



What Does Self-Advocacy Mean to Me?



Sky Hendsbee is thrilled to have been selected to attend the Self Advocacy Leadership Institute at the University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus in Kelowna. It is a four-day event created by self-advocate leaders to support the learning and skill development of 25 of their peer self-advocates. If this year is successful, the planning committee would like to offer this opportunity every two years to a new group of peer self-advocates. The following is from an interview with Sky about self-advocacy.

What is self-advocacy?

It's trying to help people with disabilities get information to help them. It is encouraging others to help them be more independent. It is also getting people's voices out and heard by talking to people in government such as MLAs about PWD (Persons With Disabilities Benefit) and housing.

How long have you been involved with self-advocacy?

I have been involved with self-advocacy since 2008. I have been on the BCACL board of Directors (British Columbia Association for Community Living – now called InclusionBC), Langley Association for Community Living Board, and I am now on the CLS Board.

What has been your experience with self-advocacy?

I was involved in talking with members about their stories and encouraging independence and self-advocacy with Langley Association for Community Living and helped to create a video about relationships YES WE CAN! -

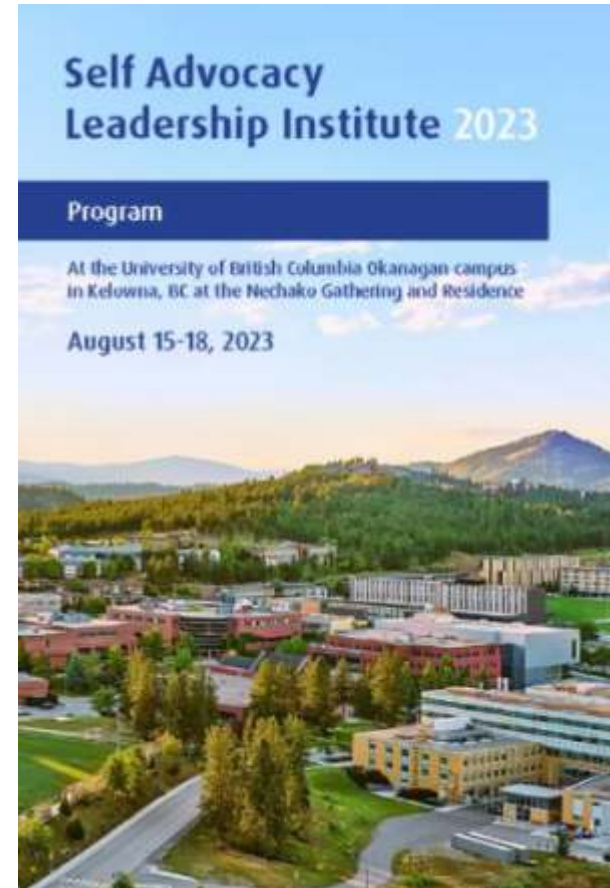
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwKIO_hs1rk

What are you looking forward to at the Leadership Institute?

Making new friends and learning about new opportunities. I want to help others. It is a good opportunity to be part of the advocacy group.

What are the important issues that persons with disabilities face that you hope to help address at the Leadership Institute in August?

Housing. It is so hard to find any and it is very expensive. Also, PWD. It is not enough and it is part of the problem with getting housing. I also want to be a resource to other self-advocates; others receiving supports can reach out and I can help as a role model and leader.



If you would like to talk to Sky further about self-advocacy he is happy for you to contact him at: skyhendsby6@gmail.com

[For more information about the Self-Advocacy Leadership Institute click here.](#)

The We Deserve to Work play has sent a powerful message by the Self Advocate/Co-Creators regarding employment. The overarching message is that all persons, should they wish, must have equal opportunity to obtain meaningful employment with appropriate and fair compensation - "Real work for Real Pay". The play features 13 persons, who self-disclose as having a disability, who have been partners in the creation of the play with the UBC Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship. Together they interviewed people with disabilities who are employed, inclusive employers, and job developers/coaches from various community living agencies. This research helped inform the writing of a play that highlights not just the desire of people to work and the benefits of employment, but that it is a fundamental right to have that opportunity. We Deserve to Work has been performed five times between November, 2022 and June 2023. The final performance was at the Second World Supported Employment Conference held in Vancouver B.C. June 6-8, 2023.

Advocating for oneself and knowing that there are many others who feel similarly, and also support you, is both powerful and gives one a sense of agency. One of the goals of self-advocacy is for individuals to make a difference in their own life and live the life they envision for themselves. Also, to come together with others who share some, or all of your challenges and desires, in order to mutually support and enable each other to achieve unique successes.

The Community Living Society supports all people to have the opportunity and any needed support to successfully achieve their goals.



A NEW PLAY by People with Disabilities Transforming Attitudes about Employment

