



The Ripple

April/May 2016

Mission

We teach people with disabilities to advocate on behalf of themselves and others. We are a united voice which promotes equality, opportunities, and inclusion for us, by educating the community about our dreams and what we can achieve.

Interview with an advocate: *By Shannon Kehler and K.S.*

Each newsletter, we are going to interview a different self-advocate. This issue, we decided to interview Melodie Scout. She is our friend at Peak and the president of SRSAN!

The Ripple: How long have you been going to Peak?

Melodie: Since January 19, 1998. I've been going 17 years and I love it!

The Ripple: What do you like about going to Peak?

Melodie: I enjoy friendship, doing new jobs, getting

involved in community and activities throughout the week.

The Ripple: What are your interests?

Melodie: I like art class and drama because I like to act.

The Ripple: Why is it important to be involved in the community?

Melodie: You get to know people within the community. It's good to be out there to show I'm the same as everybody else, with or without a disability.

The Ripple: What does self-advocacy mean to you?

Melodie: Speaking up for myself and my friends if they need help, or if I see something that's not right.

The Ripple: Why is it important to self-advocate?

Melodie: At times, there might not be anyone around to help you or help me. I have been in situations where people push me down with negativity. Speaking up shows I am a person too and not just somebody that looks vulnerable.

The Ripple: How do you advocate in the community?

Melodie: Whenever something is not right, I'll say how it is. I go with what's in my heart.

The Ripple: How long have you been part of SRSAN?

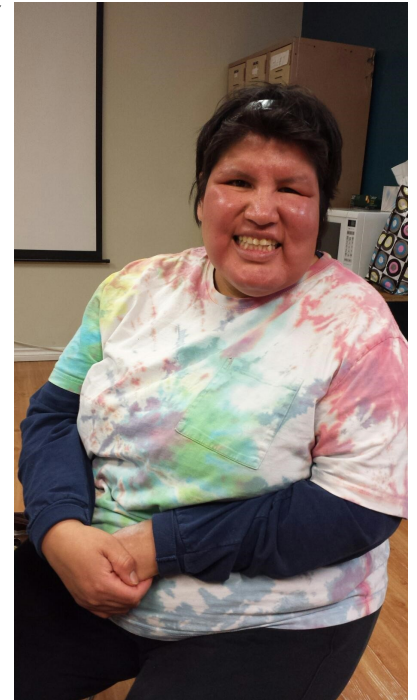
Melodie: A few years. I went through the Leadership Today program; this has helped me a lot to speak up.

The Ripple: What is it like to be president?

Melodie: It is great! Running the meeting once a month has helped me grow. I have been chairperson for a year.

The Ripple: What is favourite food?

Melodie: My favourite food is pizza!



What is physician-assisted dying, and what does it mean to us?

On February 11, the community came together to have a discussion on physician-assisted death. Physician-assisted death means a death that is done with the help of a doctor. The Supreme Court of Canada decided to make this legal in February 2015. The discussion was organized by Rachel Harder, Conservative Member of Parliament for Lethbridge. Rachel was on a special committee that gave the government ideas on how the new law can protect everyone's rights.



The court decided that “competent adults” who have a serious, unfixable medical condition can ask a doctor to help end their life if they are able to give consent (permission). That leaves A LOT of things that still need to be worked out. The federal government has until June 6 to put the law into place.

Why might someone want a doctor to end their life? Some people might be very sick or in a lot of pain and they don't want to suffer. The person doesn't have the quality of life they did before and they don't want to live that way. The doctor can help them end their lives by giving them medication. This is a sensitive subject, because people have different opinions on physician-assisted dying. Some people are worried that the new law will hurt vulnerable people, like seniors and people with disabilities. Other people like the law because it lets people have a choice to die with dignity if they are suffering.

Rachel had the community meeting because she wanted to hear people's thoughts and concerns to see what safety measures need to be put in place to make sure the new law protects people's right to choose while still keeping people safe. Rachel took these concerns back to the committee and helped write a report that gives the government suggestions on how to move forward with the new law. The committee heard from 61 witnesses across the county and received more than 100 written submissions. The report came out on Feb. 25. The report made a total of 21 recommendations. Here are some of them:

- Canadians suffering from physical conditions or diseases should be able to ask a doctor for assisted dying. This can include things that are not life threatening, like a disability.
- People with serious psychiatric (mental health) conditions should be able to access physician-assisted dying.
- The government should work with provinces to make sure requests for physician-assisted death are in writing and witnessed (signed) by two people.
- Two independent doctors need to approve a person's assisted dying request before they can go through with it.
- The law would apply to people over 18 for the first three years; after this, it could extend to “competent minors” (people under 18).

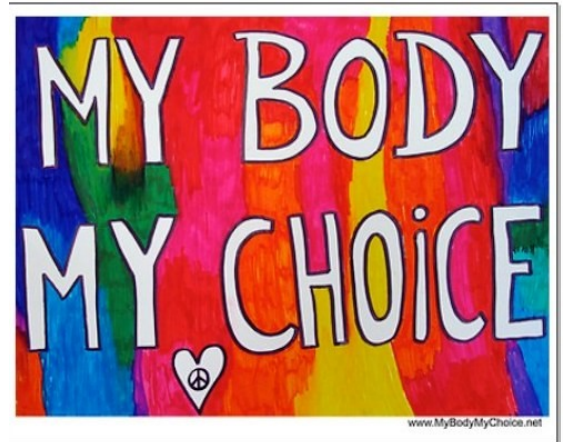


Even though these are only suggestions to the government, we felt like this was A LOT to take in. We had some concerns about these suggestions. The suggestions went beyond what the court ruled, and some advocates worry that physician-assisted death is a slippery slope that will lead to vulnerable people dying unnecessarily or against their will because people in positions of power might be able to make those decisions for them.

There was also concern that the suggestions include people facing psychiatric conditions. That means that someone with depression or schizophrenia could potentially ask a doctor to end their life if they feel they are suffering.

“Assisted dying should not be used for mental health conditions like depression,” says one self-advocate. “There are treatments like counselling and medication that can help you. I’ve had depression and I understand what it’s like. I was able to get through it and I’m glad I did.”

Advocates feel people need greater access to mental health services so they can talk to people and get the help they need. Some people also wonder whether it is a good idea to let people with disabilities access physician-assisted dying. As self-advocates, we know how rich and full life with a disability can be. The same self-advocate as above thinks everyone should be able to make their own decision about the procedure.



“I feel that assisted dying should be used for physical ailments whether they are terminal or not,” said the self-advocate. “The individual should have choice in how to end their life without having to suffer and be in pain while they wait for natural causes that might take years.”

At The Ripple, we feel that people with disabilities should not be excluded from being able to make that choice, but that there need to be some safety measures in place to make sure this is something someone with a disability really wants. On March 1, Inclusion Alberta showed its support for the Vulnerable Persons Standard to protect people with disabilities, seniors and anyone else who might be at risk. This standard was put together by a group of Canadians who are experts in many different fields. They came up with a set of safeguards that they are urging the government to put in place as part of the new law. They include:

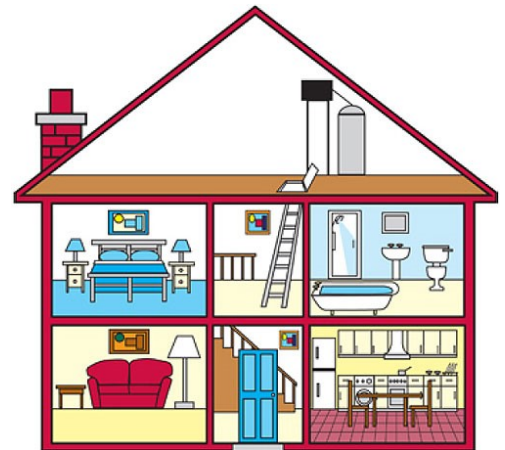
- Having two separate doctors look at the patient to determine there is no chance that they will get better
- Making sure the person requesting the procedure can make such a serious decision on their own, and has made the decision without being forced or convinced to do it
- Making sure the doctor has explained all other choices the patient has, besides physician-assisted death

We will not know what rules the government will make around this issue for another few months, but our newsletter team will keep following this story as it develops!

To learn more about the Vulnerable Persons Standard, visit: <http://www.vps-npv.ca/>

Safety Standards Consultation: Self-advocates, allies and the community make their voices heard *By: The Newsletter Crew*

In 2012, the former Conservative Government of Alberta created new safety standards to keep people safe in their homes. This happened after a person with a disability living in Edmonton died in a house fire. After this, the government came up with eight safety standards that apply to certain people funded by PDD. It applies to people with complex needs, people who need overnight staff on a regular basis or to two unrelated adults living together who receive PDD supports.



The standards cover things such as: repairs to the home, water temperature, room temperature, fire safety and medication storage. Some of these standards are good, but a lot of people had a problem with standard 8 because it means that health inspectors and fire safety inspectors will be able to inspect our homes. It also means there will be new rules for our homes, such as which towels we use, where our pets can be, how we wash our hands, personal hygiene and how we wash our dishes.



There were a lot of concerns about this because people with disabilities felt like this was an invasion of privacy and that these inspections aren't fair. Advocates worried it may be expensive to pay for the safety upgrades that are required. They also worried that landlords may not want to rent to people on PDD because of the safety standards.

People in the disability community raised their concerns to the government about this, and when the NDP government was voted in last May, Human Services Minister Irfan Sabir postponed any inspections until March 31, so they could listen to people's concerns. The Minister appointed a special consultation team that includes an MLA, the executive director of Inclusion Alberta, someone from the Alberta Council of Disability Services and self-advocates with disabilities.

From February 24 to March 10, the committee travelled across the province to listen to people's concerns. They travelled to Westlock, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Fort MacMurray. People also had the chance to fill out a questionnaire about the standards online.

The Ripple was on the scene at the Lethbridge Consultations March 7. We talked to a lot of different people about their opinions on the safety standards. Here is some of what they had to say, starting with self-advocates:

"I understand some of the rules, especially with the water temperature being too hot."

"I think standard 8 could be modified so you work with people to come up with realistic ideas. There needs to be more education and workshops in the home, instead of one set of rules."

“The safety standards should apply to anyone, disabled or not.”

“Just because you have a disability doesn’t mean you are less intelligent and should have a different set of rules.”

“Why do the rules only apply to some people funded by PDD?”

“The safety standards should vary from person to person because everybody’s situation is not the same. Support workers should be better trained so they can teach their clients about safety.”

The Ripple talked to the chair of the consultation team, John te Linde, who told us concerns like these are the reason for the consultations. He told us these consultations were phase 1 of a plan to listen to Albertans. People who attended the consultation got to answer questions like: what makes a home safe? What should be the role of agency staff, parents, guardians, and landlords? People also got a chance to tell their stories about safety.

We asked John what he has heard from people so far, and he said:

“We’ve heard that the regulations are overly-restrictive in cases, that they’re too costly, that they discriminate. A lot of people have been suggesting that staffing is a very important consideration, and the ability to live in community inclusively.”



Some people are worried these new rules will turn homes into institutions, like a guardian we talked to who has an adult daughter with a disability. She said:

“[I feel my daughter] lives in a very smooth running home by a caring agency with caring staff,” said the guardian. “They live in a safe environment, they have great neighbours, everything works well, so why would you want to change things? Once you start putting down regulations for all these homes that are running perfectly fine, [I feel] they become small institutions.”

We talked to service providers, too. They told us they care about client safety, but the standards go too far.

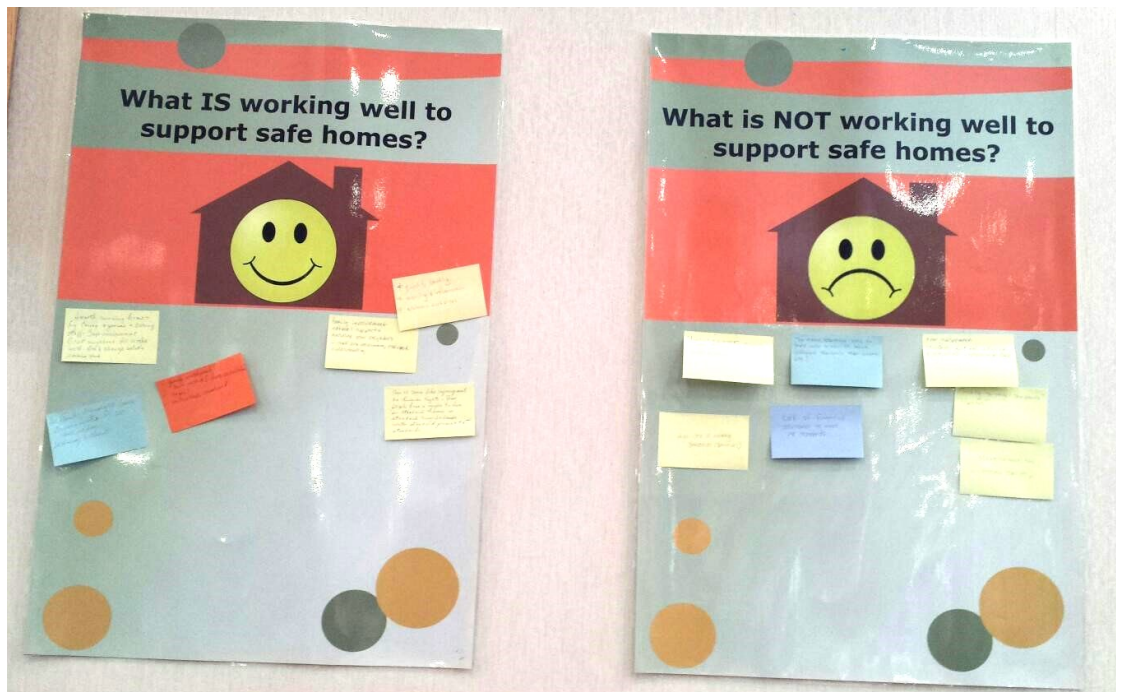
“I think that safety standards are important for the people that we support and the people that we are paid to help protect,” said one service provider. “But I feel, at this point, that the standards are over-intrusive and unattainable. They are going to reflect a poor quality of life. There needs to be a choice.”

Another service provider agrees, adding that his home would never pass the same kind of inspection.

“I have a dog who gets fed right in the kitchen on the floor,” he said. “I don’t feel my house isn’t safe or that I’m not meeting some sanitation rule because we have a family pet. These are people’s homes, just like any person’s home. We need to look at everything and decide what’s really needed for safety and what’s not.”

When we asked what should be different, the service provider told us these consultations are a good first step.

“I like the idea that there are consultations going on and I hope that people will listen,” he said. “There’s been a lot of things said that I think if people listened to them, there’s time to reflect on what’s needed and what’s necessary.”



We also talked to Heath Wright,

Lethbridge’s chief fire marshal. He wanted to hear people’s views on the safety standards. It would be the fire department’s job to do inspections in homes for fire safety. He said that there are a lot of questions that need to be answered about the standards, especially when it comes to how the government will label the homes that have to meet the safety requirements.

“There’s some questions around building classifications and who is making the decisions on those classifications.”

He also told us that safety for everyone is extremely important, but it’s also important for clients and inspectors to talk to each other.

“We need to make sure inspectors have open conversations to help encourage each other to become safety smart,” said Heath.

Colleen Huston, from Disability Action Hall, told us that in Calgary, there is a new registry that vulnerable people can sign up for that allows them to register their address and information. If there is an emergency in your home, emergency services will know if you might have trouble getting out of your house. People have a choice about whether they want to sign up or not.

“It’s really good for people with different types of disabilities,” she said. “It’s a private database nobody else has access to. Confidentiality is important.”

The chair of the consultation team told us they are going to take people’s ideas, and come up with solutions. In phase 2, they will bring another group together to talk about those solutions to see what will work or what needs to be changed. We do not know when phase 2 will happen yet. We will keep reporting on the safety standards to keep advocates informed!

Managing your money: the secrets of saving!

By: The Newsletter Crew



No matter who you are, everyone needs money. Money helps people pay for things and is part of having a good quality of life. Money can come from different places. If you have a disability, sometimes money comes from AISH or PDD. Money can also come from jobs people have. The Ripple's own Peter Langridge works at the University of Lethbridge, collecting their recycling and depositing it into the proper bins. Peter says it feels good to earn money.

But, having money also comes with responsibility. Money can help us pay for things we need, or things we want. What's the difference between needs and wants?

Needs are things that we have to have to be able to survive. Examples of needs are: food (groceries), shampoo, toothpaste, clothes, and a place to live. Lots of people keep a place to live by paying a mortgage, or rent.

Wants are things we would like to have, but we can live without them if we have to. But, being able to buy things we want for fun is part of a good quality of life, too. At the Ripple, we enjoy lots of wants that we spend money on, like going to the movies, going bowling, swimming and powerlifting. We also have a sweet tooth! We like to buy candy, pop and flavoured water.



Sometimes, after paying for the things we need, it can be hard to have money left over for the things we want, for fun. If you really want something that costs more money than you have, is there anything you can do? The answer is yes! You can SAVE money until you have enough. This means you put the money away and only use it for the thing you really want.

Here are some tips to help you collect your cash!

- Put the money away in a piggy bank or bank account and don't touch it.
- Spend less money on candy and pop.
- Buy cheaper groceries. You can buy cheaper brands, or, look for deals on sale. You can also use coupons you collect from grocery flyers.
- Give the money to someone you trust, like a friend, a parent or guardian. They can help you save it!
- Make a budget and stick to it. A budget keeps track of how much money you have, and all the things you need to pay for with the money. Having a budget that shows you exactly where your money goes can help you save in a big way. You have the power to decide how much you can afford to spend on certain things and whether you need to spend less.

Do you want to know how a budget can help you? Next issue, we will have an article on how to create a budget and what to include.

Internet safety tips and tricks *By the Newsletter Crew*

The internet is a great tool to get information. Some of the things you can do on the internet are:

- Research any topic, like animals, recipes, or where to go on vacation.
- Listen to music or watch videos.
- Shop for things or manage your bank account.
- Keep in contact with people we care about using email or Facebook.

You can do lots on the internet, but it is important to be smart. There are some dangers on the internet we need to be careful of. Here are some tips to protect yourself online:

- **Do not share personal things on the internet such as your social insurance number, address, or phone number.** The tricky thing about the internet is that even though you can talk to lots of people, not everyone is telling the truth. A person might not be who they say they are. You should only share information with people you know and trust.



- **Use passwords to protect your information.** People use passwords for lots of things, like their email or bank account. Think of passwords as a lock on a door that only YOU have the key to. Only you should be able to access it. Pick a strong password that you can remember. Write it down if you need to. There are sneaky people online called hackers, who try to guess people's passwords so they can steal information. The stronger the password, the harder it is for hackers to guess. This is why your password should not be something like your name or your birthday. A strong password should have both letters and numbers in it. Try not to use the same password for everything you do. It is good to change your passwords once every few months so that hackers have a harder time taking advantage of you.



- **Be careful on social media sites like Facebook.** It is always important to update your privacy settings so you can control who sees your information. Many people only choose to only let their “friends” see their posts. If this is what you have decided, you still need to be careful about what you post and share. If you have 300 Facebook friends, that means 300 people might see your posts, photos and videos. This is why you need to think about what you share. **A good rule to follow is: do not share anything on Facebook that you would not feel comfortable sharing with an entire room full of people.**

Think
before
you post!





Superbowl 50: The half-time show! *By: Shannon Kehler*



On Sunday, February 7, Superbowl 50 happened. There was a Super Bowl half-time show, and there were good singers that performed. These singers were: Bruno Mars, Coldplay, and Beyonce. There were lots of colours, fiddlers and people playing guitars. It was a good performance and there were flowers. Bruno Mars sang Uptown Funk. Beyonce's dancing was good and Lady Gaga sang the national anthem.



Right 2 Love: what do parents think? *By: Gwen Rowley*



Last issue, we did an article on Right 2 Love, a special group where people with disabilities can talk about love, sex and relationships. We wanted to know what parents thought of the Right 2 Love for their sons and daughters with disabilities. This issue, we interviewed Pat Robb, parent to 2 adult children with disabilities.

Pat has two sons, Andrew and William. They are in university and have autism. She

feels we need to hear parents' opinions but be open to other thoughts and opinions as well. Pat shared two stories that prove getting married is a possibility: one was with parental support and that marriage is still successful. The other story happened without parental permission. This was a couple who got married and were together until one of them passed away.



Next issue, we will have one more interview with a parent. Stay tuned!

Solidance Community Dance Class *By Nicole Macdonald*

Solidance is about including people with and without disabilities. The class is teaching basic dance. We have three main teachers: Callista Chasse, Lisa Doolittle and Corey Makoloski. All three of them have different teaching styles. From January 20th to April 13th, the class meets at CASA two days a week for an hour and a half: Wednesdays from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. My experience with the class has been amazing. I have definitely noticed I am more flexible than I thought! I hope Solidance continues in the future so everybody has a chance to learn how to dance at their own level and pace.



Solidance
Inclusive Recreation Society



SAIPA Spring Fundraiser!

Spring is here! Spruce up your garden while supporting self-advocacy!

From March 9 - April 15, SAIPA is selling various high quality seeds from Vesey's!

All funds raised will go towards planning the 2018 Self-Advocacy Conference for people with disabilities.

You can buy various seeds including:
Dahlias, Gladiolas, Lilies



Herbs, fruits and vegetables



Please have your order forms to us no later than April 15, 2016. For more information or to order, contact the SAIPA office: 403-320-1515



Spring poems

It's Springtime

Leonard J. Bourret

Winter ice takes its time,
cracking through the
glacial sublime.

Snow disappears from
every crevice, and frees
up the fresh-water lakes,
and the golden ponds.
Spring displays a terra
firma sign.

Dormant trees begin to
bud, leaves and flowers
start to unfurl, and our
excited spirits soar and
whirl.

On panoramic mountain
views we'll climb, and
hike on scented trails of
pine, tasting the flavor o
New England, and
enjoying its spirit-filled
Spring mime.

[http://www.inspirational-
poems.net/spring-poems](http://www.inspirational-poems.net/spring-poems)



Spring Can't Come to the Phone Right Now . . .

Charlotte Partin

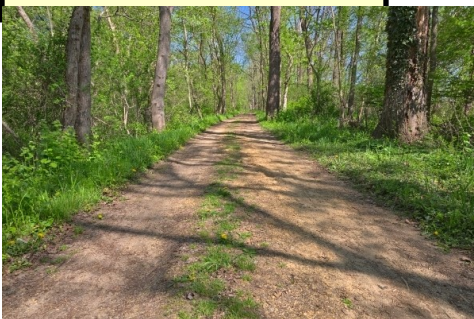
Spring can't come to the phone right now...
She's flown to distant hills
to dabble speckles on a fawn
and fling out daisy spills.

When she re-mosses forest floors
and pulls back Winter's pall,
she'll batten down the daffodil
and then return your call!

To teach the wren her little song
will take an hour or two-
Striping birches lasts awhile,
so wait and she'll call you.

You'll know when April comes again -
She'll cause your heart to leap.
Just close your eyes and listen
to her message at the "beep".

<http://www.inspirational-poems.net/spring-poems>



Advocates are artists!



These wonderful works of art were created by self-advocates at PEAK Vocational Services. Advocates have many talents, and we are proud to share them!

1. **Various works of art by Melodie Scout**
2. **Africa Queen by Gracie Gales**
3. **Mona Lisa by Shannon Kehler**

We will feature artwork throughout the year. If you have artwork to share with the Ripple, please contact us!

This newsletter raises awareness about self-advocacy, inclusion and community. It also provides information on how to be a better self-advocate, how to speak up and how to help other advocacy groups and their friends. If you have information, events or ideas you would like to see in the newsletter, please contact us!



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Coming soon!