



## Breaking the ICE (BTI) Conference Canada

BTI Canada hosts consumer-focused virtual and in-person events for people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). The goal is to provide youth and adults who use AAC with opportunities to come together and learn from each other, create meaningful relationships in the community, and have a platform to share ideas and feelings. These individuals typically have Complex Communication Needs (CCN) as a result of communication and/or physical challenges.

People who support those who use AAC as well as professionals and students in the field of AAC are welcome to attend events as observers. This unique context provides a rich opportunity for observers to learn from people with lived experience using AAC to communicate.

**ICE** stands for Independence, Community and Empowerment. Through its events, BTI Canada strives to create:

- Opportunities for Independence and growth. Participants are supported to be involved in different aspects of the Conference (e.g. program development, introducing a presenter, presenting on a panel, presenting individually, co-chairing the Conference). These opportunities enable those who have more experience with AAC to mentor younger AAC users. This allows younger users and their parents/allies to interact with others who have shared experiences.
- A Community of people who use AAC. Coming together as a group (either in-person or virtually) gives individuals with CCN who may be isolated a chance to share ideas, make connections and say what is on their mind. For example, an integral component of the BTI Conference is the Town Hall where everyone who uses AAC has a voice. Other people may observe and listen, but they cannot join in the sharing.
- Empowerment by recognizing and celebrating the lived experience of people who use AAC. They share their stories, opinions and experiences through presentations. The Conference respects the efforts and skills of our speakers by providing equitable payment in the form of honorariums and expenses.

## Past events:

- The first biannual conference was held in 2002 in Orillia.
- Conferences were then held in Toronto every 2 years until 2019.
- With the Covid-19 Pandemic, events moved online, allowing for more Canada-wide participation
- Participants are able to connect and share ideas on a variety of topics.

## Comments from past attendees:

- *BTI Conferences give an “opportunity to AAC users to know that they do have a growing voice that will be heard; that they can live lives that are full and rich with life experiences; that their interests to move forward are fueled confidently by each daily adventure in their community.” (An AAC Professional)*
- *“People who use AAC of all ages have been ... presenting as guest speakers, on panels and individually in the Town Hall sessions where a range of meaningful topics is tackled with openness and respect.” (A parent)*
- *“With the insights I gained, I would insist that my colleagues all attend this conference.” (A Speech-Language Pathologist)*
- *“An amazing opportunity to show the powerful minds that use AAC.” (An AAC user)*
- *“People who are new or inexperienced at using AAC have an incredible opportunity here to see how AAC has enhanced the lives of individuals.” (A parent)*
- *“I was very happy to see so many people like myself, with different modes of communication... Many people in the general public do not know or understand that we are very smart and current individuals. But by attending this conference I feel very good about myself and felt included.” (An AAC user)*

## Want to learn more?

- Sign up to our mailing list: [BTI Canada Information](#)
- Check out our [Facebook](#) Page (*Breaking the ICE Canada Conference*)
- Contact us: [Conf.breakingtheice@gmail.com](mailto:Conf.breakingtheice@gmail.com)