



Community. Connection. Belonging.

Out & About

ICS's Winter 2025 Newsletter



Photo of the Year!
Look inside for
more details

ICS Rising Star Award

Inclusion Chilliwack is thrilled to announce our new inaugural RISING STAR Award at ICS, a key part of our retention strategy to celebrate and recognize exceptional new hires. Our first recipient, Mehul Phondni, has truly exemplified the spirit of this award. Since his first day, Mehul has shown unwavering dedication, offering help whenever needed and knowing when to step back. His work 1:1 with a young man in a challenging position has been remarkable, demonstrating his commitment to learning and building meaningful relationships.

The RISING STAR Award is designed to highlight the outstanding contributions of employees who have been with ICS for less than 12 months. By acknowledging their hard work and dedication, we aim to foster a supportive and motivating environment that encourages growth and retention.

Congratulations, Mehul, on this well-deserved recognition!

We look forward to celebrating more exceptional new hires in the future.



ICS Manager, Natalie Smith-Klassen awards Mehul Phondni the inaugural ICS Rising Star Award

ICS New Look Logo

After a thorough vetting process, Inclusion Chilliwack is pleased to reveal our new look logos (short and long versions). Many thanks to Claire Petherick of Creative Candy Media for all her help! We hope you like our new look!



Photo of the Year

This year's Photo of the Year winner is Cynthia Martin!

The photo was taken by Lori Oostenbrug, a staff member at OASIS.

Lori shared that Cynthia, who attends OASIS, came in that day wearing her favorite skirt and asked to have her photo taken.

The Sunshine Community Garden is located right behind OASIS, and the participants work on a garden plot together. Lori thought the garden would be the perfect place for the photo. Cynthia loves the garden, especially walking through it on sunny days and chatting with other gardeners.

Cynthia is a friendly and social person. She enjoys volunteering at Cat Haven and watching senior baseball games.

Congratulations, Cynthia!

Raffle Painting

Art with Friends is an inspiring art class founded by Nicole Sorensen and her mom, Beth. Beth wanted to provide Nicole with a way to combine her love of art and spending time with friends, especially after the isolation of COVID-19. They extended an invitation to all ICS services and the response has been very positive.

The program meets three times a month and has grown to include many regular attendees. Last summer, several of their art pieces were proudly displayed at the Chilliwack Mural Festival.

Beth and Nicole continuously brainstorm new projects, and Beth guides everyone through the creation process during the classes, all for a nominal fee.

Recently, the group collaborated on a large 30"x40" painting titled "Community,". They hope to raffle this beautiful piece to raise funds, ensuring the classes remain affordable for everyone. Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$25 and can be purchased until March 4, 2025. The draw will take place on the program's third anniversary, March 6, 2025.

Join us in celebrating creativity, friendship, and community spirit with Art with Friends.



The title of this painting is called "Community" and is inspired by British Artist Paul Bursnall.

Meet the Board - Lexa Bergen

Lexa Bergen is in the second year of her first term as a board member (elected at the 2023 AGM).

Lexa describes her professional life as a Leadership and Advocacy Coach and a Disability Advocate:

“For over 20 years, I’ve been an advocate, living with a chronic illness and raising a child with disabilities. This journey has often required me to seek accessibility supports and accommodations, facing resistance and attitudinal barriers along the way. These experiences inspired me to combine self-leadership coaching with disability advocacy, empowering individuals to overcome personal and societal challenges. Self-leadership begins with self-awareness - understanding your emotions, thoughts, biases, and goals. This clarity helps you set boundaries for self-care and navigate advocacy with confidence, less swayed by societal pressures. Balancing vulnerability and authenticity in my work involves sharing my thoughts honestly, within the boundaries I’ve set for safety and alignment with my needs. Leading by example, I try to inspire others to embrace their personal growth and transformation. Although there are some ideologies out there driven by fear and desire for safety, I witness positive changes daily. Shifts in attitudes, policy changes, and increased inclusivity reflect an inclusive world. When we focus on the good, we can feel the presence of a loving energy driving these transformations.”



Lexa Bergen

Winter Gala

Inclusion Chilliwack employees and their plus ones partied it up at our biennial Winter Gala at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort. Many thanks to the ICS Social Committee and Sector 7 Networks for making this event happen! Here are some photos from the ever-popular Photo Booth!



E-Badge News

Congratulations to Robyn Mortimer on earning her DSP-I certification through the NADSP E-Badge Academy (pictured on the right presented to her by ICS manager, Katrina Both). This achievement highlights her dedication to professional growth and her commitment to providing exceptional support to those she serves. Robyn's hard work and perseverance have set a strong foundation, and she is already taking the next steps to achieve her DSP-II certification. Her continuous pursuit of excellence embodies the values of our organization. Thank you, Robyn, for your passion and dedication to making a difference!



NEOC Update

At Inclusion Chilliwack Society, we value employee feedback and are committed to fostering professional growth. In response to our recent employee satisfaction survey, which highlighted interest in career advancement and professional development opportunities, we hosted two informative sessions titled "Career Development & Advancement." These sessions, held on October 29, 2024 (in-person) and November 4, 2024 (virtually), provided staff with valuable insights into growth opportunities within ICS. Thank you to everyone who participated, helping us build a supportive and forward-thinking workplace!



ICS employee, Aaron Van Beest, seen here speaking at the session

ICS News



ICS's Children & Youth Services is pleased to announce a new resource for a youth that will require 24/7 support. Tel LaLem is the new name of the home and is a 2-bed youth home contracted by the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Service Society. Tel Lalem is the Halqemeylem word for "my house" and is being used with permission. ICS is pleased to announce Erin Barber as the new manager of Tel LaLem. Erin has extensive community work experience with some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults in various communities throughout the lower mainland over the past 25 plus years. Welcome to Inclusion Chilliwack Society, Erin!

ShareVision Update

The steady migration to the latest version of ShareVision is now completed as Phase 2 of 3 officially began on January 1, 2025. This means that all services will be using the new version for all their documentation and reporting needs including HR and Administrative processes. The ShareVision



Working Group meets every second Friday and will continue their work into the New Year. The next phase will involve finishing up some administrative tasks and preparing for the move off of the current software infrastructure to a faster responding more dynamic one. Stay tuned!

Mathieson Day Centre

On September 3rd, Child and Youth Services officially opened a new inclusive After School Childcare program.

The program runs Monday to Friday 2:00pm to 6:30pm and will soon be expanding to provide care on School District 33 Pro-D days, as well as early dismissal days and are also applying to increase the program's capacity. Experienced staff will ensure individualized attention and inclusive participation, promoting a welcoming space for every child to thrive. For children requiring more support, parents with access to

funding through the Fraser Valley Child Development Centre, staff will work to create a custom experience that meets the need of that child. The program currently offers pick up for students from Evans, Sardis and Watson Elementary Schools. If you are interested or would like more information, please call (604) 846-7777 or reach out to mathiesonadmin@cscl.org



Chilliwack Access For All

Chilliwack Access For All (formerly Chilliwack People First) are excited to share our new name with you.

With our new name, comes a new logo that we are currently designing. We will be hosting more fundraisers in 2025 to buy a new banner and pamphlets.

We are also excited to collaborate with the Salvation Army again this year for an even more successful Food Drive in the spring.

If you would like to be a part of our innovated and inclusive Self-Advocacy group, please contact us at our new email address: chilliwackaccessforall@gmail.com

Board Update

ICS's Board of Directors is elected by the Membership every year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Inclusion Chilliwack Society Board of Directors held meetings on the first Monday of October, November and December to conduct their governance work for the organization. In addition to regular board meetings, the Finance Committee, Property Planning & Development Committee, and the Membership & Nominating Committee all held meetings in the last quarter. Finance Committee chaired by Sam Tolmie reviewed ICS's financial



Mike Robinson,
ICS Board President

results for the first two quarters to September 30, 2024. The Property Planning Committee, chaired by Josh Hall, reviewed opportunities for development and provided direction for use of the \$78,500 grant from CMHC for feasibility studies.

The membership committee, chaired by Shawn Palmer, reviewed new member applications and began identifying potential candidates to fill upcoming board vacancies at the June 2025 AGM.

CYS News



The Mathieson After School Child Care Centre will be hosting a Spring Break Camp this March. It will take place from March 17 to March 21 and will run like a shorter version of the popular Summer'Scapes Program. More details will be available soon! ICS Child and Youth Services also has a new 15 passenger van. This was partially paid for by the support of the Variety Club and will help immensely with Child and Youth program delivery!



Variety Club and ICS employees take time for a group photo in front of the new van

BC Caregiver Awards



In December 2024, the Home Sharing Support Society of BC (HSSBC) held their first awards ceremony and honoured four home share providers from across the province. Rhianna Millman (pictured centre next to ICS Associate Director, Mary-Lee Tondreau and Brandi who Rhianna currently supports), is an ICS caregiver who won the “Inspiration Award”, which honours caregivers who make a significant cultural or diversity impact in their community. This award is given to those who promote inclusion and inspire others, leading to positive changes in the disability community. The award was presented by the Minister Sheila Malcolmson, the Minister responsible for CLBC. Rhianna was recognized for her efforts to raise awareness about discrimination against Indigenous people in healthcare. Her advocacy began after Keegan, a young man from the Skwah First Nation she supported, died from a preventable cause due to cultural biases in the healthcare system. In his memory, efforts are being made to improve care for everyone. A memorial ceremony was held at Chilliwack General Hospital, and Rhianna was featured in an article calling for cultural change in nursing care. Indigenous health liaisons are now available at the hospital, which has been a valuable resource for those in home share, ensuring quality, culturally safe care. ICS is grateful for Rhianna’s support and advocacy regarding Keegan Coomb's death and her ongoing efforts to highlight systemic racism against Indigenous people and discrimination against people with disabilities in the healthcare system.

Addie and the Cats

By Etta (Daughter of an ICS Employee, Pet Owner & Aspiring Writer): Addie, the playful Australian Shepherd, took Stevie, the chubby Oreo tuxedo cat, under her wing. With her tail wagging, Addie aimed to teach Stevie the joys of being a dog. Their antics began with belly rubs; Addie would roll over, and Stevie would pancake against the floor, trying to mimic her "mom's" energy. Addie encouraged Stevie to scratch at doors while Smokey, the sleek grey cat, and Salem, the wise tuxedo cat, watched in disbelief. Stevie attempted to join in, releasing choppy "bark-meows" that were more adorable than scary. Her efforts to sound like Addie resulted in a comical mix that made everyone chuckle. When it was time to relax, Stevie would pancake flat, while Smokey and Salem loafed nearby. As they settled for the evening, Addie looked at her flat feline friend affectionately, while Stevie let out a soft choppy meow, echoing her joy in their friendship.



ICS Wonderful World
of Pets





By the Numbers

As of January 1, 2025

inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

of
Individuals
Supported:

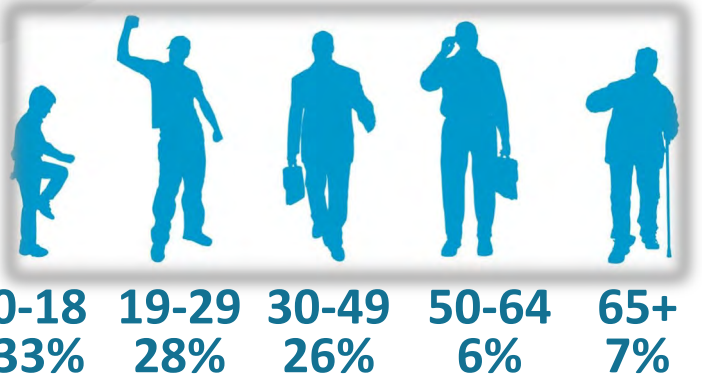
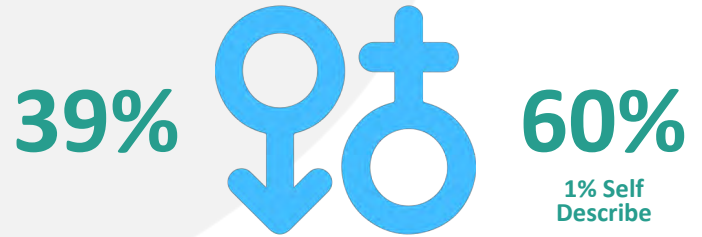
586 ●●●●●●●●

of
Employees
Working:

392 ●●●●

of
Caregivers
Active:

126 ●●



Serving Communities in:

- Chilliwack
- Sardis
- Hope
- Yarrow
- Agassiz
- Harrison
- Deroche
- Greendale
- Cultus Lake
- Sunshine Valley





inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

is **100%**
Non-Profit

11
Services

58
Service/Program
Options

Online Presence:



2213 Followers



609 Followers



852 Followers



1903 Views

ICS Reports

Measuring Up!

A progress update from an official ICS Report:

Strategic Plan:

- Domain: Employee Learning & Engagement - 2.2 Employee Morale - Strengthen Connection to the work of ICS.
- Executive Director requesting time at each staff meeting to present the organization's Strategic Plan, new name, and mission, vision & values.
- Update November 2024: Leadership Presence at DSP Appreciation Event (September 2024); Leadership hosted lunch for Managers (Combined Meeting - September).



ICS STAR Award!

Congratulations to Andrea Martin (centre) who received the latest CSCL STAR Award from ICS Manager, Natalie Smith-Klassen, and ICS HR/LR Director, Natalie Karam. The STAR Award was created to recognize employees for excellence in their job as a CSCL employee.

Andrea has been a valued member of the Inclusion Chilliwack Society team since March 2019. Over the years, she has consistently demonstrated her dedication and creativity in supporting individuals to be included in the community. Here's what her co-worker said about her in the nomination: "Andrea always comes to work ready to have a great day. She supports individuals by always being present and coming up with creative ideas to include them in the community. She is always willing to come up with different ways to promote social capital. I am encouraged by her supports and creativity!" Congratulations, Andrea, on this well-deserved recognition!



ICS Events...



BINGO Wednesdays!

Did you know about ZOOM BINGO?

Come join us for BINGO every Wednesday, hosted by the gang at Vanmar! Email them for more details!



ICS Career Fairs

January to April 2025

ICS will be participating in Career Fairs hosted by UFV and Sto:lo Nation. We will also be hosting our own too!

Inclusive Employers

Inclusive Employer Luncheon

April 2025

ICS's Employment Services is proud to host our annual signature Inclusive Employer Recognition event



Sunshine Community Garden

2025 Growing Season

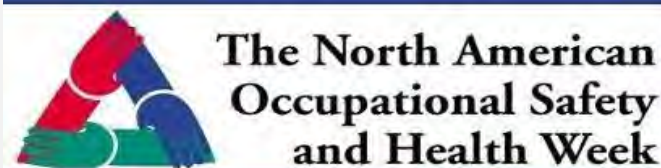
Want to have your own garden for next year? Sign up now to reserve your spot!



Community Social Services Month

March 2025

March is the time for a province-wide public awareness campaign about the Community Social Services sector.



NAOSH Week/Month

May 2025

Safety and Health Week is an annual ICS event that focuses on keeping our worksites accident-free!



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Annual General Meeting

June 2025

ICS will be hosting our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June 2025. More details to come!

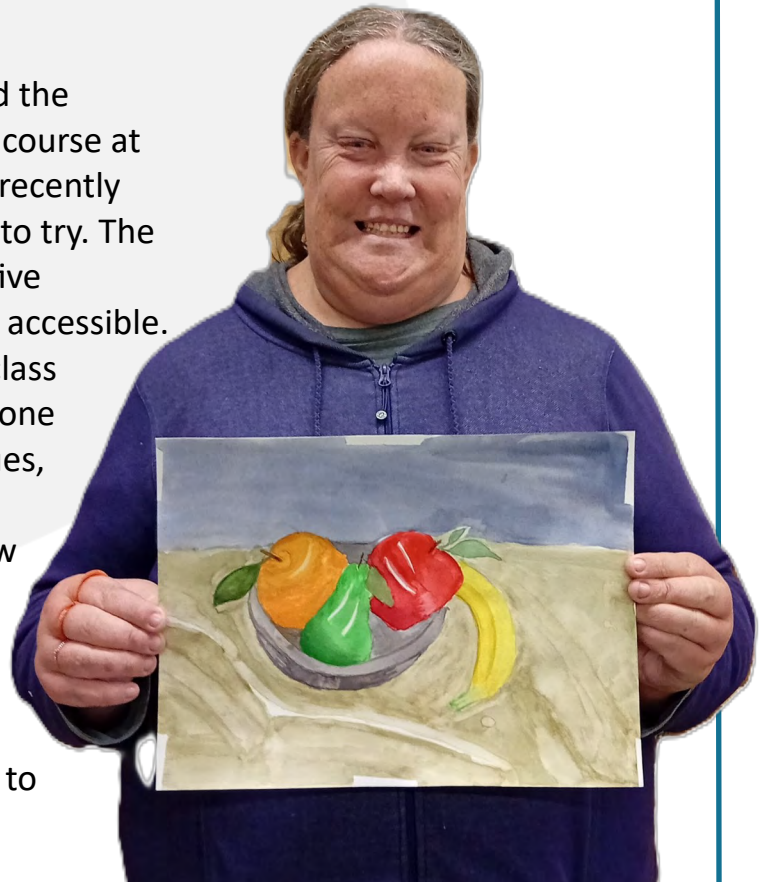
Watercolour Beginnings!

Meagan Siebert - Watercolour Beginnings

November 19, 2024:

Meagan was excited when she was first offered the opportunity to join the Watercolor Beginnings course at the Chilliwack Cultural Centre, especially after recently expressing her interest in finding a craft group to try. The course provided a relaxed, casual, and interactive atmosphere that made learning enjoyable and accessible.

Led by a fantastic instructor, Dan Berube, the class took a step-by-step approach that ensured no one felt rushed. Meagan learned valuable techniques, including the difference between primary and intermediate colors, how to mix them, and how various colors interacted on paper. The hands-on, supportive environment helped her feel confident in her creativity. Overall, Meagan thoroughly enjoyed the experience and hopes to join another course in the future to continue exploring watercolor painting.



Inclusion Chilliwack Society

Supporting people with diverse abilities, and their families since 1954.

9353 Mary Street
Chilliwack, BC
Phone 604-792-7726
Email info@cscl.org
Web www.cscl.org

"Our Vision is for a community that values and includes everyone. A centre of excellence that inspires a culture of community, connection and belonging."



Follow us on
Social Media:



Proud members of
[Inclusion BC](#) and
[Inclusion Canada](#)

Your Voice!

Many thanks to Julie Unger, Natalie Karam, Dan Celella, Danielle Cross, and Angela Vermeer for their contributions to this edition.

And, of course, to Cynthia Martin for gracing our cover!

Do you have something to say? Let's hear from you! Please contact Jeff Gilbank at jeff.gilbank@cscl.org for your comments, editorials, and/or newsletter ideas.