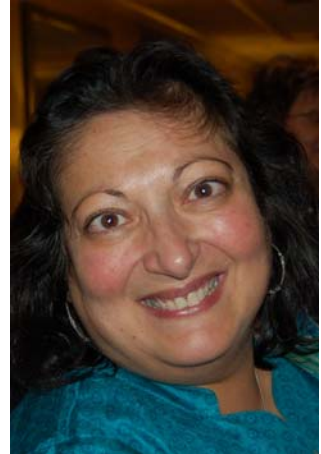


NO MORE EXCUSES - Zuhy Sayeed *"Inclusion – our way of life"*

For the past 27 years, "inclusion" has been the "way of life" for our family. We have worked with early childhood intervention services right through to graduate school and work environments to ensure that our sons have been welcomed, meaningfully included and that the communities they have lived in have seen and experienced the huge positive impact of having them as part and parcel of active life.

My joy knew no bounds last week when I went with my daughter in law to pick our grand daughter up from Kindergarten during her first week of school. As my grand daughter exited the room and said goodbye to her teacher, another young child, her classmate, came out behind her - complete with his walker, his school bag and with a huge smile on his face!



Our 27 years of hard work to ensure that every child is included and that every school does indeed include; was suddenly worth every minute and each heartache and barrier we had ever faced!!

For our little one to be going to school where a child with a disability was her classmate – no fuss, no bother – just as a matter of course was great. Growing up with the full fabric of human diversity just felt so right and so powerful!

Indeed, today, no family should have to face the obstacles and challenges to have their children included in school. Those should be long ago battles that no longer result in exclusion and heart ache. Surely in the 21st Century each child with an intellectual disability should simply be a part of the diversity that is Canada in their families, their schools and their communities.

Today, teachers must be trained to teach to all children and accept the diversity of our society. Schools must be adequately funded to provide an equal education and needed supports for every child. Children must be nurtured and educated together in their community school and learn to be responsible, participating citizens.

We need to ensure that this happens. **With no excuses. No exceptions.** We can do it if we all get involved and have our voices heard!

Zuhy Sayeed is a parent and advocate from Lloydminster, Alberta. She is the Past-President of the Canadian Association for Community Living. She is also a Past- President of the Alberta Association for Community Living. She and her husband Raffath have four sons – and now several grandchildren. They have worked hard to develop inclusion in the schools in their city and beyond.