



@Virtual Voices 2002 Report

Eighteen campers signed on for the third year of @Virtual Voices at Camp Squamish this summer. They connected with old and new friends, practiced their communication skills, and had a great time on the camp's new climbing wall and in-ground trampoline. Many of the daily activities focused on the camp theme of "MuchMusic: Squamish Style", culminating in some great musical performances on the final night.



The British Columbia Lions Society for Children with Disabilities hosted the five-day camp, presenting an exciting program of recreational activities, as well as 24 hour care and supervision for the campers. Special Education Technology – British Columbia (SET-BC) provided a team of communication and technology specialists for the camp, ensuring that every camper had a chance to practice and improve their communication skill using their voice output technologies.

Each morning, the communication team organized small group activities that focused on building camper communication and technology skills. In the afternoon, the camp staff provided lots of chances for campers to enjoy arts and crafts activities, swim in the indoor pool, play games, or take part in outdoor recreation. Evening events included a camp fire and sing-along, a campout under the stars, and the final awards ceremony and dance.





Day 1 – Campers connect

As campers arrived, they greeted friends from previous years and had a chance to meet new campers and staff. Everyone joined a small group for the day’s activities and jumped right into the communication goal for the day - initiating conversations with other campers and staff. Each camper was given a “Social Passport” which they used to collect information from each other. They chose who they wanted to interview and added photos, addresses, and details about personal interests to act as reminders of the friends they made at camp.



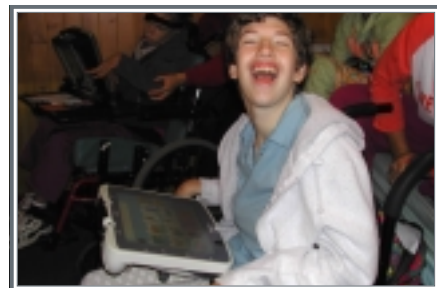
they wanted to interview and added photos, addresses, and details about personal interests to act as reminders of the friends they made at camp.

Day 2 – Everybody has their say

By the second day, everyone was involved in writing scripts for the group performances planned for Saturday night. Each camper gave suggestions for songs and skit dialogue and decided which role to play.



Ashleigh and Catherine carried out a special role at camp, acting as communication mentors for the younger campers. They took an active role in initiating conversations with others and modeled good strategies for communication and interaction throughout the camp activities.





Day 3 – Campers direct the action

Rehearsals provided lots of chances for campers to comment and share ideas for improving their performances. Selecting costumes, practicing their parts and working on choreography kept everyone busy.



SET-BC provided a technology lab for the camp where the communication team could prepare boards for activities, program voice output devices and print out photos and entries for camper journals. Many of the campers gravitated to the lab during their free time, enjoying the chance to try out different communication devices and help out with developing vocabulary for camp activities.

Day 4 – Time to perform

In the morning, each team presented their song or MuchMusic skit in front of the camera, doing their best to get their timing right, remember their lines and give their best performance. And in the evening, the final dinner, awards ceremony and dance were a lot of fun for all the campers and adults.





Day 5 – See you next year!

Following the pajama breakfast and a morning for final conversations, it was time to pack up and head for home. The campers were happy to see their families as they arrived at Camp Squamish, but had lots of camp stories to share with them.



Each camper took home a Social Passport with information about other campers and staff, as well as a personal camp binder with symbols, photos and daily journal entries. Campers will have these camp mementoes to remind them of their friends and the fun they had at Virtual Voices. We hope to see everyone back again next year.





Community Involvement

Many people and organizations contributed to @Virtual Voices, combining their time and efforts to make this special program a valuable experience for the campers. This camp was provided at no cost to individual campers.

Thank you to everyone who helped make @Virtual Voices 2002 such a great success.

- The British Columbia Lions Society hosted @Virtual Voices at beautiful Camp Squamish, providing campers with accommodation and meals, plus 24 hour care and supervision by trained staff. Their energetic team of counselors and recreational staff kept the campers busy and happy all day long.
- The SET-BC team brought together communication and technology specialists who supported camper communication and participation in all camp activities. Team members came from Surrey, North Vancouver, and Courtenay School Districts, Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, Partners in Communication, Aroga Technologies, and SET-BC.
- The Hamber Foundation, the McLean Foundation, and Sierra Systems provided generous funding of resources for this year's camp.

The BC Lions Society provided camping opportunities for 932 children with disabilities in 2002 at no charge to their families at their three Easter Seal Camps. Other programs and initiatives funded by the society include three Easter Seal Houses, Child Development Centres, the Valley Therapeutic Riding Centre, Lions Laser Skin Centres, and the Lions Helipad at Vancouver Hospital.

SET-BC is a Ministry of Education provincial resource program that supports school districts in educating students with disabilities through the use of assistive technology. Working in partnership with school districts, SET-BC provides consultation, training, resources, and equipment loans for students with physical disabilities, visual impairments and autism.



Some examples of communication devices used by campers

Pathfinder has a computer-like keyboard and a colour dynamic display. The Pathfinder comes set-up with vocabulary, pictures, computer emulation and infrared controls. Word prediction and icon prediction appear on the dynamic display with spelling.



- Manufactured by Prentke Romich www.prentrom.com
- Available through Aroga Technologies www.aroga.com

DynaVox is a dynamic display communication aid. Access is available through a touch screen, visual and / or auditory scanning, or mouse compatible input device. Pages can be programmed with a variety of cell sizes and colors; cells can contain text, words, or phrases.



- Manufactured by DynaVox Systems www.dynavoxsys.com
- Available through Sunrise Medical Canada www.sunrisemedical.ca

GoTalk and Pocket GoTalk were useful to quickly program conversations and favourite mealtime songs! The Go Talk has 9 message keys with four levels. The Pocket GoTalk has 5 message buttons with a total of 25 messages of 14 seconds each. It also has scanning capability.



- Manufactured by Attainment Company www.AttainmentCompany.com
- Available through Betacom / Bridges www.betacom.com

We created many communication boards with vocabulary needed for different camp activities. The boards below were created using Boardmaker PCS software by Mayer-Johnson. www.mayer-johnson.com



<-- This board was available for each camper on their campout.

This board was on the pool flutter boards. -->

