



Richmond Centre for Disability

Maximizing Independence

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 Andy Hobbs is the current council liaison for 2021. Accessibility Coordinator, Melanie Burner, at the Community Social Development 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 Community Services Advisory Council, BC Personal Supports Network, as well as a few reference groups on new projects and innovations. Moreover, RCD is, through our Resource Centre, an accredited member of the national organization Independent Living Canada.

ORGANIZATION'S MISSION

The organization respects "Dignity, Knowledge, Diversity and Self-Determination", which forms the basis of our service provision. In August 2021, the Board of Directors revised the organizational mission and vision statement.

RCD Mission Statement: The RCD is committed to creating opportunities to empower people of all abilities to participate confidently with dignity in their community and achieve independence to their fullest capabilities. We offer a friendly environment to provide information, resources, training and support, as well as increase public awareness and promote universal accessibility.

RCD Vision Statement: All people, regardless of their abilities, will maximize independence with confidence and dignity.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN COMMUNITY

- RCD, following the BC Provincial Health Orders, is gradually implementing the Re-Start Plan from July 2021, bringing back some in-person services and activities at the physical location at the Lansdowne Centre.
- RCD survived the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, and continued to offer services and opportunities for people with disabilities to access programs and projects via both virtual and limited in-person activities. Staff members started working remotely, and they greatly narrowed the technology divide and improved the work efficiency through planning and implementing enterprise resource planning. Most members were connected to the RCD and each other via newsletters, emails, phone calls, visits to office, and on Social Media.
- For the Municipal by-election in May 2021 and Provincial election in October 2020, the RCD, in partnership with the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition, worked collaboratively to share candidates' information and platforms by online postings on their organization websites, in lieu of a physical All Candidates Meeting.
- Van Accessible Parking Space was adopted by the City of Richmond bylaws, with specific signage and layout, in October 2018; RCD was instrumental to the changes.
- 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 2019 they celebrated 13th Anniversary of the event – 2019 Canadian Open, and saw record high of 16 teams' participation. The event was suspended for 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic and will pause for 2021 due to venue mechanical issues.
- Starting 2005 the RCD offered Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Training to caregivers, agencies, businesses and Government officials. In 2019, 72 participants received the training.
- 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

- 2020 marked the 35th anniversary of RCD; due to COVID-19 pandemic, all celebrations had been cancelled.
- RCD hosted the first virtual Annual General Meeting on November 17, 2020; and inaugural online fundraising concert on November 13, 2020, 2020. For virtual programming, RCD had set up Zoom activities, RCD YouTube Channel, as well as started an online Get Good @ Series to share information and resources with the community, meanwhile aiming for global visibility and virtual representation of RCD.
- RCD remained financially vigilant in soliciting potential funding, including all COVID-19 related benefits and subsidies from public and private sources. All permanent employees remained on the work team to provide continual services.
- RCD moved to a whole new setting in Lansdowne Centre in January 2019, with a theme of heightening the visibility of the organization in the heart of the community – RCD in the Community.
- In 2020, the RCD served close to 30,000 people in the community and provided more than 53,000 service hours. Despite the number of people served was about 24% lower than previous year, nonetheless the number of direct service hours has increased by 7%.
- Every year, 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.
- 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.
- 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 2018, 14 teams participated included 3 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 <https://www.accessrichmond.org> in 2005 to provide information to tourists or people interested in moving to the area. This website currently records an average of over 4,000 page hits per month in 2021, reviving from the pandemic effect.
- 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 – <https://www.rcdrichmond.org> was established in 2001; it currently registers an average of nearly 100,000 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.
- 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.
- The RCD recruited and trained volunteers and caregivers working with people with disabilities through regular training and supervision; they have over 100 active volunteers monthly, and trained over 200 volunteers annually. In 2020 a total of 9,419 volunteer hours were recorded. Despite the number was about 16% lower than previous year, the RCD were able to virtually engage a different group of volunteers.

(Revised August 2021)