

## The History of the Self-Advocates of the Rockies Group Society

**Mission:** To work together to help individuals with diverse abilities find their voice and advocate for themselves so they can be as independent and successful as possible in their lives and communities.

The Self Advocates of the Rockies has been around for many years now but this wasn't the name way back when and we would like to share our history. When the group first started they were know as "**People First**" and from 2005 to 2010, the group was known as the **Cranbrook Self-Advocates** and they have been working endlessly hard to get their voices out there and heard. There are two key people who have been with this group since the very beginning and they are Krista Petrich and Colleen Mosimann.

There have been many changes within the group and advocates as well but the core has remained in tack. Some of the ongoing things that the advocates feel very strong about is exercising their rights to make their own decisions about where to work or live, what type of work they want to do or even volunteer for someone or an organization.

One of the key important things this self advocate group is very strong about is when there is a provincial election that happens in BC, they help in spreading the word for "EVERYONE" to get out and exercise their right to vote.

In 2010, the self-advocates made a video doing a commercial on the choices they make in everyday life and taking a stand for themselves. In that same year, the Cranbrook Self-Advocates joined with the Elk Valley Society for Community Living to form the "**Cranbrook-Fernie Self Advocates**" because a representative joined the group from that area.

By the time 2010 ended and 2011 began the group grew through the East Kootenay Region. Several advocates in Cranbrook, Creston, Invermere, and Kimberley would join the group and with those changes in place, the name of the self-advocates became the "**East Kootenay Regional Self-Advocates.**" Under the new name, the East Kootenay Regional Self-Advocates worked very hard in their monthly meetings that were held in the boardroom at CLBC based in Cranbrook. They managed to be successful by making a workshop presentation based on choices. Late 2011, the advocates were contacted if they were interested in presenting their information at the very first Self-Advocate Conference in Kamloops. The feedback they received after that conference was well received. It was from that point on for the advocates to take part in other conferences in the years that followed.

Entering 2012, the East Kootenay Regional Self-Advocates were getting their groove on and voices heard. However, they were expressing their voices on very key issues and one was transportation and receiving PWD assisted income from the Ministry of Social Development. The advocates were really upset with the amount that was given to them monthly to help them with their daily living. They wanted to use their voices at the BC govt. and have the Minister who was in charge. It was Don McRae and the MLA for Kootenay East at the time too was Bill Bennett. These two gentlemen were kindly enough to join in a meeting with the advocates. Minister McRae took the concerns from the advocates and the response was that there wasn't enough room in the BC budget at the time. MLA Bennett took the other concerns from the



advocates had to Victoria that was written. In the middle of the year, some advocates from the East Kootenay traveled to Penticton for the PAC conference and spoke to be elected on the committee.

Late that same year, a couple of advocates couldn't attend the monthly meetings due unexpected reasons and plus the group felt it was time to change the name. They took options for the name and what everyone liked was "**Self-Advocates of the Rockies**" and the reason why it was the name of choice was because all the advocates live in the Rocky Mountains of BC.

As the Self-Advocates of the Rockies entered 2013, the continued hot topic of conversation was the PWD assistance and a new feature that was introduced and it was the Annual Exemptions Earnings cap or AEE for short.

Later that year, the now and next bi-annual Interior Self-Advocates conference would be happening in the fall located in Kelowna. Some Self-Advocates of the Rockies members wanted to go to that conference and they did go and represent the group very well. Some of the advocates from our group presented a video at this conference was the commercial that was made in 2010.

In the years that followed, the Self-Advocates of the Rockies continue to let their voices be heard along with other advocates throughout the Interior of BC.

By the time 2015 came, the advocates were presented with another opportunity to take part in another bi-annual conference and that was in Vernon. There was a large group of advocates that took part in that and they enjoyed themselves like always.

In 2016, the Self-Advocates of the Rockies put their name in the running to be the host for the 2017 bi-annual Interior Self-Advocate conference. They found out at one of their monthly meetings during that year that they were chosen. The entire group was very happy to have that honor.

Now presently, the group was awarded a conditional grant from Community Living British Columbia to get paid to host events to help keep advocates around the province connected during the pandemic. The group has been running weekly and monthly virtual events through zoom and google meets. Their upcoming "Fall into Fall but Let's Get Inspired" conference is the last event they will be hosting and facilitating as part of the grant project.

In conclusion, we hope you have enjoyed our history story on how we the Self-Advocates of the Rockies has come together and overcame some of the challenges that we face today. Like our slogan says, "**Let Your Voices Be Heard!**"

\*If you would like a copy of this information, please send your name and email address to [cranbrooksor@gmail.com](mailto:cranbrooksor@gmail.com)\*