



Richmond Centre for Disability

“Promoting a new perspective on disability”

2012 Business Excellence Awards – Association of the Year Winner

RCD HISTORY

The Richmond Committee on Disability (RCD) was established in 1985 through the joint effort of United Way of the Lower Mainland, Special Needs & Social Planning divisions of the City of Richmond along with several people with disabilities from the community. It is a non-profit, registered charitable society (# 88832 8432 RR0001).

The Society’s purpose is to give people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the community to the fullest extent of their ability and desires and to improve their quality of life by working for – Inclusion, Independence & Empowerment. The RCD serves as an advisory body and spokes group to local government, business and community on issues and barriers faced by people with disabilities and the society’s work has contributed to the overall physical and attitudinal accessibility of the city.

As the official advisory group to the City, Council appoints a member to liaise with the RCD; Councillor Alexa Loo is the current council liaison for 2017. Mr. Alan Hill, Diversity Services Coordinator at the Community Services Department of the City is the designated staff liaison. In addition, Richmond City Council appoints an RCD member to sit on the City’s Advisory Design Panel, on the Intercultural Advisory Committee and when appropriate to sit on special purpose advisory committees as established.

The RCD is a member of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Richmond, Richmond Community Services Advisory Council, BC Personal Supports Network, and through our Resource Centre, an accredited member of the national organization Independent Living Canada.

ORGANIZATION’S MANDATE

RCD’s mandate is to support people with disabilities to lead a more independent life of their choice. The organization respects “Dignity, Knowledge, Diversity and Self-Determination”, which forms the basis of our service provision. Our present focuses include the following:

- Promote “Independent Living Philosophy” by enhancing skills development;
- Facilitate full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the community;
- Establish a leadership role in representing the interests of people with disabilities; &
- Build capacity to develop a solid-structure and better meet emergent community needs.

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KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN COMMUNITY

- In September of 2000, the RCD established the *Resource Centre*, which is an accredited member of the Independent Living Canada. The Centre work is based on IL Canada guidelines, supporting the independent living movement. In 2016 the RCD was granted continual accreditation for the third time.
- RCD hosted the inaugural Wheelchair Curling Bonspiel in 2007; this has turned into an annual event and greatly increased the exposure of wheelchair sports and athletes with disabilities. In 2016 we celebrated 10th Anniversary of the event – 2016 Canadian Open, and saw record high of 14 teams' participation.
- Starting 2005 the RCD offered Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Training to caregivers, agencies, businesses and Government officials. In 2016, close to 200 participants received the training.
- RCD celebrated its 30th Anniversary in 2015; we planned a series of 10 celebrating events, from April to December 2015.
- To our great loss, RCD's founder, Frances Clark, passed away on April 23, 2015; she was presented one of the most prestigious national awards the previous year: the Prime Minister's Volunteer Award for Lifelong Achievement.
- RCD was the proud recipient of the "2012 Association of the Year" of the Business Excellence Awards hosted by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce on November 21, 2012.
- RCD was part of the planning committee of the City of Richmond to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Rick Hansen's World Tour; the event was hosted at the Richmond Olympic Oval in May 2012.
- RCD became a Safe Harbour Certified Location in April 2012, building a welcoming place for all to live and work.
- RCD worked closely with the City of Richmond's Transportation Department since 2007, in a liaison role to the community representing people with vision loss, in the development of "Accessible Pedestrian Signals" throughout the city.
- Working with city staff, the RCD drafted a "Universal Housing Design Bylaw". Initiated in 1995 the concept was approved by Council in the Fall of 2007 as a result of a collaborative effort by the RCD with the Urban Development Institute and City staff. It addresses the functional needs of everyone; children, adults, and seniors with or without disabilities, in a user-friendly environment.
- As a result of the RCD working in partnership with the City, Richmond was presented with the "5 Star Award for Accessibility" in 1991 by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Secretary of State and National Committee on Disabilities. Richmond was the only City in Canada to be given the full 5-star award for accessibility.

- Working with the RCD, City staff developed accessibility requirements for city buildings, greater than the provincial standard for use in construction or renovation of all City owned facilities.
- A curb cut design created by the RCD for the City Centre area, which addressed the needs of both wheelchair users and the visually impaired, is now being used in other provincial communities.
- Working with community developers, the RCD provided input relating to accessibility for many commercial and residential developments, which assisted the developers in creating more user friendly projects.
- The RCD was a facilitator and partner in the 1995 establishment of the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society, which provides a therapeutic horseback riding program in Richmond for children and youth with disabilities run under Canadian Therapeutic Equestrian Society (CanTRA) guidelines.
- The RCD provided HIV/AIDS prevention presentations in Richmond High schools and the community, held three successful “WALKS for HIV/AIDS” to create awareness about the disease and raise funds for the program.
- Bringing together the City, a local developer and the False Creek Residence Society the RCD facilitated the establishment of the *Steveston Residence*. Located at No. 1 Road and Steveston Highway this is an integrated project of 20 apartments; 10 of which are purposely built for people with disabilities and require full time attendant care. The other 10 units are affordable apartments for families, responding to the need for residential housing for people with disabilities, as well as affordable housing for others. The 10 family apartments embrace universal design.
- As part of our community education initiative, the RCD worked with City staff to develop a Scooter Safety awareness brochure for the community, a project supported by funding from ICBC. The brochure covers many aspects of ownership and their safe use on City streets.

KEY MILESTONES

- In 2016, the RCD served over 25,000 people in the community and provided more than 50,000 service hours. Close to 10,000 individuals with disabilities participated in centre-based activities which include specialized Information & Networking services, Skills Training and Peer Support, Social Interaction, Life Skills Development, English Language Building, Basic & Advanced Computer Training, as well as Youth Support & Leadership, Chinese Support Group and Filipino Parents Support Group.
- The RCD conducted annually community awareness events, such as the Invisible Disability/Illness Forum in May, Access Awareness Month in June and International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, to heighten awareness to disabilities issues in our communities.
- 2015 marked the 30th anniversary of RCD; they celebrated many accomplishments throughout the years, and were able to act more proactively to achieve their mission and goals.

- The RCD hosted the first Roll and Stroll Event in 2009, in partnership with Richmond Rotary Club, to raise funds supporting the programming for people with disabilities.
- In 2008, the RCD changed its name to the Richmond Centre for Disability – with the purposes of the Society remaining the same; the change has better reflected the position and the role of RCD in the community and enabled it to be more relevant and responsive to its members.
- In 2008, the RCD relocated its physical centre to the current address. Since then they see significant increase in traffic and member participation; there are more recreational activities and skill development opportunities offered.
- In 2007, the RCD hosted its first annual Wheelchair Curling Bonspiel, which drew competitors from some International teams and from other parts of Canada. In 2016 14 teams participated included 5 international teams.
- In 2006, the RCD celebrated its 20th anniversary and hosted an inaugural Fundraising Gala.
- To promote the accessibility of the City of Richmond, the RCD created <http://www.accessrichmond.ca> in 2005 to provide information to tourists or people interested in moving to the area. This website currently records an average of over 9,000 page hits per month in 2016.
- Several major Conferences involving people with disabilities have been held in Richmond in recent years as a result of RCD's efforts to promote the City for its accessibility and suitability to host events that require accessible amenities. In 2005, the RCD hosted the Conference for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities which was a great success and saw the participation of over 300 delegates from all across the country, as well as played host to Independent Living Canada Annual General Meetings on two occasions.
- The RCD started to conduct Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Training Workshops to community members in 2005, and the service has grown as demands increase in recent years. The RCD has developed a reputable identity being the expert on disability issues.
- In 2003-2004, the Centre developed a manual on Service Delivery to people with disabilities from other cultures. This manual was translated into seven languages, and circulated to organizations across Canada.
- The Centre's informational websites – <http://www.rcdrichmond.org> was established in 2001; it currently registers an average of over 175,000 page hits per month.
- Reflecting the diversity of the community, services and activities are available in both English and Chinese, while communication in other languages can also be provided.
- The RCD recruited and trained volunteers and caregivers working with people with disabilities through regular training and supervision; they have over 110 active volunteers monthly, and trained over 200 volunteers annually. In 2016 a total of volunteer hours were recorded.

(Revised January 2017)