

# The Ripple

November/December 2017

South Region  
Self-Advocacy Network

## Minister Sabir visits SAIPA and SRSAN



Back Row: Sandy Layton, Keelaee Blackwood, Minister Irfan Sabir, Ben Rowley, Kelly Tower, Anna Olson  
Front Row: Kevin Layton, Randy Chandler, Sharon Rempel, Christina Scott

On September 7, The Ripple interviewed Irfan Sabir, minister of Community and Social Services in Alberta. Born in Pakistan, he has lived in Calgary since 2004. Before going into politics, Minister Sabir practised aboriginal law at a national law firm and volunteered with Calgary Legal Guidance and the Canadian Red Cross. He was also a social worker with the Salvation Army for five years. His ministry is in charge of many programs for people with disabilities including AISH, the RAMP Program, PDD, and DRES.

SRSAN talked to the minister about some of these programs to share suggestions and ideas. SRSAN also made a presentation to the minister about what SRSAN is, its mission, vision and what it has achieved.

Afterward, The Ripple sat down with the minister to ask a few questions. Here is the interview.

**THE RIPPLE:** What is the reason for your visit to Lethbridge?

**MINISTER SABIR:** As the minister, I think it's important for me to come down and learn firsthand the important work individuals and organizations are doing. [It's also important for me] to learn the challenges they are facing to find the best way to work together to make sure Albertans have the supports they need to be successful.

## Minister Sabir visits SAIPA and SRSAN (continued)

**THE RIPPLE: Why did you feel it was important to visit SAIPA and SRSAN?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** Both SAIPA and SRSAN are doing important work for people with disabilities. As the minister responsible for the PDD and AISH programs, it's important for me to learn about different community initiatives. It's important that we work together to make sure our province is more inclusive and offers opportunities for people of all abilities to be successful and reach their full potential. The work SAIPA and SRSAN is doing is helping us do that.

**THE RIPPLE: How will the ministry use the information it hears on this visit from self-advocates and the community?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** As the minister, I have heard the "Nothing About Us Without Us" message loud and clear. To help these programs better meet the needs of those who are receiving services from my department, it's important that I hear from the individuals receiving those services. I like hearing from self-advocates who



deal with these issues and know these issues better. It was important for me to hear your experiences with advocacy and the important work you are doing to make this province a better, more inclusive place for everyone.

**THE RIPPLE: Your ministry got rid of the PDD Safety Standards and the Support Intensity Scale (SIS) test. Why was it important for you to listen to people and make change?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** The AISH and PDD programs provide very important support to almost 70,000 Albertans. The PDD Safety Standards and SIS test were impacting people's lives. It was important for me to hear how these policies were affecting people. The community told us that the policies were not working because they were disrespectful and too restrictive. So, we got rid of the Safety Standards and the Support Intensity Scale. Going forward, we will make sure that we work with the community on all issues that are important to them because we believe that community knows their issues better than anyone.

## Minister Sabir visits SAIPA and SRSAN (continued)

**THE RIPPLE: What role do you think self-advocates play in creating fair policies that work for everyone?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** Self-advocacy groups like SRSAN have shared their concerns about the Support Intensity Scale and the Safety Standards, so it helped us learn their point of view and how these policies were not working for them. Self-advocates play a very important role in creating inclusive policies that work for the community. (Self-advocates) supported Bill 205 to create a provincial disability advocate. We are confident that the role self-advocates are playing will help us create more inclusive policies going forward.

**THE RIPPLE: What do you like most about your job?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** Every time we have an opportunity to make a positive change or difference in somebody's life, that's the best part of my job. As the government, we work hard every day to make sure that we are making life better for Albertans.

**THE RIPPLE: How can people get in contact with you?**

**MINISTER SABIR:** They can reach out to me by telephone or email. Thank you for inviting me here! Please know that you have a government that's in your corner!

**To contact the minister, email [css.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:css.minister@gov.ab.ca).**

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## Save the date! International Day of Persons with Disabilities



International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is coming up in December! We wanted to do an article on this because we believe that it is important to meet new people and learn about their abilities. We know that everyone can contribute to their community! IDPD is celebrated worldwide on December 3; this year, it will be celebrated in

Lethbridge December 4 at the Enmax Centre. This year will be all about inclusive, barrier-free sports; people will be able to try dance, sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball and more. The Enmax Centre is the perfect place for this because that is where people like to go when they think of sports. This year's event sounds very interactive! Hopefully it will help the community see that sports are a real option for all abilities. Hopefully self-advocates will find something they didn't know existed and want to try!

# Citizen Walk About 2017



The eighth annual Citizen Walk About happened September 27th. The Walk About celebrates all abilities, inclusion and brings awareness to the disability rights movement.

We walk to show that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. SRSAN held its first Walk and Roll for Self-Advocacy on June 5th, 2009. In 2010, SRSAN changed the name of the Walk and Roll for Self-Advocacy to the Citizen Walk About. This was to include all citizens who believed in self-advocacy.

For the past eight years, people with and without disabilities have come together at city hall and walked to Galt Gardens carrying signs with messages about inclusion. We share the day with members of our community and they share talents we didn't know they had!

This year's theme was the disability rights movement across Canada. It is important to talk about the disability rights movement to teach the community what we can do and how far we have come. We know that equality can only happen when people with and without disabilities work together and learn from each other.

At this year's event, we had a lot of important people come support SRSAN. These people included city councillors Ryan Parker, Blaine Hyggen and Jeff Coffman, as well as Lethbridge East MLA Maria Fitzpatrick, and Erin Leclerc from MP Rachael Harder's office. We even got a special video message from Minister Sabir.

The weather was sunny and warm for our march. Some of the messages we carried for our march were:

*"See our abilities."*

# Citizen Walk About 2017 (Continued)

*"We are citizens too."*

*"Stand up for rights."*

We really liked the talent show at Galt Gardens. Randy Chandler sang a song from Beauty and The Beast; he had a cool costume! Little Feather did two rap songs. Some of us here at The Ripple are part of the Peak Drama Club; we did different skits on airplanes, cops and robbers and bubble gum. There was also dancing and art displays. We also liked the Indigenous dancers and the fact that they included everyone in the round dance (picture at the top of article).

See more pictures below!



Erin Leclerc (representative for MP Rachael Harder), councillor Blaine Hyggen, Lethbridge East MLA Maria Fitzpatrick, councillor Ryan Parker and Ben Rowley. Ben introduced the speakers and was also the Citizen Walk About committee chair.



Randy Chandler smiles in his beast costume. Randy sang a song from the movie, Beauty And The Beast.



Signs showing the history of the disability rights movement across Canada.

November/December



Theron and Dylan Black performing an Indigenous grass dance.

# TAG: Advocacy In Action



The Ripple decided to interview John Steer from The Action Group in Medicine Hat. We wanted to do this to learn more about other advocacy groups in Alberta and find out what they are working on. We found out that they do a lot of different things around self-advocacy in their community! Here is our interview with them.

**THE RIPPLE: TAG stands for “The Action Group.” What is TAG?**

**JOHN:** The Action Group (TAG) is a group of people with developmental disabilities and their community partners who believe in working together to build strong communities.

**THE RIPPLE: How long has TAG been a group?**

**JOHN:** TAG has been a group for more than 25 years. TAG was previously called the ILS Social Club but changed the name to TAG in 1994.

**THE RIPPLE: How often does TAG meet?**

**JOHN:** TAG meets with the full group once a month, and has an executive meeting once a month to plan the agenda.

**THE RIPPLE: How many people are involved in TAG?**

## **TAG: Advocacy In Action (Continued)**

**JOHN:** There are 20 members and about 15 people attend each month.

**THE RIPPLE: What do you talk about at the meetings?**

**JOHN:** We talk about self-advocacy, fundraisers and events for clients. This year, we are planning the client Christmas party.

**THE RIPPLE: Can people with and without disabilities join TAG?**

**JOHN:** TAG encourages all members if they are over 18, want to make a difference, and want to gain skills in making decisions and meeting new people. The membership fee is \$5.

**THE RIPPLE: What does TAG does work on?**

**JOHN:** TAG creates partnerships in the community, educates the community about TAG and people with disabilities, and supports people to advocate for themselves and their rights. In the past, TAG has sent letters to the City of Medicine Hat to let them know about issues affecting those with disabilities. We are also working on a client rights statement for REDI. One of our TAG members is also on the Client Rights and Protection Committee.

**THE RIPPLE: What do you do in the community to promote TAG?**

**JOHN:** TAG volunteers at the Tongue on the Post Folk Festival every year to promote community awareness about TAG. TAG also hosts an information booth at the Canada Day celebrations in the local park every year.

TAG members partner with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities committee to go to local elementary schools to promote awareness about people with disabilities.

**THE RIPPLE: What work has TAG done that you are most proud of?**

**JOHN:** TAG is most proud of its members. Many members that join TAG want to boost their self-esteem and gain advocacy skills. Some of our members have done presentations about TAG on their own to educate their peers on the benefits of self-advocacy. Many of our members did not feel confident enough to speak in public when they first joined. Now, they are doing presentations in front of many people.

**THE RIPPLE: What do you like most about being a part of TAG?**

**JOHN:** Being able to create networks, volunteering in the community, accessing classes at SAIPA, participating in fundraisers and promoting inclusion.

# CITIZENS FOR INCLUSION

All Candidates Forum - October 10 @ 6 P.M.  
Antons - Lethbridge - Moderated by Dory Rossiter  
#YQLvotesINCLUSION



On October 10, there was a municipal all-candidates forum called Citizens For Inclusion. All 29 candidates attended and answered questions on how to make the city more inclusive. Dory Rossiter asked the questions, which were submitted by the public ahead of time.

We thought there were many good speakers. We liked how everyone got a chance to answer some of the questions and talk about what they would do if they got elected to council. Because the questions were already decided, there was no audience participation. It would have been nice to ask the candidates questions after they gave their answers so we could understand their point of view better.

Topics included equal access to services for people with disabilities, the city's plan for reconciliation with Indigenous people, how to get newcomers to live in Lethbridge, and services for people who are vulnerable, like the homeless, drug users and sex workers.

We feel the most important topic was equal access to services. This is important because people with disabilities deserve access to all parts of our community in a safe and respectful manner. Many businesses are still inaccessible and there is a lot of work that needs to be done on our sidewalks and curb cuts for people with mobility challenges.

Many candidates agreed problems with accessibility needed to be fixed. Some said that the city is making progress, but that they need to work with people with disabilities to find solutions. One person said if elected, he would meet with organizations like the CNIB, Inclusion Lethbridge and others to find out which accessibility projects are most important to make sure they get done first. We feel this was a good answer because it



provided a solution that included the voices of people with disabilities. People with disabilities know what needs fixing because they deal with inaccessibility every day.

One person said people should contact council to talk about issues they are facing so they can work to solve them. We are not sure of the best way to approach council, but we are going to find out!

We feel it was important to attend the forum to learn what the issues are around inclusion in Lethbridge! It also helps people decide who to vote for; voting is important because whoever gets elected gets to decide what policies are made in the city.

SRSAN created a plain language voters guide that included the information that you need to bring with you to vote, where to vote, what to do if you have a concern about voting and voter tips. We hope self-advocates used the voters guide this election!



**Mayor: Chris Spearman**

**Council: Mark Campbell, Joe Mauro, Jeff Carlson, Ryan Parker, Blaine Hyggen, Belinda Crowson, Jeff Coffman, Rob Myashiro**

Congratulations to all the winners! See page 10 for our interview with Kevin Layton, SRSAN's chairperson who also ran for a seat on council!

## SRSAN chairperson runs for council



Kevin Layton has run for council so many times he has lost count! He didn't win in this year's election, but we admire him for continuing to try and wanted to interview him about his experience.

**THE RIPPLE: What are your thoughts on inclusion for all?**

**KEVIN:** Inclusion for all is very important. Everybody wants to be included and accepted no matter their religion, nationality or the challenges they have.

**THE RIPPLE: What is the most important thing that needs to happen to make our city more inclusive?**

**KEVIN:** Acceptance and tolerance and being able to get along with one another.

**THE RIPPLE: What skills and talents do you have that would have made you a good council member?**

**KEVIN:** The ability to listen and communicate with others to debate my ideas. I also think past experience on different boards, learning to get along with others would also make me a good council member.

**THE RIPPLE: What boards have you served on and what were your positions?**

**KEVIN:** Through the city, I was on the board of the Lethbridge Housing Authority for three years because I wanted to get into a house. I figured while I was waiting, I might as well see what's involved from higher up. I was also involved in People First, Pro-Life, The Lethbridge Society for Rare Disorders and of course SRSAN!

**THE RIPPLE: What do you think is the most important issue facing council in the upcoming term?**

**KEVIN:** Keeping the entire city happy and staying on budget. There are too many issues and they're all going to cost money.

## SRSAN chairperson runs for council (continued)

**THE RIPPLE: What encourages you to keep running? What have you learned about the election process?**

The reason I keep running is the public. After I run, the comments I get are: “Way to go!” “We’re proud of you!” and “Are you going to run again?” Every year, I question whether I will do it again and the people I meet in the mall and on the buses tell me: “We need somebody speaking for us.” They need someone to represent them. So, I say, “OK, one more time.” I’ve learned that running for council is a lot harder than it looks. But it’s worth it. That’s why I keep doing it.

Even though I didn’t win a seat on council, they’ll never hear the end of me. Their phones will still ring. To all of those who supported me and voted for me: Thank you!

## The south region dreams about the future on Planning Day



At Planning Day on June 15, people from the south region came together, including service providers, government, self-advocates and families. They talked about working better together for the future to make positive changes to disability services.

This meeting happened at the Saddle room at the Exhibition Grounds in Lethbridge. A facilitator helped the group get their ideas down in pictures.

## Planning Day (continued)

The group talked about the south region's strengths, challenges, opportunities and gaps. Some of the strengths shared were advocacy (a strong voice), strong leadership and strong relationships. Challenges were transportation for people with disabilities, a lack of understanding about people with disabilities, funding (money) and leaving people with disabilities out of decisions about their life.

The purpose of Planning Day was to give people a chance to dream and think about how to provide better services to people in the south region, and build even better relationships.

The group also dreamed about our region's future: What will the future have? What will the south be known for? What will people be saying about the south? What will people feel about services? At first, everyone sat at their own tables and shouted out ideas.

In the dreams, what our region **would have** included:

- Inclusive employment
- The same opportunities for all Albertans.

In the dreams, what our region **would be known for** included:

- Respect and rights for everyone
- A strong relationship with the community including doctors, employers and business owners
- Involving people with disabilities to plan their own future.

In the dreams, what **people would be saying** about the south region included:

- That it is accepting of people with disabilities and people realize they can contribute.

In the dreams, how people **could feel in our region** included:

- That they can be open and talk about issues, whether it's self-advocates service providers, family or government.

In the afternoon, we worked in groups to create a vision of the future. The group thought it was important to:

- Work together to be leaders
- Have support plans led by individuals themselves
- Create strong communities that support everyone to be included
- Be creative with ways to support people and think outside the box.

## Planning Day (continued)

At planning day, there was lots of information on how other groups (besides self-advocates) feel and it is important to be part of the conversation. It is important for all groups to come together to find solutions to make disability services better. When everyone works together, a brighter future is within reach!

### ***In Flanders Fields* By John McCrae**

**In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks still bravely singing fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the dead: Short days ago,  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved: and now we lie  
In Flanders fields!**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe  
To you, from failing hands, we throw  
The torch: be yours to hold it high  
If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.**





# Christmas As a Holiday for Friends

By: Nicholas Gordon

**C**hristmas is a holiday for friends,  
**H**owever they may be, or not, related.  
**R**emember that the three wise kings were strangers  
**I**n search of one remote, uncanny dream.  
**S**o may we all be far more than we seem,  
**T**ogether bound for dark and haunting changes,  
**M**ore lovely for the loves we have created  
**A**long the lonely paths from means to ends,  
**S**tumbling towards that star of Bethlehem.

CHRISTMAS.365GREETINGS.COM

# CHRISTMAS PARTY

**December 15**  
**11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**210, 410 Stafford Drive South | Lethbridge**

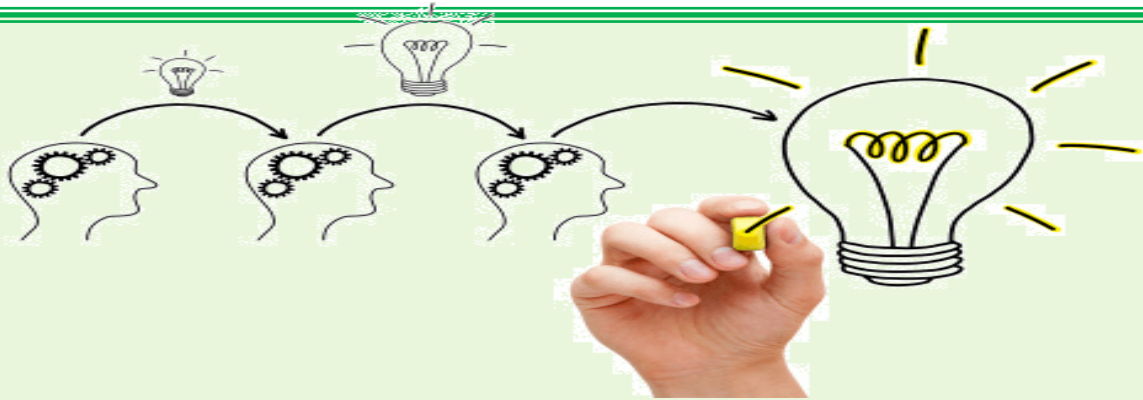
Join us in celebrating the holiday season!  
Step out of the cold and into our office to share  
snacks, drinks and conversation!

**This is a come-and-go event; no RSVP required.**

**SAIPA**

*Celebrating 30 years of service!*





The Ripple Newsletter raises awareness about self-advocacy, inclusion and community.

Self-advocates share their ideas on these topics and articles are written with staff support.

**We want to hear from YOU!**

**Send us:**

**Story ideas**

**Questions for our “Ask The Ripple” feature, or  
Artwork**

We are always looking for new and exciting things to share!

**Contact Christina Scott, editor, at**

***403-320-1515 or via email at  
christina.scott@saipa.info.***