

STORIES ABOUT THE PEOPLE & EVENTS OF INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

INCLUSION

SUMMER 2021



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A SEASON OF NEW BEGINNINGS

 **GLORIA MAHUSSIER** | PRESIDENT OF INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” This quote got me thinking about the journey of development we have been on at INSK over my term as President. As well as exploring our own strengths we have been taking things a step further by combining those strengths to be one dynamic connected team; this includes both our board and staff.

It is said that when you know what people are good at, you're in a perfect position to help develop those individual qualities. Kim, our new Executive Director who you were introduced to in the last issue, has done exactly that with our management team. Kim has recently hired two assistant executive directors, Katherine Andersen-Hallberg, Assistant Executive Director of Operations and Megan Wells, Assistant Executive Director of Inclusion. Our board looks forward to working together with our new assistant executive directors as we continue to grow stronger.

In this summer issue, you will read about the board's priorities set at the last strategic planning meeting. I am certain that by working together, no challenge is too big. I am convinced that anyone can rise to any occasion if they are willing to

work with others, to reach that higher goal and to do what is right for those we support. With the strength of everyone working together, we can build a network of supports in the North for families, we can promote proactive systemic changes to ensure people with intellectual disabilities experience supported decision-making when it comes to health care, we can develop innovative, person-centred, affordable, and inclusive community housing initiatives, and we can say that access to inclusive education in Saskatchewan is at the quality that INSK expects it to be.

INSK is strong because we share the same desire: to ensure that citizens of Saskatchewan who have intellectual disabilities are valued, supported and included members of society, and have opportunities and choices in all aspects of life.

The coming year will bring some changes to our Board of Directors; I have stepped down as President after 11 years. Thank you for knowing that for me - next to my family, my duty as President has been my life and my passion over the years. It truly has been a privilege and my honour to serve. Thank you for all of your support over the years. ■

Inclusion Saskatchewan is a registered charity that supports Saskatchewan individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families.

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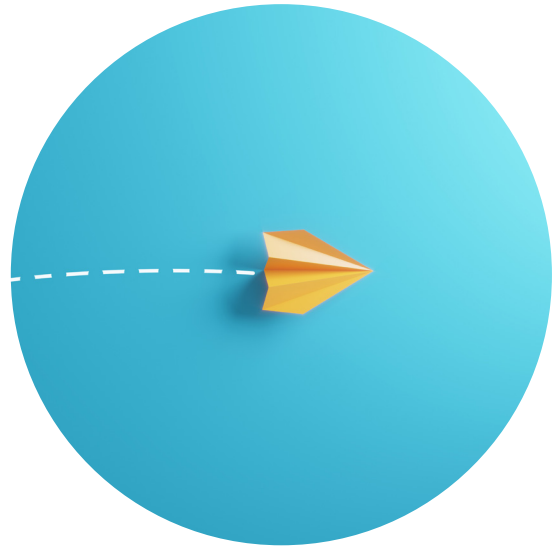
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GLORIA MAHUSSIER STEPS DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF INSK

After 11 years of service, Gloria Mahussier has stepped down as Inclusion Saskatchewan's President at this year's AGM. During her tenure, Gloria brought a fierce family perspective, an unwavering stability, and a collaborative approach with government partners. She guided a number of projects and initiatives including (but not limited to): the Valley View Centre closure and transition, the development and implementation of Self-Directed Funding, the prioritization of supports for Northern communities, INSK's Grassroots Committee, INSK's Family Network, and Prince Albert's INTEREC summer program. She also worked to forge strong alliances with key stakeholders in the Saskatchewan Government and throughout the Saskatchewan disability non-profit space. Along with the Board and Executive Directors (Kevin McTavish and Kim Hague), Gloria also expanded the reach of Community Living and the reputation of INSK. The legacy of INSK will be forever tied to Gloria's good work and what she was able to accomplish as our president.



THE NEW NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM HAS ARRIVED!

After months of editing, rewriting, rethinking, and reformatting, the 4th edition of *Navigating The System* is now available. As one of Inclusion Saskatchewan's most essential publications, *Navigating* features information on programs & services for children, inclusive education, financial assistance, inclusive recreation, and many other systems. This valuable resource for family members of individuals with intellectual disabilities offers a wealth of information on how you can work with the complex systems that you will encounter. The new format also makes the book itself easier to navigate, allowing for readers to quickly lookup and find the relevant information they need.

The book is available for download via the Inclusion Saskatchewan website (www.inclusionsk.com/resources) as either a whole PDF document or individual PDF chapters. The book is also available as a printed book which is free for members and \$15 for non-members and professionals.

LEARNING HOW TO HEAL THROUGH ART

 TRAVIS NEUFELD | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Grief is something that all of us, at some point in our lives, will have to confront. It is a uniquely painful part of being human, and one that, no matter how prepared we are, is impossible to fully understand, manage, or deal with. It would be true to say that each of us has our own process of overcoming grief, but it is only by grieving that we develop that process — and it is only the experience of grief that allows us to truly empathize with those who are grieving. The grieving process can take months, years, and even lifetimes. It's a process that's sometimes deafening and sometimes silent. It's in constant transformation as it moves through us, like how a creek rolling over stones erodes away layers of rock by only the steady flow of quiet persistence.

For members of Inclusion Saskatchewan's FEEL (Families Experiencing Exceptional Loss) group, grief is a daily struggle. The focus of the FEEL group is on parents who have lost a child with an intellectual disability. The group, comprised of over 40 families, holds retreats throughout the year and offers the opportunity for family members to connect with each other, share their stories, and find comfort in the support of those who truly understand what they

are going through.

When Chris Gardiner, father of a child with an intellectual disability (Matthew) and local artist, heard about the group, he reached out to the then facilitator, Shirley McGuire, to offer a unique form of therapy through the power of art. His idea, based on his artistic practice of confronting and literally containing grief, was to transform significant objects previously owned by the children who have passed on into artistic works that could aid in the healing process. Together, Chris and Shirley reached out to 6 families to contribute items that represented the gravity of loss they were experiencing, and after hearing the idea, all of the families agreed to participate.

"The most important part of this project was to create a conversation around these 6 children and assist their families in coming to terms with the loss," says Chris. "Over several months from late 2018 to mid 2019, packages arrived at my studio which were carefully wrapped (contents unknown to me) and I began my process of using careful crafting and ritual to create containment objects which resulted in the golden yellow coloured objects."

Chris' process, which was originally

developed as a means of dealing with the loss of his grandfather, was to encase each mailed package within a compartment that is lined with a very thin lead that is then coated in a light coat of beeswax. From here, Chris meticulously hand stitches a fabric box around the package and then paints it in 20-30 coats of shimmering gold, making the box airtight. Through this process of transformation, Chris' hope is that some of the anxieties around these items are contained — allowing the parents to take the next step in their healing journey. In this sense, the boxes are a way of containing the pain of loss, finding closure, and healing.

Kim Bass, one of the FEEL parents who supplied an item, says she loved taking part in the project. Kim says that the process has helped her because she knows where the object is at all times and knows that it is safe. When asked if she'd ever open the box at any point in the future, she says "Absolutely not — I love the piece and it feels good to know that the object is cared for, treasured, and protected." ■

Right: Chris Gardiner stitches up one of the items from the FEEL group parents.

“THE BOXES ARE A WAY OF
CONTAINING THE PAIN OF LOSS,
FINDING CLOSURE, AND HEALING.”



NAVIGATING A COVID-19 SUMMER IN WEYBURN

 JACKIE WILSON | INCLUSION WEYBURN

In early March 2020, Inclusion Weyburn's Board of Directors had things in place for our 2020 Inclusive Summer Day Camps. Families and staff who have grown to love the camps were on board; families had their registration forms sent in and staff were hired. Plans with the Weyburn Leisure Centre and Weyburn's Family Place were in place to have our children who have intellectual disabilities join their camps for ages 3-5 and 6-12. Things were looking great! Then Covid-19 hit. Our young people had their worlds turned upside down. No school meant the routine and structure they so highly depend on was pulled out from under them. Parents were left to care for their children at home or hire others to do that for them.

Given that we could no longer hold events, respite care seemed to be the way to offer support while adhering to the safety rules rolled out by the Saskatchewan government. We informed parents that instead of offering day camps, we would offer each child one on one care by a respite caregiver.

By mid-May, we had things set up and ready, families were waiting for help, staff was waiting to work. Our board members, who are classroom and special education professionals, each took on a

few of our staff to mentor as needed. They communicated with them often, to see how things were going and to offer suggestions for problem solving. We started weekly Zoom meetings that brought our staff and board members together, a time to share highlights from the week and to brainstorm ways to prevent and react to problems that were experienced. Things were on a roll. Local social workers became aware of the program and had families that they work with register for respite care. Some were right in Weyburn and some were out of town, in Estevan, Montmartre, Oungre, and Radville.

Because we don't know the young people who might be interested in providing care in these out of Weyburn places, we requested help from parents and people who we do know in those communities. In the end, we hired staff for all places. Altogether, we were able to offer respite care to 13 individuals and their families. Inclusion Weyburn paid staff salaries, mileage for short trips, personal care and safety items, as well as other equipment required such as life jackets. Parents received this care at no cost.

Despite the ups and downs we experienced during our program, we managed to cover all the bases. Having to change

from inclusive day camps to respite care had some positive results. Families who live too far from Weyburn to participate in camps received support that they would not have otherwise received.

Now that our respite program has been a success, social workers in our health district have approached us to find ways to bridge the gap between themselves and Inclusion Weyburn so that we can work together to best meet the needs of people in our area. We have had one meeting to address this, and future plans are promising. Right now, members of our staff who want to continue to provide care have allowed us to share their names with the health district who will connect them to families needing respite care.

Despite the challenges of Covid -19, we have found other ways to provide support. Seeing all of the children enjoying time with their caregivers, listening to staff share stories, making lasting friendships, as well as all of the appreciation given by families has made it all worthwhile. We are now looking forward this summer, ready to tackle any challenge. ■

Right: Raine works on a fun summer project with his caregiver Payton.

A close-up, high-angle shot of two children, a boy and a girl, working together outdoors on a grassy area. The boy, on the left, is wearing a white t-shirt with a colorful abstract pattern and blue shorts. He is leaning forward, focused on a task. The girl, on the right, is wearing a dark blue tank top and is also leaning forward, looking down at the same point. They appear to be working on something on the ground, possibly a small plant or a piece of equipment. The background is a soft-focus green field under bright sunlight.

**“DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF
COVID-19, WE FOUND OTHER WAYS
TO PROVIDE SUPPORT.”**

FINDING INDEPENDENCE IN WILLOWVIEW HEIGHTS

 DALLAS TETARENKO | MANAGER OF INITIATIVES

Canada is in the midst of a housing crisis. The average purchase price for a home has just exceeded \$715,000, and rents have continued to rise as well. The unabated inflation of housing prices and rental markets is due to many factors, from predatory speculation and gentrification to the liquidation of affordable housing supply into market value stock. For people who experience disabilities, there are barriers when seeking housing, from financial considerations, accessibility issues, and proximity to community services, to societal bias, discrimination, and segregation.

A disproportionate number of people who experience intellectual or cognitive disabilities are in core housing need, which means their accommodations are deemed unaffordable, unsuitable, or inadequate. They are more likely to be homeless, experience poverty, be separated from support networks, and live in institutional settings due to housing scarcity. Nearly one person in five who experiences a disability over the age of 15 years old lives in a household in core housing need, almost double the national average.

According to the Centre for Policy Alternatives, a person would have to earn

\$18.05 per hour or work over 60 hours a week at the minimum wage to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Saskatoon. The situation is similar in other rural and urban municipalities throughout the province.

One new initiative, the Willowview Heights project, seeks to disrupt the provincial affordable housing crisis within a person-centred context that addresses the diverse needs of tenants while achieving community inclusion and participation for people who experience intellectual disabilities. In 2020, The National Affordable Housing Corporation, Real Life Rentals, and Inclusion Saskatchewan partnered to build Willowview Heights: a 72-unit mixed affordable market rental development in Saskatoon. The project includes six affordable rental units that provide housing for nine people who experience intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

The development of Willowview Heights has added much-needed affordable housing supply in a perpetually stressed market that excludes historically oppressed and marginalized populations. Our collaborative delivery of holistic support services at Willowview Heights sets it apart from other developments

in the sector. We built in community engagement and support throughout all aspects of the project, to ensure that tenants are empowered to identify appropriate and effective services to meet their needs and assist in learning the essential skills to maintain their tenancy successfully. Tenants who experience intellectual or cognitive disabilities are supported to access and understand their responsibilities for suite maintenance, human rights, foster communication with neighbours and roommates, and practical problem-solving tactics. The tenants will contribute to a plain-language guide with the partner organizations that synthesize good practices in inclusive housing development and community relations to use in other projects in North America.

Inclusion Saskatchewan is grateful and fortunate to work with such passionate and dedicated partners in the National Affordable Housing Corporation and Real Life Rentals. Housing is a human right and everyone deserves a home of their own. ■

Right: The Willowview Heights project during construction in 2020.



**“HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT
AND EVERYONE DESERVES
A HOME OF THEIR OWN”**

INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN'S PRIORITIES

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Our priorities, which were decided by the board at the 2020 strategic planning meeting, help guide the overall work of our association. This helps give us a cohesive vision for where we're going, while we're also working on a wide variety of initiatives and issues. Currently, our top initiatives are: Inclusive Education, Housing, Health, and Northern Saskatchewan.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education has been a priority at the very core of Inclusion Saskatchewan since its inception sixty-five years ago. Our founder, Dr. John Dolan, created the association after putting an ad in the StarPhoenix to survey the number of children who were unable to attend school because they had an intellectual disability. The response to his ad inspired him, and many others invested in the disability cause. Over the decades, the association worked with the provincial government to create new facilities and new education opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities.

This work still continues today. Our Director of Strategic Initiatives, Alaina Harrison, is focused on building positive and strong relationships with the Ministry of Education as well as the Saskatche-

wan Teachers Federation. We are now in a place where the Ministry routinely asks us to supply feedback on draft inclusive education resources they are developing and the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation connects with us on ongoing public education and outreach. Going forward, we will work to identify systemic trends and address policy gaps within the education sector and find innovative ways of celebrating and promoting best practices of the many dedicated schools, teachers, and administrators who champion inclusion in Saskatchewan schools every day.

Housing

Having a safe place to call home is an integral part of living a dignified life. Unfortunately, people who experience intellectual disabilities disproportionately face a lack of access to safe, appropriate, and affordable housing options in their communities. Recently, we partnered with The National Affordable Housing Corporation and Real Life Rentals to build Willowview Heights: a 72-unit mixed affordable market rental development in Saskatoon. The project, which offers 6 affordable rental units for up to nine people with intellectual disabilities, seeks to disrupt the affordable housing

crisis by addressing the diverse needs of its tenants while achieving community inclusion. Construction on the units began and was finished in 2020 and the first Inclusion Saskatchewan-supported tenant moved into their new home in October 2020. As of today, there are 9 Self-Advocates living in all 6 of the available suites.

Health

Disability should not mean few health care options - and choices - at any time, but especially not during a pandemic. Inclusion Saskatchewan collaborates with health professionals to navigate individual health concerns while also promoting upstream, proactive systemic changes to ensure people with intellectual disabilities experience supported decision-making when it comes to health care.

Northern Saskatchewan

There is a lack of access to necessary services and supports in northern Saskatchewan for people with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion Saskatchewan has partnered with other provincial disability sector organizations to create a strategic framework and plan to build service capacity and effect systemic change in Northern Saskatchewan. ■

TELL IT LIKE IT IS: A SEXUAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

Tell It Like It Is (TILII) is a sexual wellness education program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Using a compassionate approach, it covers a range of topics and concepts pertaining to relationships, dating, gender identity, sexual identity, personal hygiene, safer sex practices, and more.

1

IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN SEX

When people hear “sexual health” they often focus on the “sex” part. But sexual health education is about a lot more than just sex! In TILII we talk about lots of different topics, such as communication, body image, types of relationships, setting boundaries, and decision making.

2

IT'S INTERACTIVE AND ADAPTIVE

TILII has been designed in a way that allows facilitators to adapt the program for the specific needs of any group. We use a number of methods of teaching in order to ensure different types of learning are accounted for. Learners are also encouraged to repeat the course as many times as they need.

3

IT GIVES TOOLS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

The primary goal of TILII is to provide learners with accurate sexuality information to support them in making informed decisions. Everyone experiences their own sexuality in a different way, so our goal is to make sure our participants have the tools they need to shape their own sexuality.

4

IT CHALLENGES MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Unfortunately, many still believe that people who experience intellectual disabilities do not experience sexual desire or are unable to consent to sexual activity, but this is not true! People who experience intellectual disabilities have sexual desires just like those who do not. By providing comprehensive, evidence-measured sexual health education, TILII is committed to challenging these stereotypes.

5

IT'S A SAFE SPACE TO EXPLORE CURIOSITIES

When we start class, we create a list of guidelines for each class to ensure that all learners feel safe and comfortable. Some topics covered in the class can be challenging or awkward, so we work to create a safe space to share stories, ask questions, explore curiosities, express fears, and gain knowledge.



A WIN-WIN WAY TO GIVE

 **CONNIE ANDERSEN** | DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What is the most tax effective way to make a gift to charity? In 2006, the capital gains tax rate on in-kind gifts of securities to charities was reduced to ZERO. This means that if you own securities (e.g. publicly listed stocks, mutual fund units, segregated funds) that have appreciated in value, they make a great gift. Donating listed securities that have appreciated in value is a win-win: the charity receives funds to spend on worthy causes and the donor gets a donation tax credit and – *thanks to a further tax break on in-kind donations of listed securities* – the taxable gains will be 100% eliminated. This is more tax advantageous than writing a cheque or donating cash – but many people are still unaware of this opportunity.

Particularly during challenging economic times, donors who are committed to an organization and want to support it are looking for tax-advantages that will help them to make their gifts count even more, while helping their own tax situation. Fortunately, Inclusion Saskatchewan offers our donors the opportunity to consider gifts of securities. At www.inclusionsk.com/securities you will find more information and a form you can take to your broker to initiate a transfer of securities. We recommend that individuals consult with their professional advisors about their own investment and tax situation. Contact Connie Andersen at ConnieA@inclusionsk.com for more information.

HOW TO GIVE STOCKS & SECURITIES

- 1 Go to: inclusionsk.com/securities to start the process.
- 2 If you use a self-directed online investment platform, click the button to use the online form.
- 3 If you have a broker, download the *Gift of Securities Intention* form and take it to your broker.



INCLUSION BREAKFAST

WORLD TRADE CENTRE SASKATOON AT PRAIRIELAND PARK

OCTOBER 7th, 2021 @ 7:30 AM

Enjoy a continental breakfast and the company of friends as we raise funds to continue to support Inclusion Saskatchewan's work on behalf of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout the province.



RSVP: ConnieA@InclusionSK.com | All safety protocols in effect on October 7, 2021 will be followed.

Your donations help us
support our most essential.



**INCLUSION
SASKATCHEWAN**

supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities

Donate at inclusionsk.com to help support individuals with intellectual disabilities.