

On the Page – ASD Community Voices



Meet Bradley Thomas Elkin Hall

Member, ASC Advisory Committee of Adults with ASDs

I live in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories and am 24 years old. I am currently studying through a distance course at the Nova Scotia Community College for a degree in Libraries and Information Technologies.

I volunteer in a territorial government library, and I do paid work as a records clerk for another branch of the territorial government. Every Friday, I deliver a local publication known as the *Coffee Break News* to over 50 businesses in my city.

When I am not doing my regular jobs, I write and illustrate. This year, I published a book entitled *Too Many Espresso Beans*. I also sing bass in a United Church Choir, am a member of Rotary International. I enjoy traveling, and especially meeting new people.

Thoughts on my early school years...

I was diagnosed with autism on my fourth birthday. I didn't always behave properly at school, nor was I always a good role model for my younger cousins. I learned about my diagnosis at six or seven. When I found out I had an ASD I finally understood the reason for my behaviours.

I did not really feel isolated or lonely as a child. It was always easy for me to make friends when I was young. It is harder for me to make friends now.

I was sometimes bullied by other kids, but it wasn't because I was different.

At school I worked with a person known as an "aide", who helped me overcome any obstacles.

The best things about my childhood were the things I did with my extended family and the times I spent with them.

On the teen years and high school...

Completing my studies was my biggest challenge although my "aide" was a good support during my teen years. I did excellent in math, but not so good in English. My "aide" was my special support.

During high school, I played trombone in the band. Making friends as a teenager wasn't as easy as it had been in childhood, but I still made friends in adolescence. I also met other teens with similar disorders.

Moving on from high school...

Leaving school and joining the adult world was difficult. I didn't know how much I appreciated high school until I finished it. It was the "final farewell" to my classmates.

NSCC is the second college I have attended. Aurora College's Yellowknife Campus was the first.

Working life...

I have worked at several jobs, but most were only for about two or three years.

As with everywhere else, more support would help people with ASD in the workplace.

Independent life...

I live with my family. I feel there is plenty of support for people with ASDs who want to live independently.

On social and other differences...

I have trouble communicating verbally. I communicate better in writing. Memorizing facts and lists is my strongest ability.

People without ASD can be helpful in social situations when they meet someone with an ASD by first getting to know the person. It is important to understand what kind of ASD a person actually has and what they are like as an individual.

My family has really helped me develop my skills, and they helped me to be successful.

On the language of "cure"...

In the Autism community some parents and organizations are focused on finding "cure" for ASD – RUBBISH! Autism is an unchangeable nature; it is not a lifestyle choice. It is not all bad, and many autistics wouldn't want a cure. The same goes for the LGBT crowd.

Thoughts on autism research and treatment...

Don't search for or find a cure. Find a way to make the world better for autistics.

ASD is a special ability. It's a condition, not a disorder.

Approaches to change and hopes for the future...

Autism self-advocacy groups and the whole new ASD culture that is developing will definitely help to empower people with ASDs.

It is important that autism organizations like ASC (that advocate for more and better services), to take the time to reach out directly to those with ASD and to consult them in person.

I am confident that someday civilized humanity will look back with pity and astonishment at the time when people believed autistics couldn't work full time, or live independently, or get married, or make good parents, and that their children couldn't lead normal lives.

I am also fighting right-wing lies and "autism cure" fraud.