

STORIES ABOUT THE PEOPLE & EVENTS OF INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

INCLUSION

WINTER 2022



COVER PHOTO:

Leanne Madsen is a Self-Advocate who lives in Estevan, SK and has been a dedicated volunteer with INSK for over 20 years. She is a founding member of ICAN and is currently working on a committee to develop Supported Decision Making resources. Thank you for all that you do, Leanne!

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REINVENTING COMMUNITY WITH A PLAN

 **BLUESETTE CAMPBELL** | PRESIDENT OF INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

As we emerge out of the past two years, laden with so much uncertainty and concern, we can't help but wonder what things will be like. Will they go back to "normal"? Will it ever be the same? What will that look like?

I know my own family is grappling with these same questions. And, so it is with our organization, Inclusion Saskatchewan. It's probably fair to say the whole world is wondering. Did we really make it to the other side? How do we all deal with this in our families and community? Unfortunately, I don't have the answers, but what I do have is a plan. That, I believe, is the best way to equip my family for the uncertainties of the future. I know, it sounds like a contradiction.

Let me explain what I mean in four steps. First, I decide what is important to our family. Safety? Spending time together? Getting something specific accomplished? Secondly, we draft an idea of how to achieve those important things. The process of making a plan for the future (either for the next day or the next two years) calms the noise of the mind and replaces it with feelings of empowerment and choice. Once we have an idea, we start chipping away at the plan. Step

three is being mindful if we are staying on track. How is it going? Is it working? What has changed? Lastly, we stay open and flexible. Do we need to make some minor adjustments to our previous plan, or do we need to replan?

While this may sound oversimplified, it is the basis for our family's success. And, believe it or not, these are the same principles that I am using, as President, to help guide Inclusion Saskatchewan as we emerge out of some of the most challenging years we have faced.

We are keeping what is important to us at the forefront (our vision and mission), we are continually making plans (supporting individuals/their families and caring for our staff). We are also keeping close tabs on if we are on track and lastly, perhaps most importantly, remaining flexible to replan. Boy, we have exercised this muscle.

Thank you to all who are a part of this organization for your patience as we reinvent what community will look like!

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

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SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 4, 2022 IS THE INCLUSION CONFERENCE

Join us this year for our in-person annual Inclusion Conference in Saskatoon! This year, we will be exploring the theme: Challenging Change and Winning. The key speaker will be ReYu Paralysis Recovery Centre Co-Founder Bean Gill and session topics will include trauma informed support, supported decision making, alternatives to guardianship, self-care, and supporting the North.



OUR SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING RESOURCES ARE HERE

Designed for and by Inclusion Saskatchewan's Self-Advocates, our new series of Supported Decision Making documents provides individuals and their supporters the tools they need to make the Supported Decision Making process a reality. Visit inclusionsk.com/sdm to find information about each document and instructions on how to download them. We encourage you to explore all of these resources and download the documents that best fit your needs.



SURVEYS: SUPPORTED MEDICAL DECISION MAKING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

We need your feedback! We currently have a survey open to evaluate our supported decision making health planning document *My Health: How To Support My Decision Making*. We plan to also launch an Inclusive Education survey to collect thoughts, opinions, and perspectives on inclusive education in Saskatchewan. All of our surveys are fillable online and can be found on the news page of our website (inclusionsk.com/news) as well as our Facebook page.



THE FAMILY NETWORK LAUNCHES A GUEST SPEAKER SERIES

Inclusion Saskatchewan's Family Network recently launched a Guest Speaker Series where expert speakers were invited to present to family network members (via Zoom). Recent topics included caregiver mental wellness, inclusive education, sexual wellness, and cannabis use. A new series is currently in the planning phase and will launch this spring/summer. Contact Brittany Acton at brittanya@inclusionsk.com to learn more and register.

NIMBYISM FROM A SELF-ADVOCATE PERSPECTIVE

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER, **DALLAS TETARENKO** | MANAGER OF INITIATIVES

Jamie Ellis, a dedicated Self-Advocate who works regularly with INSK, recently shared his experience of moving into a group home in a new neighbourhood. Wanting to introduce himself, Jamie attended a meeting with his neighbours at a nearby church. Together with his housemates and staff supporting the development of the group home, he setup a comfortable and inviting meeting space, complete with coffee, cookies, and other snacks. He was excited to meet everyone and looking forward to building new friendships and all the possibilities of living in the community of his choice.

This meeting, however, did not go according to plan. Instead of warm welcomes, Jamie and his housemates were met with skepticism and distrust. “We got asked all kinds of questions about what we do and this type of thing. The people were so nervous about having us around. It was like they didn’t want to have anything to do with us,” Jamie recalls. His new neighbours used the meeting to voice their objections to the group home and to raise a list of concerns, including how 24-hour support staff would complicate parking on the street.

For our Inclusion Team, this reaction is well-known. It’s called NIMBY or

Nimbyism, an acronym for “Not In My Back Yard.” It’s a sort of catch-all term for the views of those who oppose new housing developments or a change of community socioeconomic demographics because of discriminatory, prejudicial, and preconceived ideas about the people who will move into these developments. It’s something that persists throughout our population and is ever-present even when governments, community-based organizations, and housing developers cooperate to develop affordable, inclusive, and supportive housing.

Typically, we see the NIMBY sentiments from a vocal minority of residents who protest the planned changes through emotionally charged campaigns of fear-mongering and misinformation. Group homes, shelters, and affordable housing are common focal points of hostility within NIMBY movements. Neighbourhood accessibility features and human services are also familiar targets. NIMBY attitudes ignore the benefits for the residents of the new developments and instead argue that there will be increases in crime and violence and that property values will decrease if the changes proceed. Research on socially and economically diverse communities

and housing developments has disproven such opinions.

For Jamie, the meeting came to a head when one of his new neighbours relayed his unfounded fears to the group. “He said ‘we bought this house by this bike path so that my daughter could ride her bike. What if I’m out there and I’m with my daughter and what happens if one of these guys has a fit?’” Jamie remembers. His response to the man was direct and clear. He told the man that the daughter could ride her bike anytime and that his presence was not a worry. He finished by saying “whether we are standing up or sitting down we’re still people.” Despite the negativity at the meeting, Jamie decided to stay put, hoping that one day attitudes might change.

This is just one of many NIMBY-driven experiences that Self-Advocates endure, often daily. Our Inclusion Team regularly works to support Self-Advocates like Jamie through these experiences and will continue to advocate with and for people we support in their journey towards finding a place to call “home” in an inclusive community.

Right: Self-Advocate Jamie Ellis listens to a speaker at an ICAN workshop in Moose Jaw.

**“WHETHER WE ARE STANDING UP
OR SITTING DOWN WE ARE
STILL PEOPLE.”**



THE FAMILY NETWORK EVENTS GO VIRTUAL

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

The COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to adapt to different ways of thinking, working, and connecting. For the parents involved in our Family Network — parents of a person with an intellectual disability — the transition into this adapted way of being has been a challenging one. They've had to find new ways to parent and support their children as well as create opportunities for well-earned respite. It's a daily balancing act that has left some parents feeling stressed, exhausted, and isolated.

In pre-Covid times, our Family Network was a resource for parents to connect with other parents who understand their situation and are on the same journey with their child. Through our various annual in-person workshops, parents could get out of the house and enter into a welcoming environment where they could attend workshops and social events. Over the course of an evening or weekend, they could share anything from a funny story to their deepest fears. In many ways, these events were lifelines for parents and a much-needed oasis. And then, COVID happened. Suddenly, gone were the days of meeting in-person and so went the Family Network events.

Instead of admitting defeat, however,

our Family Network Coordinator Brittany Acton got to work. With support from the Cameco Fund for Mental Health, Brittany reformatted the Family Network events into Zoom events where parents could participate safely from their homes. This means she also had to totally reinvent programming that was designed for in-person attendees into something that could translate into the online space.

Hitting the ground running, Brittany facilitated the creation of new forms of events that included trivia nights, craft nights, and the very popular weekly destination: the self-care cafe. Craft nights have seen families creating watercolour paintings, plant hangers, and cake pops — activities only made possible by packages of materials being sent out to each parent in advance of the zoom call. In the self-care cafe, parents are encouraged to join others for a casual coffee to discuss whatever is on their mind.

"As a single working mom of two children with unique needs I have felt overwhelmed and isolated during the pandemic. I have come home from work exhausted but I still attend the Family Network zooms because it's a break from my stresses. It's a chance to share my challenges with other moms who

understand. I laugh, I smile, I create," says Michelle, a parent from Humboldt.

Bonnie, another parent, says, "In a year that felt quite isolating, the programming brought much needed laughter, relaxation and connection. There is something very comforting and powerful about being with people who are so accepting and understanding."

Amanda, a parent from Saskatoon, says, "I have really been struggling this last year and being able to have these events have given me an outlet to talk to people that understand. Without my weekly coffee groups and the craft nights I don't think my mental health would be as well off as it is now."

Heading into the second year of online events, Brittany once again revamped and revitalized the programming by developing a Guest Speaker Series that invited highly-qualified speakers to give presentations to parents — kind of like a Ted Talk. So far, the topics have included mental wellness for caregivers, inclusive education, and how to engage youth in talks about their sexual wellness.

"As we work towards in-person events, we will be using the lessons we've learned in this process to build a stronger program for the future," says Brittany.



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STAFF SPOTLIGHT: FORMER E.D. KEVIN MCTAVISH

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Over its 65+ year history, Inclusion Saskatchewan has seen a number of executive directors come and go. Historically, our ED's stay in the role for 5-6 years before rotating out; however, there is one recent ED whose tenure lasted almost double that: Kevin McTavish. From 2008-2020 (11.5 years), Kevin guided the organization through some of its biggest and most well-known achievements, assembled the organization's current leadership team, and professionalized the organization's structure and operations. His outsized impact is almost impossible to quantify and his leadership ushered in an era of stability, growth, and collaboration.

Kevin came to Inclusion Saskatchewan as an outsider to the disability and non-profit world. He had just retired from a career at SaskTel as Director of Customer Services Saskatoon when his friend and co-worker Doug Conn (a former Inclusion Saskatchewan board member) recommended he consider filling the current ED vacancy. Seeing an opportunity to use his unique set of skills to help improve and change the lives of those with intellectual disabilities, he agreed to interview for the role.

When Kevin arrived, the organiza-

tion had seen some tumultuous times. His first few acts as ED were focused on steering everything towards a more stable financial situation. He put a strong emphasis on fundraising and facilitated the creation of the Inclusion Breakfast event. Kevin also assumed the role of ED for Community Living — the clothing donation organization that raises funds for Inclusion Saskatchewan — and put together an aggressive expansion strategy that resulted in more bins, more trucks, more staff, and more donations.

On the advocacy side, Kevin refocused the organization on being less adversarial, building bridges, and fostering partnerships with the Ministry of Social Services and other non-profits in the disability space. Piece by piece, Kevin was able to slowly reverse negative sentiments born out of a time when our organization was less open to collaboration. This course correction came to fruition when the Government of Saskatchewan announced the closure of Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw in 2012 — a long-held goal of the org — and chose to involve Inclusion Saskatchewan as a key player the process.

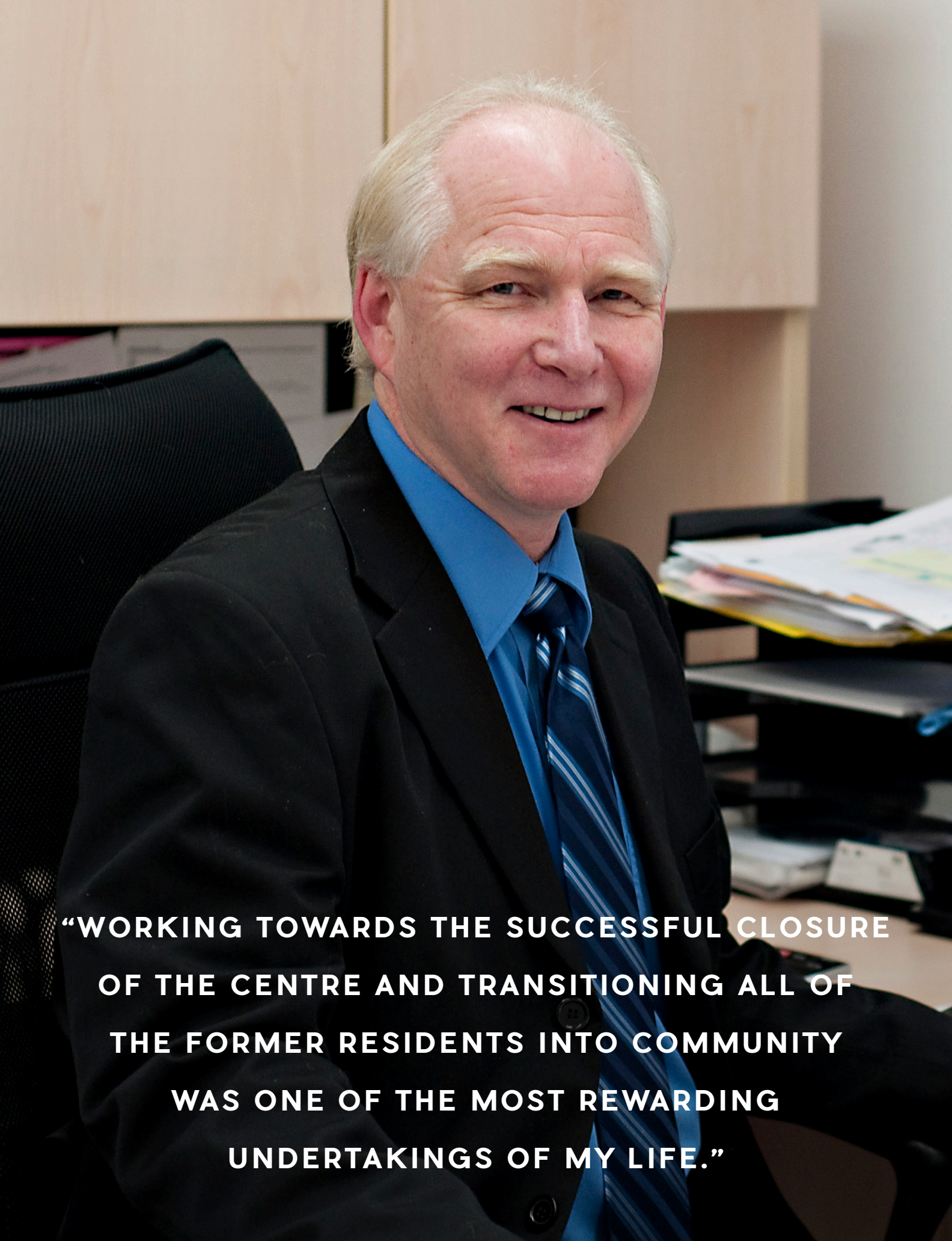
"It was my great honour to be appointed by the Minister of Social Services as a member on the VVC Transition Com-

mittee. Working towards the successful closure of the centre and transitioning all of the former residents into community was one of the most rewarding undertakings of my life," Kevin says.

The Valley View Centre closure would become Kevin's most enduring legacy, seeing over 153 former residents leave the aging institution and move into homes and communities of their choice all over Saskatchewan. Other key accomplishments include the implementation of the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) and Self-Directed Funding programs (SDF), his efforts on Inclusive Education, and the recruitment of talented and inspired new staff.

Kevin retired in May of 2020 and is now enjoying his well-earned second retirement. For those who worked with him, he will be remembered for his steady and decisive leadership, push for innovation, and his efforts to find common ground wherever possible. Please join us in congratulating Kevin and thanking him for his many years of devoted service to Inclusion Saskatchewan's mission and vision.

Right: Kevin McTavish, hard at work in his office at Inclusion Saskatchewan's Saskatoon office.

A middle-aged man with thinning grey hair is seated in a black office chair, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a bright blue collared shirt and a blue and white striped tie. The background shows an office environment with light-colored wooden cabinets and a desk with various papers and office supplies.

**“WORKING TOWARDS THE SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE
OF THE CENTRE AND TRANSITIONING ALL OF
THE FORMER RESIDENTS INTO COMMUNITY
WAS ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING
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STAYING SAFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Social Media seems to be more complicated than ever. In the early days, it was fun to share photos, keep tabs on all of your friends, and reconnect with people you hadn't seen in decades (or longer). It was also a great way to be creative and express yourself, post things that you found meaningful or cool or hilarious, and discover new things to explore. But now, things are different. To a large degree, social media is still all of these things (and much more), but as we all know, it also has a darker side. Hackers, scammers, and phishers are doing whatever they can to get your personal information. Trolls are using the protection of anonymity to target and harass, and newsfeed algorithms are pushing each of us further into our own echo chambers. It's a complicated world to navigate and if not used mindfully, social media can be a danger to our mental health, financial security, and overall wellbeing. This is why a team of Inclusion Saskatchewan Self-Advocates came together to create *Staying Safe On Social Media*.

"We need to connect with each other just like anyone else. Our communities online can be just as important as the people we see in real life, sometimes even more important. I have gotten great support from people I met on the internet

and it has really kept me going during the pandemic. And it's important that people hear from members of the disabled community," says one of the book's Self-Advocate creators, Dan Dolan. This unique document is part of an entire suite of Supported Decision Making (SDM) resources that have been developed by our staff and Self-Advocates (which you can find on our website at inclusionsk.com/sdm). Taking lessons from their own positive and negative online experiences, the SDM team authored a resource that will aid Self-Advocates and the people supporting them in making critical social media decisions.

The plain language document guides the reader through the steps of carefully examining and thinking through decisions about what to share, what not to share, and what is considered confidential information. It also covers topics like privacy settings, protecting one's identity and banking information, and the limitations of what one can control online. It also features a fillable form that asks the reader to reflect on what types of social media activities are working for them and which are not. Overall, it's a short

but comprehensive resource that's been thoughtfully designed.

Just released in December 2021, the document is already making waves and earning a lot of positive feedback from Self-Advocates as well as their supporters. The book is also finding audiences beyond the disability world. People of all ages and of all different backgrounds are sharing the resource and using it to reshape their own approach to social media content.

The SDM team hopes that their document will help all Self-Advocates avoid the pitfalls of social media and understand what they can and can't control. They feel that by protecting yourself and being aware that negativity is just a reality of social media, people will be able to have fun and enjoy the connections they make online. "We can participate in social media if we have the right support to get things set up, and people to turn to if we run into challenges," says Dan.



THE POWER AND IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE HOUSING

Inclusive housing is about more than just the physical place where we live. It's about the way we live, who we live with, and the choices we make. Here is a list of things to know whenever you're discussing or developing inclusive housing options where everyone can thrive, prosper, and be included.

1

IT STARTS WITH CHOICE

Choosing the neighbourhood in which we live, the people who come to our homes, how we decorate, and whether we live alone or with another person is at the core of inclusive housing. Having choice is absolutely essential to living inclusively as well as our feelings of belonging and independence.

2

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The right location is fundamental to all real estate and inclusive housing is no different. Each of us deserves to live in a home in a safe neighbourhood and close to doctors, bus stops, grocery stores, libraries, parks, and other fun activities that help us be well and enjoy our lives.

3

A HOUSE MUST BE A HOME

Not every house is a home. In order for housing to be inclusive, it must suit the specific needs of the person living there. Affordability, accessibility, and potential neighbours are all essential considerations because they directly impact whether or not someone feels like they belong in their own home.

4

LIVING INCLUSIVELY MEANS BEING SUPPORTED

Having the right support means having the opportunity to live life as we choose. Our ability to live inclusively is shaped by our ability to access the assistance we require to participate in cultural, spiritual, social, leisure, and economic opportunities throughout the community.

5

IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

Humans are social beings. We all need people in our lives who share stories and laugh with us, see us for who we are, and count us as either friend or family. To truly live inclusively, we must have the opportunity to socialize and develop new relationships with other people in the community around us.



TINA'S WAY OF GIVING BACK

 **CONNIE ANDERSEN** | DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Self-Advocate Tina Millar has found a unique way of giving back to the community — she's supporting Inclusion Saskatchewan through a planned gift in her Will. It might seem unconventional, and maybe even a little uncomfortable to talk about, but this kind of “legacy giving” is critical to the funding and operations of many charities and part of a growing trend. It's one of the simplest ways to ensure that you can continue to support the causes you care about long after you're gone.

For Tina, the decision to leave a gift in her Will was an easy one. Her connection to Inclusion Saskatchewan goes back 16 years. Her involvement started when she joined ICAN — a group of Self-Advo-

cates that meet regularly to talk about the issues affecting persons with intellectual disabilities and learn how to make their voices heard.

Over the years, Tina asked Inclusion Saskatchewan to support her in a few areas, including when she needed to transition into a new job at Safeway. With the support of our Employment & Transition staff, Tina found the support she needed to learn her new role and manage relationships with her coworkers.

From here, Tina became even more involved with Inclusion Saskatchewan when she joined the board of directors, becoming the Self-Advocate Director At Large. Through her work on many of the board's committees, Tina saw the day-

to-day of our work, our various strategic projects, and all of the individuals we support. This, in combination with the support she received, inspired her to give back.

She approached our fundraising staff with an idea: she wanted to leave a gift so that future Self-Advocates could access the same supports as she did and felt that listing Inclusion Saskatchewan as one of her beneficiaries was the way to go. After a few discussions with her lawyer, she put pen to paper and created a legacy of inclusion.

To learn more about how you can leave a legacy of inclusion, contact Connie Andersen at 306-955-3344 or conniea@inclusionsk.com.

EVERYTHING'S COMING UP YELLOW!



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DONATE AT ONE OF OUR YELLOW BINS
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ALL DONATIONS SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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SASKATCHEWAN**

supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities

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