

Special Interest Article

Ed. Note: The following article was written by CSHA member Patrick Alexander at the invitation of the editor. The invitation was extended to provide readers with some of the background and history of the Canadian Elks Purple Cross Deaf Detection and Development Program which has had an important influence on the course of our profession and the treatment of the communicatively handicapped in Canada.

THE ELKS PURPLE CROSS FUND

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The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (B.P.O.E.) and their auxiliary, The Order of the Royal Purple (O.O.R.P.), have made an enormous contribution on behalf of hearing and speech impaired Canadian children, especially during the past fifteen years. In the five year period from June 1, 1978 to May 31, 1983, the Elks* "invested" two and a half million dollars toward improving the lives of Canadian children in need.

The Canadian Elks Order (not affiliated with the American Order) was instituted in 1912. The purposes of the Society are Benevolent, Provident, Moral and Charitable and in particular to provide funds, equipment and generally assist children for their good and welfare. The following six aims are listed in the Elks Constitution and By-laws:

- To inculcate the principle of charity by the development and financial support of the Elks Purple Cross Fund.
- To promote and support service in the community.
- To assist in the care and welfare of our senior citizens.
- To promote goodwill and welfare to all in need, with special emphasis on the needs of children.
- To inculcate and foster in the children of Canada pride and loyalty towards our Nation and our Flag.
- To encourage all members to uphold the Rule of Law and to show by example good citizenship at all times.

It is from these lofty ideals and fraternal attitudes that their charitable motivation is derived.

The Elks have always been charitable. For the first 50 years the money raised by members was given to various community and national charities.

In 1956 the Elks Purple Cross Fund was established to:

"...Provide financial assistance for any purpose whatsoever that is for the good and welfare of a person resident in Canada prior to attaining their nineteenth birthday..."

In 1967, under the leadership and through the tireless efforts of Robert K. Coulling, Executive Director and Chairman of the Board, the fund was extended to include the Deaf Detection and Development Program.

The Elks Purple Cross Fund as it exists today has two distinct divisions:

* 1. The term Elks refers to the combined groups, men and women.

- a) Individual Assistance Division
- b) Deaf Detection and Development Program

The Individual Assistance Division focuses upon the needs of individual children and their families. Through this section of the fund money has been provided for a very wide range of reasons.

A family who operated a corner store in a major Canadian city suffered a devastating fire. The Elks provided considerable subsistence funding until they were able to rebuild. A six month old child had to be rushed to a specialized clinic in the United States to receive emergency heart surgery. The expenses were considerable including air travel to the clinic, meals and accommodation for the accompanying parent, hospital, surgical and pharmaceutical costs. The parents applied through their local Elks Lodge and received a grant sufficient to cover all of their expenses not reimbursed by medicare. An adolescent in a small Canadian farming community was paralyzed when struck by a car. The Elks purchased a special hydraulic device to lift the child and wheelchair into the family vehicle.

Over the years, the Individual Assistance Division of the Elks Purple Cross Fund has purchased various prosthetic devices including glasses and hearing aids; specialized equipment and services; and travel to enable children to obtain necessary treatment.

Applications for individual assistance through the Elks Purple Cross Fund are submitted through the local lodges. The Elks Purple Cross Assistance Committee adjudicates each application. There is not a "Means Test" per se, but the fund is not intended to support families who can clearly afford to provide for themselves. Neither is the Fund meant to replace medicare. Money is awarded where assistance is not already available through medicare or other governmental programs.

The second division of the Elks Purple Cross Fund is the Deaf Detection and Development Program. This division focuses on hearing and speech problems in Canadian children. At the time of the inception of the Elks Purple Cross Fund, the many and various needs of Canadian children were studied. At that time it seemed that many advocacy groups were dedicated to increase public awareness and provide funding for the care of virtually all special needs Canadian children with the possible exception of the hearing-impaired. At least it seemed that Canadian hearing-impaired children had a particularly serious need for additional support.

The Deaf Detection and Development Program progressed in 1968 with the implementation of the Elks Speech and Hearing Clinic in Regina, the first combined speech pathology and audiology clinic in Saskatchewan.

The objectives of the Deaf Detection and Development Program are listed in a recent Elks Purple Cross Fund Brochure:

1. Prevention.
2. Earliest possible identification.
3. Immediate, effective management...medical, audiological, speech and language, educational.
4. Research to eradicate the causes of hearing loss.

The Deaf Detection and Development Program has contributed to the provision of speech and hearing services in all ten provinces and the two northern territories.

A Canadian university program in speech pathology and audiology was informed by the university administration that a portion of funds required to obtain equipment necessary for adequate training of future speech pathologists and audiologists would be denied because of budget cutbacks. The chairman of the program contacted the Elks Deaf Detection and Development Program and explained the situation. The training program was invited to submit a grant proposal for the balance of the funds required. The grant was awarded and students are receiving the benefit of training with the use of proper instruments.

A major Canadian hospital speech and hearing department, frequently called upon to provide diagnostic and treatment services for children with the most complex communicative disorders wished to replace obsolete equipment and worn out materials. When informed by the hospital executive that the money was not available for a few years, the department submitted a proposal to the Elks Purple Cross Deaf Detection and Development Program. An award was granted in the full amount.

The information and technology explosion has led to development of highly sophisticated and very expensive equipment. Even though these new instruments hold the potential for greatly improving clinical services and markedly reducing the time required, the very high cost precludes their acquisition for most programs. The Elks Deaf Detection and Development Program has entered into cost sharing agreements with a number of programs in Canada providing initial grants to stimulate matching funds from governments.

Most practitioners in speech and hearing acknowledge the need for improved public awareness and understanding of the needs of children with communication disorders. During the last several years the Elks Deaf Detection and Development Program has produced a film, "For All To Hear", two video tapes, "A Child Knows Best" and "Early Detection of Hearing Impairment Is Your Responsibility", three radio spots for "May is Hearing and Speech Month" and the following brochures: Can Your Baby Hear?; Hearing ABC's for Boys and Girls; Hearing Impaired?; Overcoming Hearing Handicaps of Children; The B.P.O. Elks of Canada and their auxiliary The Order of the Royal Purple; The Elks Purple Cross Deaf Detection and Development Program; Will Your Child Speak?.

The above materials are made available to agencies and interested speech and hearing professionals at no cost. Each May, a special emphasis is placed upon public education. The Elks provide "May is Hearing and Speech Month" posters, counter cards and buttons to heighten the awareness of Canadians concerning the needs of the hearing and speech impaired.

As mentioned above, the Deaf Detection and Development Program opened a Speech and Hearing Clinic in 1968. The clinic was viewed as a "model" or "demonstration" clinic to enable a thorough investigation of the actual need for such services and to provide an example of an effective service design to meet the determined need. In 1976, the Elks Deaf Detection and Development Program, in co-operation with the University of Saskatchewan, established the Saskatchewan Preschool Auditory Rehabilitation Centre (S.P.A.R.C.). In January 1983, the B.C. Elks Auditory Rehabilitation Centre opened in Surrey. These programs for preschool hearing impaired children were designed to investigate the need for preschool auditory rehabilitation services and to develop model programs that present examples of effective service delivery. Both of these programs place considerable emphasis on the training of parents to increase their understanding of hearing impairment, its influence on the life of their child, and their potential role in minimizing the handicapping effects of the hearing

impairment.

The Elks Purple Cross Fund has always acknowledged the importance of research. Much of the clinical equipment purchased through the Deaf Detection and Development Program has been used in applied research. Of special interest has been the dissemination of information based upon the interpretation and implications of research results.

In order to provide an environment for the exchange of information concerning "state of the science" research and clinical program designs, the Elks Purple Cross Fund has sponsored a series of international conferences.

The papers presented at these conferences and position statements endorsed by the International Panel, have been published, placing these most current, international perspectives into the hands of clinicians and scientists:

- Mencher, G.T. (Ed.), Early Identification of Hearing Loss, S. Karger, Basel, 1976
- Gerber, S.E., Mencher, G.T. (Eds.), Early Diagnosis of Hearing Loss, Grune and Stratton, New York, 1978
- Mencher, G.T., Gerber, S.E. (Eds.), Early Management of Hearing Loss, Grune and Stratton, New York, 1981
- Gerber, S.E., Mencher, G.T. (Eds.), The Multiply Handicapped Hearing Impaired Child, Grune and Stratton, New York, (in press).

To coincide with the C.S.H.A. Convention, the Fifth International Conference, "The Hearing Impaired Infant: A Decade of Progress", has been scheduled for May 22 and 23, 1984 in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Through the Individual Assistance Division of the Elks Purple Cross Fund, hundreds of families have received direct support in times of severe personal suffering. Through the Deaf Detection and Development Program, literally thousands of hearing and speech impaired children have been indirectly helped. Many of us feel that the accomplishments of the Elks Purple Cross Fund to date have been truly remarkable but we understand that the Elks have plans to increase their support for Canadian children.

The Elks are currently engaged in a record setting fund raising campaign to raise in excess of four million dollars to enable even greater contributions to the lives of Canadian children and their families. They have dubbed this campaign "65/84". The "65" represents the number of dollars each member has been asked to raise. The "84" is the year chosen for this special project. If you are aware of a Purple Cross 65/84 special project, please support it. The Elks are Canadians who make their concerns manifest through meaningful action. Your local Elks and Order of the Royal Purple would appreciate receiving the assistance of any speech and hearing professional.

Robert K. Coulling was given the Distinguished Service Award by the Canadian Speech and Hearing Association during its First Annual Convention. His personal vision, charity and unswerving dedication; and the benevolent and protective attitudes of the Canadian Elks have alleviated suffering, advanced technology and improved communicative abilities of Canadian children.

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