



The **everyone belongs™** social brand campaign seeks to promote the inclusion and contribution of all people, including people with developmental disabilities in the ordinary stuff of life - going to school, working or volunteering, having friends and a home. Communities that welcome all citizens are better communities, stronger, healthier, and more vibrant.

Backgrounder

Who is behind everyone belongs™?

Driven primarily by a fundamental belief in the importance of human connection and a deep commitment to community, the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary (DDRC) became interested in the possibility of creating a social brand that could communicate and represent the value and benefits to everyone when people with developmental disabilities are included into all aspects of daily life. Experience has shown that enormous potential exists for people with developmental disabilities to live fuller and more fulfilling lives and to contribute through meaningful human connection and participation in community. Likewise, experience has revealed that other citizens benefit and discover something in themselves when opening up to a person with a disability. **everyone belongs™** is rooted in this concept of possibility for all citizens.

Why is the everyone belongs™ initiative necessary?

While DDRC is encouraged by the progress made toward the creation of truly inclusive communities, there is still much that needs to change in the community - personal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour, formal systems, and government policies - for this goal to be realized.

Rather than experiencing life as a neighbour, a classmate, a co-worker, friend, or fellow citizen, many Calgarians with developmental disabilities continue to experience a parallel life, largely defined by specialized and often segregated services and supports. As a result, many people with developmental disabilities do not experience the richness that comes from relationships that are freely given and freely received without any of the power differential inherent in being entrenched in “services”. Likewise, without the contribution of citizens with disabilities, the community suffers. **everyone belongs™** seeks to bridge this gap and to make our communities richer and stronger.

Backgrounder/2

What are the goals of this phase of the everyone belongs™ campaign?

This phase of the campaign will focus initially on **educators**, encouraging them to consider inclusion of people with developmental disabilities into schools.

Later, a workplace-focused initiative will be deployed, communicating the benefits of **everyone belongs™** to **employers**. We have many testimonials documenting the many morale-boosting, productivity enhancing and financial benefits that have been realized in Calgary when inclusive strategies have been adopted in the workplace.

Who is the contact for media inquiries?

Contact: Suzanne Chennells, Manager of Marketing Communications

Telephone: (403) 240-7342

Cell: (403) 710-4154

Email: suzannec@ddrcc.com

Website: www.everyonebelongs.com

The last word...

The fundamental meaning of **everyone belongs™** is that genuine connection is essential for all people and that quality of life is deeply linked to quality of relationships. Communities are more vibrant, healthy, safe, strong, and satisfying when ALL people, regardless of disability, ethno-cultural background, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class are welcome and able to fully participate and contribute.

The purpose of **everyone belongs™** is to raise public awareness about the benefits to us all by including everyone in our communities. Through **everyone belongs™** we want to change peoples' minds, attitudes, and behaviours about people who may be perceived as "different".

Making it Happen

Here are a few, simple ways we can make sure **everyone belongs™**. Modeling respect and an appreciation for the beauty that exists in our differences is a big part of making a profound difference.

- Look beyond myths and stereotypes...people are unique.
- Ask if your child's classroom includes kids with disabilities. Welcome *all* children into your school.
- Talk to your children and other parents about the benefits of inclusive classrooms, workplaces, and communities.
- Don't make assumptions about peoples' abilities.
- Help your children reach out to their peers that may be isolated.
- Be open to receiving everyone's gifts and contributions.
- Consider hiring someone with a disability...it's good for business.
- Patronize businesses that are fully inclusive and value diversity in people.
- Read John McKnight; David Schwartz; Robert Putman; Jean Vanier, and others who understand and express the value of community and belonging.
- Speak up against language and labels that are derogatory.
- Share this message!
- Contact the *Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary (DDRC)* to support the continued work of **everyone belongs™** at www.everyonebelongs.com



Our Values Statement

everyone belongs™ is guided by:

A fundamental belief in the importance of human connection. Genuine human connection is essential for all people. Quality of life is deeply linked to quality of relationships. Social isolation is disabling. We all need to feel included, connected, and valued.

A passionate sense of possibility. Enormous potential exists for all people to live fuller and more fulfilling lives, to grow and blossom through meaningful human connection and participation in community. *everyone belongs™* is rooted in the concept of possibility for all citizens.

A deep commitment to community. Healthy communities are inclusive communities. Inclusive communities nurture values of interdependence and practice natural forms of mutual support of one another.

A positive spirit of championship. *everyone belongs™* stands for an initiative to change peoples' hearts, minds, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. Through this change, more people can become more connected in our community. We will pursue a positive future with a positive spirit.

An authentic voice of inclusion. Inclusion means ...the voice of *everyone belongs™* is honest and humanizing. The strength of the voice comes from honest and inspiring stories about our fellow citizens. *everyone belongs™* helps to create a chorus of voices for the possibility of healthy and meaningful communities for all its citizens.