

STORIES ABOUT THE PEOPLE & EVENTS OF INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

INCLUSION

WINTER 2020



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PAGE 6

FAMILIES EXPERIENCING EXCEPTIONAL LOSS

Family Network member, Nancy Holdner, speaks about the exceptional loss in her life and how Inclusion Saskatchewan's FEEL program supported her.



PAGE 8

DANIEL & BOOSTER JUICE

Read about Daniel's journey to find employment and learn to thrive at Booster Juice stores around Saskatoon.



PAGE 10

TALKING WITH SELF-ADVOCATES ABOUT COVID-19

We talk with Inclusion Saskatchewan Self-Advocates, Aiden Young and Sydney Risler, about life during the COVID-19 pandemic.



PAGE 12

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REIMAGINED

We're working hard on making education more inclusive for students with intellectual disabilities in Saskatchewan. Read about our recent work.



PAGE 13

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT: EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



PAGE 14

MEET THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Longtime Assistant Executive Director, Kim Hague, has officially accepted the role of Executive Director. Learn more about Kim and her vision for the association.

MEET THE NEW INCLUSION SK MAGAZINE

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Inclusion Saskatchewan's "magazine" has seen many, many forms over the past 60 or so years. It started as a legal-sized, typewriter-written newsletter before transforming into a variety of 4-5 page booklets for about 30-40 years and then finally a magazine. It also has had a number of names. The association went through a few iterations of names I won't bother repeating before finally settling on "Dialect." Presumably, the name "Dialect" suggested a document of content that spoke to a specific group of people who shared a common language: the language of having a loved one with an intellectual disability.

Over the years, however, we've felt the need to shift our content to better suit a donor-focused audience as well as the business community. We've also found that the medium through which families connect and share their experiences has moved online to Inclusion Saskatchewan's private Family Network Facebook group. And finally, as we all know, there's been a dramatic shift in where people get and expect to get their news/opinion content from: the internet. People have moved and are continuing to move further and further away from print in favour of the screen - causing countless newspapers,

magazines, and print companies to shutter their doors as advertising dollars went online.

For these reasons, and a few others, we've decided to change the format of the "Dialect" and give it a name that more accurately reflects our mission and vision: Inclusion Magazine. As it is with all forward-thinking organizations, we are moving all of our content online (website and socials) so that it is more accessible and able to be liked and shared by anyone and everyone. So where does that leave this magazine you ask? Inclusion Magazine will serve as a semiannual aggregation of the content we release online. It will feature a curated collection of stories, articles, and opinion pieces for those who either don't have internet access or aren't on it very often.

We know that you value our stories of success, updates about our work, as well as our opinion pieces - and we thank you for reading and following us all of these years. We are very excited about the new format of our magazine and would like to officially invite you to pore over, browse, explore, like, and share. And, as always, we hope that you and your family are safe and well during these extremely challenging times. ■

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

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VIRTUAL INCLUSION BREAKFAST UPDATE

We are proud to announce that our first ever virtual Inclusion Breakfast fundraising event has raised over \$76,000 - funds that will go directly towards supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities in Saskatchewan! The half-hour early morning virtual event on October 1, hosted on Facebook and our website, saw over 400 live-viewers and a total reach to 8,500 viewers across social media. Speakers, who were all recorded in advance, included the Hon. Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, members of our self-advocacy group, TD Wealth's Andrew Tennent, Inclusion Hudson Bay's Shilo Knutson, Saskatchewan Senator Brent Cotter, Darrell Nordstrom, and Dr. Ronan Conlon. Additionally, the virtual event served as the premiere of our latest success story videos each focusing on individuals who have found success in the community and the workplace. If you haven't seen the virtual Inclusion Breakfast video and/or would still like to donate, we encourage you to visit: www.inclusionsk.com/breakfast. With your help we can reach our fundraising goal of \$100,000 and continue our important work for persons with intellectual disabilities.



HEALTH PASSPORT NOW AVAILABLE!

Our Inclusion Team, in consultation with our Self-Advocates, has created a new tool to aid communication between persons with intellectual disabilities and healthcare professionals. The Health Passport, which is available for free on our website (link below), is a downloadable and electronically fillable PDF document that contains a form that can be given directly to healthcare professionals during a routine checkup, hospital visit, or emergency situation. The form, which also includes a plain-language guide, communicates essential information like health concerns, essential contacts, communication preferences (e.g. pointing at images, assistive technology), care and support needs, sensitivities, consent (e.g. healthcare directive), and next of kin. The Health Passport was thoroughly vetted and tested by both the Inclusion Saskatchewan Self-Advocates as well as key people within the Saskatchewan Health Authority. We would like to encourage everyone to both take advantage of this new resource and share it with anyone who may benefit from it.

Find the INSK Health Passport Here:
www.inclusionsk.com/resources.

FAMILIES EXPERIENCING EXCEPTIONAL LOSS

 **NANCY HOLDNER** | 2019 INCLUSION BREAKFAST SPEAKER

My name is Nancy Holdner and I'm honored to be sharing with you a piece of our story. I'm married with three children and live near a small rural community.

Back in 1988, at just ten days old, our first born, AJ, was diagnosed with PKU, a rare metabolic disorder requiring a very restricted diet. At the time we were told our son would develop normally and other than his special food and diet, would be like any other child. Well, that didn't happen.

He was developmentally delayed, diagnosed with ADHD by his fifth birthday, behavioral disorders around age twelve, and had no concept of consequences and was lacking in social awareness. At eighteen, we were told he had a moderate intellectual disability and asked if we had been claiming a child tax disability credit on our taxes. We had never been told he qualified for the tax credit, or that we should have had a co-decision-making order in place before he turned eighteen, or that there were services available through Inclusion Saskatchewan that could have helped us.

It had become our theme, continually slipping through the cracks and being left with a lack of support. Growing up, AJ never quite seemed to fit any of the

criteria in place and it seemed we never quite fit anywhere. We felt like we were adrift on a raft, alone in the ocean with no compass to guide us.

All AJ ever wanted was just to be like everyone else. To fit in, have friends and belong. He had a blind faith and trust in people that left him very vulnerable. In July of 2013, that's what ultimately ended his life when he was murdered by two so-called "friends." That's when our life became surreal and our grief journey began.

Our AJ had a heart of gold, a contagious laugh, loved to tell stories, work on vehicles, and had a smile that could light up any room. Sadly, not only his family, but the entire world now lives without all that. There truly is nothing worse in this world than losing a child, no matter how it happens. Grief is a very complex process and losing a child with disabilities complicates it even more.

Where do you turn for support, understanding, and comfort when it's so desperately needed? I tried going to a few support group meetings but felt like I was only a body in a room full of people. That all changed when I was invited to an Inclusion Saskatchewan group called FEEL (Families Experiencing Exceptional

Loss). I thought it probably wasn't going to help me much, but I was so heart broken and desperate, I figured I had nothing to lose in trying.

FEEL was formed because along with losing a precious loved one, families had also lost their network of support while going through the absolute worst time of their lives.

This group of families embraced me, opened their hearts to me, took me in like I was a member of their own family and gave me a safe place to grieve. Each one of our stories is very different, yet we have the common thread of having had and lost from our lives an exceptional person we love dearly.

I have learned that death does not end a relationship, it changes it. Through FEEL, I have discovered the support I was lacking during AJ's life: in grief, Inclusion Saskatchewan has been there for me, valuing AJ and our family. Every person with a disability and their family needs the type of unconditional love and support I have found through Inclusion Saskatchewan and the FEEL group. ■

Right: Nancy Holdner speaks about her experiences during Inclusion Saskatchewan's Inclusion Breakfast.

“I LEARNED THAT DEATH DOES NOT
END A RELATIONSHIP,
IT *CHANGES* IT.”



SUCCESS STORY: DANIEL & BOOSTER JUICE

 TRAVIS NEUFELD | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Daniel is the kind of guy who will memorize the recipe of your favourite smoothie. That's just who he is. He understands that in this era of purely-transactional and even automated customer service, the simple act of memorizing what you like is enough to make you feel important or even special. But if you asked Daniel about why he does this, he'd probably just think it was normal and carry on. It's this kind and quiet care and attention that truly defines him.

For Daniel, working at Booster Juice has always been something of a dream come true. After first discovering it through a Work Education class placement at Saskatoon's Bethlehem Catholic High School, Daniel immediately liked everything about the smoothie mainstay. "I liked how it was a small environment, which is what I'm comfortable with. I'm not really into big environments. Also, if you need anything, your co-workers are always nearby," Daniel says.

Once the class placement was over, Daniel set his mind on returning as a permanent employee. Sharon Watkins, Learning Assistance Teacher for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, invited Inclusion Saskatchewan's Alyssa Lindsay to help Daniel further define his employ-

ment goals and create a pathway to return to Booster Juice. Within a short amount of time, Daniel completed a job readiness course at the Radius Community Centre, created an action plan, scheduled and managed regular meetings with Alyssa and Sharon, and returned to Booster Juice for a second Work Education class placement.

Shortly after his second placement, Multiple Franchise Store Manager Jacquie Kowalenko called and offered him a permanent position of 3-hour shifts at 1-2 times a week with an opportunity to expand based on performance. Daniel was in shock. The thing he had been working so hard on was finally happening. He immediately jumped into his role at the Blairmore Booster Juice.

But that's just the beginning of the story. Simply having a job wasn't good enough for Daniel. He wanted to grow, learn, and take on more responsibility. Wanting to work at both the Blairmore and Midtown locations, Daniel set to learning and even practicing his bus route. He spent his down time studying smoothie recipes and customer interactions. Needless to say, he now works three shifts a week, for longer hours, and at both locations.

For Sharon, who has been there every step of the way, she sees how far he's come. "Daniel has matured into this young man who sets himself a mission. He doesn't hesitate to ask for what he needs. He's confident in putting his thoughts down on paper and putting the steps of a plan together. He's very dependable and independent. He's just an amazing young man," she says.

Jacquie, Daniel's manager, reports that, "Daniel is a very good employee. He has grown so much since he first started. He follows all instructions and does all tasks to the best of his abilities. Daniel has become very confident in all parts of his job. He is friendly to all customers and gets along with all the staff. Our staff look forward to working with him because he's always in high spirits and it's refreshing especially when it gets busy and hectic."

All of us at Inclusion Saskatchewan are thrilled by Daniel's success and determination and very much look forward to what his future holds at Booster Juice and beyond. ■

Right: Daniel presents a smoothie of his own creation that tastes exactly like a chocolate orange (note: it was delicious).

Pick-Up
Here

Canada's
PREMIUM
SMOOTHIES

REAL FRUIT
SMOOTHIES

Booster Juice
DANIEL

Booster
Juice

Booster Juice

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IS INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND
OPERATED BY A MEMBER OF
YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

**“DANIEL IS THE KIND OF GUY WHO
WILL MEMORIZE THE RECIPE OF
YOUR FAVOURITE SMOOTHIE.”**

SELF-ADVOCATES, COVID-19, & PANDEMIC LIFE

 TRAVIS NEUFELD | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

COVID-19 has changed all of our lives, in some cases pushing us apart, and in other cases, bringing us closer together. The challenges and tragedies we've all faced, however, are also very acutely felt by those in our community with intellectual disabilities. To get a sense of their perspective on all of this, I talked to two of our Self-Advocates, Aiden Young and Sydney Risler.

What have been the biggest lessons you've learned during the pandemic?

Aiden: Initially, I suspected the lockdown was temporary and only going to last a few weeks. When the first state of emergency was declared, anxiety was high in my social environment which affected many around me. That said, the pandemic helped me gain a new perspective on the importance of community and social networking. Throughout history, individuals with intellectual disabilities have often faced isolation and being alone. This lockdown has allowed those without disabilities to experience the isolation that many with intellectual disabilities face every day. In the case of support staff, the pandemic has allowed them to better understand the perspective of the

persons they support which allows them to sympathize and fully appreciate the value of community inclusion as well as community engagement that we often take for granted.

Sydney: The lessons I've learned about the pandemic are that social distancing isn't as bad as I thought and that wearing a mask is ok. At the beginning for me it was scary and I didn't really go out much.

How has Inclusion Saskatchewan helped you during the pandemic?

Aiden: Participating in the development process of the INSK Plain Language Guides to SK Re-Opening with a team of fellow Self-Advocates through Zoom brought a sense of structure. A group of INSK Self-Advocates from all across the province virtually meet on Wednesdays to discuss various projects and discussions which wouldn't be possible in person. Thanks to these calls, Self-Advocates from across the province get to take part in events and Inclusion Tours hosted by different cities. The technological learning curve for the Inclusion staff to attend meetings was certainly a source of entertainment.

Sydney: Inclusion Saskatchewan has helped me during the pandemic by doing weekly check-ins via Zoom calls. This has allowed me to connect in a social way that we didn't have before covid.

What advice would you give to Self-Advocates who are struggling right now?

Aiden: This is the point in history where we get to use our experiences to help others cope throughout the pandemic and spread awareness that many individuals living with disabilities experience social isolation and exclusion. This is the time in history where you reflect on your life and truly appreciate who you are. Living with a disability, my life has never had a sense of normalcy. Also, everyone's sense of normalcy is different and what is normal for some people is not normal for others.

Sydney: The advice I would give to other Self-Advocates who are struggling like I was at the beginning is: it is all okay. We are all going to get through this. I know that it doesn't feel like it, but we are. Life will return to normal one day, but for now it is best to keep everyone safe and healthy cause we are all in it together. ■

**“THIS IS THE POINT IN HISTORY
WHERE WE GET TO USE OUR
EXPERIENCES TO HELP
OTHERS COPE.”**



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REIMAGINED

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Inclusive Education is one of Inclusion Saskatchewan's highest priorities. Aside from our work advocating for individuals struggling to find inclusion in the education system, we are always moving forward with ideas and strategies on how to resolve these issues at provincial and systemic levels. As part of this systemic work, our Inclusive Ed Committee has been collaborating with a number of other community organizations as well as government in a group called Re-Imagine Education. The goal of this coalition has been to evaluate and clarify the issues facing education today, imagine what the future might look like, and plan how to make the vision a reality. After months of work and research, the group has hit a major milestone with the release of *Education Re-Imagined: 12 Actions For Education*.

In creating their recommendations, Re-Imagine Education invited parents, grandparents, caregivers, students, members of the business community and post-secondary institutions, members of the public, and teachers to share their hopes and dreams for public education now and in the future. In 2019, a survey was sent out and consultations were held in schools, libraries, community halls and

event centres, hockey rinks, and coffee shops across the province. In total, over 6000 people contributed to the survey and consultations we held in over 200 schools around the province. Once the data was collected, the team pored over the results and created 12 recommendations that best represented the hopes, desires, and dreams of participants.

The goal of these recommendations is that the Saskatchewan education system (Ministry of Education, School Boards, Schools) will accept and implement them broadly at every level and in every classroom — changing the landscape of education for future generations. For Inclusion Saskatchewan, we were excited not only to learn that a majority of the public also want inclusion in the classroom, but also to discover that inclusion plays a key role in the recommendations.

Recommendation #2 reads, “Human resources must be provided to support inclusion and create classrooms where every child can learn. This means providing educational assistants, Elders, speech-language pathologists, educational psychologists, counsellors, librari-

*Education
Re-Imagined:*

12 Actions for Education



ans, English as an additional language teachers and others to support classroom learning.” The document goes on to say that “Participants were clear that they support an inclusive education system where all students are given the opportunity to learn and develop their individual gifts. They were also clear that an inclusive education system requires the proper resources to help students succeed.”

Further down the list at #11, Re-Imagine Education recommends that “any funding model must be designed to provide the resources to support the varied needs of students, including behavioural issues, learning needs, cultural diversity and mental health.”

While these are only just recommendations, it's important to understand just how big of a step forward this is. Not only is there a major policy document proclaiming the benefits of inclusion, but it is directly sourced from the voices of those in this province. ■

EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

People with intellectual disabilities can and want to work at real jobs, but only 25% find employment.

We know that hiring someone with an intellectual disability can seem costly and difficult, so we'd like to change that perception. Here are 5 things you should know:

1

93% RETENTION RATE

For people with intellectual disabilities, securing employment is one of the biggest challenges they'll face in life. Once they've finally landed a position with an employer, it's unlikely that they'll want leave. According to data¹, 93% of individuals with intellectual disabilities hired remained with their employer.

2

CUSTOMERS WILL LIKE YOU MORE

Customers like businesses that do good and give back to their communities. According to a national survey² 92% of individuals regarded companies who hired people with a disability more favourably than their competitors and 87% of people indicated they would prefer to give their business to companies who hire inclusively.

3

INCREASED STAFF MORALE

Businesses report that having a diverse and inclusive workforce has boosted morale, enhanced connectedness, and enriched leadership and management skills among senior level staff. No stats. No facts. No research. People feel good when they do good. It's that simple.

4

TRAINING COSTS \$500 OR LESS

People think that accommodating someone with an intellectual disability comes with a significantly increased cost. Research³, however, demonstrates that 57% of job inclusive accommodations cost nothing and that 37% of businesses that hired inclusively saw only a one-time cost of \$500 or less.

5

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Interested in hiring someone with an intellectual disability? We're here to help you navigate the process and find the right candidate. Contact us at info@inclusionsk.com or (306) 955-3344 for more information.

¹ Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship at the University of British Columbia

² University of Massachusetts Boston

³ Job Accommodation Network



MEET THE NEW E.D.

 **TRAVIS NEUFELD** | COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

Meet Inclusion Saskatchewan's Executive Director, Kim Hague! Following former ED Kevin McTavish's retirement at the end of May, Kim has taken over the reigns of the association as well as its fundraising sister organization, Community Living. Kim, who previously served as INSK's Assistant Executive Director for 10 years previous is beyond thrilled to have the opportunity to lead the association, despite taking over in one of the most uncertain and tumultuous years in recent history.

"Kevin was an incredible mentor and I wish the very best for him in his retirement. I've learned so much about how best to manage Inclusion Saskatchewan over the past ten years, and am so excited

to explore new directions and opportunities for our staff and mission," says Kim.

Kim, whose stepson is a child with Down syndrome, goes on to say "I'm inspired every day by my stepson, Noah. He guides me, especially when facing the hard decisions."

Kim originally joined Inclusion Saskatchewan in November 2009, shortly after moving to Saskatoon from Whitehorse, Yukon. In her capacity as Assistant Executive Director, Kim oversaw all of the organization's activities with a special focus on the Family Network and organizing Inclusion Saskatchewan's annual AGM & Family network event.

This "family focus", she says, will help shape her as the new leader of the associ-

ation. "I've learned so much from speaking with families and getting to know them through our Family Network over the past ten years. I know their needs and concerns and look forward to bringing their perspective into the office."

On the topic of the Association's current outlook amidst a global pandemic, Kim is optimistic as she pushes on, continuing to help individuals with intellectual disabilities through all of this. "We're taking it one day at a time and we've all had to make adjustments to working remotely, but our mission to promote inclusion and support people with intellectual disabilities remains the same. We're here, we're open, we're ready to help."

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.