

## Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “Being supportive in a small community – Larry’s story”

Larry Elkin is a big supporter of Autism initiatives. He is an even bigger supporter of his grandson Bradley Elkin Hall, a young man living on the autism spectrum, and author of the book, *Too Many Espresso Beans*. Larry is an important person in Bradley’s life, and he continues to be an asset to the greater autism community by supporting Bradley’s participation as a member of the Advisory Committee of adults living on the spectrum for Autism Society Canada (ASC). ASC is an organization that was started 35 years ago with the goal of helping parents find information and supports for their children living with an autism spectrum disorder.

Today, 35 years later – and with the help of supportive grandparents like Larry - ASC has grown to become the largest collective voice in the Canadian autism community. Provincial and territorial autism societies and their member groups provide direct support to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and their families all across Canada.

Larry is frustrated by the lack of autism resources available to his grandson and other individuals living in the Northwest Territories. In fact, the Northwest Territories Autism Society is the only reputable place in the North West Territories – a land mass of almost 1,150,000 km<sup>2</sup> – where autistic individuals and their families can get together to share their experiences, challenges and successes and periodically bring in resource people from elsewhere to speak and give advice on various autism related subjects. Just like Bradley, individuals living with an ASD in the Northwest Territories must travel to either another Canadian province or to the United States to receive their autism diagnosis. Larry is worried because individuals living on the autism spectrum in the Northwest Territories are falling under the radar: they do not have access to the autism services, treatment and support they so desperately need.

During the last two years, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been looking into ways to improve the hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. It is unclear as of yet whether any new initiatives will support the hiring of more autistic adults in the Northwest Territories. Grandpa Larry is very proud of Brad’s success at finding employment, and he explains that many of these opportunities have resulted from support from individuals in both the service industry and government who have gotten to know Brad through his involvement in community initiatives. As Larry says, educating supervisors and employees about Brad’s autism and the challenges and benefits associated with his particular autistic characteristics has been an important component part of each of Brad’s jobs during the past 8 years.

The benefit of being from a small town is that everyone knows Brad and his grandfather in Yellowknife: the town has strong community and cultural ties. This is a place where a sense of community runs deep and it is therefore particularly frustrating to know that Brad and other individuals like him must leave their community to access the autism resources out of province that they so desperately need.

Autism Society Canada supports Brad, Larry and their family by advocating on a national platform on their behalf. After 35 years of experience working with the Canadian autism community, ASC knows that the time is now to develop the foundation of a Canadian Autism Strategy, so individuals across Canada can access high quality services for their Autism related needs. For more information log on to [www.autismsocietycanada.ca](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca), or contact us at tel: **(613) 789-8943** or **1-866-476-8440**.

ASC’s Provincial Member society in Northwest Territories is Autism Northwest Territories.  
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