

# Self Advocacy Leadership Institute 2023

## Program

At the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus  
in Kelowna, BC at the Nechako Gathering and Residence

August 15-18, 2023



# Welcome to The Self Advocacy Leadership Institute!

Learn about different aspects of the self advocacy movement

Build leadership skills together

Make connections with people who are passionate about disability justice

**Each day has a topic that will be focused on:**

Day 1- Foundational Learning and Skill Development

Day 2- Rights, Advocacy, & Self Determination

Day 3- Resilience, Personal Care, & Having Fun

Day 4- Hopes, Dreams, & Future Planning

At the end of the institute, participants will receive a Certificate of Leadership.

## What is included with your registration?

- All meals at the Leadership Institute
- A dorm room at the University
- Access to all sessions
- Support with travel to the Leadership Institute

## Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we will be gathering on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan people. We acknowledge the Métis, Inuit, and Urban Indigenous people who also live throughout these territories.

# Organizers & Sponsors

Thank you to the organizers and sponsors that have helped make this event happen!

**TALK  
NORTH WEST**



**THE ADVOCACY  
LEAGUE OF KINDNESS**



**SELFADVOCATES  
OF THE ROCKIES**

Let your voices be heard.



[www.bcsaln.com](http://www.bcsaln.com)

**BCSALN**

British Columbia Self-Advocate Leadership Network Society

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**CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR  
INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP**



**OKANAGAN**

# Schedule

## Day 1 (August 15)- Foundational Learning and Skills

**8:00 AM**      **Breakfast and Registration**

**9:00 AM**      **Welcome with Elder Donna Goodwater**

**9:30 AM**      **Self Advocate Planning Committee Panel**

This session will be hosted by members of the Leadership Institute Working Group. Meet each member and hear about the planning process, what they have learned along the way, and what their hopes are for the Leadership Institute moving forward.

Presented by: Kara Anderson – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)  
Jo-Anne Gauthier – BC People First (BCPF)  
Raymond Edinger – Self Advocates of the Rockies (SAOR)  
Tami Pedersen – Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness Kamloops (SUSA)

**10:00 AM**      **Networking Coffee Break**

**10:30 AM**      **Speak, Share, Laugh Public Speaking Session – Toastmasters**

This session will feature an interactive Toastmasters presentation designed to inspire, and inform self-advocates. There will be an interactive game with the audience to get everyone involved and excited about public speaking. They will then talk about why they created their Toastmasters club, and how Toastmasters has helped their team of self advocates develop their skills as leaders. Self advocates will also share tips on public speaking and hosting successful meetings.

Presented by: The Self Advocates of Semiahmoo

**11:30 AM**      **Sharing Circle – what have we learned so far?**

CHECK-IN TIME! Kara and Michael will check in with participants to see how you are feeling about the Institute, and what you have learned so far from the presenters by answering any questions.

Presented by: Michael McLellan – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)  
Kara Anderson – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)

**12:00 PM**      **Lunch with Music**

**1:00 PM**      **The Importance of Plain Language**

For years, people with disabilities haven't had much control over the way society refers to them. There has been a never-ending struggle for people with lived experiences to be heard and listened to. Over and over, we are asked to "come to the table", "be a part of a discussion", and "asked what we think and our opinion" about language...but nothing seems to change. This workshop will help you understand the value of plain language. Plain language is about clear communication. It's about using common words and presenting information in a straightforward, logical way.

Presented by: Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)

**2:30 PM**      **Networking Break**

**3:00 PM**      **Leadership Bingo**

This activity-based workshop will teach you about the kinds of skills you need to be an effective leader in a fun, interactive way. Come play Leadership Bingo with us!

Presented by: Jo-Anne Gauthier – BC People First (BCPF)

David Johnston – Community Living BC (CLBC)

**4:00 PM**      **Free Time**

**5:30 PM**      **Welcome Reception**

With Tami Pedersen – Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness Kamloops (SUSA)

**6:00 PM**      **Dinner**

**7:30 PM**      **R-Word Film & Chat**

Attitudes Matter. Words Matter. Filmmaker Amanda Lukoff grew up advocating for her sister Gabrielle, especially whenever she heard the R-word. In this film, she shows the history and lasting effects of this word through the sibling experience, animation, and self-advocates speaking truth-to-power - making the case for why the conversation about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities needs to change.

Hosted by: Richard McDonald – BC Self Advocacy Foundation (BCSAF)

## Day 2 (August 16)– Rights, Processes, Advocacy, & Self-Determination

**8:00 AM**      **Breakfast**

**9:00 AM**      **British Columbia Self Advocacy Foundation (BCSAF) History Session**

In this session, you will be taken on a journey to talk about important moments in the history of the inclusion movement here in B.C. Understanding the challenges and successes in advocating for inclusion in our province is key to keeping our movement strong to fight for our vision of a world where everyone belongs. You will hear what it has taken for people with disabilities, their families, and supporters to get here and how we can come together to face current challenges.

Presented by: Richard McDonald – BC Self Advocacy Foundation (BCSAF)

**10:00 AM**      **Networking Coffee Break**

**10:30 AM**      **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

What are your rights as a person who lives with a disability? During this session, speakers from BC People First will discuss the United Nations Convention on what rights you are entitled to and protected by under international law.

Presented by: Jo-Anne Gauthier – BC People First (BCPF)

Kara Anderson – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)

**12:00 PM**      **Lunch with Music**

**1:00 PM**      **Family Movement from a Self Advocate Perspective**

This session will explore the experience of being a parent with a disability. You will learn about going through pregnancy, giving birth, and raising a child, and what happens when that child starts living their own life.

Presented by: Michelle Goos and Lizzy Walsh– Community Living BC (CLBC)

**2:00 PM**      **Networking Break**

**3:00 PM**      **Crip Camp Film and Chat**

In this session, we will watch the 2020 American documentary film Crip Camp. The film follows Camp Jened, a summer camp for teens with disabilities. This documentary proves we can tell human stories about disabled people. Through these stories, we will discuss where we have been and where we want to go next. We will discuss the film together and share ideas that come up!

**5:00 PM**      **Free time!**

**6:00 PM**      **Dinner**

## Day 3 (August 17)– Resilience, Personal Care, & Having Fun

**8:00 AM**      **Breakfast**

**9:00 AM**      **Morning Mindset – Great Things about You!**

This session will be a chance for you to share your gifts, talents, and strengths. You get to decide what you want others to know about you. As you participate in this session, think about how this could be used in different parts of your life, like in the workplace or with friends.

Presented by: Kya Bezanson – Inclusion BC Self Advocate Advisory Committee  
Kara Anderson – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)  
Michael McLellan – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)  
James White – Empowering Self Advocates To Take Action (ESTTA)

**10:00 AM**      **Networking Coffee Break**

**10:30 AM**      **The Art Brain!**

This session will present information about a group called ArtBrain. In this session, the participants will try art-making activities like the ones people do in ArtBrain. Every time this group of self-advocates meet, they talk about leadership and teaching. They do this by making all different kinds of art, visiting art galleries and parks, welcoming guest speakers, and trying new things. Everyone keeps a sketchbook for their art and writes about themselves and their leadership.

Presented by: Susan Powell – Art Brain  
Liz Etmanski – Art Brain  
Aaron Johannes – Art Brain

**12:00 PM**      **Lunch**

**1:00 PM**      **Healthy Relationships and Romance Session**

Adults with cognitive disabilities are experiencing their own sexuality, but may not be getting information or acknowledgement about this experience. In this session, you will learn about having open communication about healthy relationships and improve your interpersonal skills, and increase the chances of positive romantic relationships for those who want them.

Presented by: John Woods – Real Talk  
Kelsey Savage – Real Talk

## Day 3 (August 17)– Continued from page 7

**2:00 PM**      **Networking Break**

**3:00 PM**      **Laughing Yoga**

This is a fun session where we'll bring in some movement to our day. Learn some great yoga poses while laughing!

Presented by: Shelley Nessman – Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

James White – Empowering Self Advocates To Take Action (ESTTA)

**4:00 PM**      **Journaling and Self Care**

This interactive session will help you to learn ways to increase your knowledge about self-care. Learn practical strategies to use when you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed so you can keep doing the things that matter.

Presented by: Kimberly Earl – Self Advocates of The Rockies Group Society (SAOR)

Tami Pedersen – Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness Kamloops (SUSA)

Erika Cedillo – Inclusion BC

**5:00 PM**      **Free Time**

**6:00 PM**      **Dinner**

**7:00 PM**      **Games Night**

## Day 4 (August 18)- Hopes, Dreams, & Future Planning

**8:00 AM**      **Breakfast and Certificates**

**9:00 AM**      **Interactive Planning Tools – PATHS/MAPS**

This interactive session will talk about the idea of person-centered planning. What are your rights? How do you know what good person-centered planning looks like? What are the goals you want to achieve in life?

Presented by: Shelley Nessman – Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

**10:00 AM**      **Break and Bring Luggage Down**

**10:30 AM**      **Self Advocates Across Canada**

Participants will hear about what self-advocates are doing in their communities across Canada. There will be an chance to talk about what has been learned at the Institute over the last few days.

Presented by: Jo-Anne Gauthier – BC People First (BCPF)

Michael McLellan – Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN)

**11:00 AM**      **Lunch**

**12:30 PM**      **Travel Home**

# Presenters and Planning Committee



## Aaron Johannes

Aaron hosts workshops, dialogues, and planning events around North America using visual facilitation techniques that include all voices. His research projects focus on participatory action research methods. He has been a Director of Spectrum Society and Spectrum Consulting, an instructor at Douglas College and the Justice Institute of B.C. and was the provincial advisor for B.C. People First. He is a member of the Taos Institute, a global group of scholars looking to advance social justice causes in ways that involve community.



## Chelsea Rinquinha

Chelsea is a resident of Kitimat BC and happy to say she is the Northwest delegate for the BC Self Advocate Leadership Network (BCSALN) and the co-founder of TALK Northwest. She is proud of the advocacy work she is involved with. She enjoys meeting new people and networking on important issues. She is excited to learn and grow more with every new connection. Chelsea is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## David Johnston

David is a firm believer in equality for all. As a young outspoken lad it didn't take him long to realize that he was passionate about helping people with Diverse Abilities. A little older and still outspoken David calls Dawson Creek, British Columbia home. He is a self advocate, changemaker, and leader in the disability community. David is a Strategic Initiative Advisor for Community Living BC, a Special Olympian in bowling, and has been a leader in many self advocate groups. David is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## James White

James has worked in the Community Living sector for 40 years in many different roles. Now retired from his 9 to 5 job. He is working with his business partners on different projects. He is a board member of The Learning Community for Person Centred Practices. He is also a mentor/support member of Empowering Self Advocates To Take Action (ESATTA). When he is not talking with partners in the community, you can usually find James in the great outdoors enjoying his other passions – kayaking and hiking. He has recently climbed the Kokanee Glacier in B.C. and Mt. Kilimanjaro with his friend Ryan.



## Jo-Anne Gauthier

Jo-Anne has been advocating for inclusion and accessibility rights for people in BC for over 20 years. She is the current President of BC People First (BCPF), a provincial organization run by self-advocates for self-advocates. As President, Jo-Anne is an important part of the BCPF Fundraising and Communications Committees – Jo-Anne is a tireless volunteer who leads by example. She has also worked on community projects for PosAbilities, Inclusion BC, and the University of British Columbia (UBC) Centre for Inclusion & Citizenship. Jo-Anne spends her free time enjoying life on the BC coast with her husband, getting outdoors to enjoy nature, and travelling as much as possible. Jo-Anne is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## John Woods

John Woods has worked in the community living sector since 1992, and with Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion since 1997. He is also a Certified Sexual Health Educator. John founded Real Talk in 2017, and is the organization's manager. John also works with Options for Sexual Health in their Education department. John holds a BA from the University of Manitoba. In his free time he enjoys running, biking, and composing music.



## Kara Anderson

Kara is a mother of a son with a disability. She is very passionate about self-advocacy work and has lived in B.C. for 11 years. Kara is the secretary for Empowering Self Advocates to Take Action and has given presentations for the Regional Community Living BC (CLBC) Staff Meeting. She helps facilitate the Welcome Workshops for CLBC. Kara is a member of the Self-Advocates of Nanaimo and Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN). Kara developed and was part of a film called "Fun, Food, and Advocacy", which was presented at the Inclusion BC conference in Victoria 2019. She sits on the advisory committee for the Community Support Worker and Educational Support Program at Vancouver Island University. Kara is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Kelsey Savage

Kelsey Savage began her training in sexual health education in 2014. Since then, she has become a Certified Sexual Health Educator, and worked independently in elementary schools, high schools, and international schools across the Lower Mainland. From 2017 – 2022, she managed the Options for Sexual Health Vancouver Clinic at BC Women's Hospital, and has been part of the Real Talk team since its inception in 2018. In 2023, she will lead the Real Talk: Building 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Project.



## Kimberly Earl

Kimberly is the Vice Chair of the Self Advocates of The Rockies Group Society (SAOR). Kimberly comes from the unceded territory of the Ktunaxa Nation also known as Cranbrook, British Columbia. Her first time doing advocacy work was back in 2018 when Kimberly got invited to go to the Inclusion International Conference in Birmingham, England. Kimberly is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Kya Bezanson

Kya is the co-chair of Inclusion BC Self Advocate Advisory committee and a member of the Inclusion BC board. She is very passionate about Self Advocacy and being a new member of BC Self Advocate Leadership Network Society. Kya was one of the first graduates of a new program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) called Including All Citizens. She enjoys making things to sell them at Craft Markets and has applied for a job at Pet Smart to become a licensed dog groomer. Kya is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Liz Etmanski

Liz is a frequent presenter on art, life and poetry at workshops and conferences and teaches and does graphic facilitation. She likes to paint scenes that inspire people, and teaching people how to visualize their goals. In her spare time Liz likes to go for long walks, discuss books with her book group, and cook.



## Lizzy Walsh

Originally from Vancouver Island, Lizzy is a Master of Social Work student at UBC Okanagan in Kelowna. She is passionate about doing research that supports people and is thrilled to work alongside self-advocates. Outside of school and work, you can find Lizzy swimming, skiing, hiking, being creative, and, most often, playing music.



## Michael McLellan

Michael lives with a visual impairment and his first attempt at self-advocacy was advocating for his white cane. Michael gained confidence and shared the importance of having their voice heard. Or specifically, to feel the “power of the white cane”, whatever that white cane may be. He currently sits on the boards for Inclusion BC, BC People First (BCPF), The Self Advocacy Foundation, The Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship, and The Learning Community. He is the President of a non-profit workers’ cooperative called Empowering Self Advocates To Take Action (ESATTA). Michael works with Community Living BC (CLBC) and other community services by conducting presentations to spread the importance of self-advocacy and inclusivity amongst the B.C. community. Michael is a co-founder of the Self Advocate Leadership Network (SALN). Michael is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Michelle Goos

Michelle is a Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) Strategic Initiatives Advisor from Victoria, B.C. She is a self advocate as well as a mom of a young adult with disabilities. She has been on boards like BC People First, Inclusion BC Self Advisory Board, Editorial Board of CLBC and she is also a resource parent with the Family Support Institute. Michelle is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Raymond Edinger

Raymond has worked for the city of Cranbrook for 18 years and for Realize Empowerment Access Life to the Maximum (REALM) for 12 years where he continues to enjoy working. Raymond also has been working with REALM’s advisory committee for the last eight years as well as being a working member of the Self Advocates of the Rockies. He leads a monthly music show and a weekly phone tree connecting with other advocates in Cranbrook and the province. He has been involved in advocacy for more than 20 years making sure that other people are respected. Their voices have been important to him ever since he left the Woodlands Institution. Raymond regularly attends local, provincial and international conferences. Raymond is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Richard McDonald

Richard is the President of the BC Self Advocacy Foundation. Richard has been advocating for the rights of people with disabilities to live in community for over forty years. Richard is a featured artist in the From The Inside/Out! exhibit and spoke at the demolition of the Woodlands Institution. Richard is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Shelley Decoste

Shelley is a change-maker and a tireless advocate for true inclusion throughout the Okanagan. In 2010, She launched the province-wide campaign to change the word 'disability' to 'diverse ability'. Her goal was to draw attention to the diverse abilities of those who are labelled with a disability. It was a call to see what all individuals are able to do and be. Shelley is a volunteer for a variety of organizations, a past self-advocate liaison for Pathways Abilities Society, a presenter/educator and course co-developer for the Community Living BC Welcome Workshop, a developer of the Diverse Ability Workshop, currently a Strategic Initiative Advisor for Community Living BC, and is a Special Olympian. Her life underlines her diverse abilities. Shelley is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Shelley Nessman

Shelley's passion is supporting people to discover, nurture and share their gifts, skills, and abilities. Her experience as a facilitator and planner has helped her to understand that when a person and their network combine their dreams with a plan for action – anything is possible! Two significant experiences changed everything about the way Shelley views "the work". First was an opportunity early in her career to be trained by Jack Pearpoint and Marsha Forrest as a PATH facilitator (followed by life altering training from Dave and Fay Wetherow). Second has been the privilege of sharing her home with people who experience disability. Life sharing has been a deep personal learning experience that shows up in everything she does. Shelley created her own consulting business "In the Company of Others" and has been privileged to work in BC, Ontario, Australia, and the US.



## Sherwin Strong

Sherwin is a member of the Nu-Chat-Laht and Carrier First Nations. He was born in Victoria and moved to the Comox Valley at the age of 10. His biggest goal as a Self Advocate is to ensure those he meets, talks to and supports feel that he helps instill self worth, and knows that he is always willing to listen and connect. He believes everyone should be treated with dignity, honesty and respect. In doing that, he helps people build self worth, self confidence, and a better understanding of who they are. Sherwin is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Susan Powell

Susan has been a special education teacher, district resource teacher and inclusion consultant in the school system. She worked at Kwantlen Polytechnic University for many years. For the past several years she has consulted with many organizations to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities. She co-wrote a children's alphabet book called "The ABC of Ability" with a group of self-advocates. She currently volunteers as a facilitator of a Next Chapter Book Club with a group of adults with disabilities. She is also one of the facilitators working with self advocates exploring leadership through art making.



## Tami Pedersen

Tami has been an active member of the Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness (SUSA) Society for nearly a decade. Her self-advocacy journey started before that, but her awareness of rights and being a presenter has grown since she became part of SUSA. Leadership and presenting have become a passion for Tami. Tami has also been a chair of the Thompson Cariboo Community Council for three years and still has another year in this role. In her advocacy roles, Tami has learned about different issues in the community and how to raise awareness about things that are important to self-advocates. When Tami isn't advocating, she enjoys spending time crafting, painting, and going to karaoke. Tami is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.



## Vicki Abbott

Vicki is a Self Advocate who lives in Kamloops, B.C. She is part of Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness Kamloops (SUSA) and does many activities in her community. Vicki runs the newsletter at SUSA. She is passionate about baking, sewing, cooking and hopes to expand her capabilities as a self-advocate. Vicki is on the Planning Committee for the 2023 Self Advocacy Leadership Institute.





