

SALN

Self Advocate Leadership Network British Columbia

November 13, 2020

SALN COVID-19 News-sheet #9: Thinking About Language news-sheet

This News-sheet is a public document. Information, quotes, and questions are invited to be shared and included outside of SALN.

The majority of SALN members are part of provincial self-advocacy and advisory groups. SALN is aware and interested in the BC self-advocate movement. All SALN members are well-established and recognizable. All SALN members are from leading groups in the movement.

SALN Mission Statement:

To promote a good life through positive and informed: actions, networking and advocacy.

SALN would like to share the following:

The public release of our Report thinking about Plain Language

“Thinking About Language. Words Matter. Words Have Power.

The Self-Advocate Leadership Network’s Journey Through Thinking About Language”

August 2020

What is this Report?

For years, people with disabilities have not had very much control over the way society “refers” to them. There has been a never-ending struggle for people to be heard and listened to.

SALN believes it is time to have a serious conversation and support ways to help people think differently...and think about supporting self-advocates and people with disabilities to lead the change in language that is imposed on them.

SALN and their supporters spent time working through a process to think about this conversation and created a report to share, in hopes that it could help people think deeper about the importance of language.

WHERE TO FIND OUR REPORT

<https://salnbc.com/saln-projects/>

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SALN Comment (from Report):

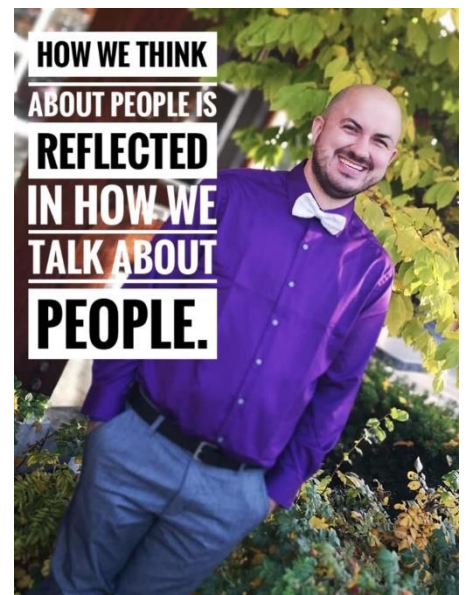
"Is not dictating and imposing what we think is right or wrong. We want to be open minded based on people's experience, history, where they live – but maintaining the principles of decent language. We understand language is different all over the world, but there are basic principles of respect, kindness and inclusion. We want to encourage and deepen understanding."

"Now that we have started this conversation, we feel it is important to keep it alive. Figure out ways to support positive change."

Our Principles

What can people keep in mind about language.

- Ask people what they prefer.
- Ask people what words and terms they like...and don't like.
- Ask people if they understand the words and terms you are using.
- Ask people if they are easy to say.
- Try to use the person's name as much as possible.
- Try to use the word person or people as much as possible.
- Ask yourself, are the words you use positive, respectful, meaningful, helpful?
- Ask yourself, do the words you use promote inclusion or foster exclusion?



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Quotes from SALN members:

- **"How we think about people is reflected in how we talk about people."**
- "Language is so important – it shows how we treat people."
- **"People often speak before thinking on how words can affect the person."**
- "Some words and terms that started out as respectful – with good intention...that over time shift and then become negative or an "us and them" meaning. So, we have to always keep looking at language and words."
- **"When we are offended by a word or term, we can take the opportunity to let people know...and tell them why. We can offer alternatives."**
- "It is good to think about how words matter. It doesn't have to be complicated."
- **"Language is always changing**, so this work and thinking needs to be done on a constant basis. If you keep having to fight for something, you start to lose interest...it's tiring and you learn to go with the flow. It is what it is. It's sad."
- "Sometimes you just grow up with a term and you just get used to it but I didn't always think that the term was wrong or anything. But it's not a term that you normally hear. People who come from different parts of the world have different terms...different language."
- **"How do we educate people?** Language is something we hear, what we grow up with. What we hear growing up with can shape your thoughts and how you view yourself and others. Language impacts everything: how we learn, act, interact with others, impressions of others. Language is constantly changing, even if you don't mean to be offensive, you might be. It's a very fine balance – people need to constantly learn and change."
- **"How do we help make changes – in a positive way – and not be the "language police"? People shut down or get defensive or feel bad...and then there is no opportunity for changing things. How do we respectfully help educate people? Help people be more aware of the impact of the language they use?"**

Link of our report: <https://salnbc.com/saln-projects/>

Please invite SALN to participate in creating and delivering solutions where it makes sense. SALN appreciates the support in sharing SALN content. To receive SALN content, email SALN support at info@salnbc.com. Response can be sent to SALN support, at info@salnbc.com.

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