

CIF FEATURE STORY:

Enabling Inclusive Arts.



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Feature Story: *Enabling Inclusive Arts, Listen To Dis Community Arts Organization Inc.*

Listen To Dis' (LTD) offers workshops, performances, and touring opportunities for variously-abled Saskatchewan artists. Their main objective is to establish sustainable cross-abilities arts programming to connect people living with disabilities to the larger community. In 2016, LTD put on a show called Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People to over 1000 people. **"I need to go home and rethink everything I thought I knew and understood about this (disability)"** was what one audience member in particular expressed after seeing the show. Many other audience members expressed similar thoughts.

This program targets anyone living with a disability that wants to spread their creative wings. It reaches many different communities including various disability communities, the arts community, agencies and their employees working with marginalized people, and a broad spectrum of others who make up LTD's audiences.

"The quality of our member's lives have been profoundly affected" shared Traci Foster, Director. **"We have members who have started working, gone to university, and have been given opportunities in professional arts and as public speakers because of our programming. People underestimate the effect art has on skill development and confidence. It gives or gives back voice to those who do not feel heard."**

"I feel like I am free. I have found my voice. For the first time in my life I feel seen and heard. I am part of the community now thanks to LTD."

- Barry Lasko,
A longtime member

"At first I was unsure I could offer enough physicality in order to participate. Thankfully, because the groups are so diverse, a key attribute is how adaptable and malleable the projects are. Allowing myself and possibly others to feel valuable even with significantly reduced mobility. There is nothing else like this in this city or province." - Natasha Urkow, 2 year member.

"We have seen so many amazing transformations. Eva Rousner is a longtime member who lives with Autism" shared Foster. **"When Eva began she was very quiet and generally did not speak to anyone except close family members and friends. It was believed that she could not read or write. Since being involved in the arts programming (6 years), Eva not only reads and writes but she volunteers time and time again to perform on stage for large audiences. Apparently, she is one of the most vocal Regina Pats fans out there now!"**

"The true integration and acceptance of the broader community has changed the way each and every member feels about themselves and the world around them" said Foster.



Word Up Performance featuring Listen To Dis' Voice at the Artesian. Members perform a collection of group and individual original poems and songs. Photo credit: Daniel Paquet.



Cathedral Village Arts Festival - The Movable Feast parade produced by Curtain Razors. Photo Credit: Carey Shaw.