



FALL/ WINTER 2021

Volume 56, Issue 2



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Canadian Content at ISAAC Connect
- Feedback requested

Hello everyone!

I am so excited to take on the role of ISAAC Canada President and to work with the outstanding people that are on our Executive as well as the members of the National Council.

I also want to thank the outgoing Executive and National Council members who have done such an outstanding job of leading the work of ISAAC Canada and sharing the importance of AAC for persons with communication challenges for the past 4 years.

I have been involved in the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication for many decades. In fact, I was at the meeting in Toronto in 1982 where they decided to have a special AAC conference the following year and I went back the following year, 1983, when ISAAC was officially

formed. For years I had an ISAAC pin in my sewing kit that said something like “we have a name – ISAAC”. I so wish that pin, like so many things, hadn’t disappeared over the years. It would be so fun to wear it again!



I would like to take a couple minutes to introduce you to your new Executive. This is the first time, so I am told, that the Executive positions have been held by Region 2 which is Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. I am happy to say that at long last we Region 2 members are stepping up. Some might say it’s about time ;-)

As I have already indicated I am your new President. I am a born and bred Albertan who has lived here all but 4 years where I spent my teenage years in Saskatchewan. As I said I have been in and around the field of AAC it seems like since the beginning and yet in many ways I feel that I am a perpetual beginner myself. There is always so much more to learn about the people, the methods, and the tools that gather in our field. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow my understanding with you all over the next four years.

Lee Millar, a wonderful SLP from Saskatchewan, has taken on the important role of Secretary. Lee has been involved with ISAAC for several years as a Regional representative. Lee works for Regina Public Schools as an SLP with a focus in AAC. I first met Lee at the Where It’s AT Conference in 2019 where her passion for AAC shone through. We are very lucky to have such a knowledgeable and dedicated person to not only keep our meeting notes but to also manage our growing membership list.

Shaun Pearson, is another wonderful SLP, this time from Alberta. Shaun, with a little encouragement has agreed to be our Treasurer. Although Shaun is currently living in Alberta he hails from Quebec which brings a Canada wide perspective to our team. Shaun is renowned for his love of gaming which he brings to the world of AAC and is a regular presenter at conferences such as ATIA and Closing the Gap. Shaun is also the proud papa of two beautiful little girls which keep him busy when his is not focused on his passion for all things AT and AAC.

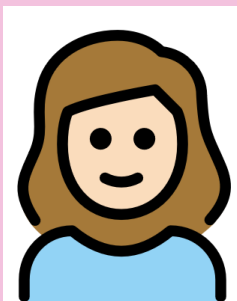
We are also so lucky to have two wonderful members at large on our Executive.

(continued on page 3)

ISAAC Canada
Executive Council



Kathy
Howery



Lee
Millar



Shaun
Pearson



Stacey
McRuer



Jocelyn
Roberts



Chelsea
Hagen

Stacey McRuer, an OT from Manitoba whose AAC work primarily focuses on adults. Stacey has been my right-hand woman in my role as president taking on many roles including stepping up and making sure we have this Newsletter for you all, and sitting on an important new committee with me where we are partnering with others, including the Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC), to forge the Canadian Communication Access Alliance (CCAA). Learn more about the Alliance on page 8! Stacey is also an avid angler which is something I don't share with her, but something I may one day try to take up myself.

Jocelyn Roberts, another SLP and another Albertan. Jocelyn is from the Lethbridge area and brings to our team a wealth of expertise and experience supporting children and youth who use AAC and their teams. Like Shaun, Jocelyn has a young family which keeps her actively engaged in her "off" hours. Jocelyn has graciously taken on the relatively new role on our Executive of organizing our ISAAC Canada Webinars. It is great to have her onboard to help share the wonderful Canadian expertise and experience in AAC.

Finally, perhaps the most important voice on our Executive, **Chelsea Hagen** our Person Who Uses AAC or as she likes to refer to herself as The Defender. Chelsea is an accomplished young lady. She has created and shared a film at the 2016 ISAAC Conference in Toronto, has written several published pieces of work, including most recently the preface to a children's book about AAC – *Eddie the Elephant has Something to Say* (<https://www.eddietheelephant.com/about>) and is a regular speaker at universities and conferences. Chelsea also stepped up and took the mike with me when we talked about AAC Awareness Month on CBC radio in October: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-17/clip/15874227>.


Along with your new Executive we have a wonderful array of passionate people on our National Council. Here they are from West to East:

- * **Jacob Rowe** (BC),
- * **Krista Wennerstrom** (Alberta) who also is helping out with our Newsletter – thanks Krista,
- * **Cori Debert** (Saskatchewan),
- * **Aynsley Allen** (Manitoba),
- * **Elizabethe Baird** (Ontario),
- * **Maha Abdelhak** (Quebec) and the newest member of our National Council, and
- * **Lisa Harris** (Maritimes)

And finally, I must give a big shout out to **Laurel Robinson** from Ontario who continues to spearhead the AAC Awareness work for ISAAC Canada. Thank you so much Laurel! And you can read more about those events in this newsletter! Again, I am so grateful to this amazing group of volunteers.

We have some new ideas for ISAAC Canada in the works... So, stay tuned, and please reach out if you have ideas or would like to become more involved as a professional, an AAC user, a parent, or a caregiver. All our voices are important in giving voice to and for AAC.

*Sincerely yours,
Kathy Howery*



AAC AWARENESS MONTH

OCTOBER 2021 | #AACAware21

GET OUT, SPEAK UP AND BREAK THROUGH THE SCREEN IN A RECOVERING WORLD

Image above of the AAC Awareness Month 2021 Logo. October 2021, #AACAware21. Get Out, Speak Up and Break Through the Screen in a Recovering World

AAC AWARENESS MONTH 2021

Every year since 2007, the ISAAC LEAD committee puts out a thoughtful theme for AAC Awareness Month, and this year was no different!

Every year, they encourage people to consider participating in AAC Awareness month and spread the news using the #AACAware21 on Twitter and/ or Facebook! Even if it's after October! We love seeing what people get up to. You know what they say, creativity begets creativity!

Also, keep in mind for next year, many AAC & Educational app companies offer significant (up to 50%) discounts during AAC awareness month. Check out this [amazing poster](#) created by [Lauren Enders](#), that outlines all the apps that were on sale in 2021! It's even an interactive poster that allows you to click on the app, and it will take you to the appropriate site.

There was also some wonderful ISAAC Webinars for International AAC Awareness Month. Check them out here: <https://isaac-online.org/english/webinars/>

Some of the International Chapters hosted events to mark AAC Awareness month, for instance Denmark hosted a [one-day seminar](#), ISAAC-US hosted a [virtual auction](#) and ISAAC - South Africa challenged individuals to make a [1-2 minute video](#)! Amazing work everyone!

AAC AWARENESS 2021

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2021 International AAC Awareness Month this past October. ISAAC-Canada's goal and vision is to raise awareness of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) across the country and to inform the public about the many different ways in which people communicate.

Here are some of the highlights around Canada.

Communication Devices Program Deer Lodge Centre Winnipeg, Manitoba (Submitted by Stacey McRuer)

The Communication Devices Program created an e-blast that was sent out in October alerting facility staff to AAC Awareness month, with a few informational tidbits about AAC. The e-blast included directions on where to find a QR code to participate in a survey for a chance to win a gift card to our facilities gift shop. The survey included questions about AAC, AAC Awareness Month and services available in our Province!

Kathy Howery & Chelsea Hagen - Alberta

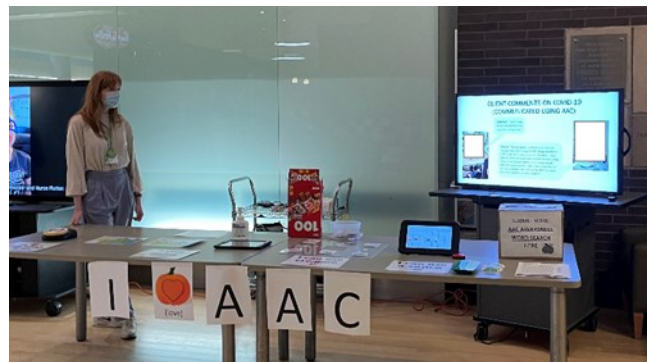
On October 25th, 2021 Kathy & Chelsea's radio interview aired: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-17/clip/15874227> Session titled: The Importance of Augmentative and Alternative Communication with Mark Connolly.

**Communication and Writing Aids Service
Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
Toronto, Ontario
(Submitted by Heather Wong)**

At Holland Bloorview, the Communication and Writings Aids (CWAS) team organized several events and activities to raise awareness about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

To start, we posted stories from two of our AAC users who shared the powerful impact of AAC in their lives on the Holland Bloorview internal and public website. Their stories provided an overview of their AAC journeys and the collaborative teamwork process that resulted in their current innovative AAC systems. The article also included reflections from AAC users about how they felt about COVID-19. One of our young AAC users used their eye-gaze system to share “I didn’t get to see my Bubba and Jane for a long time.” A slideshow of these stories also circulated on our hospital’s television at the main atrium.

A hands-on event was organized at Holland Bloorview to provide staff and families the opportunity to try various AAC access methods. Participants asked for either Halloween chocolates or stickers by 1) pressing a BIGmack to say “Trick or Treat!” 2) directly accessing a communication display or communication device 3) using eye-gaze via an E-tran vocabulary board or 4) using a switch to select a desired item on a scanning-based communication device.



Staff also had the opportunity to participate in a virtual AAC Trivia Kahoot event. Questions ranged from testing contestants’ knowledge of general AAC information and AAC myths to testing their abilities to guess the meaning of different symbols. It was a fun and competitive contest!

To cap off International AAC Awareness Month, a word search with AAC key words was made available to staff and families. Examples of key words included access, choices, eye-gaze, symbol and language. Many participants submitted their completed puzzle to enter a draw for a prize.

I would like to congratulate Stacey McRuer from Deer Lodge Centre. For submitting an article to highlight an event, she has won an ISAAC membership for a person who uses AAC. We will be in contact with you shortly.

For information and updates about events from around the world, please be sure to visit <https://www.isaac-online.org/english/aac-awareness/international-aac-awareness-month/>.

We look forward to continuing to raise AAC awareness in Canada.

Laurel Robinson - ISAAC Canada Rep

ISAAC CONNECT: AUGMENTING OUR NETWORK

CHECK OUT THE 'CAN-CON'!

ISAAC Connect: Augmenting our Network, 2021 was no small undertaking! First and foremost, we would like to congratulate the committee, volunteers, presenters and everyone who played a role in bringing together such a wonderful conference. Information below gathered from the ISAAC Connect Introductory video found here: <https://isaac-online.org/english/isaac-connect/> provided by Tracy, Sally, Kevin and Gabriela.

The conference ran from August 9-12, 2021 and included leaders in the field of AAC from around the world. The event saw over 40 invited speakers, peer-reviewed poster sessions and knowledgeable presenters.

The really neat feature of ISAAC Connect was that it was offered live in different time zones! This meant that many people from across the world were able to participate live! Additionally, the participant was able to view sessions on-demand for a period of time after the conference ended.

The National Institute for Health (NIH) awarded a conference grant to USSAAC to support the conference. This offered the opportunity to run Master Classes, Interactive Sessions, Spanish language sessions and research, as well as support registration for 12 poster session participants. WOW!



There was also a focus on ensuring that people who use AAC (PWUAAC) were able to fully participate in the conference. Specific sessions and panel discussions were led by PWUAAC giving individuals from all over the world the opportunity to share their expertise. The Film Festival showcased many talented individuals sharing their personal story and experiences.

No conference would be complete without the social activities! And while they looked a little different this time, they were no less spectacular! There was a coffee tasting, a beer tasting and a great ISAAC bake off!

The real highlight of the conference? Drumroll please..... the incredible talent from our Canadian counterparts! See below for a list of the Canadian content (Can-Con)! *Congratulations to them all on a job very well done!*

A significant amount of Canadian content was presented at ISAAC Connect 2021, and we think that's something to celebrate!

Beata Batorowicz, Sidney Givigi, Yosra Kazemi, Paulina Finak (with Edênia da Cunha Menezes: USA, and Rosana Givigi: Brazil) - Robotics and Artificial Intelligence to Support Participation

Kathy Howery - The Meaning of Voice: Lived Experience of Aided Communicators

Kathy Howery and Karen Pollock - Supporting Families during the Pandemic: Virtual AAC Camp Alberta

Krista Winnerstrom, Toby Scott, Justin DuVal, Jocelyn Oliva, Sara Peters, Michaela rolls, Victoria Hoang (Edmonton Catholic School Division) - AAC Goes to Online School: Supporting All Learners

Pat Mirenda, NIH Master Class - Planting Two Trees with One Seed: AAC Supports for Problem Behaviour

Shaun Pearson - Think INSIDE the Box: Gaming and AAC

Rheanne Brownridge, Tara Commandeur, Sarah Douglas, Jan Dunn, Monica Francella, Stacey Harpell, Kristi Wintemute (Communication Access for Youth and Adults: CAYA) - A Client-Centered Approach to Hybrid Service Delivery of AAC for Adults

Tracy A. Shepherd, Anne Marie Renzoni, Steven E. Ryan (Holland Bloorview & Bloorview Research) - Toward Advancing the Effectiveness of AAC for Students in School Activity Settings

Tracy Shepherd, Michelle Servais, Jessica Kay, Gill Steckle, Kelli Vessoyan, Colleen Willoughby - Augmentative Communication Service Client and Family Satisfaction Survey

* I apologize if we missed you from this list! Please contact admin@isaac-canada.org for a correction to this article.

ISAAC CANADA

The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) was founded in 1983 by a group of therapists, teachers, people using AAC, parents, engineers and other professionals from many countries.

ISAAC Canada is one of many national chapters of ISAAC. It aims to make people aware of the potential that AAC has to change the lives of individuals around the world who are unable to speak, and to find new approaches and technologies to help people communicate in different ways.



GLOBAL SYMBOLS

Information gathered directly from: <https://globalsymbols.com/>



Global Symbols

Global Symbols was co-founded by David Banes and E.A. Draffan. It is an online repository of freely available multi-lingual AAC symbols sets, with training materials and tools for creating AAC supports.

The webpage features multiple different [Symbol Sets](#).

In addition, you can easily create AAC materials by using the [Board Builder](#) function. They have templates available, or you are free to create your own layout. Once in Board Builder, you can search from thousands of free images, use your own, OR create an entirely new symbol if you need.

ISAAC Connect 2021 presenters, David Banes and E.A. Draffan discussed the different layers of culture and aspects of language and how that influences the development/ use of symbols in AAC, in a presentation titled: ***From Universal to Global: The Impact of Language and Culture on Symbol Design for Communities***. If you are interested in learning more about their work, you can download the entire presentation here: [SLIDES](#). You can also find further information and training on their [Moodle](#) platform.



“The world is waiting for your words”

- Arvee Robinson

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Have an idea or a story to submit?
We would LOVE to hear from you!

Please contact us at:

admin@isaac-canada.org



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

You may have noticed that the format for the Figuratively Speaking Newsletter has been changed up! Essentially, it's the product of a new committee coming in and being quite a bit behind the 8-ball! Despite that, it has given us an opportunity to try something a little different. With the changes, we really want to know what you think!

Please use the camera on your internet enabled phone or tablet to scan the QR code below.



You will see a link pop up which will take you to a brief, 3 question, survey about Figuratively Speaking.

If you prefer to speak with us directly, you are welcome to connect with us here:

admin@isaac-canada.org.

We look forward to gathering feedback from anyone and everyone!