



THE KAMLOOPS SELFADVOCATE NEWSLETTER

SEPT 2026 FREE! PLEASE TAKE ONE!
Serving people since September 2013.

Welcome to the September 2026 edition of the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter!

This month, we proudly celebrate the beginning of our 13th year of publishing. Since September 2013, our newsletter has focused on disability awareness, self-advocacy, community inclusion, kindness, compassion, and sharing the voices and stories of people with disabilities.

When the newsletter first launched, it started as a print newsletter and did not have an online edition. Over the years, it has grown into a disability-focused media platform with both print and online content, allowing us to share more stories, interviews, resources, and awareness information.

What makes the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter different from other media in Kamloops and BC is that we are a specialized disability-focused publication. We focus on disability voices, lived experiences, accessibility, success stories, resources, mental health, recreation, entertainment, and important topics that are often missing from mainstream media.

Over the years, we have connected disability awareness with community life by covering events and celebrations. Our Halloween and Community Inclusion Month coverage has featured inclusive Halloween ideas, traditions, and attractions such as Boo at the Moo at Blackwell Dairy Farm, Big Little Science Centre Halloween events, The Black Mountain Haunted House, Halloween Market YYJ, and Haunting of Falkland.

Our December 2025 holiday coverage featured Holiday Splash, along with stories about community connection, accessible recreation, holiday activities, kindness, friendship, and creating opportunities for everyone to participate.

We have also enjoyed covering entertainment stories, including movies, music, and performers such as Taylor Swift tribute artists, and we hope to continue sharing more entertainment, interviews, and inspiring stories for many years to come.

Thank you to our contributors, supporters, sponsors, community partners, volunteers, and readers for helping us reach this important milestone. Welcome to our 13th year — we hope you enjoy this special anniversary issue!

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The Kamloops Self-Advocate Newsletter is a disability focused media platform promoting inclusion and sharing the voices of people with diverse abilities. We celebrate Disability Awareness, success stories, and inclusion for all!

If you have a story to share or an event you think would be good for our readers, contact us at:
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Celebrating 13 Years of the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter

This September, the Kamloops Self Advocate (KSA) Newsletter celebrates an incredible 13 years of sharing stories, promoting inclusion, and giving people a voice. Founded in September 2013 by Krystian Shaw, KSA began as a small, printed community newsletter focused on self-advocacy, disability awareness, and positive stories. Today, it has grown into a specialized disability media platform with both print and online editions through KSANews.ca.

For 13 years, KSA has worked to show that people with disabilities are more than the challenges they may experience. Our contributors share their talents, accomplishments, experiences, ideas, and stories. We believe every person has a valuable voice and should have opportunities to participate in their community.

The KSA covers a wide range of topics, including disability awareness, accessibility, self-advocacy, mental health, social inclusion, recreation, entertainment, technology, internet safety, community events, and inspiring success stories. We also believe inclusion means being part of all areas of community life—including movies, music, sports, holidays, arts, recreation, and celebrations.

Over the years, disability representation has continued to grow in movies, television, books, advertising, sports, music, and social media. More people with disabilities are telling their own stories and being recognized for their talents and contributions. KSA is proud to be part of this change by creating opportunities for people with lived experience to be contributors, interview guests, and leaders in sharing their stories.

The KSA has also evolved with technology. What began as a print newsletter now includes the KSANews.ca Resource Hub, providing information and resources throughout the year. We continue to use plain language so information is easier to understand and accessible to as many people as possible. This year, we are also moving to Google Docs for producing the newsletter. A special thank you goes to Ben for suggesting this free and accessible tool.

None of this would be possible without the many people who support KSA. A heartfelt thank you goes to Kamloops Hearing Aid Centre for being a long-standing advertiser and supporter, and to Uncle Chris the Clown for his sponsorship and encouragement. Thank you to New Horizons Professional Support Services for providing free editing assistance and supporting accessibility as an Ability Friendly Accessible Business Certificate member. We also appreciate Horizon Dental Clinic, People in Motion, our other advertisers and sponsors, contributors, volunteers, readers, and community partners. We are grateful that Self Advocate Net sponsors our website hosting.

Looking ahead, we hope to continue growing our interview series and connecting with self-advocates, community leaders, entertainers, authors, athletes, advocates, and others making a difference. We also look forward to sharing more information about health and wellness, including diabetes awareness, while continuing to cover the topics our readers value.

Continued on next page

The story of KSA is a story of growth—from a small community print newsletter in 2013 to a year-round disability media and resource platform. Most importantly, our mission remains the same: to inform, connect, educate, and inspire while promoting inclusion and belonging.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of our 13-year journey. For the next 13 years and beyond, we will continue sharing stories that matter, celebrating diverse abilities, and creating opportunities for every voice to be heard—one issue at a time.

Planning for the Future: Aging Parents Caring for Adult Children

By Krystian

For many families, parents are the main people who provide support, guidance, and advocacy for their adult children with developmental disabilities and diverse abilities. Parents often spend years making sure their children are safe, respected, included, and able to participate in their communities.

As parents get older, many families begin asking an important question: What will happen when parents are no longer able to provide support?

This question can bring worry for both parents and adult children. Some people may wonder who will support them, where they will live, and how they will continue to have a meaningful life. Parents may also worry about whether someone will understand their adult child's needs, wishes, and personality.

Planning for the future can help provide reassurance. It gives individuals and families an opportunity to talk about choices, build relationships, and create support networks beyond immediate family members.

For eligible individuals, organizations such as Community Living BC (CLBC) can help people explore available supports. These may include home sharing, supported living, community inclusion, and other services that support independence and participation in the community. Future planning should include the person with the disability. Self-advocates should have opportunities to express their wishes about where they live, who supports them, and how they want to be involved in their community.

Families may not be able to provide support forever, but this does not mean a person will be forgotten or lose their independence. With planning, communication, community connections, and appropriate supports, adults with developmental disabilities and diverse abilities can continue to live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Planning for the future is not about fear. It is about preparation, choice, reassurance, and making sure every person has the support they need to thrive.

Inspiration Porn, Pity, and Respecting Disability Stories

By Krystian

When people with disabilities achieve something, society often says, “You are so inspiring.” While celebrating achievements is important, disability stories should focus on the person—not make someone inspirational simply because they have a disability.

Disability activist Stella Young used the term “inspiration porn” to describe when people with disabilities are viewed as inspiring for everyday activities instead of being recognized as equal human beings.

There is an important difference between being inspiring and inspiration porn. A person is genuinely inspiring because of their accomplishments, character, leadership, or the positive difference they make in the lives of others. Someone who starts a business, becomes a successful Hollywood actor, earns a degree, wins an award, volunteers, creates art, or advocates for accessibility can inspire others through their effort, determination, and achievements. These accomplishments deserve recognition whether or not the person has a disability.

Inspiration porn, however, happens when someone is praised simply because they have a disability or are doing everyday activities such as going to work, attending school, shopping, using public transit, or enjoying a hobby. These are normal parts of life and should not be treated as extraordinary because a person has a disability.

This also connects to pity, which means feeling sorry for someone because we see them as facing challenges or being less fortunate. While pity may come from kindness, it often focuses on limitations instead of strengths, goals, and contributions. People with disabilities do not need pity—they need respect, accessibility, inclusion, and equal opportunities.

Disability stories should highlight people's talents, achievements, voices, and lived experiences. Media and entertainment can help by showing people with diverse abilities as actors, artists, leaders, athletes, employees, and creators—not only as stories about overcoming disability. Authentic representation helps challenge stereotypes and shows that disability is only one part of a person's identity.

This connects directly to the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter, which shares stories about disability and diverse abilities through inclusion, self-advocacy, accessibility, mental health, community events, entertainment, and success. The newsletter celebrates meaningful accomplishments because of a person's effort and contributions, not simply because they have a disability. It also reflects the social model of disability, recognizing that many challenges come from barriers in society, such as discrimination, inaccessible spaces, and lack of understanding.

People with diverse abilities are not objects of pity or inspiration simply because of their disability. They are valued members of the community with their own stories, talents, dreams, and achievements. Disability stories deserve to be told with dignity, honesty, respect, and a commitment to inclusion.

When a Diagnosis Helps To Access Services: Recognizing Disability and Diverse Abilities

By Krystian

The word disability is important, especially when talking about rights, services, supports, accessibility, and inclusion. For many people, having a disability or a diagnosis can help them access the services, accommodations, and supports they need to participate fully in their communities.

In some situations, a diagnosis is part of the process for accessing services. Organizations may require medical or other professional documentation to determine eligibility for funding, programs, accommodations, or supports. While this process can sometimes feel complicated or frustrating, it is important to recognize that asking for support is not something a person should feel embarrassed about.

A diagnosis does not define a person. It can help explain why someone may need certain supports or accommodations, but it does not describe everything about who they are, what they can do, or what they can contribute.

This is where the social model of disability can help us understand the difference between a person's condition and the barriers they experience. The medical model often focuses on a person's diagnosis, condition, or limitations. The social model looks at how barriers in society—such as inaccessible spaces, negative attitudes, communication barriers, and limited opportunities—can create disability.

Removing these barriers is an important part of creating inclusive communities. At the same time, people may still need individual supports and accommodations. Both recognizing disability and removing barriers are important parts of inclusion.

Disability is also only one part of a person's story. When we talk about talents, careers, creativity, relationships, and accomplishments, the idea of diverse abilities can help remind us that people have many strengths and skills.

A great example is actor and advocate Lauren Potter, who became well known for playing Becky Jackson on the television series *Glee*. Through her acting career and advocacy, she has helped demonstrate that people with disabilities belong in the entertainment industry and deserve opportunities to share their talents and creativity.

Lauren's disability is part of her life, but it is not the only thing that defines her. She is also an actor, performer, and advocate who brings her own skills, experiences, and personality to the world.

Using the words disability and diverse abilities together can create balance. Disability is important when discussing rights, eligibility, services, accessibility, accommodations, and social change. Diverse abilities can help highlight talents, achievements, and contributions.

Most importantly, people should not have to choose between being recognized for their disability and being recognized for their abilities. A diagnosis may help a person access the support they need, but it should never become a label that defines their entire life. Every person deserves respect, opportunity, accessibility, and the chance to be recognized as a whole person.

Molly Burke: Finding Her Voice and Inspiring Change

By Krystian

Molly Burke is a Canadian disability advocate, motivational speaker, author, and content creator who has helped change how many people understand blindness and disability. Her story is about more than losing her vision. It is about finding her strengths, building confidence, and showing that disability does not prevent people from achieving their goals.

Molly was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa as a child, a condition that causes progressive vision loss. As her vision changed, she eventually became blind. Growing up, she experienced challenges including bullying, feeling left out, and people making assumptions about what she could and could not do.

Molly became a strong self-advocate and began using her voice to educate others about blindness, accessibility, and inclusion. Through public speaking, writing, videos, and social media, she shares her experiences and challenges stereotypes about disability.

Molly also shows the everyday parts of life with a disability. She talks about topics such as accessibility, travel, fashion, beauty, hobbies, and personal experiences. By sharing both challenges and accomplishments, she helps people understand that blindness is only one part of who she is.

Her work is an important example of disability representation. People with disabilities are sometimes represented mainly through stories about challenges or support needs. Molly helps create a different picture by showing that people with disabilities can be leaders, professionals, creators, advocates, and role models.

Molly's story sends an important message: a disability can be part of someone's story without defining their future. Everyone has different strengths, interests, and goals.

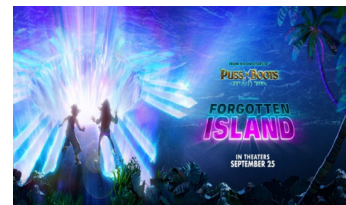
Her journey reminds us why disability representation matters. People with disabilities deserve to be seen, heard, respected, and included. By sharing her experiences and using her voice, Molly Burke continues to promote confidence, accessibility, and inclusion.

Forgotten Island - In Theaters September 25, 2026

Taken from <https://www.forgottenislandmovie.com/>

DreamWorks Animation, the studio that brought you unforgettable bonds between a boy and a dragon in *How to Train Your Dragon*, an ogre and a donkey in *Shrek*, and a robot and a gosling in *The Wild Robot*, now welcomes a dazzling and emotional story about two lifelong best friends who must come together before they drift apart in *Forgotten Island*.

While celebrating their last night together, Jo and Raissa stumble upon a mysterious portal that transports them to the fantastical island of Nakali, packed with magical and mythological creatures they grew up hearing stories about from their Filipino families. Some of these figures will become friends, some foes. Joined by well-meaning-but-hapless weredog Raww and a small-but-mighty pack of pals, Jo and Raissa must face The Dreaded Manananggal. When they discover that the memories of their entire friendship are the price for returning home, Jo and Raissa will race to find a way to leave the island before they forget each other forever.





Four Silver Medals: My Hard Work Paid Off

By Miranda Orth

Taken from

<https://selfadvocatenet.com/four-silver-medals-my-hard-work-paid-off/>

I reached a goal I am really proud of. At the 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games in Prince George, I won four silver medals. One silver medal would have been amazing, but I won a medal in every competition I entered. I was surprised each time, and it felt incredible.

This achievement means a lot to me because it shows how hard I worked. Winning four silver medals is proof of my dedication to training in track and field.

During the spring and summer, I trained in Special Olympics track and field in Nanaimo. In the winter, I continued my training at a fitness club. I also did fitness training at home in my own time. I knew I had to meet the regional and provincial qualifying standards, and that meant training hard. Even though the qualifiers were tough, I knew I had to keep going.

My track coach helped me along the way and supported my progress. My family was behind me and cheered me on. My support worker worked out with me, which helped me keep building my strength through the winter. Having people in my corner made a huge difference.

When I was presented with those silver medals, I felt proud. I had put in the work at practices, at the fitness club, and at home. I showed up even when it was hard. And it paid off.

This experience taught me that when you care about something and stay dedicated, you can reach your goals. I am proud of what I achieved and excited to keep going.

Chocolate Monkey Pops

Taken from <https://www.funology.com/chocolate-monkey-pops/>

What You Need:

- 2 Bananas
- 3 Tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 Tablespoon milk
- 2 Tablespoons honey
- 1/2 Teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 Popsicle sticks

Instructions:

Mix together the cocoa powder, milk, vanilla, and honey in a shallow bowl until well blended.

Peel the bananas and cut them in half.

Roll each banana in the chocolate mixture so it is well coated.

Place a popsicle stick into the flat cut side of each piece of banana. If there is extra chocolate, pour it on the bananas.

Eat immediately or place in the freezer on wax paper for a cold treat later.

Note:

If desired you can coat the chocolate banana with a third layer such as sprinkles or chopped nuts!



Speaking Up at Meetings & Building Respectful Partnerships

By Krystian

People with diverse abilities have the right to be included in decisions about their own lives. Meetings with service providers, support workers, and professionals should be based on respect, communication, and teamwork. A good meeting is not just about professionals making decisions; it is about everyone working together and making sure the person receiving support has a voice.

Self-advocacy means being able to share your thoughts, choices, goals, and concerns. Before a meeting, it can help to prepare questions or write down topics you want to discuss. If needed, you can bring a trusted supporter who can help you understand information or make sure your voice is heard. Everyone deserves to have information explained in a way that is clear and accessible.

It is also important to remember that it is okay to respectfully disagree. If something does not feel right or does not match your goals, you have the right to speak up and ask questions. Advocacy is not about being difficult — it is about being involved in decisions that affect your life.

Support workers are also important partners. They provide assistance, encouragement, and help people reach their goals. Showing respect to a support worker includes communicating kindly, listening, being patient, appreciating their efforts, and respecting their time and responsibilities. Building a positive relationship takes trust from both sides.

When self-advocates, families, and service providers work together, meetings become more meaningful. Everyone has an important role, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. True inclusion happens when people are supported to make choices while also being valued as equal partners.



Blazers Report: 2026/2027 Kamloops Blazers WHL Season Preview

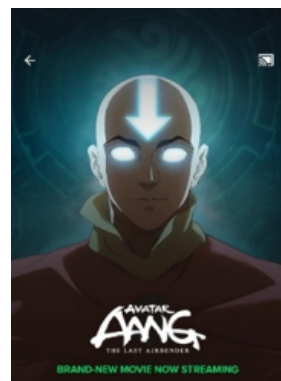
By Andrew

It's the end of August, and you know what that means. Hockey is on the horizon for the Kamloops Blazers as they prepare for the 2026/2027 Preseason (Wednesday, September 2nd to Sunday, September 13), with 3 home games and 3 away games to prepare the team for the Regular Season, which will start on Sunday, September 19 @ 6 pm and the team is officially introduced. This will include not only the players but also the Head Coach, the Assistants, the Trainer and the Athletic Therapist. Here's hoping the Blazers have a good all-around season, which we hope includes the playoffs again.

Avatar Aang the Last Airbender

By Riley

I watched Avatar Aang the Last Airbender on Paramount+. It had all the things you want in a story: great story, great background story for the villain, and a powerful message - you can't hold onto revenge, sometimes you have to let go. I give this movie a 10 out of 10.



Leading with Inclusion: Hans's Story at Air Canada

Taken from <https://readywillingable.ca/leading-with-inclusion-hanss-story-at-air-canada/>

"Inclusion isn't just about having a diversity quota; it's about well-being and creating a supportive environment for everyone."

– Hans Dupuis, Air Canada.

At Air Canada, inclusion goes far beyond fulfilling a diversity requirement. It's about creating a supportive environment where every employee can thrive. Hans Dupuis, a Specialist in Diversity and Inclusion, embodies the success of Air Canada's approach, showcasing how the company's inclusive practices are making a meaningful impact.

Air Canada's commitment to inclusive employment was put to the test during the pandemic. With numerous initiatives paused and a significant turnover in recruiters, the company had to focus on retraining and rebuilding. However, thanks to strong partnerships with programs like Ready, Willing, and Able (RWA), Air Canada remained dedicated to recruiting and retaining diverse talent. This partnership enabled Air Canada to continue tapping into an underrepresented talent pool, ensuring that diversity and inclusion stayed at the forefront of the company's recovery efforts.

Hans's journey at Air Canada highlights the meaningful effects of the company's inclusive employment practices. Even during the most challenging times, Air Canada demonstrated its commitment to diversity by expanding its workforce post-pandemic and renewing its focus on inclusion. With bases across the country, including Montreal, Halifax, Toronto, and Vancouver, the company has aimed to integrate inclusive practices at every level. Hans has been instrumental in this effort, ensuring that employees receive the necessary accommodations to succeed.

When one team member found their work environment too noisy, Hans, provided noise-canceling headphones. This simple accommodation made a significant difference in the employee's ability to work comfortably and productively. Air Canada's hiring process has also become more inclusive, providing candidates with interview questions in advance has reduced stress for applicants. This personalized and thoughtful approach ensures that new hires feel comfortable and supported from the very beginning.

While Hans's title as Specialist in Diversity and Inclusion has remained the same, his role within the company has grown in significance as Air Canada's inclusion efforts have evolved. Post-pandemic, Air Canada has made diversity and inclusion a core part of its mission, investing in a dedicated department to promote these values across all its operations. Hans has played a crucial role in shaping this vision, ensuring that Air Canada continues to lead the way in inclusive employment.

The collaboration between Air Canada and Hans demonstrates that inclusion is not just about meeting quotas but about creating an environment where all employees feel valued and supported. By embracing individualized accommodations, providing access to resources, and fostering a culture of acceptance, Air Canada is setting an example for other employers. The company's partnership with programs like Ready, Willing, and Able has been instrumental in making these achievements possible.



Hans's story, and Air Canada's leadership in inclusive employment, serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of persistence, collaboration, and innovation in promoting diversity. Together, they are proving that true inclusion is about more than just hiring—it's about creating a workplace where everyone can grow, succeed, and contribute to a brighter future.

Thank You to Our Mission-Driven Sponsors!

The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter is proud to give self-advocates a voice, share important stories, and promote inclusion in our community. We could not do this without the generous support of our mission-driven sponsors. Their support helps us pay contributors, print and distribute newsletters, and host events that celebrate self-advocates and community connection.

Welcome to our newest sponsor: BC Interior Community Foundation, a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common interest — improving the quality of life in their region, today and forever. Individuals, families, businesses, and organizations create charitable funds that help meet local and regional challenges.

You can learn more about them here: www.bcicf.ca

Kamloops Virtual Golf <https://www.kamloopsvirtualgolf.com/>

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Hypnomagician <https://www.hypnomagician.ca/>

CMHA Kamloops <https://www.kamloops.cmha.bc.ca>

Inclusion BC <https://inclusionbc.org>

Uncle Chris the Clown <https://unclechristheclown.com>

Your organization can join these mission-driven sponsors! For just \$100 per year, you can help support contributors, newsletters, and initiatives that make a real difference in the lives of self-advocates.

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Ability Friendly Accessible Business Program

The KSA has created a program to recognize and promote local businesses that are accessible and supportive of all members of the community. The businesses listed here are friendly, accessible, and great to deal with.

Horizon Dental Clinic

5 Bean Brewbar & Café

The Vic Downtown

Kamloops Film society

People in Motion

New Horizons Professional Support Services Inc.

Our Footprints Eco Store

Kamloops Art Party

Valhalla Smoke House

All Around Gamerz

Western Canada Theatre



Why the KSA Will Continue to Be Needed

By Krystian

Even after 13 years, the need for disability-focused media remains as important as ever. While society has made significant progress in accessibility, inclusion, and awareness, many people with disabilities continue to face barriers in employment, transportation, housing, healthcare, education, and community participation. Misunderstandings and stereotypes still exist, which is why education and advocacy must continue.

Since 2013, the Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter (KSA) has worked to share stories that are often overlooked by mainstream media. Every month, the KSA highlights disability success stories, interviews, community events, self-advocacy, mental health, entertainment, accessible recreation, and practical resources. The newsletter gives people with disabilities a platform to share their experiences and achievements in their own voices.

Today, the KSA has expanded beyond a newsletter into an online disability resource hub that provides information throughout the year. It serves self-advocates, families, educators, support workers, professionals, and community members looking for reliable, easy-to-understand information about disability, inclusion, mental health, and community resources.

As disability issues continue to evolve, so will KSA. The newsletter plans to continue expanding its interviews, awareness campaigns, educational resources, and community partnerships while promoting kindness, respect, inclusion, and equal opportunities. After 13 years, the mission remains just as important as it was on day one: helping create a community where everyone belongs.

Kindness and Compassion

Interview with Naowarat Cheeptham (Ann)

By Lisa Coriale

As self advocates, we teach those around us how to look at life from our perspective. Kindness and compassion change our interactions from strained, stressful, unpleasant, and hurtful to easy, peaceful, joyful, and healthy. There are many simple ways to express and offer kindness and compassion each day. This feature shows us how different individuals from a variety of backgrounds use kindness and compassion to improve their daily lives and the lives of those around them.



Ann in the Iron Curtain Cave in Chilliwack

Tell me about yourself. I am originally from Thailand, and I went to school in Japan. Both my mom and my dad are rural school teachers who didn't have the money to support me in studying abroad. Schooling in Thailand is not a right, it's a privilege. So I did really well in school, I got a scholarship, and it paid from when I was 15 years old to when I finished my PhD. I feel so grateful, and when I'm retired, I'm going to go back home to Thailand and help the country, anywhere I can.

When I finished high school, I still got the Thai scholarship to go to Chiang Mai University to study biology. Nothing wrong with plants and botanists, but I feel that for me, everything looked green. But for bacteria, it just fit me. When I finished microbiology at the university, I got a Japanese scholarship to study there for seven years. And then life threw a curveball; I met my husband, who is Canadian, in Japan. Because my scholarship had a string attached to return to Thailand, I went back to be a prof for two years before deciding to move to Canada instead of staying in Japan or Thailand.

I never dreamt that I would end up in Canada. When we first met, my husband and I, we spoke to each other in Japanese, because my English was not good at the time. Can you imagine? We landed in Burnaby in Vancouver, I applied for jobs and had many interviews, but they were not sure if I was able to teach in Canada, so I could not get a prof job.

I could not work as a scientist because it didn't have human relationships. The type of research in the lab has to be one that can sell, and that wasn't sitting well with me. I want to teach the younger generation instead of selling something. My husband and I came up to cross-country ski at Stake Lake. We saw University College of the Cariboo in 2002, and I thought I will check the website, maybe they are looking for a microbiologist, and I got the job finally.

What do you do for a living? I teach, I am a microbiologist and a professor at TRU. I not only teach, I also do research and I mentor students to do research with me. My research is in caves, so I don't look like this every day, I look muddy and everything when I take students into the caves. We study what kind of bacteria live in caves. When you think about a cave, it's strange, a lot of people might think that there are not a lot of lives in there. But you look everywhere in there as a microbiologist. Life is everywhere. It's so beautiful. *Continued on next page*

What caves do you study? The cave that we first studied is in Wells Grey Park, Helmcken Falls. We have to walk down to the cave that is close to the base of the falls. That cave is volcanic in origin. We have a cave in the Lower Mainland, in Chilliwack, called Iron Curtain Cave. We have a number of cavers in Canada that go into the caves that I can't go in and send samples for us, like Raspberry Rising cave, below Roger's Pass- that one is so interesting. I am not a trained caver, so I cannot go in by myself. The only time cavers can go in that cave is in winter, and they have to put on either cross-country skis or snowshoes to walk first, and then they change into a diving suit. They have to dive in there and get the samples for us. Those are the main three caves that we study right now, but we have other caves in Thailand and in Japan as well.

What does kindness and compassion mean to you? In Thailand, I would say 95% are Buddhist by birth. At the time when I lived in Thailand, I didn't understand the true meaning of compassion. Maybe because I was young, there were not a lot of difficulties in life yet, so I could not be genuinely empathetic to other people. Even now, I have what we call an invisible disability. I have multiple traumatic brain injuries. At the end of every day, I'm really tired, and I have headaches. When I was young, the definition and practice of compassion looked and felt totally different from now, when I am 56 years old. Compassion is truly not only kindness. I realized that being nice and being kind are a different thing altogether. As a female and Asian, in my culture, being nice has been entrenched in us. But that isn't kindness and isn't kind action. I started to learn more about the difference between those two. For me, the sum of the definition of compassion would be when you think about people other than you. Being a mom has really taught me the best lesson for compassion, not only for my husband and my son, but for myself as well.

Why is it important to show kindness and compassion to others? It's like a ripple effect from us going out. You have to be so kind to yourself. As I said, back when I was young, I wasn't really kind to myself. I was too hard on myself to achieve success, and the definition of success looks totally different than now. It's important to be kind and compassionate to others, not just other people, but also other life on Earth. I believe that everything is interconnected and we are a part of nature. I found that being kind has helped me to feel happy and to feel like I'm a part of the community that I live in. Now there is even research- they said that being kind, no matter how small the act of kindness is, makes you have dopamine, oxytocin, or serotonin, all of these happy hormones. That is for me, like an agenda for being kind- genuinely kind. When I'm happy, my happiness comes and ripples out to people around me. Then, when we have a happy community, what happens to the earth? Because everything is so interconnected, us being happy and kind to everyone and every life around us has made the community better. I don't know, maybe I'm too naive, but I have hope that it starts from here, and it goes out.

How do you show kindness and compassion to others? For example, when I see homeless people, I don't give them money, but I would ask whether they have a place to stay or food to eat, and I will help with finding shelter and food. We've been teaching our son to do that too: help what we can help, with that small act of kindness. I'm a teacher, a lot of students would come in and talk and confide in me- to be a listening ear and just trying to help them.

How can people show compassion when they are in community? When you're passionate about something, you can just show it through your passion naturally. For example, I like teaching and to talk to kids to debunk the misconception about bacteria in our society. A lot of people often hear only about the one percent that make us sick, but what about the other 99 percent on Earth? With this said, I'm volunteering at the farmer's *Continued on next page*

market with the Soapbox Science organization, and I would take my plush toys that are all bacteria like E. coli or COVID, and it gets kids interested that way, to become aware of how good bacteria or microorganisms are. I think being kind in your community is about sharing what you're already passionate about, but doing it beyond your own home and with other people.

In what ways are you kind to yourself? After my brain injury, I had to take a year and a half off from being a professor. I had to re-learn how to read because my eyes would not go from the same line to the end. I went once a week to a vision therapist for a year and a half. My younger self would have been totally mad, and felt like, why me? But it didn't take me long to accept the fact that now my reality changed. I will learn to live with me again, but with a different personality.

When I get mad, I go from 0 to 200 really quick, I have no control, but I try meditation to understand and I can help myself and my husband and son because those are the 2 people that get yelled at from me the most! To be kind to myself, that's it- I change my attitude and accept my reality that changed. It has been 6 years, I'm so lucky and grateful that I could come back this far to be able to work full time. I love myself, and I do a lot of things that make me feel happy. I accepted that myself today is not the same as myself yesterday and tomorrow.

People sometimes have negative views or attitudes towards people with diverse abilities.

What do you do, or can you do to increase kindness and compassion for those who are diversity abled? I think we need more voices in the community to show people what we can do and what we're passionate about. We have more in common than differences, and awareness is key. Like me, when I try to give a good example about bacteria and microorganisms when I talk to a lot of people, because knowledge is the key too. When people have knowledge, they can allow themselves in the community to think differently about people with disabilities. Because my disability is invisible, I tell my students every fall that I have a disclaimer. I have a brain injury and I'm ageing, but gracefully! I explain that I might forget things- so be kind with me for that! I might have days when I don't smile, but that doesn't mean it's about you! It breaks the ice and reminds students that professors aren't superheroes—we're human beings going through struggles too. I want to bring humans back into the science classroom. Going back to how, I think it's awareness, knowledge and being interactive and putting yourself out there as a role model. It helps people to have a less ungrounded, negative idea about people with disabilities.

What are some ways people can show kindness and compassion to people with diverse abilities? When you think about other people. In Thailand, we have a saying: Jai Kao, Jai Rao. Jai means heart, and Kao means other people, and Rao means ourselves. Jai Kao, Jai Rao. To translate it literally in English, it means you treat other people as you want to be treated. If I am in your shoes, how would I like to be treated? I would like to be treated as another person. Why would my disability have to do with anything? You can have compassion for people with disabilities.

Being an Author

By Ben

Lisa Coriale took some time for an interview about being an author. Here is what she had to share.

What inspired you to become an author? I have always liked writing my feelings down. It is easier for me to express myself. I enjoy writing stories about myself and others. I feel that's how I best communicate with my community.

Where is your favourite place to write? My favourite place to write is in my bedroom, because it is quiet and helps me focus. I also do a lot of writing in my head, because I don't always have somebody available to write it down for me. I often organize my thoughts mentally until someone can help me put them on paper

What helps support your well-being when you are writing? I like a quiet, peaceful space where I can focus. Sometimes I find inspiration when I spend time in nature or go for a walk. I also draw inspiration from my life experiences, people I have met, and the challenges I have overcome. Those experiences often help shape my ideas and my stories.

What is your favourite book that you have written, and why? My favourite...is a children's book called "Beautiful, Beautiful Bird" Growing up I did not see very many books I could relate to or represented me. I wanted other children to experience encouragement as well. I wanted all children to feel included and have something to relate to. My family has encouraged me to follow my dreams. This is what motivated me to write this book.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to become a writer? Your voice and your story have the power to make a lasting impact. Don't be afraid to tell your story. Trust the process, it can be a long journey, but it is worth it to have your voice heard. Do not be afraid to share the lessons and messages that matter to you, because others can learn from them. There may be times when expressing your creativity can feel challenging, but it is important to keep going and let your ideas flow and share them with the world.

What types of books do you enjoy reading? I enjoy reading the Bible because it inspires me. I also enjoy reading adventure stories, mysteries, biographies and autobiographies.

If you are comfortable sharing, do you identify as having a disability? If so, how has it influenced your writing or your journey as an author? Yes, I identify as having a disability, but I prefer to use the term diverse ability. I do not like the term "disability" because it tends to focus on what people cannot do. The word is made up of "ability" and the prefix "dis" which suggests the lack of ability. I prefer the term "diverse ability" because it replaces the "dis" with "diverse". "Diverse ability" focuses on the ability of the person, but I don't mind when other people use the term disability. Throughout my life I have lived with cerebral palsy and it has shaped both my journey and my writing. Many of my stories are inspired by my lived experiences, thoughts and feelings and the challenges I have faced. Writing allows me to share those experiences, and hopefully encourage others to see ability, resilience in themselves and the people around them.

What message do you hope readers take away from your books? My books encourage children to work together, support one another, and value their relationships with their family and friends. It reminds people that everyone has unique gifts and treasures within them, and that no

Continued on next page

Being an Author, continued

matter who they are, they can share those gifts with the world. My books also promote kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. It teaches children how to treat others with diverse abilities with respect and compassion, while encouraging everyone with diverse abilities to believe in themselves, persevere, and recognize their own strengths and potential

Where can readers learn more about you or find your books? Readers can learn about me by emailing me, Facebooking me, or google. I can answer any questions to whomever would like to reach out. My book is available for purchase on Amazon in Kindle format. It can also be purchased online through the AuthorHouse bookstore. Or you can email me directly and I can order one.

Save the Date!

The Speak Up Self-Advocacy Awareness (SUSA) Society in partnership with CLBC, BCPF, KSCI, ESATTA and New Horizons is holding a conference in Kamloops!

**Where We Belong
Oct. 6th and 7th**

**For more information, please contact
the SUSA Society at:
speakupkamloops@gmail.com**



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