



Knowledge That Makes a Difference

CASE FOR SUPPORT

THE CHALLENGE

Across BC, families are often left to navigate autism support alone—sorting through conflicting information, long waitlists, and services that vary widely by region. For families outside major urban centres, access to reliable, evidence-informed guidance can be limited or non-existent.

Every dollar donated multiplies impact by empowering families, educators, and communities - not just one child or one classroom.

ACT is one of the few organizations in BC that reaches every region, including remote and Indigenous communities.

ABOUT ACT

Mission: ACT empowers communities with trustworthy information and education, fostering inclusion and championing neurodiversity. Guided by Autistic voices, we provide the tools people need to build an inclusive, equitable, and neurodiversity-affirming society.

Vision: To contribute to a world where neurodivergent individuals thrive in an equitable and inclusive society.

Who we serve: Autistic and Neurodivergent individuals, families, educators, and community professionals—anyone seeking reliable, accessible, and culturally informed autism and disability resources.



Understanding Autism—Why It Matters

Autism is one of the fastest-growing developmental disabilities, yet too many Autistic people in BC still face exclusion—not because of who they are, but because families and communities lack access to clear, reliable, affirming information.

With **1 in 29 children** diagnosed and more than **70,000 Autistic people** across the province, the need for accessible, evidence-informed support has never been greater. Without access to accurate, affirming guidance early on, many individuals and families face unnecessary barriers that compound over time. Early, strengths-based guidance changes lives, improving communication, wellbeing, and long-term outcomes.

ACT bridges this gap by providing trusted education, community training, and plain-language resources that empower Autistic people, families, and the professionals who support them.



“ACT is highly regarded locally, provincially and nationally and serves as a model for the efficient and effective dissemination of public health information for neurodivergent communities.” ~Dr. Grace Iarocci, R. Psych



Knowledge That Makes a Difference

Our Impact in 2025

 45400+

Viewed evidence-based videos

 **Countless**

**Partnerships with schools, clinics,
Nations, and organizations**

 60,000+

Accessed ACT's free autism resources

 100%

**Embedded equity and
neurodivergent-affirming**

 6,000+

Participated in professional training

 20+ years

Trusted

“Thanks from the bottom of my heart for such an inspiring conference. From the beginning, it was so honest and I felt that I belonged even though I am not an academic. As a special educators working at school, your valuable knowledge will help me improve my daily interventions.” ~Workshop Participant



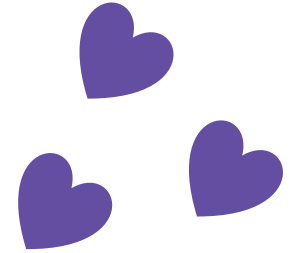
WHAT MAKES ACT DIFFERENT

- ✓ Neurodivergent-affirming
- ✓ Province-wide, accessible
- ✓ Trusted, evidence-based
- ✓ Free learning at a massive scale
- ✓ Community-first, not charity-first
- ✓ Independent and unbiased
- ✓ Deep expertise in BC systems
- ✓ Built with and for Autistic people

Together, these differences allow ACT to reach more people, reduce harm, and strengthen systems that support Autistic individuals across BC.

“ACT has been an invaluable part of my journey. As a late diagnosed autistic adult who found services through ACT’s AID search, and as a former team member, I have seen many times how important ACT’s services and training resources are in helping professionals understand autism through a truly affirming lens.” ~Rowan Guy ACT Autistic Advisory Committee





Every child deserves to be seen. Every family deserves to be heard.



Imagine living in a remote community, far from specialists, resources, or support. Your child shows signs of autism, and you don't know where to turn. The waitlists are long, travel is impossible, and each day without guidance feels like an uphill climb.

For families like **Pamela Johnson's from Wuikinuxv Nation**, this was their reality — until ACT stepped in. Through listening, acting, and going the literal distance, ACT helped her son receive the assessment and support he needed, right at home. That single act of care didn't just change one family's life — it transformed a community's understanding, strengthened local systems, and sparked hope where there had been uncertainty. This is the work ACT does every day: bridging gaps, empowering families, and building inclusive communities where neurodivergent individuals can thrive.

This kind of support is only possible because of donors who believe that geography should never determine access to care.

“Every part had value for me as a parent and a professional. Thank you for being so invested and passionate about supporting the ASD community.” ~Participant, Managing Distressed Behaviour



Knowledge That Makes a Difference

Stories Like this Show the Impact of ACT



In My Own Words: A Mother's Story from Wuikinuxv

My name is Pamela Johnson, and I'm a mother from **Wuikinuxv Nation** — a small, fly-in-only First Nations community on the Central Coast of British Columbia.

In the fall of 2023, I attended an ACT presentation. I remember sitting there in tears. My son, **Jude** needed an autism assessment, but we live so far from any city, and I had no idea how to make it happen. The waitlists were long, the specialists were far away, and the idea of traveling such a distance with my child felt impossible.

That day I met Allison. Allison listened — **really listened**. Soon after, ACT reached out. Together with **Helicopters Without Borders**, their staff flew into our community to make sure Jude could be assessed **here, at home, in a place where he felt safe**. They even found a psychologist willing to come to Wuikinuxv. I still get emotional thinking about it. For our family, that visit **changed everything**.

But ACT didn't stop there. Allison returned to our community to continue supporting us — sharing resources, helping our local school and health workers learn more about autism, and showing us that **understanding and inclusion can start right here, where we live**.

What stands out most is the **care and respect** ACT brings to every interaction. They didn't just provide services — they built relationships.

They saw our needs, our community, and our strengths. Because of ACT, my son's future feels brighter. And I know there are many other Indigenous families like ours who just need someone willing to **go the distance — literally** — to make sure their children are seen, supported, and valued.



Knowledge That Makes a Difference



Who We Are

For more than 20 years, Autism Community Training (ACT) has been a trusted source of evidence-informed, neuroaffirming education in British Columbia.

We equip families, educators, professionals, and Autistic adults with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate systems, advocate effectively, and build lives rooted in dignity, autonomy, and possibility.

ACT is a registered nonprofit founded by a parent who recognized the urgent need for timely, accurate, and accessible information following an autism diagnosis. That founding vision—respectful, inclusive, and practical support—continues to guide everything we do.

We believe every Autistic person deserves:

- To be understood, not “managed”
- To learn in ways that reflect how they think, communicate, and thrive
- To build autonomy and self-determination, not compliance

ACT is powered by a small but exceptionally skilled team of three—bringing decades of experience in inclusive education, autism support, and community advocacy. Together, we ensure that families, professionals, and communities across B.C. have access to trustworthy, evidence-informed resources.

Executive Director – Dr. Michelle Schmidt is a nationally recognized leader with more than 35 years’ experience in inclusive education, Michelle brings deep expertise in autism, mental health, transitions, and system navigation. Her career includes senior leadership in Surrey Schools, contributions to provincial and national initiatives, and extensive work strengthening services for children and youth with autism. Michelle’s commitment to equity and access continues to guide ACT’s mission and impact.

Community Liaison Officer – Allison Balfour Allison brings over 15 years of hands-on experience supporting neurodivergent students

and their families. As both an educator and a parent of neurodivergent children, she combines professional knowledge with lived experience. She has supported trauma-informed practice, and helped families navigate complex education, ministry, and medical systems.



Administrative Assistant – Albert Huang Albert ensures ACT’s programs, digital resources, and day-to-day operations run smoothly. With a strong background in cybersecurity, web development, and client support, he streamlines ACT’s digital systems, manages training logistics, and supports front-line communications—helping families and professionals access the information they need, when they need it.



Knowledge That Makes a Difference

Our Work

ACT bridges critical gaps in autism and neurodivergence support by making **high-quality, evidence-informed learning accessible across the lifespan**. Our work strengthens communities—not just individuals.



ACT'S programs include:

- Free and low-cost **online and in-person training** for families, professionals, and Autistic adults
- The **Autism & Intellectual Disability (AID) Search**—Canada's most comprehensive curated autism resource database
- **Live and streamed events** with leading subject-matter experts
- **Specialized workshops** on trauma, mental health, education, gender diversity, and decolonizing neurodivergence
- Meaningful **Autistic leadership** in governance, facilitation, and knowledge-sharing

Over two decades, ACT has built an online library of more than **90 free educational videos and more than 4,500 curated resources**, widely used for their credibility, practical value, and reach—particularly in rural, northern, and under-resourced communities.

The Challenge

Despite increased awareness, many systems remain poorly equipped to meet the needs of Autistic people.

- Children frequently enter school environments unable to accommodate their learning and sensory needs, increasing the **risk of exclusion, restraint, or seclusion**
- Approximately **85% of Autistic adults are unemployed**
- Many adults remain dependent on family due to **system failures**—not lack of ability
- Autistic individuals experience higher rates of **mental health challenges**, injury-related death, and suicide
- Families supporting an Autistic individual face average **annual costs of \$60,000**—costs that can be significantly reduced with early diagnosis and appropriate supports

These **outcomes are not inevitable**. With respect, understanding, and the right supports, Autistic people can and do flourish.



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Why Support ACT

ACT is independent by design—and that independence comes at a cost. Unlike large organizations with corporate backing, ACT does not receive core government funding and relies on individual donors to sustain its work.

Demand continues to grow. When you support ACT, you are:

- Protecting a province-wide knowledge infrastructure
- Amplifying existing, proven impact
- Delivering high-reach, cost-effective social return

When you support ACT, you are not just donating. You are **protecting access to informed, inclusive, community-led autism support**—at a time when it is needed more than ever.

With your support, ACT can continue to be BC's lifeline for autism understanding. Your gift today ensures that families in every corner of the province have access to the knowledge that changes futures.

Together, we can ensure knowledge is not a barrier—but a bridge.

Ways to Support ACT

- Make a one-time or monthly **donation**
- **Sponsor** a training or community workshop—see our sponsorship document @
- **Partner** on community-based initiatives
- **Share** ACT's resources and events
- **Advocate** for equitable autism policy and funding
- **Volunteer** your time or expertise



Join Us!

Join a community committed to equity, understanding, and lasting change.

www.actcommunity.ca/donate

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ACT is a registered charity:

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