



Community. Connection. Belonging.

Out & About

ICS Winter 2026 Newsletter



**Photo of
the Year!**

Year in Reflection



As we reflect on our 71st year, we celebrate connection, growth and a deepened culture of belonging. We opened a new home for a child through Fraser Valley Aboriginal & Family Services Society, expanding our commitment to supportive, person-centred living.

Child & Youth Services also received a new Variety Sunshine Coach, enhancing access and mobility for the children we support.

For the eighth year in a row, ICS was honoured with the Canadian Non-Profit Employer of Choice Award—an achievement driven by our dedicated teams! In April, we celebrated employees marking milestone years of service, followed by our bi-annual iConnect Staff Conference in May, themed INCLUSION: More than a name; establishing a culture of belonging.

Summer brought vibrant community moments—participation in the Pride Festival, block parties, and inclusive children’s day camps. Our first annual Golf FORE Inclusion tournament raised over \$12,000, while the Inclusion Chilliwack Celebration in October brought our community together for a BBQ, dance, raffles, and a spirited Halloween Howler.

Fall highlights included a sold-out inaugural Inclusive Employer Awards event, the annual Photo Contest, and the Qwalena performance during Multiculturalism Week. We closed the year with laughter and lights through our Christmas Parade float.

Together, we continue building communities that value and include everyone.



inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

ICS Christmas Hamper

Each holiday season, our team comes together to make a difference for families in need. We had participated with Salvation Army & Community Services for many years and then recognized that there were a number of families served by ICS that may benefit from some additional support. For the past several years we have asked our teams to identify any individuals or families who weren't receiving support from others and ask them if they would be willing to participate. This year, thanks to the generosity of our staff, we sponsored two families. One is a young family with a child and another on the way, and the other is a household where a mother and grandmother are raising seven children. Through collective efforts, we provided hampers filled with groceries and age-appropriate gifts. The response was incredible—boxes of food and gift bags were delivered, bringing smiles, surprise, and even a few tears of joy.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed and to those who helped coordinate this initiative. Your kindness and commitment reflect the spirit of care and community that defines our organization. The ICS Christmas Family Hamper Giving is just one example of how we come together to create meaningful change. We look forward to continuing this tradition and making an impact in the years ahead.



About The Cover

Congratulations to Annet Martens from THRIVE for capturing an incredible moment of joy with her photo of Justin. The photo contest theme for 2025 was LAUGHTER, and Annet's photo truly embodied the spirit of happiness and spontaneity that makes laughter unforgettable. Thank you to everyone who participated and shared your amazing photos. You helped us celebrate the beauty of laughter in everyday life!



Remembering Erin: A Spirit of Joy

In 2025, ICS experienced the heartbreaking loss of many lives, each leaving an irreplaceable mark on our hearts and community. Among them was Erin, whose passing in October reminds us of the profound impact one person can have.

In October, we lost someone truly special. Erin may have been just four feet tall and 64 pounds, but the space she filled in our lives and hearts was immeasurable. Her staff worker, Angeline Woodfield, wrote a touching eulogy that captured Erin's essence perfectly. "Her middle name was Joy—and she lived up to it every single day.

Erin was a bright light, teaching us through her actions and spirit to live fully and kindly. She reminded us to:

Be accepting — diversity brings richness to life.

Be open — the world is bigger than our comfort zones.

Be grateful — people are our greatest gifts.

Be trusting — fear often misleads us.

Be joyful — it's how we lift others.

And yes, go to McDonald's — because they have the best fries!

Erin never liked being left out of a conversation, so we share with you some of her favorite sayings, spoken by staff and accompanied by roses. And in true Erin fashion, we invite you to join us in one last bug squish—her absolute favorite thing to do. Listen for the buzz, and on Nicole's count, let's send Erin a joyful "splat." Her legacy is one of courage, laughter, and love. Let's carry forward the lessons she left us and live our best lives in her honour."



Inclusive Employer Awards

On October 28, Inclusion Chilliwack partnered with WorkBC, Bethesda, and the Rotary at Work Initiative to co-host the Inclusive Employer Awards – Fraser Valley East at the Coast Hotel. The event welcomed 135 guests, including Chilliwack Mayor Ken Popove and Hope Mayor Sylvia Pranger, to celebrate businesses leading the way in inclusive employment. Held during Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM)—a national initiative recognizing the contributions of people with disabilities, the event highlighted the importance of accessibility, equity, and belonging in the workplace.

Co-emceed by Kelli Paddon and Julie Unger, the awards recognized:

- Blue Moose Coffee House – Trailblazer
- Cabin Fever Junction Bread Bakery – Innovation
- Unique Thrifting – Champion for Change
- Fraser River Lodge – Rising Star
- Redux Nutrition Ltd. – Inclusive Employer of the Year

Events like this strengthen our region by celebrating employers who create workplaces where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



Former MLA for Chilliwack Kelli Paddon (right) and Mayor Ken Popove (left) present the Rising Star in Inclusive Employment Award to Fraser River Lodge General Manager Claudette Krahn and HR Manager Caylin Kenyon.

Celebrating Outreach Worker Day

On November 28, 2025, the ICS Outreach team came together for a full day of activities designed to celebrate their hard work and strengthen team bonds. The event kicked off with an inspiring guest speaker, followed by a hearty breakfast of pancakes, fruit, and sausage, catered by Cookie's Grill. This warm start set the tone for a day filled with collaboration and fun.

The centerpiece of the day was an engaging scavenger hunt that spanned multiple locations across Chilliwack. Teams: creatively named Merry Mischief Makers, Reindeer Rendezvous, Elf Express, Twinkle Toppers, and Holiday Hat Hustlers, competed in challenges that encouraged problem-solving, creativity, and communication. Activities ranged from painting ornaments at Prism to striking a pose at the giant Christmas tree in District 1881, enjoying treats at Hugo's, and exploring festive spots like Minter Gardens and Greendale Acres Christmas Farm. This event was more than just fun; it fostered meaningful connections among staff. Working in teams allowed participants to collaborate outside their usual roles, strengthening trust and camaraderie. The variety of activities encouraged adaptability and creativity, while the shared experiences built a sense of unity and pride in their work. These moments of laughter and teamwork will translate into stronger collaboration in the workplace, ultimately benefiting the individuals we support. After a day of adventure and bonding, the team gathered to cap off the evening with karaoke. Singing together brought an extra layer of joy and celebration, leaving everyone energized and connected. It was the perfect ending to a day that truly showcased the spirit of outreach, community, collaboration, and care.



E-Badge News!

Congratulations to James Wahl for completing all three levels of the Direct Support Professional training offered through ICS!

James says he appreciated the reflective nature of the learning. “It’s not just about acquiring new info, but how you apply it.”

“It’s a great opportunity to explore. It can be daunting, but it was something easy to pick up, doing an essay per night.”

James says the learning helped him appreciate the significance of his role and the potential for positive impact every day. “What we do in our daily role can be overlooked. I realized how important everything I do in my role is.”



James Wahl

NEOC Update

NEOC Survey Update – Goal Achieved!
Thank you to everyone who participated in our annual NEOC (Non-Profit Employer of Choice) employee satisfaction survey this past November. The survey ran for 3.5 weeks, and our target was a 55% completion rate. We’re excited to share that we reached 56%—goal achieved!

The final report from NEOC is expected in February 2026. Once received, we’ll share the top five areas where ICS is excelling and the five areas we’ll focus on improving. Your feedback matters, and we appreciate your engagement in making ICS a great place to work!



ICS News



We were thrilled to join the Rotary Chilliwack Christmas Parade this holiday season! Our team proudly represented Inclusion Chilliwack with festive spirit, spreading joy and celebrating community togetherness. A big thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success—your energy and creativity truly lit up the parade!

ICS is proud to partner with OnGuard – the ultimate lone-worker safety solution! Real-time alerts, GPS tracking, and emergency support keep our employees safe anywhere, anytime when working alone.

CARF is Coming!

Inclusion Chilliwack is preparing for our upcoming CARF accreditation survey, an important milestone that demonstrates our commitment to quality, accountability, and person-centred services. Behind the scenes, we're reviewing policies, updating procedures, training staff, and ensuring safety and accessibility across all programs. CARF

accreditation is a recognized standard of excellence, showing our dedication to continuous improvement and best practices. Thank you to everyone contributing to this process—your efforts make a difference! Together, we'll showcase what makes Inclusion Chilliwack exceptional. Stay tuned for updates as we move closer to survey time!

Fond Farewell to ML!

We proudly celebrated Mary Lee Tondreau's remarkable 35 year journey of service, leadership, and heart.

From Children's Services to Tenant Support, Employment Services, Staff Supported Homes, Shared Living, Respite, and Outreach, she has contributed to nearly every corner of our organization. Rising from front-line roles to leadership, she's known for her organization, compassion, humour, and unwavering commitment to people. Her contributions—from developing systems like Sharevision to mentoring employees—have left an enduring legacy. As she retires, we thank Mary-Lee for her dedication, brilliance, and laughter. Inclusion Chilliwack is stronger because of her, and she will be deeply missed.



Mary-Lee waves good-bye as she leaves the Mary Street Office for the last time

Chilliwack Access For All

Chilliwack Access For All (CAFA), a self-advocacy group for adults 19+, started in the 1990s as Chilliwack People First and rebranded a few years ago.



We enjoy coming to CAFA for the monthly meetings, social connections, and snacks! We're a fun group focused on advoca-

cy, communication, and giving back to the community. We go to conferences, host fundraisers, and recently attended a Camp Luther Retreat in Mission. We're welcoming new

members! Come join us!. 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).

The Board had a busy fall with three full Board Meetings, and Finance, Membership and Property Planning Committee Meetings. October 6th, the board approved the



Lexa Bergen
ICS Board President

2024 Performance Measurement Report, Critical Incident Report and the annual Technology Plan. In November the board reviewed the ICS Financial results to September 30th, noting we were trending better than predicted. They

also reviewed the Executive Director's Job Description and updates to the Organization Improvement Plan.

December's meeting was exciting as the board appointed interim Board Member, Jeremy

Johnson (to fill the vacancy left by Mashal Zafar) and

also celebrated the season with "stories from the field" shared by Leadership Team Members.

ICS News



Lifelong Learning: NADSP E-Badge Academy Update

2025 marked our most successful year yet with the NADSP E-Badge Academy! A total of 37 employees participated, demonstrating an outstanding commitment to professional development. Together, they earned 23 credentials, including DSP-I, DSP-II, DSP-III, and FLS. These achievements reflect the dedication of our team to continuous learning and excellence in service. By investing in these nationally recognized certifications, we strengthen our skills and enhance the quality of support we provide. Thank you to everyone who embraced this opportunity—your hard work and passion for growth make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

Staffing Changes in CYS

The CYS team would like to share some important updates as we say farewell to a few familiar faces and welcome new ones to our team.

First, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Karen Slingerland, who retired at the end of 2025 after many years of dedicated service as Child and Youth Respite Manager and Youth Employment Manager. Karen's leadership and commitment have made a lasting impact, and we wish her all the best in this next chapter of life.

Stepping into Karen's role is Katrina Both, a valued member of Inclusion Chilliwack Society since 2009. Katrina brings a wealth of experience and passion for supporting youth, having most recently managed Chadsey. We are thrilled to see her take on this new challenge and continue making a difference.

We also celebrate Aleks Paleczek, who has been an integral part of our Youth Employment Services team as a Vocational Counsellor since 2020. Aleks has accepted a new opportunity as HomeShare Manager in the Shared Living department. Congratulations, Aleks, on this exciting move!

Lastly, we want to recognize our amazing Admin Assistant, Alicia Eksyma, who has been indispensable for nearly two years. Alicia will be transitioning to the Human Resources Department as Scheduler/HR Coordinator. Her organizational skills and positive energy will undoubtedly shine in this new role.

Please join us in thanking Karen, Aleks, and Alicia for their incredible contributions and in welcoming Katrina to her new position. We wish each of you success and happiness as you embark on these exciting new adventures!

The CYS Team
Celebrating Movember!

Centre: Aleks Paleczek;
Left to Right: Dan
Ceella,
Karen Slingerland,
Owen Wells, Alicia
Eksyma, Alayna Eggert,
Dan Bibby



Meet Tripp!

Tripp is 60% Staffordshire Terrier, mixed with Akita and Brittany Spaniel—100% unforgettable—and is owned by ICS Manager Kami Edwards and family.

Originally found injured and alone on a Manitoba reserve, Tripp had lived with a broken back leg so long that amputation was his only option. Vets also discovered a hole in his heart, and with his chances uncertain, Tripp faced euthanasia until a family stepped up. Through a rescue partnered with Small Dog Rescue, Tripp was sent to BC for a cardiologist assessment, underwent successful heart surgery, and spent three months in foster care recovering. Meanwhile, Kami was seeking a companion for her dog Macy, who struggled when post-COVID life returned to normal. She hoped to adopt a special needs dog. When Macy met Tripp, the connection was instant—hugging, playful energy, and Tripp trying to hop straight into the car. He officially joined the family in late 2020. Now 7, Tripp is calm, low maintenance, and full of personality. Kami calls him an old soul—grumpy, part fun police, and very much like a grandpa. “There’s something magical about him; he always knows when people need comfort.” A funny fact: with only three legs, he hops while pooping, sometimes leaving a trail. He loves water, family gatherings, and simply being near his people. “He’s the best.”



ICS Wonderful
World of Pets





By the Numbers

As of January 1, 2026

inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

of
Individuals
Supported:

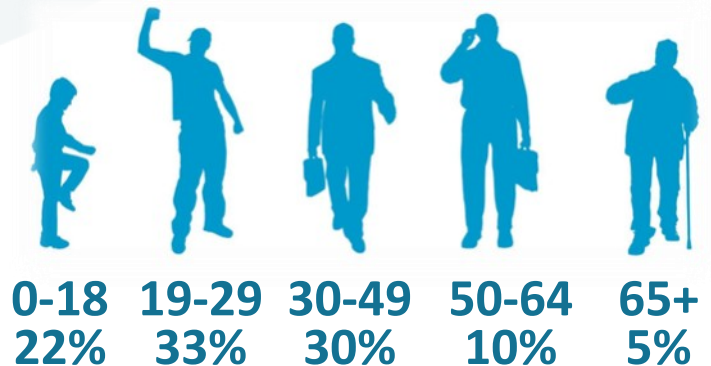
631 ●●●●●●●●

of
Employees
Working:

391 ●●●●

of
Caregivers
Active:

138 ●●



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:



2355 Followers



684 Followers



910 Followers



21843 Views

ICS Reports

Measuring Up!

A progress update from an official ICS Report:

Survey Process:

This year, ICS staff and people who receive services from ICS came together to complete important surveys that help us improve services and strengthen our organization. Your feedback is invaluable in guiding our continuous quality efforts. A special thank you to Ceara, Alicia, Kim, Trish, Richelle and Carolyn for their dedication and hard work in making this process as smooth as can be and successful. Together, we're building a culture of learning and accountability—thank you for helping us grow!

PRO D DAY CHILD CARE

Ages
6-12

8:30am to
6:30pm

- **INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT**
- **EXPERIENCED STAFF**
- **DIVERSITY**
- **WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES**
- **FIELD TRIPS**

Cost:
\$30/ day

Dates:

- February 13, 2026 Pro D Day
- February 27, 2026 Early Dismissal
- April 24, 2026 Pro D Day
- May 15, 2026 Pro D Day
- May 29, 2026 Pro D Day
- June 25, 2026 Early Dismissal

[Register Now](#)



Mathieson Centre
45195 Wells Road
Chilliwack, BC

604-846-7777

mathiesonadmin@inclusionchilliwack.org

Inclusion Chilliwack Society
Mathieson Centre

SPRING BREAK CAMP

Ages
6-12

March 16th-20th, 2026
8:30am-4:30pm

Last Day to
Register
Feb 27th

- **INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT**
- **SOCIAL SKILL FOCUSED ACTIVITIES**
- **EXPERIENCED STAFF**
- **DIVERSITY**
- **FIELD TRIPS**

Cost
\$200.00*

Register Now

*Extra fees may apply if
enhanced staffing is required
Can use Autism Funding or
ACCB



inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

Mathieson Centre
45195 Wells Road
Chilliwack, BC

604-846-7777
mathiesonadmin@inclusionchilliwack.org

Year End by the Numbers

As we welcome 2026, Inclusion Chilliwack Society reflects on a year of growth and impact. We proudly supported 631 individuals across all life stages, with services tailored to diverse needs. Our dedicated team of 391 employees and 138 active caregivers ensured quality, person-centred care every day. With 11 services and 58 program options, we remain committed to offering choice and flexibility while staying 100% non-profit. Our reach spans communities from Chilliwack and Sardis to Hope, Agassiz,



Harrison, and beyond, strengthening inclusion throughout the region. Online, we connected with thousands—2,355 Facebook followers, 684 on Instagram, 910 on LinkedIn, and over 21,000 YouTube views—sharing stories and celebrating achievements. These numbers represent more than data; they reflect lives enriched, opportunities created, and communities strengthened. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we look forward to another year of courage, learning, and inclusion.

Inclusion Chilliwack Society

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

9353 Mary Street
Chilliwack, BC
Phone 604-792-7726
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 Celella, Danielle Cross, Angela Vermeer, Amanda Lord, Paul McCracken and Taylor Laviolette for their contributions to this edition.

And, of course, to Justin 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.