



All
Abilities
Welcome

Connecting Communities through Recreation

Opening Doors to
People of All Abilities

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Presentation Overview:

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Personal Background

- Visually impaired from birth, was encouraged to try running for the first time as an eleven-year-old
- Brothers and I attended a school for blind students where participation in sport was widely encouraged
- Received support and encouragement to pursue running, and began to realize the improvements that could occur by working at it
- Continued to train and compete in university although the team environment was new and very different
- Qualified to represent Canada for the first time in 1998
- Guide and I have competed at three Paralympic Games, winning one bronze and two silver medals in the 1500 metres for athletes who are blind

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What is Inclusive Active Living?

Inclusive Active Living reflects a person's ability to take part in an activity as they choose to, based on their own ability, needs, aspirations, and environment. Inclusion is explained through the following principles:

- Inclusion is *meaningful* participation in an activity while learning new skills, with every participant accepted and supported by peers
- Activities are modified and individualized as necessary
- Expectations are realistic yet challenging
- Assistance is provided only to the degree required
- There is dignity-of-risk and choice available

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Why is Inclusion Important?

For Canadians with a disability, active living:

- increases overall health
- reduces the risk of developing illnesses or conditions that are generally linked to an inactive lifestyle
- reduces the risk of developing secondary conditions specific to a person's disability
- lessens some of the negative effects that are associated with a disability
- makes daily living easier
- increases overall quality of life

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**ACTIVE
LIVING
ALLIANCE**
FOR CANADIANS
WITH A DISABILITY

Who is the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability?

- Created in 1989, to motivate and assist Canadians with a disability to become more physically active
- Born out of 1986 Jasper Talks, where physical activity providers and disability organizations discussed the lack of programs for people with a disability
- National nonprofit, voluntary sector organization who envisions a society where all Canadians lead active, healthy lives.
- Built on an alliance of individuals, agencies and national associations that facilitates and coordinates partnerships among the members of its network.
- Supported through a grassroots delivery system of provincial / territorial representatives who we work with closely in delivering our programs.
- Over 100 partners and a growing network of close to a half million organizations who share our vision of a healthier, active Canadian disability population.

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ALACD Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles that we recognize as we develop and deliver our programs and projects:

- Quality of life is a fundamental right
- Empowerment is the key
- Every community should be involved
- Equal access must be guaranteed
- Respect and dignity are the foundation

Our priorities include:

- Promoting physical activity among youth;
- Inclusion of people with a disability in school based activity;
- Public and private sector fitness facilities that are inclusive;
- All Canadians with disabilities supported in active living.

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Youth Ambassador Program

- A program engaging youth from across Canada with the importance of active living and effective advocacy in their communities.
- Program empowers young people with a disability to make good choices and to grow as individuals through effective self-expression and advocacy.
- Youth are challenged to uphold the principles of fairness and inclusive participation promoted by ALACD
- The program was born out of an annual Youth Exchange started by ALACD in 2001 and was developed as a leadership component.



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Moving to Inclusion

- MTI was designed to promote the inclusion of young people with a disability in school physical education classes
- ALACD has MTI facilitators across the country who deliver workshops highlighting inclusive activity modifications which physical education teachers can implement
- MTI guidebooks detailing a range of inclusive modification ideas for different disabilities are available through ALACD
- The Alliance is set to launch an online version of MTI later this year



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All Abilities Welcome

- AAW is aimed at promoting greater inclusion of Canadians with a disability in community recreation programming
- Program launched in 2006 in response to the lack of inclusive physical activity opportunities available to Canadians with a disability
- Canadians with a disability are often hesitant to participate in recreation activities and many fitness facilities or clubs seem intimidating or not welcoming
- AAW aims to work with service providers around how to be more welcoming and inclusive, and is committed to supporting them in their efforts.
- AAW also aims to empower those with a disability to choose and pursue an active, healthy lifestyle



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AAW Outreach

To date AAW has reached out to people with a disability and community recreation providers through:

- An inclusion toolkit, containing the AAW manual and a variety of inclusion resources to assist recreation providers in adapting their programs
- The bilingual AAW website (www.allabilitieswelcome.ca), containing inclusion articles, easy program modification ideas, and disability information
- A television Public Service Announcement
- The All Abilities Challenge, a program where we recognize the commitment of recreation providers to inclusion through a certificate of acknowledgment
- A diverse group of 45 speakers personally or professionally connected with inclusive physical activity trained to deliver awareness presentations

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Tips for creating a Welcoming Recreation Environment

- Treat all participants as you would like to be treated
- Avoid making assumptions or generalizations
- Pity is not proper
- Treat people with a disability as people first
- Do not insist on offering help where it is not needed
- Do not paint people with a disability with the same brush
- Ask, listen, and do not assume!
- Each person is the expert on their disability
- Do not lean on a wheelchair as it is part of personal space
- Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their caregiver, parent or friend
- Different degrees of disability mean that people may have different limitations
- Do not get caught up on language
- Do not treat disability as a tragedy

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Language with Dignity

In general, focus on *respect*

- Speak to a person with a disability in the same way you would want others to speak to you
- Place the person before the disability
- Focus on accurate language
- Remember that body language is just as important as the words you use
- Patience, respectfulness, and a little creativity can go a long way in facilitating greater ease of communication with individuals with a speech impediment



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The Challenge beyond Inclusion

For many people with a disability:

- Access to recreation facilities is limited by economic, social, transportation, intimidation, and even cultural barriers
- Many people with a disability live at or below the poverty line
- Often, people with a disability may have low self-confidence, which can lead to a sense of resignation and disempowerment
- When accessing physical activity is difficult, as it can be so often, many people with a disability may simply give up
- With the right support, people with a disability not only benefit physically through recreation, but socially and emotionally also



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How Recreation Organizations can Proactively Reach Clients with a Disability

- Identify a “Disability Champion” among the staff or clientele of your organization to invite people with a disability from the community to visit your facility
- Organize and promote a “meet and greet” at your facility so that people with a disability can meet your staff, ask questions, and gain a level of comfort
- Develop and promote fitness classes specifically for people with a disability
- Encourage people with a disability to bring a peer or “buddy” to assist them, and charge only the person with a disability
- Have “buddies” available to assist people with a disability who may require help
- In addition to competitive sport programs, develop some cooperative physical activities geared to the strengths of all participants
- Connect with rehabilitation therapists and disability sport organizations to share the fact that you are an organization that embraces inclusion



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The Challenge from a Recreation Provider Perspective

- Staff members that are stretched thin by current programming demands
- The feeling that persons with a disability may not be able to take part in many activities, and lack of knowledge in how to adapt activities to accommodate them
- The sense that including people with a disability in current programming may detract from the experience of other participants
- The fear that persons with a disability may get injured and that the facility would be held liable
- The perception that accommodating people with a disability would demand extensive facility renovations which the organization can not afford



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Another Perspective

- Staff training focused on simple inclusion strategies, creative thinking, and the willingness to make inclusion work, can make all the difference
- Including people with a disability will make recreation activities richer through mutual learning and cooperation
- Injury is a risk for anyone participating in recreation; those with a disability will likely know their limitations, even more so than other participants
- Although accommodating people with a disability may be made easier through facility renovations, renovating attitudes will make the biggest difference
- This change can be inspired from within through a willingness above all to include people of all abilities at your facility

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Accessibility Ideas

We encourage recreation organizations to accommodate persons with a disability to participate fully, in a modified form, in an active parallel capacity, passively, or as an informed observer.

Accessibility ideas include:

- Allowing a person with an intellectual disability to shoot baskets
- Persons in a wheelchair who may have limited arm strength may be unable to play basketball but could play floor hockey
- One-on-one help for someone with cerebral palsy when canoeing
- Providing verbal cues for someone visually impaired participating in an aerobics class
- Allowing two bounces instead of one for a person in a wheelchair playing tennis
- Tying a plastic bag around a ball to enable blind participants to play soccer



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Eight Steps to Inclusion

By following these eight simple steps, you will be laying the groundwork for participation of persons with a disability in your programs:

- Ask about the disability
- Ask about support
- Define safety concerns
- Assess skill
- Set realistic objectives
- Select activities
- Make modifications
- Implement and evaluate

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Additional Resources

Here are just some of the people and organizations you can contact:

- The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability www.ala.ca
- Local, provincial/territorial and national disability-specific groups
- Local hospitals and rehabilitation centres
- Your municipality
- Community-based, provincial/territorial and national organizations that focus on sport and recreation opportunities for those with a disability
- Local or regional health promotion departments

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Contact Information

To learn more about All Abilities Welcome or to book a speaker to deliver a presentation at your event, call or write to us.

Jason Dunkerley

All Abilities Welcome Coordinator

Tél : 1-800-771-0663 or (613) 244-0052 ext 25

Email / courriel: allabilitieswelcome@ala.ca / participationsansfrontieres@ala.ca

Website : www.allabilitieswelcome.ca / www.participationsansfrontieres.ca



**Alliance for Canadians with a Disability / Alliance de vie active pour les
Canadiens/Canadiennes ayant un handicap**

Email/courrier : ala@ala.ca

Website: www.ala.ca

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