

# CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

## Dan Bauer—Founder of AWS and dedicated to accessibility in the great outdoors

One day, while recovering from a serious car accident in a rehabilitation hospital, Dan Bauer of Campbell River, BC, had a life-changing experience. He recounts how he overheard a recently paralyzed man emotionally tell his wife and children, "Sell the boat! Sell the trailer! I won't be able to use those things anymore. There won't be any more hiking or fishing or camping."

Initially saddened by what he had heard, Dan was quickly overcome with anger. "Why," he thought, "shouldn't this man be able to camp or hike or fish? Why shouldn't he still be able to access the wilderness?" It suddenly occurred to Dan that anyone could enjoy the outdoors with the right equipment and environment. Thus began Dan's dream of improving wilderness accessibility and his journey toward establishing the Accessible Wilderness Society (AWS).

Dan's idea remained on the back burner for years until he enrolled in the Business Abilities program and worked with his coach to develop his business plan for the AWS. Following this, he signed up for the IBDE program and soon realized that his newly acquired web design knowledge could help him achieve his long-time dream.

***"It was just like raising your hand in a classroom."***

Always the class clown, Dan's humour came through even in the virtual classroom. He describes the very first Illuminate session where he joked with fellow classmates, "I used to have dreams about coming to class naked. Now I can actually do it!"

While jocular in nature, Dan is serious about his appreciation of the IBDE program. The timetable fit his schedule



and allowed him to work independently, while the program's structure kept him focused.

***"Just have fun in the course. The teachers will make sure you stay on the right track."***

And the instructors were very prompt with their feedback, always responding to Dan's emails within "twenty minutes," he says. In some cases the responses were so fast, "It was just like raising your hand in a classroom," laughs Dan. He also found that the instructors understood the special challenges facing people with disabilities.

Dan recommends that future students, "Just have fun in the course. The teachers will make sure you stay on the right track." IBDE has brought Dan closer to his goal of building a fully accessible campground and resort facility. It eliminated the need to pay others for web design costs and provided a forum for promoting the AWS.

In May of 2009 Dan incorporated the Accessible Wilderness Society as a nonprofit entity. AWS is currently working on the development of a series of accessibility guides, which it hopes to have

available for the 2010 Paralympic Games in Vancouver. The guides will rate hiking trails and campgrounds on Vancouver Island based on their accessibility for people with physical disabilities. The revenue raised from advertising sales will go directly toward funding Dan's long-term vision of establishing an accessible campground and resort facility.

On the AWS website ([www.awsociety.org](http://www.awsociety.org)), Dan states, "Most barriers can be overcome simply by finding ways around, over and sometimes directly through them." People with disabilities can rest assured that if they face any barriers to enjoying the outdoors, Dan will find a way around them.

### Update - May 2014

In November 2010 AWS acquired a wilderness property at Roberts Lake, 38 kilometres north of Campbell River on Vancouver Island, through a Crown land tenure opportunity offered by the Province of British Columbia. There, the AWS has plans to develop a universally designed wilderness lodge and campground facility.

Recently, Dan and his wife Judy relocated to the Okanagan to be closer to family. Through this, Dan has stepped back from his role as Executive Director of the AWS but remains a very dedicated member of the organization's Board of Directors. Dan has been instrumental in acquiring the Roberts Lake property, and his passion to see the area become an accessible wilderness site for "Every-Body" is still as strong as ever.

Despite Dan's relocation to the Okanagan, the charting and exploration of accessible wilderness opportunities for those of less mobility continues on. Through a chance meeting in a Wal-Mart parking lot this month, Dan is now working under contract with Four Seasons Transportation, a company based in Calgary, and will be

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developing an inventory of accessible trails and recreation areas in the Okanagan.

When viewing their Rocky Mountain Wheelchair Tours website, Dan noticed it was in need of an update and is giving it a much-needed facelift. Thanks to his IBDE training, he is also well suited to complete their web optimization for marketing purposes as well. A double whammy—Four Seasons Transportation is lucky to have found Dan!

If that wasn't enough, Dan is also in the process of developing a new web and multimedia business called Night Owl Concepts, and you can view his website in the [CSSD-IBDE website competition](#) now running (see page 5).

Dan is really on fire these days, and we are truly fortunate to have his continued involvement in CSSD to this day.

**To contact Dan, visit his website [CLICK HERE](#).  
Or you can give him a call at 250-923-9612.**

**We are always looking for contributions from past and present participants about your business ideas, career journeys, triumphs, and challenges.**

**Please send your ideas to: [newsletter@cssd-web.org](mailto:newsletter@cssd-web.org) (Include a photo if you can.)**