



## A message from the Co-Editor *Maria Glaze*

*Greetings Everyone!*

In my role as a new Vela board member and Co-Editor of the newsletter, I have been invited to write the editorial page for this newsletter. The focus of this issue of VelaVision is connecting with others and making the most of challenges.

Vela has always recognized the power of connecting with others. At the hearts of microboards are the connections to the person for whom the microboard is formed. Over the years, Vela has provided many opportunities for microboards around the province to connect with one another through our annual provincial conference. However, last year, the venue that had been used for the past few years was no longer available due to fire damage. In true Vela fashion, the staff saw this potential challenge as an opportunity. Instead of a single provincial conference, Vela chose to offer four regional gatherings around the province. With only the Prince George and Vernon events behind us, we expect the total number of attendees for all four gatherings to be significantly higher than at the single BC-wide conference. In this newsletter we are sharing information about the Prince George and Vernon gatherings that took place in the fall. We hope that many of you will be able to connect with others at our next regional events. Look for a

Vancouver Island gathering in the next couple of months and the Lower Mainland event in late spring.

It was through facing challenges and connecting with others that our family discovered new ways of supporting our daughter, Rebecca, to have a great life. The high school years were an extremely challenging time for us and as we looked ahead, we saw that the services and supports available were not the best fit for her or our family. It was through connecting with others that we learned about individualized funding and microboards, and a dream began to take shape. Now, 8 years after we formed our microboard, we are living our dream and it's even better than we could have imagined!

With ongoing external changes and our family's needs shifting with time, we continue to benefit from connecting with others for information, new ideas, and support.

As Vela's work expands locally and internationally, we are able to broaden our connections. This newsletter also includes information on an exciting project in Western Australia. The Family Focus Conference is another great networking opportunity. Watch for news about their October conference on their website:

<http://www.familyfocusconference.com/>

Stay tuned for our next issue of VelaVision where we will be celebrating 20 years of microboards in B.C.

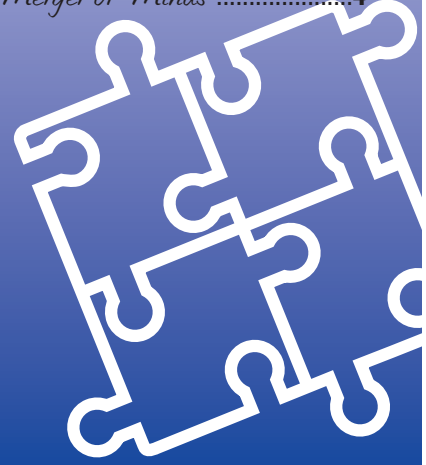
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**Rob McLean is a young man with a Vela Microboard living in Chase. On January 16th, 2010 Vela hosted a Gathering of Microboards and IF recipients in Vernon. One of the three sessions presented was a panel on Innovation. Rob McLean was one of the presenters on that panel. Rob spoke about his life and the changes he has experienced with the support of his microboard. Rob, as he notes in his article, is also interested in photography and he took some terrific pictures for us that day. The following is the presentation Rob gave.**

*Hi my name is Rob McLean.*

My Microboard's name is Rob's Supportive Society.

Having a Microboard has helped me to come off medication and be much happier. My microboard has enabled me to move out of a care home and to live semi-independently in my own apartment. My microboard has helped me to achieve all my goals and to set new goals.

I have support workers who come on

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*"My microboard has helped me to achieve all my goals and to set new goals."*

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a regular basis and they help me with whatever I need help with, like shopping, meal planning, cooking and budgeting. Having support workers allows me to go to dentist and doctor appointments on a regular basis.

My Support workers and I go on day trips to places like the BC Wildlife Park, the Revelstoke Dam and the Revelstoke Train Museum. My support worker takes me on camping trips to Niskonith Lake in the summer. I enjoy going to places like the BC Wildlife Park, because every time I go, I see different animals and I learn about the animals' habitat. I do lots of volunteer work with my



support workers. I help out at the Thrift Store in Chase, where I put out clothes and other merchandise. I go 5 days a week to the Chase Village Office, where I use their postage machine to put postage on their mail and deliver it to the post office, where I pick up incoming mail. I use the office shredder to dispose of their confidential information.

At Haldane School in Chase, I help with recycling pop bottles. Another school that I volunteer at is the Chase Primary School where I count ice cream bars on pizza days, and I help on Sports days handing out freezies. The Government supplements my volunteer jobs a bit.

My support workers and I go to special events, like Christmas parades in Chase, the Desert Gardens Fall Fair at Desert Gardens Seniors housing in

Kamloops, Bingo at Parkside Estates Seniors housing, and Christmas concerts at both schools.

Some of my hobbies are Photography, bowling, and building with lego. I enjoy taking pictures when my support workers take me on day trips. When the workers and I go on trips, I learn about the history of the places that we visit, and I also get to see different scenery.

I would like to thank Vela Microboard Association for all the support in helping me to achieve my goals.

*Thank you!*

I have been hearing about microboards for many years, bits and pieces from those who already have one set up for their loved one. I have attended meetings locally with Terry Robertson, and have always received current sound advice about microboards.

The workshop we attended in Prince George at the end of August was well planned and laid out and provided important info, some of which we heard before, but new information that definitely put us that much closer to starting a microboard for our son Sean; in particular, learning more about having employees and all that is involved with that as presented by Linda Perry.

Bringing together families with similar desires for their loved ones to have a safe and secure life is always encouraging. Knowing that we are not alone. The socializing at the end of the day was enjoyed both by my husband Albert and we brought Sean along for the evening and I could tell by the smile on his face that he enjoyed himself as well. Thanks again to all those involved, especially Terry and Gord who are such an inspiration to our family.

*Thanks  
Sheryl Demers*

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*"Close to 30 people  
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Northern Conference"*

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Close to 30 people attended Vela's first ever "Northern Conference" on September 19 and 20, 2009, in Prince George. Local families as well as families from Ft. St. John and Quesnel came together to enjoy an informative and educational opportunity seldom offered in our neck of the woods. Everyone enjoyed the guest speakers from Spectrum Society and most stopped into their hospitality room on Saturday afternoon to share stories of friendship and connecting with them for a provincial project Spectrum is doing on Personal Support Networks. (Check out Spectrum's Personal Support Networks site at; <http://www.101friends.ca/>)

Participants enjoyed a fabulous lunch Saturday followed by a panel presentation from 3 moms, Barb Warkentine, Sherry McDonald, and Terry Robertson on the challenges their families have faced over the years and how they've needed to be innovative and flexible to create good

lives for their sons and daughters. There was an opportunity for the audience to ask questions of the panel and share their experiences. Ernie Baatz from Spectrum Society did a presentation about CLAN. CLAN stands for Community Living Agencies Network. It is an organization of smaller agencies and microboards who have joined together to have a louder voice with Community Living B.C. CLAN advocates for its members to receive better contracts and supports from Community Living B.C.

It was clear from the session on Sharing Resources that families in Prince George would like the opportunity to meet on a regular basis to discuss how we can support one another, strategize on how to maximize our dollars, and work more efficiently.

The evening social was lots of fun and great music was provided by Gord Robertson. Thanks Gord!!! The dancing was greatly enjoyed by a couple of party girls, Holly McDonald and Bree-Anna Robertson, who spent the majority of the evening hopping and bopping to the music. A quote from another young man attending his first ever Vela social was, "Terry, I'll never forget tonight, I danced with Bree-Anna!" Needless to say, a good time was had by all!

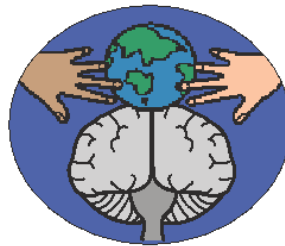
Sunday brought us all back to reality with Linda Perry presenting the Families as Employers workshop. This workshop is designed to get to the nitty gritty on what is expected by Revenue Canada, Worksafe BC, and BC Employment Standards when you are the employer of record. Although there was a lot to take in, it is certainly very important to know what you are getting into before you start down the path to incorporation.



**Merger of Minds** Language • Technology • Relationship

For the last several years, Vela has been affiliated with a like-minded group of families from Western Australia, helping them to develop Vela Microboards Australia. Like the individuals and families we've had the privilege to know here in BC, the folks in Western Australia have proven to be trailblazers. During a recent conversations with Jacquie Mills, one of the moms that developed a microboard with her son Eli, she mentioned an exciting venture that Eli has undertaken. At my request she sent the following information on his business. She also mentioned they would be open to connecting with individuals and families connected to Vela here in BC if you'd like to learn more.

Merger of Minds is Eli Dickenson's business which focuses on the facilitation of communication and relationship between all people. Eli is non-verbal and engages with the world in some non-typical ways. His love of dismantling anything technological and of connecting deeply with others inspired the formation of his business, **Merger of Minds**.



**Merger of Minds**

Everyone can communicate  
mergerofminds@gmail.com



Would you like to:

- Connect more deeply with someone you know, or with others, using non-verbal language?
- Discover strategies for supporting others to connect with people who are non-verbal?
- Have the chance to experiment with technology for communication or learning without having to invest, or apply for, thousands of dollars?
- Access individualized programming for your communication or learning software or explore the possibilities of software for learning and communication?
- Learn by having individualized modification of your learning program on your laptop or other device?



Then contact the Merger of Minds team!