

I believe in my community.

I believe that its success depends on the people who live in it.

That everyone has something to contribute.

That everyone deserves respect.

That everyone's potential can be realized.

That diversity is vital.

That every person has value.

That everyone needs help and everyone can offer help.

That a safe, supportive community is everyone's responsibility.

I believe in possibility.



United Way
Northern British Columbia
Investing in Northern BC Communities

NICHOLAS' STORY

Little Nicholas stubbornly sits at the dining room table, dawdling over a partially eaten carrot on his supper plate. His mother Susan lowers her face to make eye contact. Getting Nicholas' attention she mouths the words and signs to him to quickly finish so he can join his older brother and sister having a Halloween treat – Nicholas frowns and makes an awkward sound that resembles a *no!*

This scene played out in most families with small children who can be very picky about their food would be frustrating - for Susan, this is a great day!

"It all started out so right and when 7 pound 13 ounce Nicholas arrived my husband Dale and I were ecstatic. Nicholas had all his fingers and toes – he was loving and cuddly – and for the first months the perfect baby. Nicholas seldom cried – he seemed so content"

The family thought he was developing just like the other kids – smiling, clapping and mimicking everything that the family did. Then one day when Nicholas had started to walk the family began to notice that there was something different about him.

"I will never forget the Halloween night that we went to the fireworks display. The older children were excited reacting to the flashes of light and ducked under Dale's coat when the thunderous boom followed. Nicholas was in my arms but apparently unafraid of the noise – it was then that I began to suspect that little Nicholas could not hear sounds"

Problems of childhood deafness have been with us for centuries. Once a child is diagnosed it is a frightening and confusing time for the parents. Fortunately for Susan, Dale and little Nicholas they live in Northern BC – because the United Way of Northern British Columbia is working on solutions.

Every year 10 children in Northern BC will start off life unable to hear their mother's soothing voice or for that matter their own voice – and hundreds of others will have hearing problems. Without early intervention their lives will not have the same start as other children.

United Way works to improve the quality of life of all ages - funding services and agencies and professionals; public and professional awareness about the needs of those in our community; encouraging government legislation; and encourage planning and program development.

Advantages in computer technology as well as in ear surgery have given us the opportunity to offer the world of sound, music and speech to those who would have otherwise spent their lives in a soundless cocoon.

Those who were born deaf or those who lose their hearing from disease or trauma can experience the gift of hearing thanks to cochlear implants. Getting the implant and therapy can cost from \$ 2,000 to \$ 5,000 and many health benefit plans do not cover these procedures.

Nicholas did get help. Now with this implant, no wider than a piece of dental floss, Nicholas, at age three, has begun to recognize sounds and form words. Not unlike the thousands of other children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, speech therapy and learning to hear sounds is a big part of Nicholas' life.

"Hearing those first words that we recognize – our names, of course mama and dada and even the word no brings a tear to my eye every time – it's just so wonderful that Nicholas has a real chance to fit in, progress in school and one day make a difference in all our lives - thanks to the implant and the support the United Way agencies provided."

The implant did not magically restore Nicholas' hearing - but with the ongoing help of speech therapists and signing interpreters, Nicholas' confidence has grown and he is learning to play with his older brother and sister. The barriers that kept Nicholas isolated have been torn down. The family now awaits every new word and sound with excitement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.unitedwaybc.ca

OR CONTACT US BY TELEPHONE:
PRINCE GEORGE (250) 561-1040 • FORT ST. JOHN (250) 263-9266