Mountain Ear

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by **The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch**
Address: CHHA-BC, Room 423-2005 Quebec St, Vancouver, BC V5T 2Z6
email: northshore@chha-bc.org website: https://www.chha-nsb.com
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Editor: Susan Gelinas
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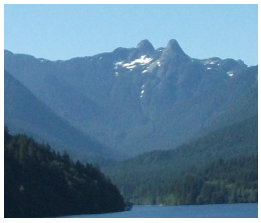



From the Desk of the President

by Alan Dion

Hi All,

So, this is the letter that I really did not want to write, but I have to.

I'll restart,

Hi All, welcome to my last letter as President of the North Shore Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association.

CHHA North Shore is NOT folding, and your Board is currently making plans to keep it going. We'll need your help but the plan is to keep kicking. I, however, cannot commit to being able to spend the time and energy required as President, so I must terminate my hold on that position. Assuming that you want me, I hereby volunteer myself to continue to serve on the board. There already is a position for me, it's called "Past President".

Some of the members of the current board will again volunteer to help organize and to run the Branch's affairs, but as usual there is always room for more volunteers. If you like Sound Advice and the Branch's Newsletter, The Mountain Ear and the website, www.chha-nsb.com, please think of what you can do to ensure that these services are available to all who need and want them.

Sound Advice is thriving in North Vancouver, at the new Silver Harbour, ably led by Ron Dolling. I, myself, will continue to be available at Sound Advice meetings, when I am able. Ping Lau will be available when he is in town. Other board members will also be in attendance. I am personally sponsoring Ron to the Board. If not immediately I see him as future presidential material. I am also asking Ron, and anyone else who would to volunteer to join me in approaching West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre to get Sound Advice meetings back to where it all began.

So, some of you may be wondering what happened to our branch, let me give you a brief rundown. Following Hugh Hetherington's illness the branch was unable to continue. We needed help and really didn't know where and how to find it. We didn't even know what we needed. We, the Board, looked around and found Ruth Warick and CHHA BC. Boy, did we ever luck out there.

Ruth is the President of CHHA BC, and they kindly let us share her time and her energy. Without her guiding hand I doubt that we would even still exist. Through financial and regulatory steps Ruth has been there to guide us and keep us on track. I could go on and on about the help she offered, but let me just say, "Thank you, Ruth".

Meanwhile, we have additional volunteers who have joined and strengthened the board, as well as your expressions of interest in revitalizing the branch. We have also been energized by your enthusiasm for our Sound Advice meetings and look forward to continuing this flagship program which we kept going throughout this past year.

So there you have it!

The AGM till take place Monday November 30th , at 7:00pm, via Zoom. More information is available further in this newsletter. Please join us and vote for your board.

Thank you all for letting me serve as your President in the last year and in the past.. It has been both a pleasure and a honour,

Alan

From the Editor's Desk
by Susan Gelinas

Firstly, my apologies for not publishing a Mountain Ear issue on schedule in September. Our branch lost its way for a time without our long time leader, Hugh Hetherington. I found it unsettling to leave his name out of the editors when I was typing this. I do know that he is looking down on us and telling us to carry on.

Secondly, in an unexpected move, the board members of CHHA-NSB have reversed the decision to dissolve the branch and be absorbed into CHHA-BC that was made in November 2025. Instead we will hold our AGM on Monday, November 30 and we will elect our board. We are beyond excited to see what's in store for our branch. Tickled pink, my mother would say. We encourage all current members of CHHA-NSB to attend, as well as those wanting to be members. The meeting is open to the public. And you do not have to be a senior citizen to attend the meeting or join our branch. We are open to any adult who wants to know more about hearing loss and issues. Hugh Hetherington always used to say "We are hard of hearing people helping other hard of hearing people." Please join us to see what we are all about.

Thirdly, I would like to talk about the format of this newsletter. We would like the newsletter to inform. We will continue to provide articles about the current events of our branch as well as other CHHA branches and organizations. We will publish articles about the ongoing advances in technology related to hearing loss, as well as articles about coping with our hearing losses. We would like it to also include information about events that would be beneficial to the hard of hearing. Hearing loss affects people of all ages and often we aren't aware of events that might prove interesting to us. Our lives become more isolated, so if we can provide some info that eases that isolation that would be good. If you know of any such events, send us an email or talk to us at Sound Advice.

We would also like input from our readers on a more personal level: you do not have to be a good writer; you don't even have to provide your name. We are looking for anecdotes that you would like to share about your hearing loss or those around you. I, myself, am always interested in knowing what TV shows have actors with hearing loss and whether we see their hearing aids. Another example, we would like to know of restaurants and venues where you had a good (or bad) experience. As we all know, it is sometimes very difficult to eat out. We would like to know about what technology you use to assist you with your hearing loss: what has worked and what hasn't. In the past, I found people reluctant to want to write about those things, but they would tell me. Catch one of us at a Sound Advice meeting and tell us your story and we'll write it down. Each of you have stories to tell that to you are ordinary but to others, they are extraordinary and the telling of the stories is supportive to others. The telling also breaks the isolation. It brings us together as a community.

We would like to include some light hearted stuff. We all need a laugh. Some cartoons I can publish, some I need permission. Do we have any artists among our readers who would be willing to draw some cartoons?

One of the odd things I have found in my own journey of hearing loss is that there is still a stigma attached to hearing loss. People are still in denial of their hearing loss and very reluctant to get help initially. And strangely, it is still considered a senior citizen's health problem. I attended the October Sound Advice meeting, and I was impressed by how many people pulled out their cell phones and used it to help with their hearing loss. Technology is still considered a young people's skill, but those of you at that meeting could teach a thing or two to the younger generation.

Somehow, we want to draw into our branch, adults of all ages who deal with hearing loss. Bring a friend to a Sound Advice Meeting. Print off this newsletter and pass it around to neighbours and friends. Post it. Tell people about our website www.chha-nsb.com

Think about what you can share and send it in to northshore@chha-bc.org

I know there has been repetition across Alan's, Mike's, and mine own articles, but we are excited about this new chapter and want to get people informed and involved.

At this point, I am not sure when the next issue of Mountain Ear will publish, but definitely in the new year and hopefully on schedule. For those of you who get mailed hard copies, please consider getting the email version. It does cut down on costs and it will allow us to play with the visual format. ■

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch
Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 30th 2026
7:00 pm via **Zoom**

Guest Speaker: **Mandy Fisch, MSc. RAUD, RHIP**
Topic: ***Hearing Health is Brain Health: How Hearing Loss Affects Brain Function and Overall Health***

About Mandy: Mandy has provided hearing healthcare services on the North Shore for over 20 years. Passionate about communication and well-being, she helps clients with hearing loss reconnect with the world around them. Mandy is also actively involved in raising community awareness and promoting early detection of hearing loss.

The meeting is open to the public and there are no restrictions on the number of people who attend. We encourage all current members of CHHA-NSB to attend, as well as anyone interested in our branch. Following the guest speaker, AGM business will be conducted including the election of board members. Only branch members may vote. The meeting may last up to an hour.

Registration in advance is required:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/eN3gC-EqQBuVcBCCmtN1rw

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

For more information:
email northshore@chha-bc.org
or visit our website www.chha-nsb.com

Mike's Musings
by Mike Hocevar,
past president, current board member

I hate to break this to you folks but...the present intense elections period is not quite over yet– we have our branch's Board of Directors to elect at our Annual General Meeting in November lol !

Hugh Hetherington's illness last fall and his passing back in January triggered the very real possibility of winding up our North Shore branch. Although it's been a very challenging transition year since, the directors have shared your concerns loud and clear to not fold the branch and have now determined to continue our existence after all.

To enable this, we received tremendous assistance and advice from BC Chapter president Ruth Warick and their board. And absolutely, our own branch president Alan Dion, needs to be acknowledged for his truly courageous leadership and continued work this whole time while dealing with some very, very serious health issues all this past year. Very inspiring your dedication, Alan– thank you tremendously.

So it's really important to have your personal AGM participation; it will be by held by Zoom later in November as per the notices to you. And if you have to renew your membership through CHHA National, please get onto it right away; it can be done easily online, or by mail, just handing us a cheque at Sound Advice. Go to https://www.chha-nsb.com/membership/join/ to get all the instructions. Thank you! Your membership renewal guarantees that you will continue to receive all the news from CHHA National and CHHA BC as well as our own CHHA-NSB.

We're excited; the Sound Advice monthly drop-in session has continued at Silver Harbour and we want to get the West Van Seniors' Centre sessions reestablished too. Our Mountain Ear newsletter under the very capable editorship of Susan Gelinas is going to get a more vibrant easy to read format too in the New Year. Also, the bi-monthly guest speaker program hopefully will be revived as well.

In the meantime, the year end celebratory season will be upon us sooner than we expect, which means for us hard of hearing folks, some extra stress in shopping, events and social settings, and family dinners as well.

So let's remind ourselves of some strategies and tips from our beloved longtime expert, former director and co-host Flo Spratt, now retired to the States. Remember, Flo used to suggest you do a little thought and analyzing of settings in advance to consider challenges in those venues and settings.

I will just mention some of these. Being assertive– not aggressive–is most important. You should let others know your of your needs or requests to help facilitate better listening experiences for you. Don't be shy either; human nature is very strong to assist, provided others know how to help you.

Just like, how often have we experienced medical personnel and supermarket cashiers for example, to lower their masks for you if they're wearing such, to be able see their lips to assist in those specific listening experiences?

What about using a remote microphone like those often supplied as part of your hearing aid package? It could be quite a difference maker, for sure.

Then there is the dreaded Family Dinner! Yet, this can be turned into a bit of an advantage according to Flo. First off, arrange with the host some little protocols that make you included, of which the host can advise the dinner guests. They will be understanding and accommodating since they'll know of your hearing loss. If you miss or are missing something in the table conversation, sit next to the host so you could give a little nudge with the elbow to prompt them to pause the table conversation to provide you with something you missed (note this tip from Flo has proven to work superbly for me personally). O.K. folks, carry on and all the best to you. ■

Sound Advice Meetings and Assisted Listening
by Ron Dolling

We are working toward Sound Advice meetings at Silver Harbour having assisted listening audio available for those who need it or those who are curious and want to learn more.

Assisted Listening are devices that go beyond our hearing aids to help us understand conversation. Most people probably use this in some form whether it is a connector to their TV or a remote microphone that they give to someone to talk into when they are in a noisy environment. In public spaces, older systems such as Telecoil (otherwise known as T-Coil or Loop) are still relevant and are used by many today. Newer technologies hold great promise. These systems take sound from a microphone the presenter is using and deliver it direct to your hearing aids bypassing room noise like echoes, air-conditioning, and side conversations. Extraneous noise is something even the best hearing aids can struggle to reject.

Auracast is a new technology that is incorporated into newer hearing aids. Sound is broadcast to an audience using Auracast and you set your hearing aids to receive it. Many may see this as complicated, but it is the system that we would design if we could and we would receive:

- CD quality stereo audio direct to our hearing aids
- The sound timing must match the presenter's lips with no annoying delay
- Low power so that it doesn't drain our hearing aid batteries
- No pairing like we must do on our phones with current Bluetooth
- Tune into a broadcast like you do an FM radio
- Make it possible for people with Telecoil hearing aids to use as well

With all of that, there are still challenges especially for those of us whose main interest is not technology. At the end of Sound Advice meetings, we can show you how to connect to the technology and try it out. Show you how to make it simple. If your hearing aids are not compatible, we can look at existing options for you to connect. We can also give tips for how to get the best experience using Assisted Listening systems.

Many people vote with their feet when it comes to public event or noisy rooms. We may struggle to hear, tune out and miss critical information, or just feel exhausted at all the effort required. Why go out to an event if it is not fun? If this is you, then Assisted Listening may be part of the solution.

The North Shore is progressive when it comes to Auracast. Centennial Theatre now has Auracast and provides neckloops for people with Telecoil. North

Vancouver District Libraries have Auracast installed in many of their rooms and some service desks. You can take a course or see a presentation or go to a concert without missing out. You can have that shared community experience that people value so highly and not be relegated to Zoom if and when it is available.

Most importantly, Auracast and Telecoil will be offered at Sound Advice meetings. You can come down and connect with people who understand the struggle of what it is like to live with hearing loss. You can give advice to others or maybe pick up some tips yourself. It is not an exaggeration to say that Sound Advice meetings change people's lives. Come and be a part of it! ■

CHHA-BC at 40: Moving Forward Together

Four decades of hearing access, advocacy and community connection

by Ruth Warick, President, CHHA-BC

This November, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association's BC Chapter marks 40 years of community, advocacy and work toward greater hearing access and inclusion. We celebrate the people who have built our community, reflect on how far we have come and renew our commitment to the work ahead.

For Mountain Ear readers, this provincial story has a familiar, local heart. It is the story of people sharing practical advice, learning about hearing technology, finding confidence and helping one another stay connected. The North Shore has been an important part of that story.

Developing a provincial voice

Founded in November 1986, CHHA-BC grew through branches and support groups that gave people with hearing loss places to meet, learn and speak up about barriers in their communities. Across British Columbia, members shared communication strategies, explored assistive devices and took part in speechreading classes. Local experience helped shape a stronger provincial voice.

Education has remained central to this work. The Managing Hearing Loss program, on-going workshops and the Hearing Healthcare program have helped people build practical skills for everyday life for adults, youth, and families.

Access, connection and a North Shore legacy

Alongside education, CHHA-BC and its branches have advocated for captioning, hearing loops, audio accessibility and better communication in public spaces. Online mentoring was established by the Chapter and embraced as a nationwide program by CHHA National. More recently, support from the federal New Horizons for Seniors Program has helped CHHA-BC deliver regional workshops with a goal of developing a province-wide network of peer-support leaders.

Here on the North Shore, Sound Advice has long brought that spirit of mutual support to life. Members have exchanged coping strategies, explored hearing aids and assistive listening technology, and learned from one another's experiences. As Susan Gelinas recalled in the June Mountain Ear, Hugh Hetherington described CHHA simply: "We are hard of hearing people helping other hard of hearing people."

That message belongs at the heart of this anniversary. Hugh's generosity with his time and technical knowledge, and the contributions of so many North Shore volunteers, remind us that a community is built through everyday acts of support.

As we mark these four decades, we thank the members, volunteers, families, professionals and community partners who have contributed to CHHA-BC's work. Our anniversary is both a celebration and a reminder of why we come together: to share what we know, reduce isolation and make participation possible. Let us carry that spirit forward—together. ■

Hearing Health Seminar Highlights Cochlear Implant Access Challenges in BC

by Ron Dolling

I had the pleasure of attending the Hearing Health Seminar hosted by the BC Cochlear Implant Support Group at West Vancouver Library on October 31, along with other members of CHHA-NSB.

The BC Cochlear Implant Support Group has grown into a province-wide community supporting people throughout their cochlear implant journey.

The seminar featured two excellent speakers: Dr. Paul Mick, a neurotologist and cochlear implant surgeon at St. Paul's Hospital, and Bowen Tang, a cochlear implant recipient and educator.

Bowen gave an excellent presentation on living with hearing loss, covering communication strategies, advocating for one's needs, and the social impact of hearing loss.

Dr. Mick followed with presentations on cochlear implant surgery and bone conduction hearing implant surgery. He discussed when cochlear implants are recommended, how they work, what to expect before and after surgery, and the different types of implants available. Expected outcomes and potential complications were also covered. He included a surgical video, which I found particularly interesting and helpful. The presentation on bone conduction hearing implants was equally informative.

During the question period, Dr. Mick spoke in detail about the serious funding shortages affecting BC's adult cochlear implant program. When an audience member asked what we could do to help, Bowen took over and explained the cochlear implant group's advocacy initiative.

The numbers are alarming. Adults in BC currently face a 40–48 month wait for cochlear implants, with an additional delay of up to two years just to enter the program after referral. Manitoba is next, with a wait of approximately 24 months, while most other provinces have considerably shorter waits.

BC limits adult cochlear implants to just 70 per year, despite receiving approximately 400 referrals annually. By comparison, there are no equivalent annual caps on procedures such as knee replacements or pacemaker implants. The physician-recommended benchmark is for treatment to take place within six months. Shortages of audiology staff add further delays. Taken together, these figures point to a serious crisis in access to cochlear implants for adults in BC.

Bowen encouraged everyone to get involved by visiting the group's website and signing a petition calling on the provincial government to address this situation and provide appropriate funding.

You can learn more and get involved here:

CI Advocacy in BC:
https://www.cochlearimplantgroupbc.ca/resources/ci-advocacy-in-bc

Sign the petition:
https://win.newmode.net/canadianhardofhearingassociation

Both presenters were excellent, and I would highly recommend attending future events featuring either of them. It was an informative and worthwhile hour and a half, and a good reminder of both the possibilities offered by hearing technology and the importance of ensuring people can actually access it. ■

Sound Advice

Presented by:
The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues dealing with hearing loss.
Subjects to be addressed include:

- Technology;
- Speech Reading;
- Coping Strategies
- Improving Hearing Environments

Silver Harbour sessions will be held at its new location at 2325 St Georges Ave, North Vancouver. These sessions will be held as in-person meetings on the third Monday of each month at 1 pm, in the Gathering Place, Room 1077

2026 Fall sessions are scheduled for Sept 21, Oct 19, & Nov 16

2027 Winter/Spring are scheduled for Jan 18, Mar 15, Apr 19, May 17, June 21

The meetings are free and are open to all members of the public-you do not have to be a senior!

There are no meetings in July & August

For Information email northshore@chha-bc.org

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association or CHHA-North Shore Branch.