

CanAssist Impact Report 2019-20



University
of Victoria

Ripple Effects

Leveraging our Impact



Message from the Executive Director

CanAssist, at the University of Victoria, develops technologies for clients across the spectrum of abilities. We offer opportunities for people living with cognitive and physical challenges to participate in their communities. We provide meaningful opportunities for student and faculty engagement. CanAssist relies on donations, grants and partnerships to undertake this important work.

We are committed to making an impact on people's lives and extending our reach and scope. Our ripple effects touch UVic students through co-op and in-class opportunities, the clients who use our technologies, and the youth who participate in TeenWork. Through our work, partnerships have emerged, opening the door to more opportunities for collaboration and for leveraging investments.

This year we focused on workplace wellness. We engaged a consultant to facilitate wellness sessions for our team. Staff members are able to connect with the consultant and get individual support. We also began "Wellness Wednesdays," a challenge to try new activities including meditation, outdoor nature walks, yoga, and wheelchair basketball.



It is thanks to our donors, partners and funders we are able to provide innovative technologies and services to more clients each year. They allow us to serve our clients and the university and enable our ripple effects to spread to the wider community and throughout the province. Thank you from all of us at CanAssist.

Robin Syme

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Syme".

Executive Director
CanAssist at the University of Victoria

Vision

CanAssist at the University of Victoria envisions a society where all people have the opportunity to participate, contribute, and reach their full potential.

Highlights

3,639

software downloads

3,350

hours worked by co-op/practicum students

1,023

UVic students engaged

97

individual clients benefiting from technologies

74

total number of technologies delivered

Mission

CanAssist strives to be a highly respected national resource that collaborates with UVic researchers and students, as well as diverse external partners. We provide people who experience physical or cognitive barriers with innovative technologies, programs and services that address unmet needs and increase independence, inclusion and well-being.

141

youth assisted through TeenWork

92%

TeenWork success rate

Values

- FOCUS ON CLIENTS
- EXCELLENCE
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- INCLUSION
- PASSION

Technology Development

CanAssist's innovative technologies support people with a broad range of challenges, whether they face physical, cognitive, or mental health barriers. The ripple effects of our technologies touch the clients, their families, their workplaces, as well as their leisure activities.

Trevor is an active 44-year old father and outdoor enthusiast. He has a right leg amputation below the knee. His prosthesis limits the range of motion in his knee preventing him from riding a traditional bike. CanAssist created an **Adjustable Bike Crank** to attach to Trevor's bike allowing him to return to the trails. Trevor has become an advocate and champion for CanAssist helping to raise our profile and build more partnerships.



"The modification has opened the door for me to bike comfortably, get back on the trails, and has given me quality time with my family. This has opened a huge door for me to get active in a way I used to be before my accident."

– Trevor

Julia, 17, loves playing music. But a stroke left her with reduced mobility on her right side. She could still play the guitar with someone strumming for her but she wanted to play independently. Her father sought a solution from CanAssist. We were able to provide a **Guitar Strummer**, which uses a floor pedal to strum the guitar. This allowed Julia to continue playing music on her own. The Guitar Strummer has become a frequently requested item for CanAssist clients; seven guitar strummers have already been provided to clients with more planned for the upcoming year. Our impact continues to grow.



"It had been a little over a year since I last heard her play, just thinking about it brings tears to my eyes. I still can't believe how this happened, from the other side of the country you decided to

help us out. It's hard for me to put in words how grateful and thankful I am to you, your donors and everyone involved in your organization."

– Vidan, Julia's father

In February 2019, CanAssist launched **Ability411**, a website providing practical information about technologies, tools and equipment to BC seniors. Visitors submit questions and receive answers about

independent living. The questions and answers then become part of the website's growing database. The service increases seniors' independence and well-being and provides support for their families and care teams.



"My experience with Ability411 was excellent. They were able to provide a lot of really relevant and useful suggestions to help the client. The work you are doing is so meaningful."

– Melissa Friesen, RN, BScN, Saanich Community Health Services

CanAssist worked with local retailers to bring our **Hitch Lift** to market. The Hitch Lift enables people to independently load a manual wheelchair, lightweight scooter or other mobility aid into a vehicle, with little physical effort. CanAssist endeavours to fill gaps identified through our community requests program, or through our product development team.

"I really can't believe how simple it is to operate. The lift is compact which makes the car easy to park. I appreciate knowing I can go places independently of my husband as I can load and unload the walker by myself."

– Linda, client



These technologies are just a few of the many CanAssist has developed and continues to refine for our clients. Their impact touches not only the clients themselves – but also their families, their support teams, their workplaces, the community and beyond.

TeenWork

TeenWork is an innovative youth employment program, designed to help youth with challenges find and retain meaningful, part-time paid employment while they attend high school. The program further enables teens to acquire practical skills, optimism about their futures, and a sense of confidence serving them throughout their lives.

Wanting to open a business providing a space for people of all abilities to work and contribute, Kim Dufort established **A Kinder Cup** café in 2018. Her vision was to hire people who experienced barriers to employment – to provide a workplace where there was a greater sense of belonging and compassion. TeenWork connected her with **Nathan**, a hard worker, and a bright young man whose job coach knew he would be an asset to the café.

Businesses like A Kinder Cup café have an enormous impact on their TeenWork employees but also on the wider community, increasing the visibility of people of all abilities and providing a supportive and diverse environment for its staff and customers.



“The best part of my job is my co-workers. Being a person with special needs, A Kinder Cup has been flexible in adapting certain tasks to fit with my personal abilities...and they just see me as a co-worker. It has been an honour being able to work with the amazing team at A Kinder Cup.”

– Nathan



“I gained confidence in knowing that despite my disabilities, I am able to do good for myself and others around me in a big way.”

– Quin

Another TeenWork success story is CanAssist’s receptionist, **Quin Jones**. When Quin graduated from high school, he wanted to find employment as he transitioned to a new stage of life. Having autism and ADHD, he had a difficult time finding a job and TeenWork supported his job search. The skills he gained from his experience working at CanAssist include communication, social skills, and healthy workplace practices.

The ripple effects of Quin’s experience with TeenWork have the potential to affect not just Quin and his family, but also future generations of Canadians. He aspires to take courses at Camosun College, become a university professor and help forge a new generation of responsible, democratic citizens.

Academic Engagement

One of CanAssist's primary goals is to increase awareness of disability issues through inclusion and education. A key step in achieving this goal is to provide students with outstanding experiential learning opportunities.

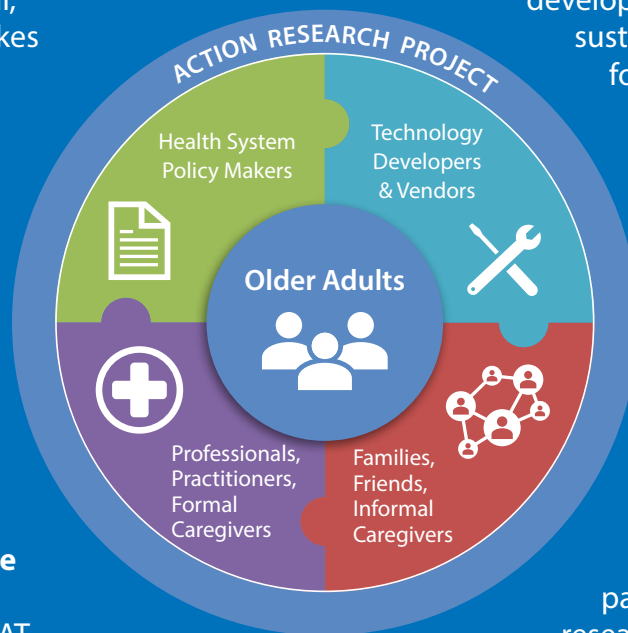
Nicole Bracewell joined the CanAssist team in May 2019 as a job coach for the TeenWork youth employment program. This co-op work term was part of her Recreation Health Education BA program. Nicole already had volunteer experience within the inclusive sport and disability sectors and she built on that experience to engage with potential employers to create customized employment opportunities.



"The TeenWork program is truly unlike any youth employment program in Canada. It is participant-centred and offers multiple delivery streams and on-site job coaching to ensure each participant, even those facing high barriers, receive support catered to their individual needs."

– Nicole Bracewell, Co-op student

CanAssist works with UVic faculty in undertaking meaningful, practical research that makes a difference in the lives of people living with a range of challenges. CanAssist is a partner in a successful Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Implementation Science Team grant-funded project. The project, **Knowledge Implementation for Scale-up, Spread and Sustainability of Assistive Technologies**, is more familiarly known as KISSS-AT. It studies the impact and scalability of assistive technology on the health care system. The participatory design approach ensures the collaboration of stakeholders in generating



ideas and making decisions about the development, implementation and sustainability of technologies for older adults and their care providers. This year, the project achieved four key milestones including: undertaking a Rapid Realist Review to identify key factors that drive successful co-design of assistive technologies; completing the harmonized ethics review; building relationships with key partners; and, developing research proposals for further funding. Next steps will include the recruitment of research subjects – both older adults and care providers to test the technologies.

Our Partners



Inclusive programming is another area of focus for CanAssist at the University of Victoria. We offer the **Just for Kicks** program in partnership with Vikes Athletics providing free indoor soccer for young people with special needs. Nearly 30 UVic student volunteers support the participants each week. This kind of inclusive programming allows children with special abilities to participate in sports and to engage with other members of the community, and have lots of fun in the process.

"The program fits our kids' needs and allows them to play, have fun and keeps them physically active. It is open to all people with diverse abilities and is barrier free. We truly believe this program can have positive impact on participants and their families."

– May Zhong, parent

CanAssist has been privileged to have the support of the **Norgaard Foundation** over the past decade. The Norgaard Foundation, established by the late Kaare Norgaard, is a private family foundation assisting people across the spectrum of ability by providing facilities, equipment, apparatus and services in response to individuals' needs. The Foundation is currently supporting CanAssist with multi-year funding to provide customized technologies to young people with disabilities. This gift has the potential to impact hundreds of people and families across Vancouver Island.



"Norgaard Foundation is delighted to offer support for some of the creative and innovative CanAssist adaptive technology projects which help to make many young individuals' lives easier and more fulfilling."

– Tom Pringle, President, Norgaard Foundation

CanAssist and **WorkSafe BC** have had a strong partnership since 2010. CanAssist provides WorkSafe's injured workers technology solutions to enable them to get back to work, designing easy-to-use and accessible tools helping increase independence, effectiveness, participation and confidence, both on the job and in daily activities related to work.

"CanAssist is so innovative, and it takes a special skill set to understand the specific challenges of injured workers, and then to propose workable solutions. We are so fortunate to be able to partner with them."

– Ken Crystal, Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant, WorkSafe BC



Ken is a painter who experienced a hand injury resulting in his not being able to complete all his usual work activities. As a WorkSafe client, he was connected with CanAssist to support his return to work. CanAssist collaborated with Ken to modify his work tools, including his paint roller pole and paintbrushes.

"I don't think that I would have been able to continue working in my trade if it hadn't been for all of your efforts to make my equipment suitable for my particular set of challenges. I am grateful to be back at work and to be able to help provide for my family."

– Ken, worker

Our donors and partners make it possible for CanAssist to touch the lives of more and more people each year. The ripple effects of our work continue to expand thanks to those vital partnerships.

Financial Information & Outlook

CanAssist began 2019–20 with \$4 million in project funding, enabling the organization to cover annual project expenses and operating costs of \$2.6 million. We achieved a modest positive balance for the fiscal year. We raised almost \$600,000 from philanthropic sources, including grants and donations for technologies, TeenWork and CARSA's inclusive programming.

Fee-for-service contracts and royalties also brought in revenue. CanAssist continues to develop our relationship with WorkSafeBC and fee-for-service revenue is increasing. With investments from the Province, we had the opportunity to produce broad-based technologies and develop private sector partnerships.



The CanAssist team develops innovative technologies and programs to fill gaps in existing services and supports.

Partners & Donors

The following partners and donors provided support to CanAssist in 2019-20 through grants, charitable donations, fee-for-service work, and

in-kind contributions. Thank you for helping our impact ripple out and reach clients, their families, the community and beyond.



**ALACS Foundation
through the
Victoria Foundation**

**NRS Foundation
through the
Victoria Foundation**

**Loyal Protestant
Association**

**The Zacks Family Charitable
Foundation**



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