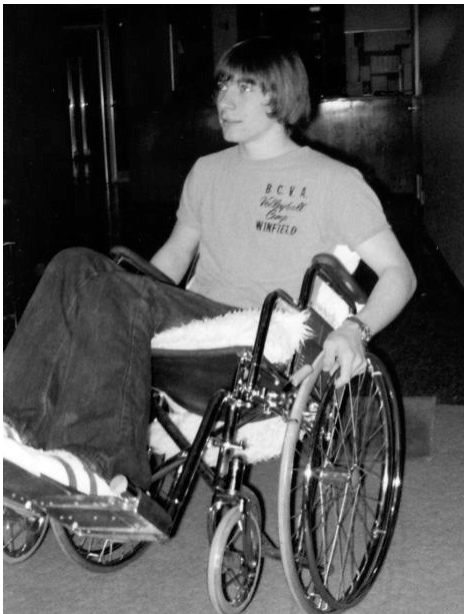


First Impressions and Identity Labels

The Rick Hansen Foundation is committed to creating a fully inclusive society, where every person can contribute in meaningful ways to their community. Rick Hansen knows first-hand how difficult it is to change others' perceptions of you.

When people have already formed an impression of what you are unable to do, it is difficult to make them understand what you are capable of. Because he uses a wheelchair, Rick was told he could not pursue a physical education degree. He was also told he was crazy for wanting to wheel around the world. He did both, and throughout his life, Rick has significantly contributed to society's awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities.



Activity:

Answer the following questions:

1. Think of some identity groups that may exist at your school (e.g. popular, unpopular, ESL, EAL, immigrant status, honours/gifted students, learning difficulty, physical disability, sp.ed student, well-dressed students, nonconformist or unusual dressers, different race/culture/religion, athletes, bullies, bullied students, etc.)

What are some challenges or obstacles that prevent us from approaching and/or engaging others who do not share the same identity groups as us?

2. If those obstacles are present, does this translate into assumptions about the person with that label, and a lack of understanding of their story (i.e. judging a book by its cover)?

3. Does this then translate into inaction or inappropriate action? What are examples of this?