

Transcription of the video: *Courtney's Story*

[Courtney] My learning disability has just become such a big part of my life. It's also become my passion. I like to say it as I could have walked into school with a neon sign over my head because I was not only the new kid, but I had a learning disability which meant that I was getting pulled out of class all the time to go to the special education classes. And so, I was automatically different, and so bullying definitely became a prominent thing in my life for a couple of years. I remember hating reading because it took so much time and it required so much effort and it was so exhausting.

To get to university, it was having multiple math tutors and it was working long hours at night to get things done, and studying incredibly hard. I had to learn how to speak up for what I needed. I had to self-advocate for myself at such a younger age. I needed to be able to do it from the day I was diagnosed essentially. I couldn't do it then, but getting into grade seven and grade eight I got a lot better at saying this is not what I need and being able to stand up for what I knew I needed. I had one teacher in high school really recognized my ability to be engaged and not be engaged and that's a really big thing for me, and so, when I was really disengaged she would tell me to go for walks and take a break.

Camp Towhee, I went to when I was twelve and made this book, when I got back it literally changed my life. I think it gave me all the self-confidence that I needed. It normalized learning disabilities for me. It gave me people to relate to, people just to listen to what I had to say, to kind of find new coping mechanisms for me, like help me to deal with social situations that were harder for me to deal with and giving me somebody to talk to, which was phenomenal.

