

1950's

In 1956 a group of parents got together to start a school for handicapped children at Fisherman's Hall, so their children would not have to be bused to a special classroom in New Westminster for an education. Mrs. Ross Duncan was hired as the teacher. The hall was located on Savoy Street in Ladner so the class became known as the Savoy Class, sometimes called the Savoy School or The Happy Class. "The Happy Class" served 12 children with special needs and provided transportation to students to and from school. Some events leading up to the creation of the special classroom:

March 29, 1956: "School Trustees and other community representatives from Surrey, Delta and Langley were scheduled to meet...to start planning a project for the assistance of physically and mentally retarded children in the three municipalities. This follows notification to the school boards covered by the Boundary Health Unit that the provincial government will now contribute towards the education and training of handicapped youngsters" Delta Optimist.

November 22, 1956: Victor Freer, V.W.S. (soon to become Vice President of the upcoming Delta Society for Handicapped Children) represented the Boundary Society for Handicapped Children and spoke to the Delta Centre PTA. Although the government recognizes the rights of handicapped children to an education and has granted a \$250 allowance per student per annum, it is not enough to maintain an adequate teaching staff. . It is the goal of the society to procure a suitable building, set up a volunteer transportation system and start with one class and one teacher, who will receive very little salary the first year.

March 7, 1957: Mr. L. Doyle, President of the Boundary Society for Handicapped Children, at their monthly meeting, introduced Mrs. McFee the principal of the Beacon Hill School for handicapped children in New Westminster. Mrs. McFee told of the history of her school and gave practical hints and advice on the starting and continuation of such a school.

1958: The Delta Association for Handicapped Children is formed to support the Savoy Street classroom in Ladner for children with special needs. This was the year that the Deas Island Tunnel (now known as the George Massey tunnel) opened for traffic, turning Ladner from a rural enclave into a busy townlet. It was also the year that a critical amendment was made to the School Act, enabling public school boards to take over full responsibility for the education and training of "moderately retarded" children. This was the first time in Canada that educating children with special needs was recognized as a public responsibility. The Act also permitted school boards to accommodate classes for children with special needs.

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Archived press clippings:

1958 Eleven children attend happy class

1958 Good work Mrs Ross Duncan

1958 Give to the happy class

1959: The Delta Association for Handicapped Children (now known as Reach) is incorporated January 1959: The Delta Association for Handicapped Children holds its first annual general meeting at Peck Elementary School in Ladner. O.S. Eakin of the Delta School Board is elected as President. The Board pursues the School Board for a classroom for the Savoy School

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Archived press clippings:

1959 Certificate of incorporation

1958 Osborne Eakin heads association

1959 School needs classroom

1959 School needs a typewriter

1959 Hall cold needs classroom