

## **12/12/12: A Special Day**

Audrey Cole

Wednesday, December 12th, 2012 was a special day in its own right! It was the kind of day that doesn't happen very often. In fact, the media reminded us that there will not be another occasion when the dates on which the day, month and year all match, until January 1st 2101. Given the significance of the day, many people around the world engaged in various special activities.

At the moment of writing, that special day was about to end. It had been a long day! It had also been an exciting day. Not only was it a day of mathematical significance, it was also the day of my son's annual Christmas luncheon – a special gathering to which Ian's many nurses, supporters in his day-to-day life and others who play various significant roles in his life are invited. He has hosted such an event at that time of year ever since he moved from his parental home to his own home, four and a half years ago.

It has always been a joyous event but on that day, for the first time ever, Ian was not the only person present who has Down syndrome. On that special day we all had the privilege of meeting Samuel, a tiny, gorgeous, perfect guest, who happens to find himself in this world wearing that same label.

There were few male persons at the luncheon gathering (a total of three, actually, one of whom, Ian's Uncle, does not have Down syndrome). But there is something about new babies that refocuses the attention of any gathering, particularly two-month old babies who, from their very first day, with unquestioned determination, have fought a valiant fight to stay where they were intended to be, right here in our midst with loving, caring families and fellow human beings.

There was no question about how most of that roomful of people welcomed this newcomer into a Canadian society that appears, at times, to be not quite sure where it stands about the rightful inclusion of people with disabilities in its midst.

And what about my son? What was his reaction to the young guest? In his 48 years, Ian has never spoken! We struggle daily, as we have always struggled, to try to be sure that we are interpreting his various gestures and reactions to situations as his will, as his understanding of what is and is not important to his life and to his well being.

We trust that we are being true to his choices about the way his life should evolve.

Ian's youngest guest's mother, for the past few years, has been involved in Ian's day to day life. She sat down beside Ian to introduce her tiny, beautiful, perfect son. And Ian, who doesn't speak, who doesn't rate on clinical IQ scales, smiled, reached over and stroked this tiny baby's arm.

Don't ever try to tell me that my son does not know who he is and why he is here – a caring citizen of his country, Canada!

Yes, indeed, 12/12/12 was a very special day!

Audrey D. Cole

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<http://www.cacl.ca/news-stories/real-life-stories/121212-special-day>