



AGM REPORT 2020

ISSUED JUNE 11, 2021, IN PREPARATION FOR THE JUNE 17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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AGENDA: 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

JUNE 17, 2021 – VIA ZOOM

1. CALL TO ORDER 6:30
2. WELCOMING MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF 2019 AGM (Held August 2020) 6:35
 - **Motion to accept the minutes of the 2019 AGM**
4. PRESIDENT’S 2020 MESSAGE – ALISON NAROD 6:40
5. TREASURER’S REPORT– BRENT SHIRLEY 6:50
6. APPROVAL OF 2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (APPENDIX A)
 - **Discussion**
 - **Motion to accept the Independent Auditor’s Report on the 2020 financial statements**
 - **Vote**
7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT 7:10
8. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS FOR 2021/2022 7:25
 - **Discussion**
 - **Motion to approve the Election Slate for Board of Directors for 2021/2022.**
 - **Vote**
9. PROPOSED NEW BY-LAW [APPENDIX B] 7:40
 - **Discussion**
 - **Motion to approve new by-laws as recommend by ACT’s Board of Directors**
 - **Vote**
10. DISCUSSION OF APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR 2021 7:50
 - **Motion that BBA Accounting Group Inc., Chartered Professional Accountants be appointed as Auditors of ACT Autism Community Training Society, to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting, or until their successors are duly appointed, and that the Board of Directors be authorized to establish the remuneration of the Auditors.**
 - **Vote**
11. MOTION REQUIRED TO APPROVE ALL ACTIONS BY THE BOARD IN 2020 7:55
 - **“Moved that...all acts, contracts, proceedings, appointments, elections and payments made and taken by the directors of ACT Autism Community Training Society since January 1, 2020 referred to in the minutes of the Board of Directors’ meetings and the minutes of committee meetings be approved.”**
 - **Vote**
12. ADJOURNMENT: 8:00
 - **Motion to adjourn**

DRAFT MINUTES - 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AUGUST 19, 2020 – VIA ZOOM

Board Members in Attendance: Dr. Alisa Lipson, Alison Narod, Anne Stoll, Brent Shirley, Blair Dwyer, Denise Ching, Karen Kalynchuk, Nicole Provost, Pharid Jaffer

Board Member Regrets: Blair Whelan

General Membership in Attendance: Anne McCaw, Anne Millerd, Brenda Fossett, Jemana Elsharkawi, Mary Ellen Ross, Tony Yue, Pat Mirenda, Kenneth Cole, Sawsan Salih, Lila Mandzuik, Richard Stock, Louise Broadley, Rashmeen Nirmal, Michelle Schmidt, Patrick Dwyer, Shannon Muir

Staff in Attendance: Deborah Pugh, Linda Leung, Mary Yamashita, Ryan Quiring, Stephanie Porter

1. CALL TO ORDER 6:30
2. WELCOMING MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF 2018 AGM (HELD JUNE 2019) 6:40

Motion to accept the minutes of the 2018 AGM.

Moved by Jemana Elsharkawi; Seconded by Alisa Lipson; Passed unanimously

4. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY ALISON NAROD 6:44

Looking back over my second year as President of ACT's Board of Directors, and from the vantage point of August 2020, I can see we were fortunate to have 2019 to stabilize both our financial and human resources in preparation for the challenges that COVID-19 is presenting.

In 2019 we rebuilt our training program after suspending it temporarily in 2018, following the instability triggered by the provincial government's sudden decision to end the community-based program of information and support that ACT had implemented for twelve years. Rather than giving up, we strengthened our relations with our sponsors from the education sector, including universities, and our committed donors, in addition to the BC experts who are the backbone of the training we feature.

We revamped our training program in 2019 so that all of our events were web streamed. While we had fewer events, we provided this training online across British Columbia and attracted a significance increase in registrants, many of whom were relieved to be spared the cost and time of travelling to Vancouver. Most of our 2019 events were recorded so that they can be watched, free of charge via Autism Videos @ ACT.

ACT's expertise in web streaming events has stood us in good stead but it was not the only resource that ACT rescued from potential oblivion. Our online key word searchable databases, the Autism Information Database and BC Community Resources were maintained by ACT in 2019, although we had no source of sustained funding to support them. Our successful application to BC's Community Gaming Fund at the end of 2019 has enabled us to ensure that these resources are available to the autism community during the current crisis where families have been driven to rely on online resources.

ACT is more than a staff of five – although they are a hardworking crew who have proven their resilience. Rather, ACT is a community effort, sustained by our supporters who value our contribution to those affected by autism enough to donate, advise us on all aspects of our work, volunteer for

events [including selling icy herring in January], organize fundraisers, and become members of our Board of Directors.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank our two retiring board members, Anne Stoll and Pharid Jaffer, for their significant contributions. Anne has served for seven years and has been a very reliable Board Secretary. Her experience as a parent of a child with autism, and her professional training as a dietician, have helped to provide a broader range of expertise to ACT.

The longest serving member of our current board, Pharid Jaffer, has reached the limit our members can serve – eight years. During this time Pharid has provided his considerable expertise in computer systems and risk management. He helped ACT to develop a new contact management database and make the transition to working totally “in the cloud” which has been invaluable in preparing for the 2020 pandemic.

In conclusion, while 2020 is proving to present extraordinary challenges for all not-for-profits, we can see that the work done in 2019 will allow ACT to continue serving the autism community, as well as the broader special needs community.

5. TREASURER’S REPORT BY BRENT SHIRLEY 6:45

ACT’s financials for 2019 were distributed with the AGM Report package, including our audited financial statements and the auditor’s report, so I will not review these in-depth. A clean opinion was given on ACT’s statements. Viewing the Statement of Operations, you will see revenues have been down significantly since the cancellation of our MCFD contract - approximately \$623,000 between 2017 and 2020 - but we have also reduced our expenses by \$596,000. We ended 2019 with a small loss of \$2,600. I would like to extend my thanks to ACT’s staff for working through this challenging year, making the cuts where needed and keeping our costs down.

Motion to accept the Independent Auditor’s Report dated August 11, 2020 on the December 31, 2019 financial statements.

Moved by Blair Dwyer; Seconded by Jemana Elsharkawi; Passed unanimously

6. DISCUSSION OF APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR 2020 6:50

Brent Shirley: BBA Accounting Group Inc., Chartered Professional Accountants, have been ACT’s auditors for a number of years. They have been very responsive to our needs and have kept their fees quite reasonable.

Motion that BBA Accounting Group Inc., Chartered Professional Accountants be appointed as Auditors of ACT Autism Community Training Society, to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting, or until their successors are duly appointed, and that the Board of Directors be authorized to establish the remuneration of the Auditors.

Moved by Brent Shirley; Seconded by Jemana Elsharkawi; Passed unanimously

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S 2019 REPORT - DEBORAH PUGH 6:50

2019 was a very positive year for ACT. As the Executive Director’s Report was circulated prior to the meeting, I will not repeat all of the details it contains. However, I want to thank everyone who is attending this meeting today, as you have all contributed to ACT’s success during 2019. When I look back at 2019, it is evident how ACT’s relationships with so many of the leaders within the autism community have made the difference for our survival.

2019, as Board President Alison Narod has explained, was a year of consolidation for ACT after a very challenging transition. This was possible because of the collective efforts of our volunteers, our donors, our presenters and our community collaborators, who include a number of outstanding clinicians, educators and researchers, as well as parents and self-advocates. It is a privilege for ACT's staff to bring together this outstanding group of individuals to build resources that are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of our community.

The fact that we have former staff, donors and presenters among those joining us in this Zoom meeting, brings home the fact that ACT's work really is a collective effort. When things are grim, I think of all the people that keep working on behalf of families and how they connect the community through ACT and inspire us in our work. Whether you are pediatrician, speech language pathologist or occupational therapist, the guidance you provide ACT is very important. This is especially true of the guidance from parents.

Our staff members have also made enormous efforts to ensure ACT's survival. Our small staff have worn many hats over the last couple of years, and with COVID-19, we have shown our resilience and commitment. I am grateful to my fellow staff members for their contributions.

The Board has been very united and focused on the needs of families and individuals with autism, which has been a crucial factor in our successful year.

My thanks to you all.

8. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS FOR 2020/2021

6:55

Alison Narod: We have three new candidates on the Election Slate to join ACT's Board of Directors:

- **Denise Ching** is Director & Portfolio Manager at RBC Dominion Securities. Denise's previous board experience includes the BC Lions Foundation for Children with Disabilities, Vancouver Society of Financial Analysts, as well as membership on the investment committee of the BC Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia and mentor to UBC's Portfolio Management Foundation.
- **Blair Dwyer** is a lawyer practicing tax and estate planning law since 1985, first on Bay Street in Toronto and since 1992 in Victoria. Blair has been on ACT's Advisory Council since its inception over 12 years ago. He also presents an online workshop for ACT and has contributed a chapter on wills and estate planning to ACT's Autism Manual for BC. For more on Blair's extensive engagement in community and professional boards and support for ACT, see <http://dwyertaxlaw.com/community-activities/>
- **Nicole Provost** is a founder and director of the May Day Youth Choir for Neurodiversity. She has a degree in mathematics from the University of British Columbia and is currently studying aviation at the University of the Fraser Valley. A former summer student employee at ACT, Nicole has presented on a panel at an ACT conference on women and girls with autism and is well known for her positive attitude.

We also have 3 Board Members standing for re-election:

- **Karen Kalynchuk** - appointed in 2017, starting 1st of one-year term
- **Blair Whelan** - elected in 2016 - renewing for 1st of two-year term; (3rd year as Vice- President)
- **Brent Shirley** - appointed in 2017, renewing for 1st of one-year term;(3rd year as Treasurer)

Motion to approve the Election Slate for Board of Directors for 2020/2021.

Moved by Shannon Muir; Seconded by Jemana Elsharkawi; Passed unanimously.

9. APPLICATIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

6:58

Motion to approve Jake Anthony's application to join the general membership of ACT -Autism Community Training.

Moved by Blair Dwyer; Seconded by Jemana Elsharkawi; Passed unanimously.

10. MOTION REQUIRED TO APPROVE ALL ACTIONS BY THE BOARD IN 2019

7:00

Moved that...all acts, contracts, proceedings, appointments, elections and payments made and taken by the directors of ACT Autism Community Training Society since January 1, 2018 referred to in the minutes of the Board of Directors' meetings and the minutes of committee meetings be approved.

Moved by Jemana Elsharkawi; Seconded by Michelle Schmidt; Passed unanimously.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

7:02

Motion to adjourn.

Moved by Lila Mandzuik; Seconded by Jemana Elsharkawi; Passed unanimously

DRAFT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 2020

I would like to welcome nearly 20 new members who have joined ACT – Autism Community Training in time for our 2020 Annual General Meeting. We now have nearly 60 members who broadly reflect the diversity of our community. Autism affects all cultures, races and religion equally. We are building our membership to reflect our community which includes those who are aboriginal or are immigrants, as well as having the experience of being autistic adults, siblings, parents, community professionals, researchers and clinicians. These multiple perspectives enrich ACT's ability to serve those with neurodevelopmental conditions. The most important value we are seeking as we build ACT's membership is to identify those who think beyond their own personal priorities and work to help all members of our community, especially those who are least able to advocate for themselves.

Part of the process of writing my president's message for ACT's 2020 Annual General Meeting is reflecting on the opportunities that 2020 provided for ACT to innovate, to better meet the needs of isolated families who have long struggled in the face of a lack of accessible information and training. When I wrote my last message to our membership for our last AGM, held in August 2020, we all were looking forward to re-establishing our normal lives within a few months. From the vantage point of June 2021, we are again hoping for a return to normality. However, 18 months into this pandemic, our society has learnt valuable lessons about using technology to serve isolated citizens, as well as its profound limitations.

The pandemic forced ACT to focus all our efforts on providing online information resources and training. This was possible because this is an area in which we have invested for many years. This has meant our ability to serve isolated families in all areas of British Columbia and across Canada has blossomed. Part of our pandemic response was to focus on practical training, aimed at family members, and made available at no cost. This was only possible thanks to the support of our presenters, donors and sponsors.

The result has been that the many isolated families who have members affected by neurodevelopmental conditions, even if they live in large cities, have benefited. We are especially encouraged by the positive feedback from those who are long use to being neglected by virtue of their difficulty in accessing training opportunities, because they live outside of the Lower Mainland. Importantly, most of our 2020 events were recorded so that they can be watched, free of charge via Autism Videos @ ACT. Effectively these are a resource library of evidence-based practice available internationally to benefit those affected by autism and related neurological disorders worldwide.

While ACT has been grateful for the opportunity to extend our service to autistic individuals and their families during the pandemic, we also recognize that we must continue to advocate for those who are marginalized by a range of additional, inter-related factors including poverty, aboriginal status and difficulty in communicating in English. We cannot help them if we restrict our work to online resources.

ACT has worked hard over the last 18 months to collaborate with other organizations focused on the wider community affected by neurological conditions. This will continue as we do our best to keep the provincial and federal government focused on evidence-based solutions to the pervasive, systemic discrimination that mitigates against marginalized communities. In particular, the horror of the discovery of the remains of 215 aboriginal children found in Kamloops last month, on the grounds of a residential school, must inspire us to continue questioning authority and demand that we end our current systemic discrimination which forces so many families, especially aboriginal families, who have children with neurological conditions, to give their children up to foster care because they are denied the services that allow them to keep them at home, safely.

Finally, in addition to thanking my fellow board members and ACT's able staff, I want to thank the membership of our organization which provides our small organization with such a depth of expertise, whether professional or from the perspective of lived experience.

Alison Narod

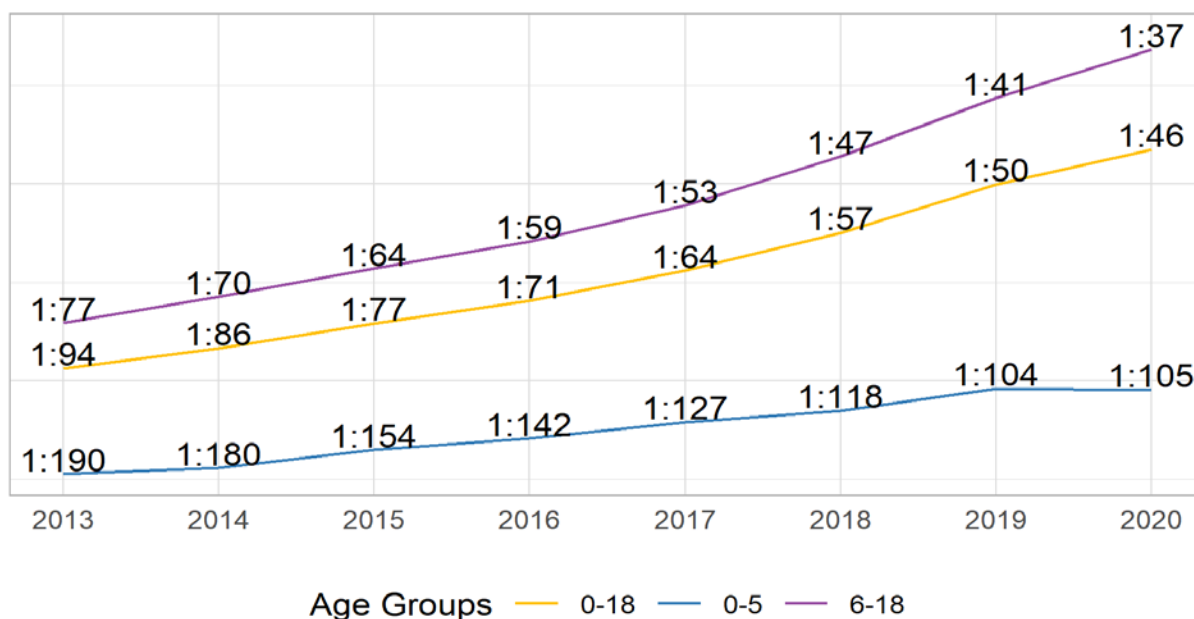
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2020

At ACT we recognize that autism is a neuro-developmental condition that brings with it strengths and challenges. To respond to the needs of individuals, we must provide a broad array of perspectives in our training and information resources, while holding on to the importance of remaining evidence-base.

The Context of ACT's 2020 Pandemic Response

The number of children now being diagnosed with autism grows significantly each year. The latest figures from the BC government reveal that 1 in 37 children in the province was receiving autism funding by the end of 2020. To give some context, when my son was diagnosed in 1995, it was a rare condition – just a few children in 10,000. In 2020, roughly 2,000 children were added to MCFD's autism funding program, many of whom would not have been recognized as autistic 20 years ago.

Autism Funding Program Service to Population Rate by Age Groups



Data Sources:

MCFD Integrated Case Management (ICM) system provided by Modelling and Analysis (MAIM)

Population data from BC Stats population projection, PEOPLE 2020 Note: Autism Funding Program count includes open/pending cases as at [sic] December each year

The reality of the pandemic has meant that waiting lists have also grown disproportionately for both publicly and privately funded diagnoses. The recent announcement by Variety, a charity, that they are prepared to fund private autism diagnoses reflects a grim reality that our publicly funded system is strained to the point that those children whose families cannot afford a private diagnosis, may never access early intervention services. The average age of diagnosis in BC is over six and this failure predates the pandemic. As in so many areas, the pandemic has highlighted our systemic failures – not created them.

The area ACT has seen the greatest struggles in 2020 is the situation of undiagnosed autistic adults and their families who have almost no access to publicly funded diagnoses or mental health support. Clinicians in private practice cannot keep up with the demand. Our publicly funded clinics use the rationale that

they do not have the training or experience to provide diagnosis. Astonishingly, our public health institutions do not require them to acquire it. This also applies to Children and Youth Mental Health clinics. Apparently, serving everyone equally is a choice in BC, especially at the complex crossroads of neuro-developmental conditions and mental health. The situation remains the most difficult in isolated communities in the BC Interior and the North and puts an enormous burden on aboriginal communities.

It is in this difficult context that I am reporting to you on what ACT has accomplished in 2020. It was the toughest year I have experienced as leader of ACT – Autism Community Training. Yet, I also have a huge sense of accomplishment to share with you. Despite the pandemic disrupting every aspect of our work, ACT has been able to innovate and serve autistic individuals and their families, and the professionals who support them, at a time when our online information and training resources have been needed as never before. I would like to recognize the commitment of our staff and board who continued to focus on the needs of the community, regardless of the many barriers.

I thank our presenters and panelists who made it possible for us to continue our information and training mandate. Especially those who participated in the ‘Pandemic Presentations’ in April and May 2020, in response to the immediate mental health impact of the pandemic on families. Details of all our training and information work in 2020, and those who made it possible, are in [ACT’s 2020 Report to Donors](#).

While ACT is grateful that we have had the capacity to serve thousands of families and professionals throughout this difficult period online, and through telephone support, we are weighted down by the continuing crisis that is affecting the autism community and all those affected by neuro-developmental conditions. The situation for many of our families continues to be challenging. Indeed, for a considerable minority, the pandemic did not change much because they received very little prior to 2020. What has been exposed by the pandemic, are the self-imposed limitations of the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s [MCFD] commitment to provide responsive services to families with children with autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. MCFD’s refusal to roll over autism funding to the child’s next contract period has particularly embittered families. Yet for many families, in particular those already disadvantaged by living in a rural area, or afraid of involvement with government, they are not able to use the funding they have access to.

The survey done by Simon Fraser University, in collaboration with ACT, over the summer of 2020, has revealed how precarious the situation is for families supporting children with autism in BC. The revelation that nearly ten percent of respondents had considered placing their autistic children in care because of concerns about their safety was shocking. [While the SFU study was specific to children with autism, discussions with other organizations indicate that the plight of those with other conditions is also desperate.] Recently ACT heard from a parent who attempted suicide as that was the only way left for her to bring attention to the desperate situation of her son who is both autistic and mentally ill.

I believe that it is thanks to the research of Professor Grace Iarocci and Vanessa Fung, both members of ACT, and the report from the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, and the media furor they produced, that the provincial government included a review of special needs in the letter that set out the priorities for the new minister, Mitzi Dean. The Minister has created an Advisory Council, but we have seen no practical steps. There was no increase in funding for families in crisis, even for MCFD’s respite services in the 2021 budget. As a member of the Minister’s Council, I am committed to speaking to the needs of families for immediate relief, in addition to meaningful systemic change.

While the SFU research revealed severe levels of crisis, it is important to consider that the neediest members of our community were under-represented among those who responded to the survey. To

respond to an online survey, you needed to be able to communicate in English, have access to a computer, have time to respond and a certain confidence in your communication abilities. This means that immigrant families, those living in areas with poor internet service or no access to a computer would have found it very difficult to respond. When you can't communicate by virtue of a neurological condition, if poverty means you have no access to the internet, if proficiency in English is a barrier, you are effectively excluded.

Looking Forward to 2021/2022 – ACT's commitment to the most vulnerable

ACT's role should be to provide training and information to those families who are in the position to help themselves, freeing up professionals, including MCFD's social workers, to focus on helping the neediest families. Yet SFU's research revealed how precarious the situation was in 2020 even for financially secure, educated families. Realistically, ACT does not have the reach to create responsive social services, but we do have the ability to engage in systemic advocacy and we are committed to accelerating this in 2021/22.

In particular, ACT recognizes that it is essential to take practical steps, not merely symbolic gestures, to ensure that aboriginal families affected by autism and other needs are given our full support. Since the pandemic began, ACT has been providing our trainings free – except a few involving out-of-province presenters. By the end of 2021, we will be back to charging professionals a fee to register. We will continue to provide generous bursaries for needy parents and caregivers. In addition, aboriginal organizations and family members will be provided full bursaries so that financial barriers will not limit access to ACT's training. Also, in recognition that aboriginal families are often reluctant to approach MCFD, we will re-double our efforts to inform our aboriginal partner organizations that we are keen to work with them to provide aboriginal families with evidence-based, confidential support.

ACT also sees systemic neglect of families who are struggling to secure appropriate services for their children because of having limited skills in English. We will continue our best efforts to provide materials in translation and to caption our videos in English and in multiple languages to serve the deaf and hard of hearing community, as well as those who struggle in English and continue to apply for funding for these initiatives. It is also gratifying that the free services we have developed have allowed ACT to contribute to the information and training needed by autism communities nationally and internationally.

We will also actively collaborate with autistic adults, researchers and clinicians, in particular in the area of diagnosis and mental health services, to promote systems change, a process we began prior to the pandemic.

Clearly, we have a lot of work in front of us. In closing, I thank our membership for all of your contributions to building a more just society for all those affected by neuro-developmental conditions.

Deborah Pugh

MOTION REQUIRED TO APPROVE ALL ACTIONS BY THE BOARD IN 2020

“Move that all acts, contracts, proceedings, appointments, elections and payments made and taken by the directors of ACT Autism Community Training Society since January 1, 2020, referred to in the minutes of the Board of Directors' meetings and the minutes of committee meetings be approved.”

ELECTION SLATE FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021/2022

According to ACT's by-laws, it is the role of the general membership to elect the Board of Directors. Not all of ACT's Board Members are up for election during the same year to ensure continuity. And some are up for only a one year term to balance the timing when terms end. All bios for ACT's current board members can be viewed here: www.actcommunity.ca/about-us/board-members

These board members are up for election

- President: Alison Narod - rejoined the board in 2017 – (4th year as President)- one-year term
- Dr. Alisa Lipson - joined in 2015 (for a one-year term)
- Karen Kalynchuk - joined in 2017
- Brent Shirley - joined in 2017 - (4th year as Treasurer) – one-year term
- Jennifer Branston – appointed in February 2021
- Dr. Kenneth Cole - appointed in February 2021
- Anne McCaw - appointed in February 2021
- Nicole Provost [elected in 2020 stepped down temporarily]

BOARD MEMBER APPOINTED SINCE THE LAST AGM

The following members of the board were appointed since the August AGM. Once elected by the board, their 1st term begins with their election by the membership at the 2020 AGM.

1. **Jennifer Branston**, participated in an ACT panel a few years ago, [Special Challenges Faced by Mothers with ASD](#), on being a mother with ASD and parenting children with ASD. She has a school-aged son on the spectrum and is an active volunteer, promoting inclusion and diversity as co-chair of the North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council.
2. **Dr. Kenneth Cole** is a Registered Psychologist, now engaged in autism assessments at BC Children's Hospital. He has previous board experience as a member of the board of the BC College of Psychologists. Ken has also presented a number of one- week courses for ACT in collaboration with POPARD where he worked as a consultant for a number of years.
3. **Anne McCaw** has a background in event facilities management and marketing and was General Manager for the Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University for a number of years. Now retired and living on Vancouver Island, Anne and her husband, Mike Rekis, are the sponsors for ACT's annual Herring for Autism Sale. Mike and Anne have two adult daughters, one is autistic and both are valued ACT volunteers.

Nicole Provost was elected to the Board of Directors in August 2020 but stepped down to work temporarily as a contractor for ACT. Nicole is Director of the MayDay Youth Choir for Neurodiversity. She has a degree in mathematics from the University of British Columbia and is currently studying aviation at the University of the Fraser Valley. A former summer student employee at ACT, Nicole has presented on a panel at an ACT conference on women and girls with autism and is well known for her positive attitude.

These board members are starting the second year of their two-year term and are not up for re-election:

- Blair Whelan – elected in 2016 - renewing for 2nd of two-year term; (4th year as Vice- President)
- Blair Dwyer – elected in 2020, renewing for 2nd of two-year term (1st as Secretary)
- Denise Ching – elected in 2020, renewing for 2nd of two-year term