



Community. Connection. Belonging.

Out & About

ICS Fall 2025 Newsletter



**October is
Community
Inclusion
Month!**



October *is* Community Inclusion Month!

October marks Community Inclusion Month across British Columbia by official proclamation! This is a time to celebrate and promote the rights and contributions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This month is more than a celebration—it's a call to action. It highlights the importance of equity, choice, and full participation in community life for everyone. Rooted in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the initiative encourages communities to remove barriers and foster inclusive environments.

At Inclusion Chilliwack Society we are celebrating with our annual party, this year on October 24th (see the events page) at the Evergreen Hall. Additionally, we are co-hosting the Inclusive Employer Awards on October 28th at the Coast Hotel – celebrating local businesses who have recognized the business value of a diverse work force and have hired inclusively. In Chilliwack, local organizations and councils are working to create culturally safe, accessible spaces where all residents can thrive. Events, proclamations, and advocacy efforts throughout October aim to raise awareness, strengthen supports, and inspire lasting change. Community Inclusion Month reminds us that inclusion benefits everyone—and that together, we can build a community that values and includes everyone.

Relationships Workshop

Relationship Workshop: Fall Season Now Underway!

Meagan Siebert (Self-Advocate), Elishah Franckiewicz, and Angela Vermeer (Outreach Services) are back with the fall season of the Relationship Workshop after a successful spring session. This six-week, hands-on workshop helps participants learn about different kinds of relationships, how to communicate clearly, set healthy boundaries, and take care of their overall well-being.

Thanks to feedback from spring participants, Elishah and Angela have updated the workshop to include topics like online communication, consent, safety, and boundaries. They've also made sure the workshop is accessible for non-verbal participants.

Here's what participants are saying:

- "The way you say things is important in relationships."
- "It's important to keep your body and mind healthy."
- "Every sexuality is welcome."
- "Love ourselves and others respectfully."
- "Can we have more workshops?"

For more information, email elishah.franckiewicz@inclusionchilliwack.org



Meagan Siebert



Elishah Franckiewicz



Angela Vermeer

About The Cover

Hope and Ellen recently spent a lovely day at the Sunshine Community Garden, soaking in the fresh air and greenery all around them. They shared a cheerful moment as Hope proudly held up a giant zucchini—one of the many delicious rewards from their hard work in the garden. Their smiles said it all! It was a joyful reminder of how gardening brings people together.



Youth Volunteers Making Impact

Inclusion Chilliwack's After School Childcare Centre would like to introduce you to Tamara Weston and Leah Lang-Matish. They are two of the volunteers that have been helping out at various ICS Children's programs while going to school. They both attended the ICS's IMPACT Program and Teens Clubs. Vocational Counselor, Alayna Heppell explains that IMPACT is designed to help youth with disabilities find work or volunteer opportunities through training, skills building, and workshops. It was through IMPACT that Tamara obtained her First Aid certificate. They also supported her in setting up volunteering experiences through ICS's Summer Scapes, as well as the Canucks Autism Network. Tamara states "I really like working with children in general and since I'm on the spectrum I know where children with autism are at."

Tamara has worked tirelessly gaining experience and after successfully completing an interview has paid employment with CAN.

Leah has been volunteering since September 2024. She says "I wanted to get experience and I really love hanging out with kids." Her goal is to become a daycare worker and she is currently taking Early Childhood Education classes at UFV twice a week while also completing her Grade 12. Thank you Leah and Tamara for all your hard work and we wish you both success!



Golf FORE Inclusion - A Big Success!

What a fantastic day it was at Cultus Lake Golf Club for our first annual Golf FORE Inclusion tournament! With perfect weather, great company, and plenty of laughs, the event was a joyful celebration of community and inclusion. Golfers of all skill levels came together in a fun-filled 4-person scramble, with exciting prizes and even a chance to win \$25,000 at our Hole-In-One! The energy was high, the dinner delicious, and the cause - supporting inclusion initiatives - made every swing meaningful - golfers even enjoyed the “Hackle Hole” too! Thank you to all who participated and helped make this day unforgettable!

Save the Date: Join us on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 for our second annual!!!



The Champs from Sweeney's Barber Shop



The Infamous “Hackle Hole”



Good Friends! Good Times!



Post Game Dinner Packed with Smiles!

Meet the Board: Chelsea Mueller

Chelsea Mueller is a new Board member joining this year at Inclusion Chilliwack's AGM. She is also a certified architect and owner of The Nerdy Architect here in Chilliwack. We asked Chelsea a few questions in a forum we call “Meet the Board”.

Q: How has your background in architecture shaped the way you view community, inclusion, or accessibility? A: For me, the two have always been intertwined actually. One never really existed without the other. My perspective with architecture is to build for people, for community, for inclusion. It means building with inclusion at the heart of it. I try and wear a hat of consistent curiosity. This helps me learn and develop ideas to build for community, inclusion, and accessibility.



Q: Can you share a moment—either in your travels or professional life—that changed the way you see the world from an inclusive perspective? A: There is never just one moment but one that comes to mind was during my architectural education. One of my good friends did a thesis project on deaf architecture. It was really cool to unwind or peel back perspectives about space and how people interact in those spaces. It was a great eye opener for what it could look like to specifically build for people who experience other heightened senses.

Q: As a new Board member, what inspired you to join the Board of Inclusion Chilliwack? A: Well, during my time in Chilliwack for the last 8 years, I have seen the constant support this organization has brought to this small community. With hearing that the organization needed support on the board, it was an easy decision to step up and offer my time and knowledge.

Matt is Honoured

In August 2025, Matt Mackay proudly marked a significant milestone - 15 years of dedicated service with the Chilliwack RCMP. This remarkable achievement was recognized and celebrated by his supervisors and leadership team, who commended Matt for his unwavering commitment, professionalism, and contributions to the force over the years. As part of the celebration, Matt was presented with a commemorative certificate and a prestigious RCMP medallion, symbols of appreciation and respect for his years of service. Matt was genuinely thrilled to receive these honours, which reflect the high regard in which he is held by his colleagues and the community. Congratulations, Matt, on this outstanding accomplishment! Your dedication and hard work have made a lasting impact, and we're proud to celebrate this milestone with you. Way to go Matt!



NEOC Update

Wellness Wednesdays: A Midweek Boost!

You spoke, we listened! The 2024 NEOC Employee Satisfaction Survey told us stress support matters—and the Wellness Committee is on it. That's why, starting in September 2025, we launched Wellness Wednesday! On the first or second Wednesday of each month, your inbox gets a little brighter with wellness tips, tools, and resources chosen to support your well-being. You'll also get a quick link to share your thoughts or suggest future topics. Let's keep the good vibes going—one Wednesday at a time!



ICS News



We're excited to share some updates and welcome some new managers across several services:

Amanda Lord has joined the Homeshare team as a manager - welcome, Amanda!

Julia Um is now managing Tel Lalem and Topaz, and Nelly Robinson is Acting Manager at Sapphire.

Aaron Van Beest is the new manager overseeing Vanmar and Hipwell supported by Jody Whitehead as SSW.

Kami Edwards is now managing Coote and Lear.

Taylor Laviolette has taken on the role of manager for both ILS and SLS.

Inclusive Employer Awards

Inclusion Chilliwack is proud to co-host the 2025 Inclusive Employer Awards, taking place October 28 at the Coast Hotel in Chilliwack. This special luncheon honours local employers who demonstrate leadership in creating inclusive, accessible workplaces for people of all abilities. Presented in partnership with WorkBC, Rotary at Work, and Bethesda,

the event will feature inspiring stories, networking opportunities, and recognition of businesses making a real difference in our community. We invite you to join us in celebrating these champions of inclusion and diversity. Tickets are available now. Let's come together to support and celebrate inclusive employment across the Fraser Valley East!

E-Badge Achievement

Congratulations to Amanda Lord (pictured) on completing the DSP I, II, and III certification through the NADSP E-Badge Academy!

Amanda, who holds a degree in social work, shared that she pursued the certification to deepen her knowledge and enhance her ability to support others. "I wanted to continue my education and the NADSP curriculum seemed like an obvious choice," she said. She found the training both engaging and aligned with ICS values and ethics. "It was interesting. I found the writing assignments very engaging—especially in Level 2, which was way more interesting than the first level," Amanda noted. "The platform was user-friendly, and the audio and video components really supported my learning style." Amanda's journey is a great example of how professional



development can reinforce our shared values, deepen our commitment to person-centred support, and encourage others to grow in their roles. Congratulations, Amanda!

Chilliwack Access For All

Chilliwack Access for All (CAFA) took the summer off to enjoy vacations and time in the sun.

They kicked off fall by attending a seminar on marketing strategies for self-advocate groups.

Members are currently deciding which individuals will be



attending the Camp Luther retreat and looking forward to workshopping how to apply what they learned in the seminar to build membership and better connect

with other self-advocate groups. Reach out to 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).

At their June 23rd meeting with board members and leadership team in attendance, we thanked leaving board members Josh Hall, Mike Robinson, and Sam



Lexa Bergen
ICS Board President

Tolmie. The current board held their executive elections; congratulations to President – Lexa Bergen, 1st Vice President – Aaron Hale, 2nd Vice President – Karen Steegstra, and Treasurer – David Houghton. Additionally, the

board established its committees for the new board year – Finance, Membership & Nominating, and Property Planning. Board members were on a hiatus from meetings for the summer. On Saturday,

September 13th four newer board members gathered

for six hours, beginning with a tour of some of ICS's properties and service areas, followed by orientation to Inclusion Chilliwack Society and their role as a board member.

ICS News



The Early Risers group took the lead in planning another exciting glamping trip. Right from the start of 2025, they formed small teams to handle different parts of the trip—like choosing and booking the glamping site, planning meals, and organizing activities. Two groups of enthusiastic participants signed up and stayed involved throughout the entire process, speaking up for what they wanted. The trip took place from June 9 to 13, and it was a big success! Everyone had a great time and wanted to share some photos from their trip to Manning Park



Kay's Right to Ride!

Kay's Journey: A Story of Advocacy, Healing, and Joy

Many years ago, Kay Stoller received a discouraging medical opinion: a doctor told her she couldn't have hip surgery because she crossed her legs too much. Her mobility was already poor, and walking had become increasingly painful. Without intervention, her quality of life was at risk. Thankfully, Kay had strong advocates in her corner. The team at Southlands, along with her family, took action by writing a letter to someone they trusted - Dr. Pereira. With help from Brittany, the receptionist, Dr. Pereira agreed to assess Kay. After seeing her condition firsthand, he added her to the waitlist and then bumped her up, recognizing the urgency of her situation.

The surgery was a success!

Just two months into recovery, Kay was already ahead of most patients. Even more meaningful, she was able to return to something she loved: riding motorcycles with her brother. It was a powerful reminder that the right support can restore not just health, but joy.

Thanks to her staff support's advocacy, her family's persistence, and Dr. Pereira's compassion, Kay's life was transformed. For her, Dr. Pereira is a true hero!



Kay and her brother preparing to go for a ride for the first time in years

Celebrating Onam

Onam is called the festival of joy and happiness. When ICS Associate Director, Craig Yendall, was recently invited by some ICS employees to join them for the Malayali cultural festival of Onam, he was thrilled to join. Onam is the annual harvest festival celebrated in Kerala, India. It is a 10-day festival celebrated with elaborate feasts, flower decorations (pookkalam), traditional games, and boat races, all honouring the homecoming of the mythical king Mahabali. Onam is known as the "festival of joy and happiness" and is considered to be the start of the new year, as well as celebrating the harvest.

ICS has a number of employees who are from Kerala, India, the Onam offers a chance for all Malayali people to gather. ICS team member Jobu Joseph Matthew is president of the Chilliwack Malayali community group and the key organizer of "ChillOnam" – Chilliwack's Onam celebration. Craig was struck by how many Malayali people at the festival were ICS employees and says it was a really fun day.

Kuro and Biscuits

Meet Kuro and Biscuits! These two cuties belong to ICS HomeShare team member Ruth Jackson. Kuro is 5 years old and very snuggly with the loudest purr. He is always looking for a lap to keep warm. Kuro is very playful and will drag his mouse-on-a-string toy over to you if he feels he has been ignored for too long. He will also sit on any piece of paper or bag and jump in any box or basket that is left unattended. Kuro's motto is "if I fits I sits!". Kuro is also full of mischief – any time someone is doing a puzzle at the table he likes to come and sit on it and then swipe pieces on to the ground!



ICS Wonderful World of Pets

Biscuits is 4 years old and more aloof than Kuro, but much more vocal – she's a chatty girl with lots to say! She will always give a little meow whenever jumping on or off things, and if you ask her to move out of the way she will whine at you. Biscuits is adventurous and always trying to escape outside. She will scratch at any door she thinks will get her there including the cupboards, oven, and washing machine! While she isn't quite as snuggly as Kuro, when Biscuit does decide it's time for a snuggle she likes to make up for it by giving lots of kisses.





By the Numbers

As of October 1, 2025

inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

of
Individuals
Supported:

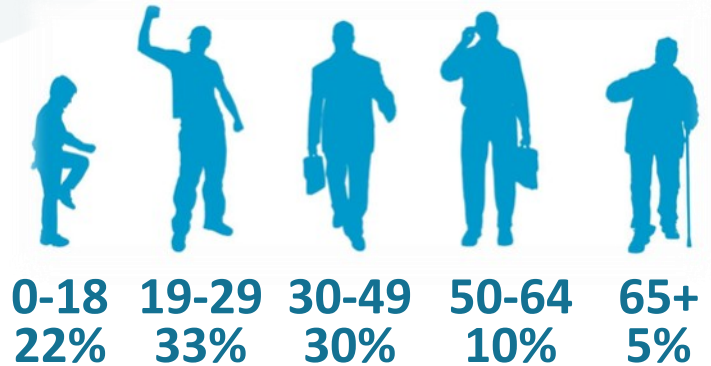
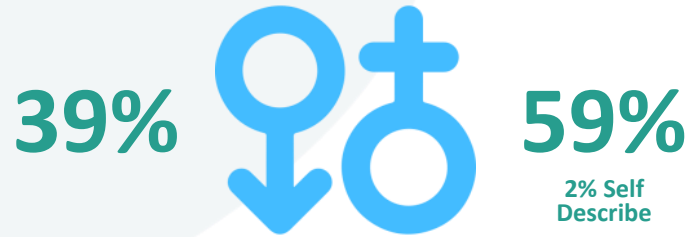
626 ●●●●●●●●

of
Employees
Working:

390 ●●●●

of
Caregivers
Active:

125 ●●



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:



2367 Followers



670 Followers



903 Followers



21,374 Views

ICS Reports

Measuring Up!

A progress update from an official ICS Report:

Technology Report Goals:

- Migrate most of the ShareVision data over to SharePoint to reduce costs associated with ShareVision storage.
- Office 365 training and deployment for employees to make use of the platform and all of its applications, including Microsoft's AI tool, Co-Pilot.
- Replace all workstations that do not qualify for an upgrade to Windows 11.
- ICS employees will undergo cybersecurity awareness training and testing to mitigate risks and enhance the organization's first line of defense

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 October 2025

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

Community Inclusion Month

Community Inclusion Month

October 2025

October is also DEAM Month—Disability Employment Awareness Month



2025 Photo Contest

Photo Contest

All of October 2025

This year's theme: LAUGHTER!
What does LAUGHTER look like to you?



Halloween Howler

Friday, October 24, 2025

Time: 5:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Location: Evergreen Hall, 9291 Corbould Street



Inclusive Employer Awards

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Location: Coast Hotel, Chilliwack, BC

Celebration Lunch Included



International Day of PWD

December 3, 2025

Observed annually on December 3rd to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities worldwide.

Celebrating Corey and Alec

This week, Corey Bennett and Alec Chelczynski proudly received their five-year service certificates from FreshCo, marking a significant milestone in their careers. Their dedication, hard work, and positive attitudes have made a lasting impact on their team and the community. Corey and Alec are thrilled to share this achievement, and their colleagues couldn't be prouder. Reaching this five-year mark is a testament to their commitment and growth, and it's a moment worth celebrating. Congratulations to Corey and Alec - your accomplishments inspire us all and remind us of the value of perseverance and teamwork!



Inclusion Chilliwack Society

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

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Chilliwack, BC
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Email info@inclusionchilliwack.org
Web www.inclusionchilliwack.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 Cerella, Danielle Cross, Nicole Howard, Elishah Franckiewicz, and Jodie Dessau for their contributions to this edition.

And, of course, to Hope Eastwood and Ellen Peters for gracing our cover!

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