



Community. Connection. Belonging.

Out & About

ICS Spring 2026 Newsletter



Meet Ceara
Our Newsletter's
Newest Reporter



inclusion
Chilliwack
Society



ICS NAMED A CANADIAN NONPROFIT EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Inclusion Chilliwack Society is proud to share that we have once again been recognized as a 2025 Canadian Nonprofit Employer of Choice (NEOC), earning an overall score of 81%, exceeding both the qualification threshold and the overall national nonprofit benchmark.

WHAT WE HEARD

STRENGTHS:

Manager/Employee Relations: 83%
Overall Reputation: 83%
Personal Enjoyment: 82%

OPPORTUNITIES:

Compensation & Benefits
Career Advancement Conversations
Coaching & Wellness Supports

WHAT WE'RE DOING

REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

Results that fell below the industry benchmark have been assigned to the appropriate committees and built into their work plans, including compensation and benefits awareness, career conversations, coaching, and wellness supports.

Thank you to everyone who shared their voice - over 200 employees completed the survey. This recognition belongs to all of you and supports our ongoing commitment to building a respectful, supportive, and engaging workplace.

ICS Report Card

Our 2025 Quality Improvement results are in - and there's lots to celebrate. Overall, Inclusion Chilliwack met or exceeded targets across most areas, showing strong performance in safety, training, satisfaction, and person-centred planning. Survey participation increased across all groups, and people supported, families, employers, and staff reported high satisfaction. We also saw excellent results in health and safety inspections, vehicle checks, emergency drills, and staff

training completion. Individual services stood out, with strong goal completion, high satisfaction scores, and improved planning outcomes.

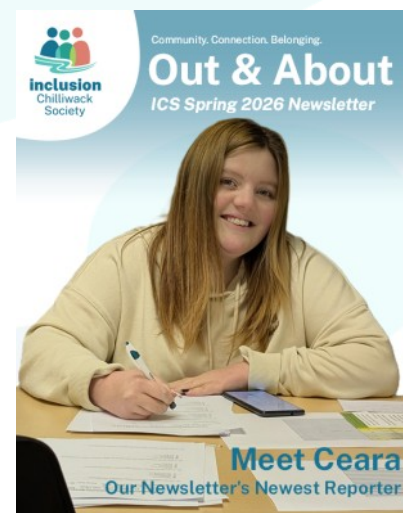
A few areas continue to need attention. Wellness participation, accident and injury rates, and some system-level reporting targets fell short of expectations, giving us clear direction for improvement in the year ahead.

These results help us understand what's working well and where we need to focus next. Thank you to everyone who shared feedback, completed surveys, and contributed to improving the quality of our services.



About The Cover

We're excited to welcome **Ceara** to the ICS Newsletter Team! Starting this edition, Ceara will be writing a regular article for **Out & About**, bringing fresh ideas and a new voice to each issue. Many people may recognize Ceara as the person who helped with several of our surveys last time around. Ceara also receives supports from ICS and is looking forward to sharing her stories, experiences, and perspectives through the newsletter. We're thrilled to have **Ceara** on the team and can't wait for you to read the first article - and many more to come!



Community Threads!

What do a high school sewing class, a hospital in Cameroon, and a Staff Supported Home in Chilliwack have in common?

A shared effort to reduce waste and help others. Each semester, students in the sewing elective at Abbotsford Traditional School create a variety of projects, leaving behind small fabric scraps too small to reuse. By year's end, bins are full and the sewing teacher is left wondering what to do with them.

Around the same time, staff learned about a Staff Supported Home in Chilliwack involved in a humanitarian project supporting a hospital in Mbingo, Cameroon. The home was sewing baby blankets, diapers, and wound bandages for the hospital's medical and surgical ward.

One student project involved cotton flannel pajamas - the exact material required for the hospital bandages, which must be cut into small 10-centimetre squares. When staff realized the scraps were headed for the landfill, the connection was clear.

These handmade items support White Cross, an organization providing accessible medical care worldwide for more than 100 years, including at Mbingo hospital. What began as a simple waste problem became a meaningful partnership, connecting students, staff, and volunteers across three communities to make a difference.



Relationship Workshop



The Spring Relationship Workshop has just wrapped up. It was a great learning and growing experience for individuals at Outreach, and presenters, Angela Vermeer, Elishah Franckiewicz, and self-advocate Meagan Siebert are happy to announce that the Fall workshop will be open to other ICS Programs and services.

This interactive, six-week workshop is designed to promote an understanding of different types of relationships, how to communicate and maintain boundaries, and overall health through self-awareness and mutual respect. It also helps participants build practical interpersonal skills that support healthier connections and greater personal wellbeing.

Please contact Angela (angela.vermeer@inclusionchilliwack.org) or Elishah (elishah.franckiewicz@inclusionchilliwack.org) for more information.

Garden to Table

Garden to Table is an inclusive, hands-on program where adults with diverse abilities work alongside support staff to plan, plant, harvest, and preserve fresh produce. Participants build practical skills in gardening, budgeting, teamwork, and food preservation while contributing to stronger food security in Chilliwack. The initiative also encourages community connection through canning, pickling, and knowledge-sharing with local garden enthusiasts. This year, alongside Outreach participants, we are proudly joining the Salvation Army's annual Plant-a-Row-for-Us campaign - donating our first harvest to the Pantry and supporting their inspiring goal of raising 100,000 pounds of food. If anyone would like to participate in the campaign using their own home gardens or even balcony pots to grow vegetables, Garden to Table can supply more information and maybe even seeds to get started.

Please contact Angela (angela.vermeer@inclusionchilliwack.org) or Elishah (elishah.franckiewicz@inclusionchilliwack.org) for more information.

NTG Training

This March, ICS managers participated in an engaging training through the National Task Group (NTG) of Canada on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia. Hosted by ICS's Behavioral Health Committee and coordinated by its chairperson, Craig Yendall, the event brought together 40 professionals and was held at the Best Western conference centre in Abbotsford. Thirteen ICS managers attended the two-day workshop, with six completing an additional day to become NTG-affiliated provincial trainers. There are currently 150 affiliated trainers across the province. Craig reflected on a significant gap he has observed in services for aging individuals with intellectual disabilities, noting strong interest among ICS staff in building skills to support those diagnosed with dementia. Craig's key takeaways from the training: "typically our role in Community Living is usually focused on fostering change within the person themselves whereas dementia capable supports the focus is on facilitating change with ourselves and the environment. This would include not just behaviour change or behaviour management, but how we measure quality of life/quality of care (behaviour aside). For example, typically we would consider quality care to include things like making sure that everyone is establishing developmental goals to "learn new skills". With the dementia lens, quality of care looks like "maintenance support" So, really the whole standard for 'success" is completely different". This training marks an important step forward in improving understanding and care for the individuals we support.



Alec's News!

Alec really does make friends wherever he goes - even when he's supposed to be doing his laps at the Coliseum! What started as a regular exercise routine quickly turned into a fun moment when Alec crossed paths with a Chilliwack Chiefs player. Just another great example of how Alec's outgoing nature and love of community turn everyday activities into memorable experiences. Sometimes the best moments happen when plans take a small detour.



Alec (left) takes a quick selfie with his new friend

NADSP E-Badges

ICS has offered employees the opportunity to enroll in the NADSP E-Badge Academy since 2021, supporting employees in earning their Direct Support Professional (DSP) credentials. The program encourages reflection on the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of Support Workers in our field and allows employees to apply their hands-on experience to earn the required badges.

ICS also provides a financial incentive upon completion of DSP credentials, to a maximum of \$1,000:

DSP-I: \$200

DSP-II: \$300

DSP-III: \$500

For 2026, a limited number of E-Badge Academy seats remain available. Employees who are interested are encouraged to speak with their Manager or contact Natalie Karam, Director of HR/LR.



ICS News



We're heading into a busy and exciting stretch across ICS! CARF survey dates are confirmed for May 4-6, and preparation work is well underway across teams.

We'd also like to share a few staffing updates:

- Kami Edwards will be managing Gillette.
- Nelly Robinson has stepped into managing Sapphire.
- Please join us in welcoming Gurpreet Dillon, the new Manager for Coote and Lear, and Stephanie Murray, the new Manager for Chadsey and Jasper.

Thank you to everyone for your continued flexibility, leadership, and teamwork as these transitions and preparations move forward.

Trying Out Trope

ICS is piloting a new tool called Trope to help make everyday "how-to" work easier to learn and share.

Trope lets managers turn tasks and workflows into clear, step-by-step guides that can support onboarding, training, and day-to-day work.

Staff from our HR and IT teams recently met with the Trope team (a group of UBC Students

that are building Trope as their major IT project) to explore how it could support our work, with a focus on ease of use, privacy, and real-world fit.

Based on those conversations, ICS has signed on to a small pilot so we can test it out and see if it adds value.

More to come as this pilot gets underway!

ICS STAR Award

The STAR Award was created to recognize employees for excellence in their job as a ICS employee.

Congratulations to Angela Vermeer (middle) from Outreach who received the latest STAR Award from ICS HR Director, Natalie Karam and Outreach



manager, Nicola Ackerman. Angela's nominators wrote:

"Angela has demonstrated exceptional dedication through their work on the Relationship Workshop. Their commitment to Outreach and education has made a noticeable difference in the lives of the individuals I support. I've personally observed how their teachings translate into real-world change. Angela is an

outstanding colleague who consistently supports both the individuals we serve and her fellow team members. She's always willing to

listen, especially on challenging days, and offers thoughtful, feedback when it's needed most."

"Angela is a true person-centred advocate who gives 100% of her time and energy on the job. Angela makes it her mission to know every single individual and staff at Outreach so that she can support them in mindful, intentional ways and set them up for success."

Chilliwack Access For All

Chilliwack Access for All (CAFA) is excited to announce their upcoming fundraising partnership with the Salvation Army during the month of May. The last fundraiser collected more than 900 pounds of non-perishable food items. This



year's fundraiser will focus on hygiene and baby items, things that the Salvation Army is in desperate need of. CAFA's North Star Goal is to collect 2,000 items. Look for more details on barrel locations soon. 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 held three regular meetings on the first Monday of January, February, and March, along with several committee meetings. The Finance Committee met on January 26th to review financial results and again on March 30th to review the draft budget. The Property Planning Committee met on January 19th to consult on major renovation and development projects, and the Membership/Nominating Committee met on February 10th to confirm Board nominees to present at the 2026 AGM.



Lexa Bergen
ICS Board President

Beginning in January, Board members also dedicated time at each regular meeting to review and update Board Policies, addressing several at each session. In addition, they reviewed and approved annual reports, including the 2025 Health & Safety Report, 2025 Human Resources Report, and the 2025 Critical Incident Review, and received quarterly updates on the Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP), with particular attention to progress on the Strategic Plan & Accessibility Plan.

CYS News



This year's Afterschool Child Care Spring Break Camp was a resounding success! We were at max capacity with 20 children of varying abilities attending our week long integrated camp from March 16 to 20.

They enjoyed full day activities including, arts and crafts, cooking, baking, gardening, games and outings.

Outings included trips to the Fire Hall, skating, swimming, and a fish hatchery. Some of their woodwork will be proudly displayed along our fence and in the community garden on Sunshine Drive. Staff and kids wrapped up the week with a cozy Pajama Day on the last day.

We are excited to do it again next year and are equally excited as we gear up for Summer'Scapes camp over the next few months!

“Living Life Loudly”

Hi, how’s it going? My name is Ceara Jensen, a passionate writer who is ecstatic about joining the Out and About Newsletter team.

I want to begin this journey with an honest conversation about one of my diversabilities, so you know that you are not alone in this great big world.

I am 27 years old and live independently in my happy little home near the Vedder River. I love being surrounded by nature. What makes me unique can also create challenges. One of my diversabilities

is a rare disorder called SETD5. I also live with BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder), which, in my case, is a symptom of SETD5. This is not always the case for everyone with SETD5, but it is my reality, and I would like to share my unique perspective on living with BPD.

I’m not going to tell you it has been easy, but I will tell you that the self-discovery journey has been worth it. It has taught me the importance of speaking with love and kindness - especially to myself.

Living with BPD means living a life full of emotions. Is that a good thing? It can be both. It took time to discover what works best for me, and those tools include music, a strong support system, therapy, and of course, writing. I am incredibly grateful to be able to use my passion for writing and share it with you through this newsletter.

If you are someone who feels comfortable sharing your personal story, I would love to be a safe space for you and feature your journey in upcoming Out and About newsletters. I would like to leave you with some words of wisdom that I have learned from my therapist - words I hope will leave a lasting impression:

“It’s not the things you have, it’s the impression you leave on people.”



Ceara Jensen is the newest member of our newsletter team.

Meet Homer!



ICS Wonderful
World of Pets

Homer is a golden retriever who is nearly six years old. He shares the same birthday in May as his mom, Natalie Smith-Klassen, Community Inclusion Manager at ICS. Homer is a happy, loving, and cuddly dog who absolutely loves being around people. Natalie says Homer basically grew up at the REV and Oasis programs, so he gets very excited when he visits staff and individuals. He often tags along with Natalie to ACE, Early Risers, Bridge, LIFE, and other ICS services. Over time, he has made many meaningful connections with the individuals. Homer is very sensitive, caring, and intuitive to people's emotions. Natalie often notices that he helps calm individuals when they're having a tough day. In many ways, his secret identity is that of a support

worker. When Homer gets excited, he chatters his teeth and even smiles when he's happy. He's also a strong self-advocate - if he wants to go out, he'll bring his collar and leash right to Natalie (or anyone nearby) as a not-so-subtle hint. One of Homer's favourite places to visit is the Early Risers program - especially on dog treat baking day. Natalie lovingly describes him as "a toddler... who also likes to nap all the time".

As a reminder, bringing pets into ICS services or workplaces requires prior approval and must follow the ICS Pet Policy, to ensure the safety and comfort of everyone.





By the Numbers

As of April 1, 2026

inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

of
Individuals
Supported:

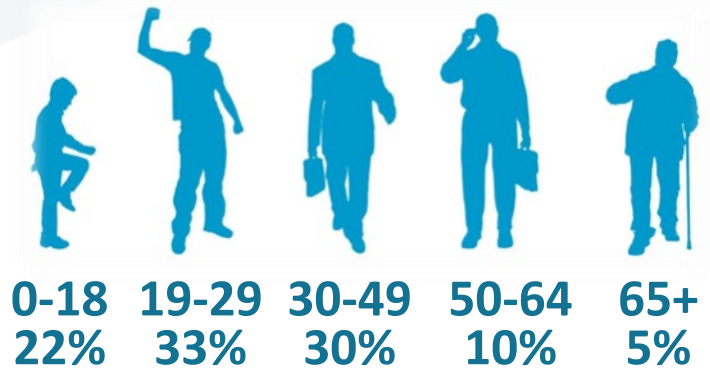
580 ●●●●●●●●

of
Employees
Working:

381 ●●●●

of
Caregivers
Active:

143 ●●



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:



2364 Followers



694 Followers



921 Followers



22,152 Views

ICS Reports

Measuring Up!

A short example from an official ICS Report:

Performance Measurement Report (PMR)

The report prompts us to ask where do we need organization-wide standards, and where do we need service-specific solutions?

- Do we need a clearer organizational definition of “wellness activities,” or different expectations by service type?
- Are current funding utilization targets realistic, given staffing pressures and service complexity?
- What preventive strategies should be prioritized to address Injury trends rather than just monitoring them?

Psychological Safety



inclusion
Chilliwack
Society

Making Psychological Safety Part of Our Culture at ICS

At Inclusion Chilliwack, psychological safety is more than a concept - it's becoming a shared way of working. Insights from our recent World Café conversations, captured at the March Combined meeting with Leadership and Management teams, highlighted a common understanding that psychological safety exists when people feel safe to speak up, ask questions, share ideas, disagree respectfully, and admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences.

The group consistently shared that when psychological safety is present, teams experience stronger relationships, more honest communication, increased collaboration, and better well-being. It also supports shared leadership by encouraging learning, accountability, and innovation - while reducing burnout, conflict, and crisis situations.

At ICS, we are embedding psychological safety into our culture through everyday actions, not one-time initiatives. This includes being transparent about decisions, sharing information openly, inviting input, and treating mistakes as part of a learning curve rather than a failure. Trust is built through consistency, follow-through, empathy, and leaders holding themselves accountable.

When strong relationships shape our behaviours, behaviours create supportive conditions, and those conditions produce positive outcomes, then psychological safety becomes embedded and not situational. This strengthens our teams and ultimately leads to better outcomes for the people we support.

What it means

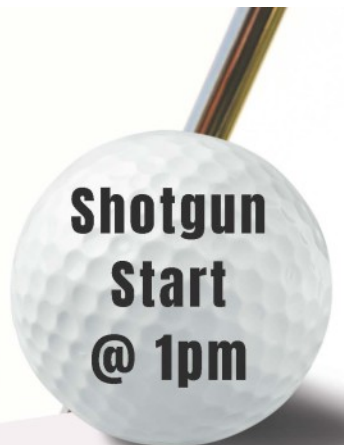
Psychological safety is a team condition where people feel safe to share ideas, disagree respectfully, and admit mistakes—without fear of embarrassment or punishment.

5 WAYS TO HELP

CREATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

				
1. MAKE it an explicit priority.	2. FACILITATE everyone speaking up.	3. ESTABLISH norms for how failure is handled.	4. CREATE space for new ideas (even wild ones).	5. EMBRACE productive conflict.

JOIN IN ON THE FUN!



Golf

FORE Inclusion

2026



**CHARITY
FUNDRAISER
TOURNAMENT**

**SEPTEMBER 2
2026**

**Cultus Lake Golf Club
4000 Columbia Valley Hwy**

**Questions:
604-792-7726**

**Scan to
Register**



Rising Star Award

Manali Pawar (pictured between Outreach Managers, Taylor Laviolette and Nicola Ackerman) has worked at ICS for four years and began her journey in staff-supported homes. About a year ago, she transitioned to Outreach and says it has been the perfect fit for her. Manali shared that her favourite part about working at ICS is the wonderful individuals and staff team she gets to work with every day. She says that no



two days are the same, and each day brings something new and exciting. Through Outreach, Manali also facilitates the Jump Club every Saturday, where around 20 individuals attend. She plans fun activities for everyone to participate in and enjoy, including movie nights and outdoor activities at the park. Manali states she was surprised to receive the Rising Star Award last year. Congratulations, Manali! Your work at ICS truly makes a difference in the lives of the individuals we serve.

Inclusion Chilliwack Society

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

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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."



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Social Media:



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

Your Voice!

Many thanks to Ceara Jensen, Dayle Thiessen, Julie Unger, Dan Celella, Jodie Dessau, Amanda Lord, Angela Vermeer, Elishah Franckiewicz and Natalie Karam for their contributions to this edition.

And, of course, to Ceara 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.