

# connection

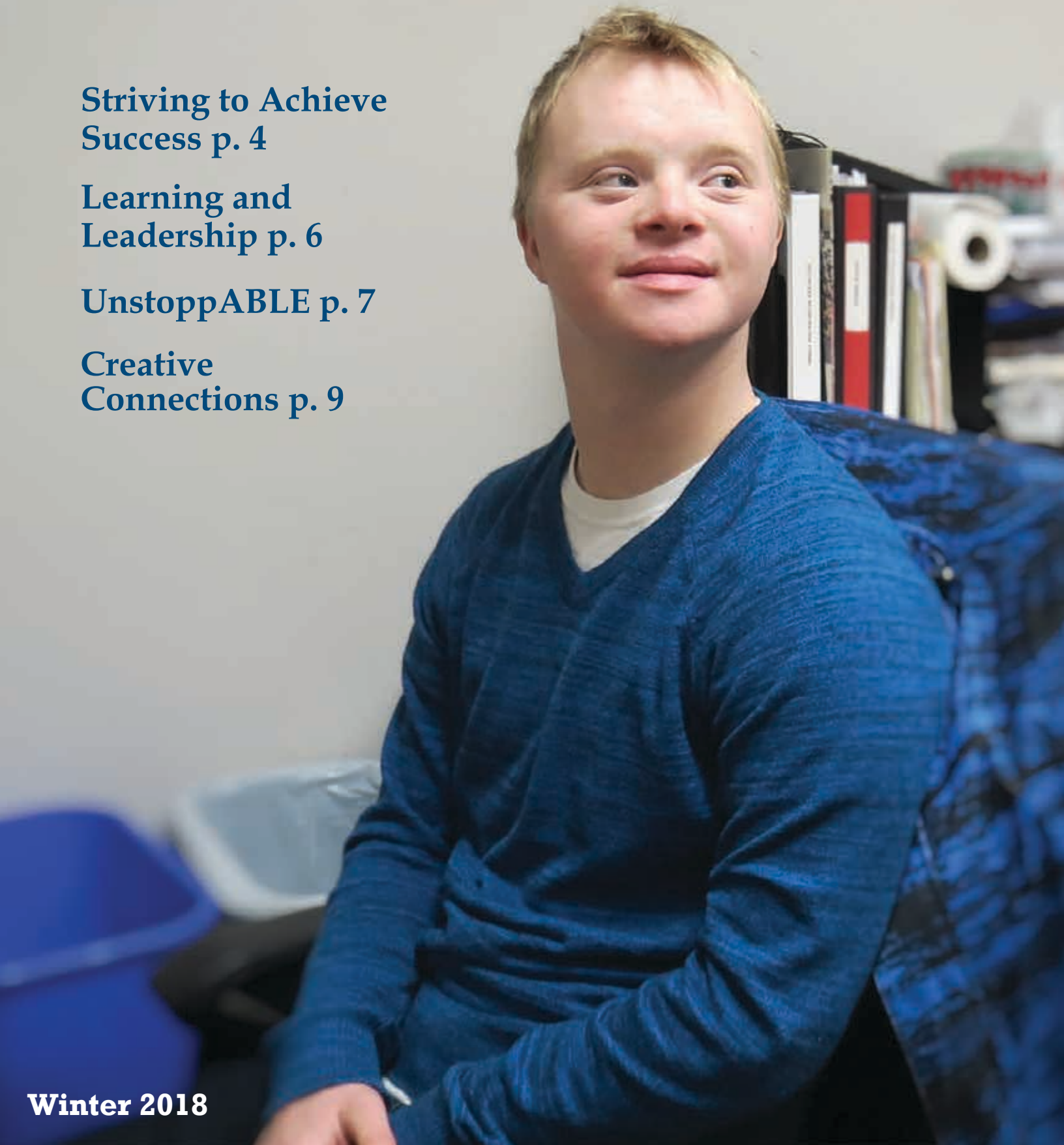
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**Winter 2018**



# A Message from Our CEO



As we race toward the holiday season, I am once again pleased to introduce you to our next edition of Connection, a place where clients' stories and successes are shared. These successes are the result of hard work, perseverance, and strong networks that all work toward client goals.

Connection is an opportunity for the DDRC to reach out to all of those in our network. For DDRC clients and their families, the stories and pictures are a source of pride and inspiration. For our staff, the magazine shows the results of all of their hard work to support client goals. And for our donors and supporters, we offer a glimpse into the lives you impact and the success we all share.

In this issue of Connection, you'll notice a theme: Inclusion. The stories you'll read are of individuals who thrive when included in their workplace, their sport, their community, and in all areas of life. With the opportunity to share experiences in their own words and art, DDRC clients beautifully showcase the benefits of our city's continued belief in including those with developmental disabilities.

This edition is a wonderful look back on a tremendous year for DDRC clients and for the agency. With all of the success and growth we've experienced this past year, the prospect of 2019 is exciting. I look forward to sharing what comes next.

On behalf of all clients and staff of the DDRC, we wish you a safe and joyous holiday season, and a happy new year.

As always, should you want to know more about the agency's work please e-mail us at [connection@ddrc.ca](mailto:connection@ddrc.ca) or remain connected through social media on Facebook ([@DDRCCalgary](https://www.facebook.com/DDRCCalgary)) or Twitter ([@DDRC\\_Calgary](https://twitter.com/DDRC_Calgary)).

Helen Cowie, LLB; MBA

The DDRC is a non-profit, registered, charitable organization that began in 1952. We offer programs and resources for children and adults with disabilities, their friends and family, and other people in the community.

Our business number is 10683 0060 RR0001.

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*The DDRC's Connection is published by the DDRC Communications Department. © 2018.*

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# Comprehensive Care

It takes a village to raise a child. This is clear for families who have children with developmental disabilities, who often rely on a vast support network to avoid caregiver fatigue. Respite services, like Comprehensive Care, provide caregivers time to practice self-care, reconnect with other family members, tend to activities outside of the home, and build their own relationships with their community.



Designed to adapt to the changing needs of individuals and families, like other DDRC programs, Comprehensive Care's flexibility recently helped Sherry Forrester and her daughter, Gabriella. Gabriella or Gaby, as she prefers, spent a month at Foothills Hospital this spring after having surgery to treat her Crohn's disease. As her primary caregiver, Sherry spent every waking minute at the hospital tending to Gaby, which affected her own health and wellbeing. Understanding the circumstances and amount of care Gaby required had changed, Comprehensive Care adjusted the amount, and type, of support they received. Sherry

appreciated not just having respite services provided while Gaby was in the hospital, but also the extra service hours the Comprehensive Care Team provided. Having a Community Support Worker (CSW) come to the hospital to spend time with Gaby in her room meant Sherry could grab a bite to eat or take a walk outside of the hospital to clear her head without worrying about her daughter's care. The support provided was not limited to hospital visits, as the CSW working with Sherry and Gaby also collected supplies from arts and crafts stores so Gaby would have activities she enjoyed to keep her engaged and entertained while recovering in the hospital.

Now out of the hospital, Gaby enjoys stepping out of her comfort zone and trying new things. With a grin on her face, Gaby's enjoying getting her hair and nails done; checking out books and movies from the local library branch; and making new friends while dancing, singing, and practicing karate at Dubasov Dance and Wellness.

When caregivers have time and space to recharge, they can do their best to provide care and support to loved ones.

People with developmental disabilities also benefit from respite services, as they have the chance to develop their independence and own place in their community. Sherry finds taking a break not only benefits her own personal health and wellbeing, but Gaby's too.

**16,000 hours of respite provided in 2018**

Having a CSW come into the home and go out with Gaby into the community provides Gaby with opportunities to develop independence skills, like cooking, using public transit, and growing relationships with neighbours and other community members. The relationship between mother and daughter has matured and evolved, due in part to Gaby's blossoming independence.



*Gaby at Thanksgiving dinner with family (top) and Gaby modeling a night shirt she sewed (bottom).*

**152 families supported**

# Striving to Achieve Success

by Belinda Sydenham

**M**y name is Belinda Sydenham. I am a fun-loving person who loves dogs and being around friends and family.

I started working for the Canadian Government after completing an internship program run by the Boys and Girls Club and then applying for the Federal Public Service Youth Internship program. 18 years later, I continue to work as a general duties clerk for the Trade Operations Department for Canada Border Services Agency. I do a variety of duties, which consist of sorting and delivering mail, filing cases after an officer has closed the case, photocopying, and data entry work, which is my favourite.



I have always worked independently, but since joining the PACE program a year and a half ago, I have found that the support and advocacy offered by Community Resource Workers has helped me create a work environment where I feel accepted and like I belong. I'm currently working on improving my problem solving and math skills so that I can pass the government assessment and, hopefully, be promoted!

Outside of work, for the last five years I have been interested in photography. Every year I create a photo calendar to raise money for a different charity. Over the past few years, I have raised money for the Calgary Food Bank, the Alzheimer's Society, Vecova, and the DDRC. This year, in honour of my dogs, the money

raised through the sale of my calendars will be going to an animal rescue group, the Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society.

It's taken some time for me to feel comfortable living on my own, but with encouragement from Selena, my Community Support Worker, I've started to make my place feel like home. I've always had dogs, and they've



helped me feel like I'm at home. This past year, my two beloved dogs passed away. This was really hard for me, as they were a big part of my life. After working through my grief, Selena helped me find Stanley, my new dog. I really enjoy having the company at home.

Last year was the first year that I participated in Special Olympics, and I loved it! It is so much fun to meet new friends, get out into the community, and feel that I belong. I am involved in the sport of five pin bowling, and next year I am excited to add a new sport— bocce ball! I've had such a great time with Special Olympics, that I volunteered for Special Olympics' Free Our Finest event this spring. As a volunteer, I helped sell merchandise, as members of the RCMP and Calgary Police Service camped out for 53 hours on the roof of a Walmart. I really enjoyed the volunteer experience, and am planning on doing more volunteer work in the next year, as it's a fun way to give back and meet new friends.

*As an organization, the DDRC supports the full participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. Connection provides a platform and opportunity for clients to share their own stories in their own words.*

# Providing For a Lifetime

by Audrey Veltri

*THE RDSP TURNS 11... What does that mean for you? This means that if you have not yet opened an RDSP, you might be permanently missing out on grant money.*



The Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) is a federal program, which started in 2008. The program was designed as a long-term savings plan to help Canadians with disabilities save and financially prepare for the future. I like to help my clients understand the program by comparing it to a Registered Retired Savings Plan (RRSP) or a pension plan for an individual with a disability. To be eligible for the program an individual must be Canadian or a permanent resident, be under the age of 49, and be eligible to receive the Disability Tax Credit.

The federal government supports the program through matching grants that are based on net family income. In addition to the matching grants, there is also the Canada Disability Savings Bond, which is additional funding that is provided to assist those in low-income situations. When you establish an RDSP, the grants are available and can be paid on any unused entitlements for up to ten preceding years, dating back to 2008, with an annual maximum of \$10,500. This means that if you are

eligible and have not yet opened an RDSP, next year will be the first year of permanently lost contribution room.

So, if you, or someone you are supporting, has been eligible and receiving the Disability Tax Credit for the last ten years, is under the age of 49, a Canadian citizen or resident, and has not applied for an RDSP—you should. You might be missing out on some money that is available to create a financially secure future.

The RDSP is a complicated program, and there are many components and rules that are applied. For this reason, it is best to always seek the council of a financial advisor that has experience in the area of RDSPs.



*Audrey teaching a workshop for parents and guardians of DDRC clients.*

**IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT**

**Audrey is a mother of a child with autism and a financial planner with a passion for supporting families and non-profits. She hosts workshops for DDRC families and is a tremendous advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.**

## Learning and Leadership

As a hub for supporting client personal growth, the DDRC's Learning and Leadership Centre provides interactive training for clients as they learn new skills, share knowledge, gain confidence, and work toward achieving their quality of life goals. Meaningful interpersonal relationships and ensuring clients protect their own health and wellbeing, are two pillars of client goals. In 2017, Canada's largest children's rehabilitation hospital, Holland and Bloorview, reported 53 percent of Canadian children with a disability, including developmental disabilities, have zero or only one close friend. In response to client, guardian, and staff discussions on clients feeling lonely, Learning and Leadership developed the Making Friends, Keeping Friends workshop to support clients with relationship goals.

In the Making Friends, Keeping Friends workshop, clients learn how to build and maintain healthy friendships, and the nature and benefits of friendship. Prior to taking this workshop series, Eric Thompson, a member of the PACE and Central teams, sometimes had difficulty expressing his thoughts and feelings when a problem arose in a relationship, because he believed it was his problem to solve alone.



*Eric attending the Making Friends, Keeping Friends workshop.*

While attending this workshop series, Eric learned positive and constructive strategies to express his feelings in a healthy and respectful manner. Having open communication is an essential skill when encountering problems in a relationship. Eric now knows building a strong friendship requires both sides to be open and honest with their feelings. Together, friends can define their friendship.

Interested in improving his conversational skills, Matthew Smyth, a PACE Team client, signed up for Learning and Leadership's CIRCLES course. In this workshop series, clients use a multi-layer circle diagram to represent their relationships and develop tools to maintain and strengthen connections with others. The knowledge and skills Matthew developed in this program provided tools he has since used to build and improve his relationships.

Exchanging pleasantries and appropriate conversational topics are two skills Matthew now uses to expand his social circles and create new friendships, two of his goals. Matthew's ability to talk with unfamiliar people has not only been helpful in his personal life, but also in his professional life. Recently, Matthew joined a Tragically Hip tribute band's merchandise team, where he successfully connects and has conversations with new people.

With some support from Community Resource Workers, family, and friends, clients participating in Learning and Leadership programs improve their quality of life by implementing strategies learned in Making Friends, Keeping Friends and CIRCLES. As for Eric and Matthew, they have found life really is more satisfying when you have people to enjoy it with.



*Matthew working on his CIRCLES diagram.*

# UnstoppABLE

by Michael Fridfinnson

For five years, adaptive sports have played a major role in my life. Adaptive sports provide all members of the community, regardless of ability, with activities and sports they can enjoy. It is important for communities to offer adaptive sport programs, because people with disabilities can feel disconnected from the community, and having sports where we can meet people with similar interests helps us build connections. Through adaptive sports, I have met new people who have similar interests, and I get to go out into the community when I would otherwise stay at home. I personally enjoy playing many different adaptive sports, such as soccer, bowling, and hockey.



However, there are lots of other adaptive sports that others enjoy, such as: baseball, tennis, skiing (downhill and cross-country), fishing, football, and other forms of adaptive hockey like sledge hockey.

“

**Adaptive sports allow me to meet new people and make friendships above all else.**

My favourite sport to play is wheelchair hockey, because it is physical and fun. Wheelchair hockey, or power hockey as my teammates and I call it, forces me to make quick decisions, which helps me practice making quick decisions in my everyday life. Our league currently has four teams, and all members play using a power wheelchair. The game is similar to ball hockey, you cannot go offside or interfere with the goalie, you have to use your stick to move the ball, and we play in a gym. Our wheelchairs weigh upwards of 300 pounds, so someone could get hurt if we are not careful with our driving, which is why we have a dangerous driving penalty.

Like non-adaptive sport athletes, adaptive sport athletes have varying skills and abilities. For example, when I am playing, I do not use my hands. I am not able to hold a stick during hockey, but I have it attached to my chair. I drive my chair with my head and am able to move, pass, and shoot the ball by driving forwards while it is on my stick. Some teammates use one arm and hand to drive their wheelchair and their other to hold their

stick. Others use one arm and hand to both drive and hold their stick; it just depends on the individual.



Adaptive sports are just as competitive as non-adaptive sports. The values of the sport are the same, we all believe in teamwork, leadership, and hard work. Power hockey is open to the public and is free to attend. I think it is very important for the public to come and watch adaptive sports so that they are able to get a feel for the games and also so they can enjoy it too. It is also a good opportunity for people who have never heard of adaptive sports to come and see what it is all about. Adaptive sports allow me to meet new people and make friendships above all else, though, adaptive sports help me to connect and feel more a part of my community.

## Your Impact

For as long as the DDRC has been providing services for people with developmental disabilities, loyal donors have contributed to causes that help improve the lives of the individuals we support. Through fundraising events, campaign contributions, and unsolicited donations made in goodwill, donors have often been the determining factor in growing the DDRC's programs and services.

The DDRC's Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) offers tracking, training, and direct work with clients to address behavior concerns. Services like PBS foster positive environments for DDRC clients, and would not be possible without support from our donors.



The Learning and Leadership Centre, a dedicated space for client workshops, was launched in 2012 thanks to individual donations and fundraising campaigns. In later years, when the Learning and Leadership Centre needed new tools, donors once again answered the call, and helped to provide SMART boards that allow interactive and accessible programing for clients and staff.

Over the past three years, DDRC donors have created the Ability Fund, a resource pool that helps clients access courses, workshops, and activities in their communities that would otherwise be inaccessible due to financial constraints. Because of donor contributions, more than 200 clients have participated in activities that align with their goals, which contributes to their overall success.

Each year, the DDRC has identified these needs and called on donors. These calls have always been answered with resounding generosity. Like previous years with PBS, Learning and Leadership, the Ability Fund, and so many other program needs, this year we have identified a new need and once again call on our faithful donors.

A positive work environment is so very important to the success of anyone pursuing their goals. At the DDRC office, we have identified two spaces needing transformation to create better work environments for clients with developmental disabilities. Both current PACE team offices, work spaces where clients develop skills and pursue educational and career opportunities, are in need of an upgrade.

With the help of donors, we hope to change these spaces filled with dated resources into areas with improved desks and computers providing a positive area where clients can work and learn.



This change is only possible with the help and assistance of generous donors and supporters. Through all of the successes and improvements made, together we continue to identify and address the needs that most impact DDRC clients' quality of life. To learn more about this year's initiatives, visit [ddrc.ca/donations](http://ddrc.ca/donations) or e-mail [donations@ddrc.ca](mailto:donations@ddrc.ca). Help us continue to make our city a place where *everyone belongs*™.



## Creative Connections

A space dedicated to providing DDRC clients with an opportunity to demonstrate their creative pursuits.

Daniel Janzen's latest project involves using different mediums to represent iconic Disney characters and objects. In June, two of his sculptures, Lightning McQueen and Mater, went to Hong Kong and Seoul as part of the Albertan Perspectives 2018 exhibition with Indefinite Arts. Below are Daniel's watercolour painting of Mrs. Potts and a clay figurine of the rose from *Beauty and the Beast*.



Known for her vibrant and bright colour choices, Sarah Yousif enjoys exploring different mediums in her creative endeavours. Throughout the last year, Sarah has enjoyed taking classes at Studio C where she learns how to incorporate photography and technology into her artwork. Using Microsoft Paint, Sarah recently finished this visual representation of a healthy relationship.



*Sarah working on an art project (above) and her Microsoft Paint artwork (below).*



# DDRC in the Community

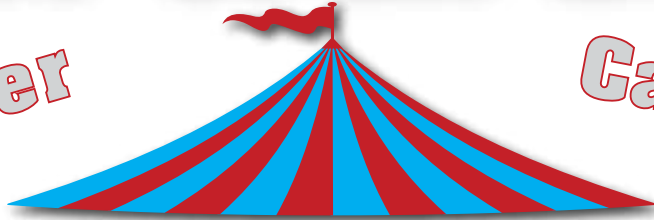




# HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Winter

Carnival



Come celebrate  
the season with us!

December 13



11 AM - 3 PM

If you have comments or feedback on our new look, please contact us at [connection@ddrc.ca](mailto:connection@ddrc.ca). The DDRC's *Connection* is published twice a year, but there's lots going on at our agency every day! Stay in touch with us online:



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