

# **Making Alberta's Camps/Lodges Disability - Friendly**

**A Workshop held at King's University College  
9125-50 St., Edmonton  
on Friday June 8, 2007**

**Hosted by Alberta Abilities Lodges Society**



**Ross Watson (left), Manager of William Watson Lodge, was recognized for 25 years of service to fellow citizens of Alberta (see page 2). Presenter: Ross W. Wein.**

June 26, 2007 report compiled by Ross W. Wein,  
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**-In Appreciation-**

**Ross Watson**  
**of William Watson Lodge**

**Ross inspires all to enjoy nature and to excel in outdoor sports**

Ross represented Canada in the Para Olympics in the 15 and 30-kilometer Nordic events in 1988. He was the first blind climber to attempt North America's highest mountain, 6,193.5m (20,320 foot) Mount McKinley, in Alaska, in 1990. In 2000, he became the first blind climber to summit Canada's highest mountain, 5,986.3m (19,640 foot) Mount Logan in the Yukon. In July 2005, he did a traverse of the central mountain range of Baffin Island.

**Ross represented those who often only have a quiet voice**

From 1994 to 2001 Ross was a member of a panel that reviewed Alberta's Human Rights Act. From 1995 to 2001, he served two terms as a municipal councilor. In 2002, he was appointed Operation Eyesight Universal's Canadian Ambassador of Vision.

**Ross has been recognized**

Ross received a Rotarian 'Integrity Award', the Cochrane 'Hero of the Year' Award, the Canadian 'Golden Jubilee Medal' from the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the 'Alberta Centennial Medal' which celebrated the province's first 100 years.

**We recognize Ross further**

Building on his University of Alberta degree in recreation administration, Ross has spent twenty-five years as Manager of the disability-friendly William Watson Lodge working to serve his fellow citizens of Alberta.

**Signed:**

**Alberta Abilities Lodges Society**

**June 8, 2007**

## SUMMARY

The goals of this workshop were:

- 1) To review the range of upgrades needed to make more disability-friendly outdoor-oriented lodges in Alberta,
- 2) To find innovative solutions to providing transportation to, and outdoor equipment at, these lodges,
- 3) To identify outdoor-oriented programs, opportunities and initiatives that complement current programs aimed at raising the quality-of-life, and
- 4) To identify the highest priority tasks that Alberta Abilities Lodges members and friends can achieve over the next 6 and also 12 months.

Our vision includes accessible and affordable disability-friendly Alberta facilities that offer the 330,000 seniors, children, and other citizens with disabilities the opportunity to experience nature and that provides respite to their family/support group and to strengthen the support net. Few question the value of William Watson Lodge in Kananaskis in improving the quality of life of citizens with disabilities and their families or support group. Unfortunately, only a small number of the 330,000 Albertans with disabilities can benefit from this facility because of the limited capacity. Each year thousands of citizens are unable to get reservations or have given up trying to get reservations. There is a need for a William Watson Lodge North and also many other lodges scattered through Alberta. We believe the Government of Alberta should lead this activity but also that this need can be met by investing in the up-grading of summer camps.

At this workshop our speakers addressed the dimensions of the disability community, the breaking of the isolation of mental illness, the challenges of upgrading summer camps to lodges, and the issue of transportation to these lodges.

Displays (in alphabetical order) supporting the workshop included disability-friendly programs and equipment from the Alberta Community of Citizens with Disabilities, Canadian Association of Disabled Skiers, Camp WOHELO, City of Edmonton, Eco Medical, and Shoppers Home Health Care.

The focus groups brought forward solutions that followed from the comments of speakers and other discussions. How do we convert camps into lodges? What transportation systems are needed? How can lodges be made safer and more enjoyable through equipment? What disability support programs could be most effectively given at lodges? The groups presented their summaries to the participants.

These reports and discussions gave direction to the Alberta Abilities Lodges Society in developing work plans for the remainder of 2007 (see page 25).

We will continue to consult with the disability community to better understand how to overcome isolation and also to understand the aspirations of individuals as they relate to enjoying the outdoors in Alberta's Provincial Parks. We offer to work with the Alberta Government to make more disability-friendly lodges available. We will act to make more

facilities available through partnerships with other outdoor lodge owners who can be encouraged to renovate to disability-friendly standards. We will act to include opportunities for environmental education, health, and tourism programs at these facilities. We will form an endowment which will assist low income families to enjoy Alberta's landscapes through visits to Abilities Lodges. We vow to place Alberta in the forefront of improving the quality of life for citizens with disabilities.

This report is being distributed electronically to almost 300 individuals and to additional citizens through disability community newsletters.

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Workshop was developed under the direction of the Alberta Ability Lodges Society Steering Committee members including: Ginny Gillen, Mufty Mathewson, William Mathewson, Bev Matthiessen, Tracie Matthiessen, Irl Miller, John Miller, Louise Miller, Larry Pempeit, Diane Ridley, and Ross Wein. Scott Vaughan, Facilitator, Alberta Community Development, assisted with the formatting of the Focus Group activities.

Ginny Gillen, Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society and a member of the AALS Steering Committee, chaired the Speakers Program while Ross W. Wein, member of the AALS Steering Committee, chaired the Focus Group program. Ginny captured points from the oral reports from the Focus Groups. The AALS Committee sincerely thanks the speakers and all participants who contributed ideas in the Focus Groups. The images were captured by Ginny Gillen, Eleanor E. Wein, and Ross W. Wein.

The lunch was provided by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Alberta. We appreciate the assistance of the staff of Conference Services (Becky Olsen, Alisha Sinclair, Erin Walton) at King's University College in organizing the facilities and lunch.

## **GREETINGS FROM HONOURARY PATRON JEANNIE LOUGHEED**

June 8, 2007

Jeanne Estelle Lougheed  
805 Prospect Avenue S.W.  
CALGARY, ALBERTA T2T 0W6

To All Participants at the Alberta Abilities Lodges Society Workshop

I am sorry that I cannot attend the Workshop that you are participating in today. In a few days Peter and I will be leaving for Greece to attend the Christening of our 7<sup>th</sup> grandchild, Cleo Jeanne! Nevertheless, I wanted to express my gratitude to you for what has been accomplished in the last few months.

The initial vision of a William Watson Lodge North has been clarified and honed into well defined goals.

The Alberta government including all the members of the Cabinet and all the MLA's received the report from the January 19<sup>th</sup> Workshop and a good dialogue with both the Alberta and federal government has been established.

Working with NGO Camps at Pigeon Lake and Skeleton Lake is a most encouraging development.

What has been accomplished is an exciting springboard to today's workshop. I know that the establishment of the Alberta Abilities Lodges Society will provide the impetus for ongoing progress.

Thank you so very much to all of the volunteers for being so generous with your time, your energy, and your ideas.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Lougheed

## **Progress Toward AALS Goals Since Our January 19, 2007 Workshop**

- AALS produced a report on the January 19 Workshop and distributed the report to almost 150 individuals who expressed an interest in the results. The list included all workshop participants, many NGOs, businesses, AB Government MLAs, Cabinet members and the Premier.
- AALS has remained true to the principle of transparency and the goals that were further refined at that workshop. The general goal of AALS is to make more outdoor recreation facilities/camps disability-friendly. Seniors, children, and other citizens with a disability need a William Watson Lodge North and we also recognize the need for a “Wellness Centre” in the Hinton area; Blue Lake Centre in William Switzer Provincial Park is a great potential site that can be developed in annual increments over the next few years. We have met with MLAs, Ministers and many potential partners on these projects. We have distributed our Steering Committee’s minutes to those who wish to follow our progress.
- We also recognize that well established private and NGO Camps could become wonderful destinations for persons with disabilities. Currently, we are working with Camps at Pigeon and Skeleton Lakes and are seeking cooperation with other camps across Alberta.
- From a Society point-of-view, we have clarified our vision, mission, and goals sufficiently that we are making application to form the “Alberta Abilities Lodges Society” and we are applying for charitable status.
- Our electronic network now includes almost 300 individuals within Alberta and Canadian disability NGOs, appropriate AB and Canadian Government ministries and departments, the business community, camp owners and managers, and others who wish to be involved. We reach a greater number through the newsletters of the almost 50 disability community associations.



## WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

The organizers invited participants in the following order of priority: the disability community, camp owners and operators, the outdoor facility medical and engineering professionals and other businesses, and governments. We anticipated having participants assist AALS to sharpen goals and to refine methods of reaching those goals over the next 6 and 12 months.

### **Our Vision:**

Our vision is to give more Alberta seniors, children, and other citizens with a disability, more opportunities to experience nature at accessible and affordable outdoor facilities in order to break their isolation, to provide respite for their family/support group, and to generally raise their quality-of-life.

### **Mission:**

Our mission is to stimulate the development of accessible and affordable outdoor facilities that offer Alberta seniors and other citizens with a disability the opportunity to experience nature. This includes a “William Watson Lodge North” and many other destinations scattered throughout Alberta.

### **Our Workshop Goals:**

The general goal is to identify the next logical steps to develop this vision.

The specific goals were:

- 1) To review the range of upgrades needed to make more disability-friendly outdoor-oriented lodges in Alberta,
- 2) To find innovative solutions to providing transportation to, and outdoor equipment at, these lodges,
- 3) To identify outdoor-oriented programs, opportunities and initiatives that complement current programs aimed at raising the quality-of-life of citizens, and
- 4) To identify the highest priority tasks that Alberta Abilities Lodges members and friends can achieve over the next 6 and also 12 months.

Our calculations suggest that a number of Abilities Lodges are needed to provide respite for low income seniors, children, and other citizens with disabilities and these could be scattered around the Province in different ecological zones and near centres of population. Lodges could develop through solid partnerships with other outdoor lodge owners who can be encouraged to renovate to disability-friendly standards. Lodges should also provide opportunities for environmental education, and tourism and programs should be developed that include aspects of nutrition, exercise, education, and health information sharing. The lodges will boast access-friendly trails and accommodation that, along with other regional attractions, will be a tourist magnet. We will place Alberta in the forefront of improving the quality-of-life for citizens with disabilities.

**What is in Alberta's future?** Here are a few statistics based on 2001 Canada Census data for Alberta:

- Seniors account for about 10 per cent of Alberta's total population
- By 2031, it is projected that there will be more than 880,000 seniors in Alberta
- In 2001, about 12.5%, or 354,740 people, had disabilities
- The three most prevalent disabilities for people aged 15 and over are related to pain, mobility, and agility.
- High school dropout rates reach nearly one-third for males with a disability; dropout rates are higher for females with a disability.
- Just over half (52%) of all Albertans with a disability aged 15 through 64 are employed (without a disability – 79.3%).
- Females with a disability experience the lowest employment rate in Alberta
- Average total income for male adults with disabilities in Alberta is \$31,458.
- Average total income for female adults with disabilities in Alberta is \$18,533.

### **What about Alberta citizens who need support the most?**

A useful basis for our discussions at this workshop is to consider how the most disabled and the most financially-challenged citizens could be accommodated and would benefit from a week or two at a Lodge.

The 2001 Alberta data show that 28,975 citizens were supported by AISH (the number in 2007 is about 36,000). These citizens have few financial resources for travel and recreation and as a result they tend to become isolated. Within this group there is a wide range of needs (see the table below) and so making lodges accessible demands innovative solutions. Providing transportation is a major challenge. Developing stimulating programs in an outdoor setting is important in developing an attractive destination.

## **AHRE – AISH Caseload by Primary Medical Condition and Age December 2001**

Source: MID Tables SMISQ & SMIST

Medical Condition	Age Groupings						Total
	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60+	
<b>PHYSICAL</b>							
Multiple Sclerosis	7	83	162	226	87	49	614
Cerebral Palsy	259	337	292	171	43	35	1,137
Epilepsy	78	181	230	246	75	55	865
Parkinsonism			2	6	10	15	33
Cerebrovascular Disease	5	20	65	125	124	143	482
Cystic Fibrosis	7	13	6	4	3		33
Cardiovascular Disease	20	28	75	218	232	302	875
Respiratory	3	15	64	157	146	182	567
Arthritis	9	61	233	569	497	604	1,973
Cancer	15	41	53	103	93	100	405

Amputation	3	4	13	24	11	15	70
Diabetes	4	41	89	156	135	110	535
Paraplegia	17	34	41	49	13	13	167
Quadriplegia	26	40	38	34	6	4	148
Other Paralysis	12	39	88	119	49	40	347
Muscular Dystrophy	43	36	38	32	11	9	169
Kidney Disease	26	36	58	53	36	25	234
AIDS	1	39	77	37	13	4	171
Other Physical	277	435	823	1,172	613	502	3,822
Traumatic Brain Injury	52	129	247	191	57	44	720
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>2,694</b>	<b>3,692</b>	<b>2,254</b>	<b>2,251</b>	<b>13,367</b>
<b>SENSORY</b>							
Blindness	9	30	39	57	34	21	190
Visual Impairment	7	12	23	34	14	20	110
Deafness	11	18	37	29	15	15	125
Hearing Impairment		7	5	6	6	3	27
Other Sensory	9	5	10	8	10	4	46
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>498</b>
<b>MENTAL ILLNESS</b>							
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>1,406</b>	<b>2,617</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>8,845</b>
<b>MENTAL HANDICAP</b>							
Down's Syndrome	169	248	216	108	21	10	772
Mild Retardation	410	478	508	300	106	73	1,875
Moderate Retardation	305	431	627	437	123	110	2,033
Severe / Profound Retardation	156	195	274	178	50	44	897
Other Mental Illness	265	173	91	84	39	36	688
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,305</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>1,716</b>	<b>1,107</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>6,265</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>							
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>2,865</b>	<b>4,615</b>	<b>7,141</b>	<b>7,544</b>	<b>3,592</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>28,975</b>

## **PROGRAM**

**11:00: Opening Events – Chair, Ginny Gillen, AALS**  
**Introduction of the “Alberta Abilities Lodges Society” members**  
**Greetings – Jeanne Lougheed, Honourary Patron**

**11:15: Breaking the isolation of mental illness**  
**Blaine Mitchell, Alberta Hospital, Edmonton**

**11:45: The range of disabilities and needs at lodges**  
**Bev Matthiessen, Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities**

**12:00: Transportation issues: getting to and from the lodges**  
**Ross Wein, AAL Society**

**12:15: Opportunities and challenges in making the transition to an ability lodge**  
**David Ridley, President, Rundle’s Mission**

**12:30-13:15:**  
**Greetings – Rob Lougheed, MLA and Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**  
**Lunch – hosted by Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, AB Gov’t**  
**Displays – Getting citizens with disabilities into the outdoors (displays include lodge destinations and equipment)**

**13:30-15:15: Focus groups: The Outdoor Needs of Seniors, Children, and Other Citizens With Disabilities.**  
**Workshop participants will be invited to take part in groups 1) to synthesize what was learned in the presentations and displays, 2) to suggest what is workable and do-able within the needs, and 3) to offer their expertise and involvement to make future progress.**

**15:15: Reports from each focus group and discussion/synthesis**

**16:00: Announcements and Closing**



**Disability-Friendly  
King's University College**



**Disability-Friendly  
Students Lounge**

### **Focus Group Discussions**



### Focus Group Reporters

Top Left – Ginny Gillen, Top Right – Myron Belej

Bottom Left – Janet McKelvie, Bottom Right – Danette Barner



## **SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHY, PRESENTATION TITLE AND ABSTRACT**

### **Blaine Mitchell, Alberta Hospital, Edmonton**

**Contact:** [Blaine.Mitchell@capitalhealth.ca](mailto:Blaine.Mitchell@capitalhealth.ca)

**Biography:** Blaine works at the Alberta Hospital, Edmonton with forensic patients.

**Title:** Breaking the Isolation of Mental Illness

#### **Abstract:**

The Alberta Hospital has several groups including geriatric patients who are taken to Jasper and Banff Hot Springs in the summer and William Watson Lodge in winter. Outpatients (30 patients to 5 staff) have about five picnics around the Edmonton area during the summer. The forensic patients (schizophrenia, bipolar, paranoia) generally have committed crimes but are deemed to be mentally unfit to serve time in jail. They tend not to have visits from family members because the patients have committed crimes against their family. With medication they are able to enjoy activities that all other people enjoy. Annually, two trips for inpatients (40 patients and 20 staff) and two trips for outpatients (30 patients and 5 staff) are mounted each year to wheel chair accessible camps. These trips are 3 days and 2 nights. Transportation is by vans owned by the hospital. Additional needs include visiting the camp as a unit; inclusiveness is not an option.

### **Bev Matthiessen, Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD)**

**Contact:** Tel: 780-488-9098; [bev@accd.net](mailto:bev@accd.net)

**Biography:** Bev has worked for more than 20 years in the not-for-profit sector. She has also volunteered with a number of organizations and social clubs including the Wild Rose Foundation, Federation of Community Leagues, Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary Club. Since 1991 she has been the Executive Director of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) (<http://www.accd.net/>), an organization promoting full participation in society for Albertans with disabilities. Previously, she was the Executive Director of the Personal Development Centre and the first Coordinator of Volunteers at Goodwill Industries. Her education is in social work, and not-for-profit agency, volunteer, fundraising, and conflict management. With small town Saskatchewan roots, Bev is best known for her tireless dedication to social justice. Bev believes in equality and fairness for all, including equity, accessibility, and full participation for citizens with disabilities. In her years of service, Bev has actively participated in numerous committees including the Minister's Employability Council, the Edmonton Regional Airports Authority Barrier Free Committee, the Power Wheel Chair Committee, the Hate/Bias Incidents Committee, and the International Day of Disabled Planning Committee. In

1998, she was instrumental in the creation of the Alberta Disabilities Forum (ADF), an advocacy partnership of forty provincial disability organizations.

**Title: The Range of Disabilities and the Needs at Lodges**

**Abstract:** In the past there was emphasis on the mental, physical, developmental, and sensory limitations and the hundreds of sub-disabilities. Today a somewhat different approach has been developed by the disability community when categorizing the needs of people with disabilities.

The FUNCTIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (“FNA”) model allows for greater flexibility than other models that require only that certain standardized services or features be in place. Emergency service agencies (fire, ambulance) are adopting an FNA that front-line workers will use to address the most immediate concerns of people with disabilities. The FNA is not concerned with developing a ‘cookie cutter approach’ that treats people with disabilities as a homogenous class that requires only one set of static adaptations; but rather with developing the most flexible accessibility framework possible to meet individual needs.

A flexible framework is marked by how easily it accommodates a wide range of needs as measured in five key areas:

**Functional Independence**

- Persons may require assistance with procuring necessary medication and equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, catheters, ostomy supplies)

**Communication**

- Persons who communicate in sign language will need an interpreter
- Persons who require electronic devices for communication may need access to specialized equipment
- Persons who may not be able to hear verbal announcements (deaf or hard of hearing) or see directional signage (blind/visually impaired) may require information in alternative formats

**Transportation**

- Persons who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids may require adapted transportation
- Persons who require ventilators or other such equipment may require specialized transportation
- Persons who have no vehicle access

**Supervision**

- Persons with psychiatric conditions, schizophrenia, or dementia may require supervision
- Persons affected by “transfer trauma” may require supervision

**Medical**

- Persons may require assistance in managing unstable, chronic, terminal or contagious health conditions, life limiting illnesses, or conditions that require intravenous therapy or tube feeding



Universal design principles and the FNA can be used in disability audits of lodges. Participants are encouraged to visit the Edmonton International Airport to view disability-friendly features.

**Further information:**

Dombrowski, Lynn Blewett. 1999. Functional Needs Assessment Treatment Guide. Academic Press

Holm, Ivar (2006). Ideas and Beliefs in Architecture and Industrial design: How attitudes, orientations, and underlying assumptions shape the built environment. Oslo School of Architecture and Design.

North Carolina State University. 2007. The Centre for Universal Design.

<http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/>

Wikipedia – Universal Design. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_design)

**Ross W. Wein, Alberta Abilities Lodges Society (AALS)**

**Contact:** Tel: 780-436-0141; [rosswein@shaw.ca](mailto:rosswein@shaw.ca)

**Biography:** Ross and Eleanor have a son, Danny, who is recovering from a 1998 motorcycle accident that occurred in Bogota, Columbia on his “trip of a lifetime” to Chile, South America. Ross is now Co-Chair, Alberta Abilities Lodges Society. Dr. Wein has had a career teaching undergraduates, conducting research, and training graduate students at the University of New Brunswick, University of Guelph, Australian National University, and, since 1987, at the University of Alberta. He retired from the University of Alberta on June 30, 2006 where he had specialized in natural resource conservation (personal website: <http://www.rr.ualberta.ca/people/rwein/>). As Professor Emeritus he continues to be involved in international outdoor education and in environmental research and publishing locally, in northern Canada, in the Caribbean, and in East Africa.

**Title: Transportation Issues: Getting to and from the lodges**

Abstract: Alberta is addicted to the auto, cities are built for autos, and auto travel is expensive. We all know that our urban citizens suffer financially and in many other ways from suburban sprawl. The young, the elderly (when they no longer drive) and certainly the disabled are at a great disadvantage because they cannot take part in the automobile culture. These groups, if sufficiently wealthy, depend on family or rental autos. With low financial resources and no support group they must depend on taxis, buses, and LRT. The problems are greater if the young, elderly and disabled live in rural areas or wish or need to travel between rural and urban areas. According to many disability groups, the lack of convenient transport to and from lodges is the #1 problem that must be overcome before seniors and others with disabilities can effectively use lodges. The wealthy can use any mode of transport from autos to airplanes. The less than wealthy need financial support for transport; someone must pay if their quality of life is to be enhanced.

**Transport Issues – Key Points**

- All children, seniors, and others with a disability
- Not a big issue for the wealthy

- More of an issue in rural than urban areas
- Long travel time is too painful or even dangerous for some
- Training /support may need to introduce transport and the outdoor equipment
- Many have insufficient resources to travel; the reality is that someone else must pay

### **Concerns for Operating Disability Transport Equipment/Vehicles**

- Ownership
- Liability
- Operators
- Operating cost

### **Transportation in Urban Centres is well developed and supported by society**

- Assisted walking
- (Power) wheel chair, scooter, bicycle
- Family/friends auto/van
- City buses
- LRT
- DATS
- Taxis

### **Transport at Outdoor Lodges is much more complicated**

- Issues of safety, ownership, liability, operators, operating costs are even more complicated and the responsibility falls to the lodge management
- Equipment on Trails – Use Imagination! Some equipment needs adaptation
- Quality of trails is very important
- Consider equipment that will allow participants to enjoy water travel

### **Transportation to Outdoor Lodges**

- Family/friend auto, vans, RVs
- Rental auto, vans
- Railway
- Bus
- Aircraft

### **We Need to Develop Better Solutions for Transportation to Outdoor Lodges**

- Personal resources – neighbours, friends
- Government subsidy – available programs
- Business sponsorship – transport companies
- Service club sponsorship – Rotary, Lions
- An endowment fund for province-wide support
- ARE THERE OTHER SOLUTIONS????

### **Acknowledgements:**

Appreciation is expressed to personnel at Edmonton DATS, Yellow Cab, Eco Medical, Driving Force, and Shoppers Home Health Care who offered advice as this presentation was developed.

**Further information:**

Transport Canada. 2006. 11<sup>th</sup> International conference on mobility and transport for elderly and disabled persons (TRANSED)

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/mediaroom/releases/nat/2006/06-h136e.htm>

Citizens Advice Bureau. 2007. Transport options for disabled people

[http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/nm/index/your\\_world/travel/transport\\_options\\_for\\_disabled\\_people.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/nm/index/your_world/travel/transport_options_for_disabled_people.htm)

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. 2007. Door to Door: a travel guide for disabled people <http://www.dptac.gov.uk/door-to-door/>

**David Ridley**

**Contact:** Tel: 780-439-7561; [dridley@st-albert.net](mailto:dridley@st-albert.net)

**Biography:** David has been a director with Rundle’s Mission Society ([www.rundlesmission.org](http://www.rundlesmission.org)) since 1997. Rundle’s Mission is located one hour from Edmonton; it was established in the late 1950s as a retreat and camp facility on the shores of Pigeon Lake. David has been involved in plans to redevelop the facilities on site, as well as improve its amenities and service to the community.

**Title: Opportunities & Challenges in Making the Transition from Camps to Ability Lodges**

**Abstract:** Facilities like Rundle’s Mission (and the other 100 Alberta retreats and camps) have potential to become attractive and useful ability lodges. The aim of this presentation is to provide a few thoughts on how established camps might respond to “becoming an ability lodge.” Each camp organization is unique and my perspective is not researched, but presented out of my 10-year experience as a director with Rundle’s Mission Society, which was established as a retreat lodge facility in the early 1960s. In this respect it is not unlike many organizations established in that era. There is a need to renew facilities to improve visitability.

**Challenges of Organizational Capacity**

- Organization & board may lack awareness of demographics re: population
- Vision & mission of organizations not presently inclusive of “visitability”
- Often dependant on declining historical constituency, users & membership for support
- Pressed for volunteer & staff resources
- Lack of partnership experience
- Varying abilities to provide program support
- Some organizations require fund development expertise for facility renewal

### **Challenges of facilities & property**

- Require expertise & budget for accessibility audits
- Support for deciding on priorities for access upgrades
- Potential limits in adaptability of “flagship” buildings at camps (e.g. Rundle log lodge)
- Support for creating recreational opportunities & amenities-- trail development, adapted equipment
- Need to integrate existing guest base with ability guests (e.g. availability-high/low season, weekend/day; developing appropriate fee schedule)
- Presently, main asset is land and location, with a small but dedicated core volunteer group

### **Opportunities**

- Provide information about AALS and aims, along with demographics to raise board & staff awareness - receptive to opportunity to provide access & service
- Provide examples of mission/vision statements that include visitability as a purpose, aim that will enhance overall mission/vision of the organization
- Many camps requiring renewal at present, excellent time to review and improve visitability
- There may be merit in identifying a limited number of prospective ability camps/lodges to develop approach and project model that can be shared with other camps in time
- Develop self-assessment tool for prospective camps to look at their current visitability and attractiveness as ability lodges—i.e. awareness of considerations and also support for address these considerations
- Help direction, expertise & modest grant support for accessibility audits
- Raise awareness of funding opportunities tied to access
- Encourage and establish collaborative efforts in developing grants

### **Further information:**

United Church of Canada. 2007. Camping Standards Manual.

[http://www.united-church.ca/files/exploring/camping/standards\\_manual.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/files/exploring/camping/standards_manual.pdf)

Alberta Camping Association. 2007. Camping Standards Manual.

[http://www.albertacamping.com/content.php?id=66&secondary\\_id=12Audit](http://www.albertacamping.com/content.php?id=66&secondary_id=12Audit)

California State Parks. 2007. Accessible features in State parks.

<http://access.parks.ca.gov/>

## **Focus Groups: Identifying the next tasks for AALS**

(We are indebted to Scott Vaughn, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing for assisting with the organizing of Focus Group activities.)

We used well-established Focus Group guiding principles:

- All have wisdom
- We need wisdom to get the wisest ideas
- All will be heard with mutual respect
- There are no wrong answers
- Participants can change their mind as often as they wish

Workshop participants were invited to take part in groups 1) to synthesize important points learned from the presentations and displays, 2) to suggest what is workable and do-able while considering the many needs of seniors, children, and other citizens with disabilities, and 3) to identify expertise and involvement to assist in making progress.

Each Focus Group discussed one of the follow topics:

- 1) First steps to making present camps more disability friendly and making the destination attractive
- 2) Building a transportation system
- 3) Safety through outdoor mobility and sports equipment technology
- 4) Linking existing support programs to lodges

## **FOCUS GROUP REPORTS**

After each group addressed their topic, they identified the best practices that they would like to see incorporated in a new or renovated destination. A spokesperson for each of four groups brought the main points to the reassembled audience. Thanks to Ginny Gillen for capturing many of these points in her notes from the oral reports.

### **1) First steps a) to making present camps more disability-friendly and b) making the destination attractive. (Danette Barner reporting)**

- There is a clear need for camps to share experiences, cooperate, and form partnerships
- Camps could be geared toward special disabilities using the camp's special features
- There is a need to focus on the benefits of the outdoors, the emotional side of the experience, the camp's strengths, and the aspects that make people feel safe
- New programs are needed – e.g. caregivers need places for respite
- Accreditation is critical– Alberta Camping Association accredits camps – have a group of people go to camps and do assessments rather than hiring expensive consultants
- Experience at William Watson Lodge indicates that visitors seek four features: **ACCESS/SAFETY, INCLUSION, PRICE, AND SECURITY**

#### a) Renovations to camps

##### **ACCESS/SAFETY**

- Volunteers, well trained staff, and well rounded team are important
- Try to incorporate tactile and textural in same message. Path edge lined with shale so they know when they are not the path (visual disability)
- Rooms are designated by flooring characteristics
- Signage – visible and audible and tactile – raised lettering, flashing red lights – something that contrasts with surroundings
- Level and height of signs. If people in wheelchairs are using facility you have to have varied heights for visibility
- Water – temperature controls and audible readout
- First aids kits should be readily available and complete
- Feeling safe – need appropriate orientation for staff and volunteers

##### **INCLUSION**

- Must think beyond just wheelchairs by using the Function Needs Assessment

##### **PRICE**

- Need knowledgeable people for fund raising
- Camps need to advertise, to get more participants, to keep costs low
- Financial viability – volunteers keep costs down. Seek funds from CIP, CFEP, STEP, Summer Canada Job Initiative

- Adopt a strong business model with all sources of funds and all expenditures identified

## **SECURITY**

- Security system on doors to protect wanderers
- Evacuation notices on walls and access to phones must be convenient in case of emergencies

### **Further information:**

City of Edmonton. 2007. Checklist for accessibility & universal design in architecture

## **2) Building a transportation system (Myron Belej reporting)**

- Think outside the (box) bus! Need innovative approaches beyond current practices
- Range of transport & number of vehicles needed - Vans, RVs, DATS, etc. - rental vs purchase
- Seniors and others with disabilities in rural areas have little access to community services in urban areas
- Need to get disabled citizens to enjoy urban (urban lodge) as well as rural experiences
- Much technology is already available – bus seats removed for wheel chairs
- Need easy and efficient conversion among seating configurations
- Need corporate sponsorship to support travel annually (e.g. service club sponsors - ROTARY, LIONS) and also to support an endowment for travel
- Need to build networks of drivers. Develop economic guidelines so lodges can make decisions about operating their own bus

### **Further information:**

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. 2007. Door to Door: a travel guide for disabled people <http://www.dptac.gov.uk/door-to-door/>

## **3) Safety through outdoor mobility and sports equipment technology (Janet McKelvie reporting)**

- Citizens with disabilities have the same goals as others
- Post safety notices around camp about emergency procedures and have clear evacuation routes
- Everything about camp must be user friendly – including trails, night lighting
- Equipment breaks – have extra equipment available
- Liability – learn about the safety requirements of the equipment.
- Need specialized equipment - GPS bracelets, snow and water skis, docks, pontoon boats, golf carts, tricycles, boats, rubber zodiac, horse drawn cart
- Think winter as well - cross country skiing etc – need paths clearly delineated.

- Indoor equipment and activities needed for bad weather

**Further information:**

Tetra Society of North America. 2007. <http://www.tetrasociety.org/>

**4) Linking existing support programs lodges (Ginny Gillen reporting)**

- Lodges can be good environments for gaining pre-job experience (confidence building, computer literacy, team and leadership building)
- Lodges can form the backdrop for other hobbies/programs – writing, music etc  
These program attract all visitors not only those with disabilities
- Outdoors is healing and when you have a disability it is even more important
- Non traditional programs should be developed. Even extreme sports can be incredibly empowering if part of the program
- Outdoor hiking could be partnered with groups such as Elder Hostel, Alpine Club, Waskahegan Trail, Wild Rose Ramblers
- Lodges good for programs of substance abuse withdrawal
- Identify what formal courses/training get best results if held at camps
- Respite programs and children partnerships are very important and have political clout
- Do not exclude venues because of their lack of ‘accessibility’
- Don’t want disabled person to be limited by the abilities of the Caregiver
- Buddy system – important for mentorship and cooperation might be needed to accomplish tasks

**Further information:**

Government of Alberta. 2006-2007. Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide.

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports.

[http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/services\\_resources/programs\\_services/booklet/ProgramsServices\\_InfoGuide.pdf](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/services_resources/programs_services/booklet/ProgramsServices_InfoGuide.pdf)



## **The Way Forward for AALS**

- We have been encouraged by virtually everyone to continue the development of the project; our strongest supporters are the disability community and the camps. We appreciate the suggestions for future activities that developed during the workshop and we invite you to participate.
- We will continue to offer our support and encouragement to officials of the Alberta Government to develop a William Watson Lodge North and to improve access in Provincial Parks. We recognize the importance of an inventory of Provincial Parks to determine the specific disability-friendly features of each Park (the California State Parks approaches is a useful model).
- We will continue to work in partnerships with the disability community to upgrade camps to lodges. We are keenly aware that camps were built for various reasons and very dedicated volunteers have maintained facilities and programs. We must build on the demonstrated strengths of the camp and region; it is necessary to capitalize on this uniqueness (e.g. near lakes, golf courses, airports, cultural centres). We will encourage and assist camps to invest in disability-friendly audits. We will assist with marketing programs to inform the disability community about opportunities at appropriate lodges. We will encourage these groups to advertise even more clearly their ability to host citizens with specific disabilities. We will partner with other professionals in health, education, recreation, etc. to assist in developing facilities and programs and we will assist in attracting a broader range of clients to lodges for the benefit of citizens.
- We will establish an endowment fund on receiving charitable status. The fund will support citizens with disabilities who require subsidized transport to lodges. We already have verbal promises for funds to begin this endowment.
- We are aware of the large number of societies that serve the disability community, but we believe that the AALSociety serves a unique function. We are proceeding with the registration and the application for charitable status. Our website, that will be developed this summer, is [www.albertaabilitieslodges.ca](http://www.albertaabilitieslodges.ca).

## PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED

ORGANIZATION	NAMES
PREMIER'S COUNCIL	MLA ROB LOUGHEED
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CAN PARA ASSOC	LARRY PEMPEIT
BISSELL – MOONLIGHT BAY CAMP	KERSTEN MORRIS
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Note: Thanks to Saabira Razac, Edmonton Summer Assistant, Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society for registering participants.