

Good afternoon Chair Bowen-Eyre (air) and Trustees

It is a huge honor for me to stand here as a product of Calgary Board of Education. With the tremendous support I received from my family and the CBE's personnel, I would not have gone this far in the wide world. My very determined parents always had the attitude of you can do it and to treated me the same as my siblings. // (signing now)

This is one of the reasons that my parents so strongly believed in mainstream education – they were adamant that if I was to be able to succeed in the hearing world, I needed to be able to communicate in this world. I thank them for pushing the CBE to accept me despite such uncertainty and thank the CBE taking the leap of faith. And it's important for you to know that this was a big stretch for the CBE – as I have been PROFOUNDLY deaf since birth due to Rubella during pregnancy – which means I have no hearing *at all*. So hearing aids or speaking loudly is not helpful. It wasn't easy for me. As I didn't have sign language at the time, I needed to rely on lipreading to understand others – many people don't realize that a good lipreader can understand only 30% of the words. So you can imagine how difficult it was to follow a teacher – particularly when they turned their back to write on the blackboard. ;-) Today, the landscape is very different for DHH students with multiple formats of communication access and use of technology. Personally, my world opened up when I learned sign language at university and beyond.

At a time when many deaf and hard of hearing students had limited education and life options, there is no doubt that my experience at the CBE helped to lay the foundation for my future success. Despite the fact that no one really knew quite how to support the deaf girl, the teachers, administrators and one very committed itinerant teacher tried their best to accommodate me. Together we learned a lot.

As chair Bowen-Eyre mentioned, basketball was a big theme in my life. It was a place where I wasn't the deaf girl, but was a valued member of the teams who happened to be able to score points. Over the years, the coaches became great advocates for me. Other teachers did what they could to make school more accessible for me. One of my teachers had a goatee and moustache which made lip reading very challenging for me. Knowing this, he shaved it off for me. However, both his wife and I agreed that he looked very strange without it so he grew it back. There were so many teachers over the years who contributed to my success and I thank them all.

My advocacy for the DHH community began at John Ware and Dr. E. P Scarlett and continues today to break down the barriers in different capacities, educational, professional and personal life.

Thank you CBE for the ongoing support to address the unique needs of deaf and hard of hearing community and provide the resources and accommodations for quality and equal access to education. I am looking forward to spending the day at Queen Elizabeth and Stanley Jones talking with DHH students tomorrow.

Thank you for this legacy award which is the most significant one coming from my hometown, Calgary. I love CBE and Calgary.