kindness brought a huge smile to my face and completely warmed my heart! It's going to live in my boutique for as long as I can keep it alive."

– **The Sweetest Thing Mobile Boutique.**

"I was also visited by the Pottery Ninjas! Thank you from the bottom of my heart. My little plant is sitting in my kitchen window, where it smiles at me whenever I'm cooking or cleaning. Totally lifts my spirits every time I see it."

– **Mary Gagnon.**



Stage Door's Pandemic Moments

"In these unprecedented times, we manage the best we can..."

Have a laugh with Stage Door! They've put together this video chronicling some of the challenges that come with the COVID-19 pandemic—celebrating while keeping your distance, making the most of your mask, and learning to smile with your eyes!

Watch here: <https://bit.ly/3o02Q7K>



We'll Miss You Ken!

Contributed by Stephanie Dupuis and Andrea Hrysko, Creekside House

It is with great sadness that we announce the departure of Kenneth Grant, as he moved out of our care this past November. Ken has been with *posAbilities* for over 20 years, and we enjoyed every minute with him. Due to changes in his health, Ken moved to a new home.

Ken loves going to the PNE each summer and playing games (especially darts) in the hopes of winning a big stuffed animal. He looked forward to our annual picnics as well. Ken also loves the Christmas season and Santa Clause along with crazy hats and clown costumes. Ken enjoys interacting with staff and chatting about upcoming events and outings (prior to the pandemic), arts and crafts, especially painting large poster boards for his bedroom walls. Ken loves sitting in the hot tub at the pool and visiting with the friends he had made there from his many visits.

During his time with *posAbilities*, many staff had the pleasure of forming special relationships with him. He will be greatly missed across the organization, at Creekside and in the Maple Ridge community. We wish you the best, Ken!



Getting Creative and Active with Scavenger Hunts

Contributed by Joy, Laura and Patricia at Montgomery House

When it comes to finding fun and safe activities to do during a pandemic, you've got to get pretty creative! Earlier this year, Joy at Montgomery House brought forward the idea to have a Scavenger Hunt at the program. To get everyone involved, the challenge was for afternoon residential staff to create a hunt list for the day program, and vice versa.

Some of the fun items that showed up on the lists were: an eagle, a crabbing cage, a fire truck, an island in the middle of a lake, a river with a blue bridge, and more.

So what did we learn doing a scavenger hunt? We learned that it was a fun and creative way to get out of the house safely, and to get our bodies moving. Ricky, Lilia, Bernadette, and staff have been actively searching throughout their community to cross items off the lists and snap great photos along the way. Since everyone loved this activity so much, the team has decided to move forward with more scavenger hunts, this time finding seasonally-themed lists available off the internet.

When asked if they would recommend the idea to other teams at posAbilities, the answer was a resounding "YES!"



Rosemont Winter Fun

Contributed by Rosemont House

When it gets cold outside
It's time to create.
We pull out our boxes
Of pencils and paint.

We knit now don't you know
The yarn just goes and goes.

Making hats, scarves, ponchos and more,
The knitting continues
Like never before.

Learning new skills is always a treat.
Knitting hats for our heads
And slippers for our feet.

The house chef can do great things with chicken.
Creating masterpieces
In the kitchen.

From soups and salads
Cookies and cake.
Chef M might let you lick the spoon
After he bakes.

We sit, we stand, stretch and more.
Exercising on chairs
And yoga on the floor.

As the year draws to an end
We reflect on those closest
Both family and friends.

From our house to yours
Be safe, wash hands
And stay indoors.



Holiday Greeting

A completely different kind of year.

Last year, I referenced the Roaring Twenties (1920s) in my holiday message and pondered what might lie ahead for us as we leaped into the 2020s. Would it mirror the Roaring Twenties and usher in a period of unprecedented economic, political and technological growth like it did a century ago?

Unbeknownst to us, something disruptive was about to unfold. The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped how we do a lot of things in our daily lives and will define the future in more ways than is known. It has introduced disruption into our routines, both personal and professional. The economic, political, technological and social impacts of this pandemic have yet to be fully revealed but one thing is for sure – the die has been cast and a season of renewal is upon us. It is important as ever to come together to foster new ways to live and work well. We will continue to embrace the future with courage and commitment. We will build back a stronger community, a path focused on caring and connection.

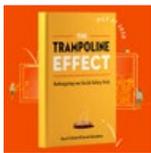
The three things that brought me gratitude this past year are your dedication, your kindness and most importantly, your courage. It gives me the optimism to continue working towards our aspiration of Good and Full Lives for everyone by focusing on what matters most to the people we serve – leading good and full lives.

Wishing you and your families joy, warm memories, good health and a new year filled with happiness and peace.

Sincerely,
Fernando Coelho,
CEO

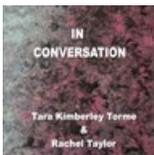
Things to Enjoy This Holiday Season

The 2020 holiday season is bound to be unique. As we're spending a lot of time at home these days, we've put together a list of things to keep you busy, entertained and inspired this winter!



The Trampoline Effect: Redesigning our Social Safety Nets – In this groundbreaking book, Gord Tulloch and Sarah Schulman explore how we can turn social safety nets into springboards that propel people into good lives.

Get your copy here: www.trampoline-effect.ca



Haikus – In Conversation by Tara Kimberley Torme and Rachel Taylor. These intimate and heartfelt conversations take the reader on a special and emotional journey weaving through the heart and soul patterns created by these two poets. Available to purchase here: [Volume I](#) and [Volume II](#).



Good for All – Listen to posAbilities' new podcast and check out: Episode 1. "An Innovation Mindset", Episode 2. "The Artists of Inclusion" and Episode 3. "Transitioning to Adulthood".

Listen here: posabilities.ca/good-for-all-podcast/



Last Laugh – Jimmy and Gregory from Stage Door have the last laugh in this short film by Jae Lew! "Comedian Jimmy Trinh and his best friend Gregory navigate kinship, theatre and disability with passion and a striking sense of humour."

Watch here: <https://bit.ly/35UPh30>



Kids Out and About – It's 2020, which means fewer events are happening than usual. But there are still many online events, activities and fun for the whole family to enjoy over the holidays.

Visit: vancouver.kidsoutandabout.com/



Buy Social! Your Holiday Giving Gift and Celebration Guide – Make a difference this year by giving gifts and experiences that will benefit artists with diverse abilities, disability advocates and the organizations operating in the social care sector.

Check it out here: posabilities.ca/gift-giving-guide/