

# SCACL INSIDER

ADVOCACY | COMMUNITY | CONNECTION | SUPPORT

## A Closer Look: Supported Employment Program

*By Micheal Oswald*

In life, having the right to work and earn a meaningful wage to support oneself is paramount, especially in the disability community.

One of the benefits of being a part of the SCACL organization as a person-served is the chance to participate in the Supported Employment Program. The program began in 1994 under the leadership of Bob Price and program founding staff Yvonne Yates and Wendy Hardesty. It truly was among the first of its kind, with the approach of matching individuals with customized jobs based on their goals for employment. Some of the first local employers to come on board with this program were IGA Wilson Creek, the Red & White Grocery Store, Sunshine Coast Credit Union, and the Wilson Creek Hatchery.

I am one of over 20 individuals who are currently placed in approximately 40 jobs throughout our coastal community. I started with Supported Employment about 10 years ago and to be honest, because not all special needs are exactly the same, I had challenges that took time to be understood. Now I am comfortable with my placement as a vehicle washer. I, along with my support worker (employed by Strive Living Society) wash and vacuum SCACL's company vehicles that are used to transport persons served on a weekly basis.

Last year, SCACL facilitated a second placement for me - delivering newspapers for the Coast Reporter, which has been a positive learning experience.



On July 15th, MP Patrick Weiler presented SCACL with a \$100,000 grant from the federal government's Employment & Social Development Canada - Enabling Accessibility Fund. We are absolutely thrilled to receive this extremely generous opportunity to address accessibility concerns at SCACL sites! Jordan McCourt, the self advocate who inspired SCACL to apply for this grant, was acknowledged at the event.



Susan Furze warmly welcomes small groups of persons-served into her glass studio to create their very own glass art!

# SCACL Re-Opens Group Programs!

At the end of June as the province reduced health restrictions, SCACL was busy planning to re-open out multi-person services. We are now able to serve multiple individuals at once in our Day Program, Bridges, and our Supported Employment programs. Please talk to program coordinators and staff for specific information on programming now in place. We are continuing to further open up and hope to be back to full operations by about the end of September, when it is believed final restrictions will be lifted. Programs such as Supper Club, swimming, and music with Steve will begin again in the fall as well. SCACL has in place a "communicable disease" plan now instead of a "COVID-19 Safety Plan," so we continue to ask all individuals who have any sign of illness to stay home until well again.



I had a chance to sit down with self-advocate, Kyle Van der Heide, who has been in the Supported Employment Program for 9 years. At the beginning, Kyle only had jobs with Bottle Me and the District of Sechelt. Now his newest job is working as a landscaper's assistant alongside Brian Harkin at B&B Kitchen Concepts. What does Kyle enjoy most about working? In his words, "getting paid and helping people - I'm pretty happy with what I'm doing now."

I'm pretty sure that Kyle's employers are happy with him as well. Thank you, SCACL, for providing this invaluable vocational program for your members.



## Supporting Local Farms - Weekly Produce Delivery

### SUNSHINE COAST COMMUNITY FOOD BOX - 2021 SEASON

SCACL is one of three non-profit organizations supporting this seasonal program by way of purchasing six bags of fresh, local organic produce arranged by Persephone Farm every week on Tuesday. The goal of this program? To help build a stronger local food system by feeding our community with food from our community. Four of the bags are delivered directly to SCACL's support homes, and two small bags are raffled off every week for SCACL staff to win as part of meeting our 2021 wellness initiative goals. All SCACL employees have been entered into the raffle - winners are emailed the Friday before pick-up day, so keep an eye out! This program will run until the first week of October.



# Supporting Diversity

By Clarence Li, Executive Director

The recent discovery of unmarked graves of Indigenous children at various former Indian Residential School locations has forced Canadians of every stripe to wake up to the extent of the harm caused by a history of colonization and the pervasiveness of colonial attitudes shaping our lives even to this day.

As a champion of inclusion on the Sunshine Coast, SCACL holds dear to our hearts that an inclusive community is one in which every child is cherished and given opportunities to thrive regardless of race, culture, ability, or any other identity markers. This month, SCACL INSIDER asks Amber Maher and Chris Walker, two of SCACL's self-advocates, on their views on DIVERSITY.

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*Insider:* Diversity is about the quality of including or involving people who are different from us -- people with different ethnic backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and more. Tell me, what is your experience of diversity on the Sunshine Coast?

*Amber:* It's been really difficult during the pandemic. So many activities and events have been cancelled. I have been spending a lot of time knitting and I sent blankets I knitted to my friends. I would have loved to go to the Pride Parade this year but it was cancelled. I like painting my nails in different colours [to celebrate diversity].

*Chris:* I went to the Reconciliation Walk in Sechelt on Canada Day. There were so many people... and a few from SCACL too!

*Insider:* I heard that you were wearing your "Every Child Matters" shirt with your drum.

*Chris:* Yes, and Terry [Aleck] from the drumming circle led a song when everyone arrived in Snickett Park. I'm Métis. It's so good to see so many people there. I'm also a part of the local Métis group that meets regularly to celebrate Métis culture. Lots of fiddling and jigging.

*Insider:* We are all different. Do you feel your differences are being supported and celebrated on the coast?

*Chris:* I think people's differences are supported quite well here.

*Amber:* It depends. I had people who said bad things about me. And I had said some bad things about others before, too. But I am learning not to do that and be nicer... [My HomeShare caregiver] is very nice to me... we used to check out the live music in Gibsons Landing all the time before the pandemic hit.



Logo created by Andy Everson, from K'ómoks First Nation

*Insider:* Can you think of anything SCACL could do better in terms of supporting and promoting diversity?

*Chris:* I can't think of anything to add.

*Amber:* I think SCACL is doing a pretty good job. Just keep on doing what you do!

A big thank you to Chris and Amber for your feedback. We would love to hear from all of you about your experience of diversity.

