

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Experience from Alberta, Canada

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Some points raised:

- The presenters have been including individuals with intellectual disabilities in universities and colleges in Alberta for more than 20 years
- Today Alberta offers more inclusive post-secondary options for adults with intellectual disabilities than anywhere else in the world. There are now 18 Post-Secondary Education colleges and universities in Alberta offering opportunities for inclusive education. All have their own model, none of them are standardised. The one thing they have in common is that they are very individualised for each person. They take advantage of the facilities already available in the college.
- Student Profile: mix of people with varying abilities – they have a policy of including people with more severe/profound intellectual disabilities in 3rd level education
- You need to develop a deep understanding of inclusion before you start the process of including people at 3rd level. Before approaching the 3rd level college you need to be united in your vision of what you want to achieve.
- In Canada the whole process from the initial idea to the first student intake took approx. 4 years. It varies from college to college.
- Start off with small group of people – 6 to 10 people
- They don't develop "special" 3rd level programmes for people with intellectual disability.
- They use the language of university rather than the language of services
- Approximately 70-80% of students who go through 3rd level education secure employment typically utilizing natural supports. (this figure would be 30-40% for people who haven't been to 3rd level)
- No rights based access to 3rd level education for people with an intellectual disability. There is a reference to 3rd level education in the UN Convention (*Extract from Article 24 of UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* "5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.")
- Students leave the college with a portfolio, including work experience, any assignments completed, references from professors etc. – they do not do a degree. They take part in the course as much as possible. You can register to sit in on whatever class you wish. Some teachers have modified their ways of teaching and the materials they use as a result of including people with an intellectual disability in their lectures. And they graduate with the other students.
- We need to be clear what we mean by "Inclusion" and "Mainstreaming"
- Everybody can be included in post-secondary education – regardless of the level of their intellectual disability

- You need to be clear where post-secondary education leads to – a pathway to life (career, lifestyle etc.)
- “Special” programmes e.g. special olympics, best buddies etc. lose their effectiveness over time
- Vision of inclusive post-secondary education came from families originally – better likelihood of employment and opportunity for a meaningful life.
- Its needs leadership to make it happen
- Inclusion in post-secondary education means no grouping of people together, no life-skills training – its embedding students with intellectual disabilities into the college curriculum
- Going to university should be a real life choice – and its only one of many choices
- Families often don’t have the option to choose the best, they have to choose the “least worst” option for their child – after secondary education e.g. day service or rehabilitative training
- Lots of people in Canada have an Individual Education Plan but few have a good life. Some plans can have trivial outcomes
- Post-secondary education is a life-enriching experience (the full range of life experiences, and all the things you never tell your parents about!)
- Programmes that are not fully inclusive can give a student with an intellectual disability a “parallel” life, not a real life. It’s important that people are embedded in “the mess of life” at university or college.
- Relationships are key – need someone with skills in developing friendships. Build and embed relationships, not paid supports
- Services need to have a presence on campus e.g. facilitator – working with the faculty to support each person and give guidance and mentorship. They find it a challenge to retain college facilitators as they are not very well paid.
- You cant wait for the “perfect” second level experience before providing 3rd level opportunities
- Research concludes that incremental change doesn’t work – e.g. developing a “special” programme at 3rd level will not lead to true inclusion. In fact a separate programme can lead to exclusion of students in college.
- A new guide on quality standards and practices for safeguarding inclusive post-secondary education developed with John O'Brien (+ DVD) will be sent on to us after the workshop

Guiding Principles

- Culturally normative pathways to adulthood
- Individualised supports
- Measuring natural supports
- Inclusion within valued contexts that have high expectations for learning and participation
- Normative and valued identities and roles
- Diversity of relationships
- Access to relevant and expansive curriculum

- Pathway to a career
- Enriching Experiences
- Possibilities, choices and opportunities
- Capitalising on generic resources and community capacity

Purpose of an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

- Relationships (these are key)
- Meaningful Learning and Knowledge
- Employment and Careers
- Life-Enriching Experience
- Identity

Workshop Facilitators

Bruce Uditsky, M.Ed., is the CEO of the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) and an Adjunct Professor, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary. He has been invited to speak and consult on a wide variety of disability practice and research issues in Canada, United States, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Bruce is also the author and co-author of numerous publications on community inclusion and social justice. He has been recognized for his public advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and their families as the recipient of a number of awards. Bruce is also noted for his development of innovative community inclusion initiatives and his leadership in social policy change and development. He is the father of two sons one of whom has intellectual disabilities.

E. Anne Hughson, Ph.D., is the Director of and Associate Professor with, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary and a Chartered Psychologist. She is a recipient of the Faculty of Education Excellence in Teaching Award and the author and co-author of a number of texts and many chapters and articles on a wide range of disability-related subjects. She has lectured and taught in many countries. As a researcher in disability studies and a teacher in program evaluation her work is grounded in the lived experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Anne has been noted for creativity in advancing community inclusion and her leadership in supporting and sustaining unique approaches to community inclusion.