

Hearing Journey

Finding My “Right to Hear”



Kit Racette was born in England, and moved to Canada at the age of ten, discovering her hearing loss then. Today, Kit enjoys retirement while residing in Lanaudiere, spending most of her time in the garden, on the lake, or volunteering at a local market. In the winter, she escapes the cold by visiting family in Australia.

I have had the pleasure of getting involved in the activities of Hear Quebec over the past year. My participation in the Peer Mentor training program and the Book Club have often brought me “AHA!” moments, leading to many excited emails to Hear Quebec expressing my gratitude. I hope you will read my Hearing Journey, and understand why my participation in this organization has been so beneficial.

As a child, I experienced unilateral hearing loss. My parents gradually became aware of my choice to sit on the left side of a room and my inability to hear what was said by people to my left. On my thirteenth birthday, I was taken to an ear, nose and throat doctor in Toronto – I remember going! He diagnosed me with complete loss of hearing in my left ear due to the loss of a nerve, caused by a secondary virus as a result of measles. Because I had no nerve, hearing aids would not help. I had measles when I was eight, so at thirteen I had dealt with unilateral hearing for five years. I continued to sit on the left, and turned my head so that my right ear faced the source of sound. Over time the turning of my head resulted in scoliosis of my spine and joint issues. In a

funny way I am grateful for this, as I have studied movement modules to mitigate these issues, benefitting my entire body!

Due to the lack of hearing, I learned that I had no proprioception on my left side. Proprioception means the body’s sense of space. For me, my left side did not exist! Fast forward to age fifty-seven – I was encountering difficulties processing numbers over the phone, so I went to see an audiologist. She confirmed that my left ear did not detect sound, but also that my right ear was losing hearing, and

Due to the lack of hearing, I learned that I had no proprioception on my left side. Proprioception means the body’s sense of space. For me, my left side did not exist!

fitted me with a hearing aid. I was relieved that the problem was my hearing and not my cognition! Six years later, an audiologist recommended that I purchase a BiCROS system. This consists of a hearing aid called a CROS (Contralateral Routing of Signals) in the deaf ear acting as a microphone, sending sound to the regular hearing aid in the better ear. Although I cannot hear in my left ear, all the sounds around me are picked up in my right ear. At first, my poor brain had no idea how to deal with this new blended sound. However, over time my left side came back! While it is still a habit to turn my head, I am working on looking people in their eyes when we talk. I am so grateful to the advances in hearing



aids, and to the audiologists who make all of this available to me.

So, why am I such a fan of participating in Hear Quebec activities? First of all, I have met people who have also had to deal with deafness. Hearing deficiency is a hidden handicap and a taboo subject. We live in a hearing world with very little allowances for those who do not hear well. I admire and learn from you. I feel as if for the first time I have found a community in which I fit! I remember peers in one of my groups talking about the "right to hear." This had never occurred to me; it was up



to me to hear. Since that day, I have been open about my hearing challenge. I ask people to speak slowly and remove their hands from their face so I can lip-read. From the Peer Mentor program, I have learnt about new and exciting tools. I now use an app on my phone called "Group Transcriptions," which transcribes meetings for me in both languages – I love it! But more than anything, I am excited that I have learnt to advocate for myself. All my life, I hid behind my deafness. Socializing was always difficult, especially in groups. Classes were often impossible if the teacher did not speak well. I did not know I could ask for help. So here I am, at seventy-seven, wishing I had known all this years ago. Sending you all gratitude for your part in me learning to advocate for myself!

So, why am I such a fan of participating in Hear Quebec activities? First of all, I have met people who have also had to deal with deafness



Sylvie Auger M.O.A.

Audiologist, Clinical Director & Owner

2111 Northcliffe, suite 443, Montreal, Qc, H4A 3K6

Tel: (514) 488-5558 | Fax: (514) 488-2462

info@audiologie-centre-ouest.com | www.audiologie-centre-west.com