



Celebrating 40 Years and **Onward!**

Independent Living is a Way of Thinking and Living!

IMPACT REPORT 2026

**INDEPENDENT
LIVING CANADA**

40 Years and Onward!

**VIE AUTONOME
CANADA**

40 ans et toujours là!



CELEBRATING
🍁 **40 YEARS**

OF
CHOICE. DIGNITY. INDEPENDENCE.
COMMUNITY. TOGETHER.

CÉLÉBRONS
🍁 **40 ANS**

DE
CHOIX. DIGNITÉ. INDÉPENDANCE.
COMMUNAUTÉ. ENSEMBLE.



MISSION

Independent Living Canada is a national non-profit association of Independent Living Centres run by and for people with disabilities who promote the Independent Living Philosophy.

VISION

Independent Living Canada envisions an inclusive and accessible society where people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully.



Independent Living Canada has a deep respect for the traditional lands of our Indigenous brothers and sisters; many of whom identify as persons with disabilities. We wish to acknowledge this land on which IL Canada operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



**Apply an
Independent
Living Lens
Everywhere!**

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Freda Uwa
National Executive Director

As Independent Living Canada reflects on another year of progress—and prepares to celebrate 40 years of our national movement—I am reminded that our greatest strength has always been our people.

Across Canada, our Member Centres continue to turn the principles of Independent Living into meaningful action. Through peer support, leadership, advocacy, research, partnership, and community connection, they create opportunities for persons with disabilities to exercise choice, direct their own lives, and participate fully in their communities.

This year, we strengthened national partnerships, amplified diverse voices, expanded opportunities for youth leadership, and advanced work grounded in lived experience. Every achievement highlighted in this Impact Report reflects a shared commitment to building a more accessible and inclusive Canada.

As we honour the people and progress that brought us here, we must also look ahead. The next chapter of Independent Living will be shaped by new voices, new ideas, and the continued leadership of persons with disabilities. Our responsibility is not simply to preserve this movement, but to ensure it continues to grow, evolve, and remain responsive to the communities it serves.

Message from the National Executive Director

Thank you to our Member Centres, Board of Directors, Youth Advisory Council, staff, partners, funders, and supporters. Most importantly, thank you to the people with disabilities whose leadership, determination, and vision continue to move us forward.

Together, we are building on 40 years of progress—and shaping what comes next.

Respectfully Submitted,
Freda Uwa





Diane Kreuger
National Chairperson

Message from the National Board of Directors

Serving as your National Board Chair for the 2025–2026 term has been an absolute privilege. Real, lasting impact isn't built overnight on big promises alone—it happens through daily care, consistent teamwork, and clear direction.

When this year began, our goals were simple: build a stronger foundation for IL Canada, work closer with the National Office, and deliver real value to our member centres across Canada.

Over the past year, your Board and National Office worked side by side to protect our resources and strengthen our overall framework.

Here is a look back at what we accomplished together and where we are heading next.

1. Financial Health & Strong Management

To keep IL Canada safe and stable, we focused heavily on keeping our core operations simple, clean, and accountable:

- **Clean Audits:** Completed all yearly financial audits with flying colors, updated our reserve funds, and met every tax and legal requirement.
- **Updated Policies:** Refreshed our committee guidelines—including Audit & Risk, Governance, and Finance—to match modern national standards.
- **Planning Ahead:** Evaluated our current leadership strengths to ensure we bring on the right talent and background for future board roles.

2. Better Teamwork with the National Office

Good governance means knowing the difference between setting the direction (the Board) and running daily operations (the National Office).

- **Clear Authority:** Updated our policies to let the National Office make fast daily decisions while the Board keeps a steady eye on the big picture.
- **Efficient Meetings:** Streamlined our board committees so we make better decisions faster without wasting time.

3. Preparing for Unforeseen Risks

A key part of our job is protecting IL Canada against unexpected economic or sector changes.

- **Financial Stress-Testing:** Tested our national budgets against potential revenue changes so we can reliably maintain our core funding and operational support for our member centres, no matter the economic climate.

Continued on next page



4. Protecting Our Philosophy & Building Trust

Beyond policies and financial oversight, the Board's highest responsibility is serving as the steward of our shared mission, values, and organizational philosophy.

- **High Ethical Standards:** We held ourselves to strict standards around ethics, conflict of interest, and open communication to ensure our decision-making always reflects our core values.
- **Member Centre Trust & Transparency:** We deepened transparent, two-way engagement with our member centres and partners nationwide, ensuring our national leadership remains directly responsive, accountable, and aligned with the local communities we serve.

Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2026 and Beyond

Thanks to this work, IL Canada enters the next year on solid ground with healthy finances, clear policies, and a united team. Moving into the next year, we will:

1. **Track Our Goals:** Keep multi-year projects on schedule and measure real results.
2. **Protect Our Resources:** Maintain safe financial reserves to safeguard long-term support for our network.
3. **Grow Strong Leaders:** Continue bringing in diverse board members to guide us forward.

Thank you to my fellow Directors for their hard work, to the National Office for their exceptional effort, and to all of our member centres for your continued dedication, support, and trust.

Gratefully Submitted,
Diane Kreuger



National Impact Perspective

Get Inked for IL: Celebrating National AccessAbility Week

During National AccessAbility Week, IL Canada launched **Get Inked for IL**—a bold, joyful campaign inviting people across the country to wear their pride in the Independent Living movement.

National AccessAbility Week is a time to celebrate the leadership, contributions, and lived experiences of people with disabilities, while recognizing that accessibility and inclusion must be built into every part of Canadian life. Get Inked for IL brought that message to life in a creative and visible way.

With temporary tattoos featuring IL Canada's 40th anniversary identity, member centres, supporters, staff, youth, and community partners joined in to share photos, spark conversations, and celebrate the values that unite our movement: choice, dignity, peer support, self-determination, and full participation in community life.



What began as a simple, creative idea quickly became something more meaningful. Every photo shared represented a person choosing to be visible, a centre strengthening local connection, and a community recognizing the leadership and contributions of people with disabilities.

Get Inked for IL captured the spirit of National AccessAbility Week: proud, visible, community-led, and focused on what is possible when people with disabilities are recognized as leaders in shaping an accessible Canada.

As IL Canada marks 40 Years and Onward, the campaign reflects both where we have come from and the future we are continuing to build together—one where people with disabilities are seen, heard, valued, and free to live life on their own terms.

Get Inked for IL showed that a small symbol can carry a powerful message. As the campaign grows, it will continue to create opportunities for people across Canada to celebrate disability pride, spark conversations about accessibility, and stand visibly behind the Independent Living movement. Together, we are building momentum for a future where choice, dignity, and belonging are not aspirations—they are everyday realities.



Getting
INKED
for IL!

Se faire
TATOUER
pour VA !



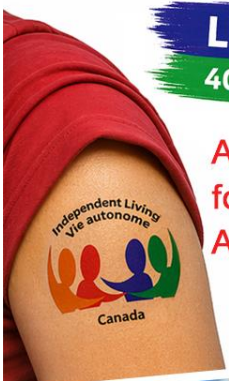
LIVING OUR WAY
40 YEARS AND ONWARD

A Celebration of Visibility
for National Accessibility
Awareness Week



VIVRE À NOTRE FAÇON
40 ANS ET TOUJOURS EN AVANT

Célébrons la visibilité dans
le cadre de la Semaine
nationale de l'accessibilité



LIVING OUR WAY.
40 YEARS AND ONWARD.

VIVRE À NOTRE FAÇON.
40 ANS ET TOUJOURS EN AVANT.

Member Spotlight

Celebrating Our IL Centres

Independent Living Canada is comprised of 23 vibrant, strong Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRC) all across Canada. These Centres are central to the Independent Living Movement in Canada and are directly representative of every Canadian with a disability. At their most fundamental level, an ILRC is a place where individuals with a disability can learn to control their own life. Centres are community hubs: meeting places for information sharing; skill development; art creation; and fun alike. Centre staff creates warm, safe, welcoming places where all are welcome and where Independent Living is everything.



Where Impact Begins:

Each Centre responds to the unique needs of its community while advancing a shared belief: people with disabilities are the experts in their own lives. Together, our Member Centres form the foundation of a national movement—turning lived experience into leadership, removing barriers, and creating lasting change in communities across Canada.



The Power of Partnerships

Celebrating Our Allies and Collaborators

Everything we undertake has a reliance on meaningful and lasting partnerships at many levels. Our Allies and Collaborators come in many forms: funders, like-minded organizations and even individuals with a similar passion for building an inclusive and accessible society for all Canadians with disabilities! Here we highlight many of our current partners. We wholeheartedly thank and appreciate every person and entity that fosters friendships with us as we continue forward on realizing our vision and mission.



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada



Accessibility Standards
Canada

Normes d'accessibilité
Canada



ACCESSIBLE MEDIA INC.



DAWN Canada



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
La Société Pour **Les Troubles de L'Humeur** du Canada



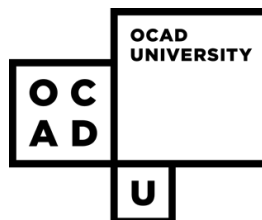
Canadian
Accessibility
Network



Réseau
Canadien
d'Accessibilité



L'ARCHE
canada



Impact!

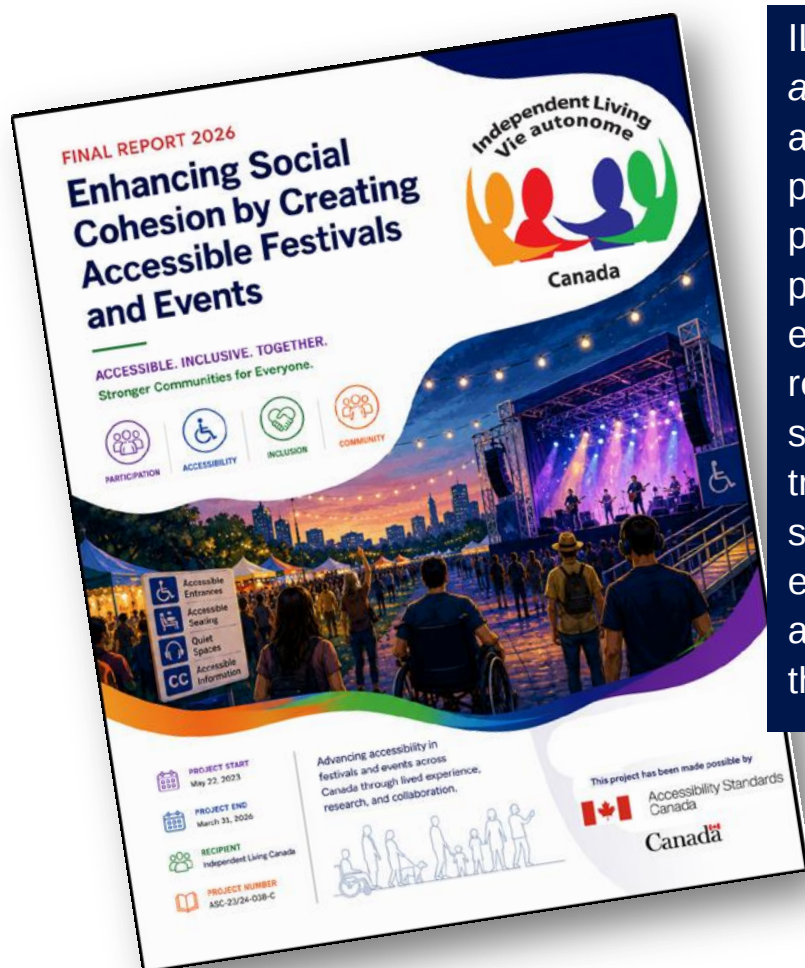
Our Work on the National Stage

Creating Accessible Festivals and Events

IL Canada's *Creating Accessible Festivals and Events* project helped advance a more inclusive vision of community celebration—one where people with disabilities can participate fully, independently, and with dignity.

Through lived-experience leadership, research, and collaboration, the project identified the barriers that too often exclude people from festivals and public events. It also developed practical, informed recommendations to help organizers move beyond basic compliance and build accessibility into every stage of planning.

The project's impact extends beyond individual events. It has strengthened awareness of accessibility as an essential part of hospitality, culture, and community life, while giving event organizers clearer tools to create welcoming experiences for everyone. Most importantly, it reaffirmed a core principle of the Independent Living movement: people with disabilities must be at the centre of designing the spaces and experiences that affect their lives.



IL Canada's *Creating Accessible Festivals and Events* Final Report shares findings from a three-year, lived-experience-led research project involving more than 1,500 participants. It identifies the barriers that can prevent people with disabilities from fully enjoying public events and offers practical recommendations for accessibility at every stage—from planning and promotion to transportation, site design, communication, sensory supports, customer service, and emergency planning. The reports are available in multiple accessible formats on the IL Canada website.

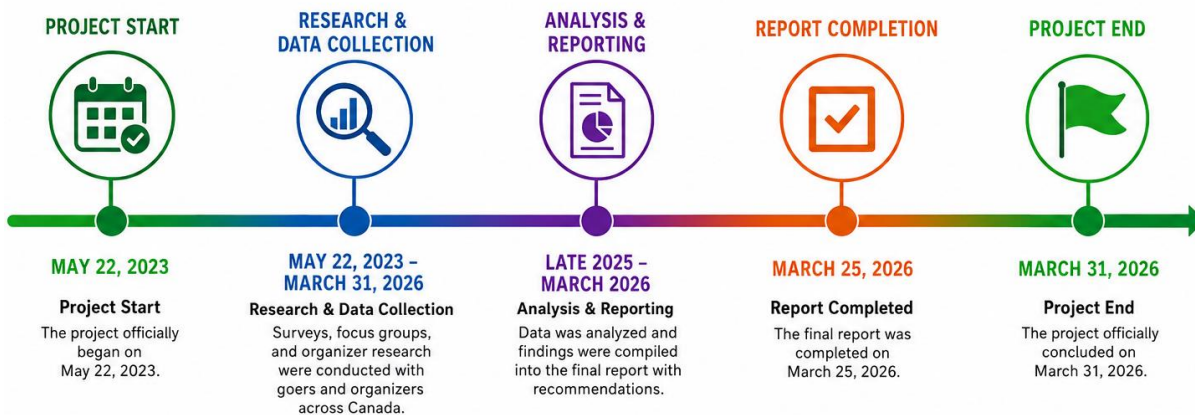


The Project at a Glance...



PROJECT TIMELINE

Enhancing Social Cohesion by Creating Accessible Festivals and Events



PROJECT DURATION:

MAY 22, 2023 – MARCH 31, 2026



TOTAL DURATION:

2 YEARS, 10 MONTHS, 9 DAYS

This project has been made possible by
Ce projet a été rendu possible grâce à



Accessibility Standards
Canada

Normes d'accessibilité
Canada

Canada

Launched in May 2023, the project brought together lived experience, research, and community engagement over three years. Its findings and recommendations were released in the Final Report in March 2026.

1

Plan for Accessibility Early

The report emphasizes that accessibility cannot be an afterthought. From ticketing and event information to site design and programming, inclusion must be considered early so people with disabilities can participate fully and confidently.

2

Remove Barriers to Participation

More than half of respondents—58%—reported leaving an event early, not enjoying it, or avoiding it altogether because of accessibility barriers. The project identifies practical ways to improve transportation, navigation, physical access, and essential services.

3

Create a Sense of Belonging

Accessibility is about more than getting through the door. The report highlights the importance of clear communication, sensory supports, trained staff, emergency planning, and customer service that creates a genuine sense of belonging.

4

Centre Lived Experience

Through input from more than 1,500 participants, the project placed the experiences of people with disabilities at the centre of its findings. Their insights have informed practical recommendations for festivals, municipalities, governments, and community organizations across Canada.

Board of Directors- 2025-2026



Our governance board is comprised of a majority of people who themselves identify as a person with a disability – Self-governance is paramount to the IL Philosophy; ensuring choice, flexibility and control!



Diane Kreuger
Chairperson



Sebastien Duguay-Nardini
Director



Robin East
1st Vice-Chair



Teresa Bullegas
Director



Kathy Hawkins
2nd Vice Chair



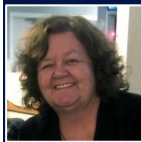
Marie Larocque
Director



Beth Caskey
Secretary



Janet Redman
Director



Sue Larocque
Treasurer



Pierre Hamelin
Director



Tyler Cooley
Director



Mandy Penney
Director

Nothing About Us Without Us

For 40 years, this principle has been at the heart of the Independent Living movement: decisions that affect people with disabilities must include the direct leadership, voice, and lived experience of people with disabilities.

Genuine inclusion creates stronger, more relevant, and more empowering outcomes for individuals and communities.

As IL Canada looks to the future, our Board of Directors remains committed to upholding this principle in every decision and action we take.





Leadership and Staff Support



Freda Uwa
National Executive Director
Operational Leadership

Freda Uwa is a dynamic leader in accessibility, mental health, and project management whose work is grounded in both lived experience and professional expertise. As National Executive Director of Independent Living Canada, she brings a clear and compelling voice to advancing the rights, inclusion, dignity, and self-determination of Canadians with disabilities.

Known for her thoughtful approach and determined advocacy, Freda is committed to addressing the issues that matter most to people with disabilities and to strengthening inclusive communities across Canada. She is also passionate about mentorship, social impact, and supporting emerging leaders.

Here at IL Canada, we have several support staff on the team whose combined efforts curate the vision and direction of our National Executive Director.



Kohl Gray – Executive Administrator

Kohl keeps close attention to the day-to-day scheduling and follow-ups in our busy national office. Kohl is beyond expert at keeping strict organization and is so detail oriented that it can be astonishing.



Tom Pugliese – Communications and Marketing Specialist

Tom brings volume to the IL Canada Voice at all levels. Tom is masterful at creating direct, consistent messaging that is always focused by a strong IL Lens, accessibility and inclusion.



Steve Lind – Financial Officer

Steve ensures that the financial accounts of IL Canada are always accurate and current. Steve's expert bookkeeping is invaluable to the day-to-day success of IL Canada.



Financial Overview

Message from the Treasurer

Another year has come and gone! It certainly has been an interesting one!

We have continued to strive, work hard, and diligently work towards our goal of a more inclusive and independent living movement for all persons living with a disability.

To the members of Independent Living Canada, I present the Audited Financial Statement for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026. The Financial Statement was prepared by Frouin Group Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants.

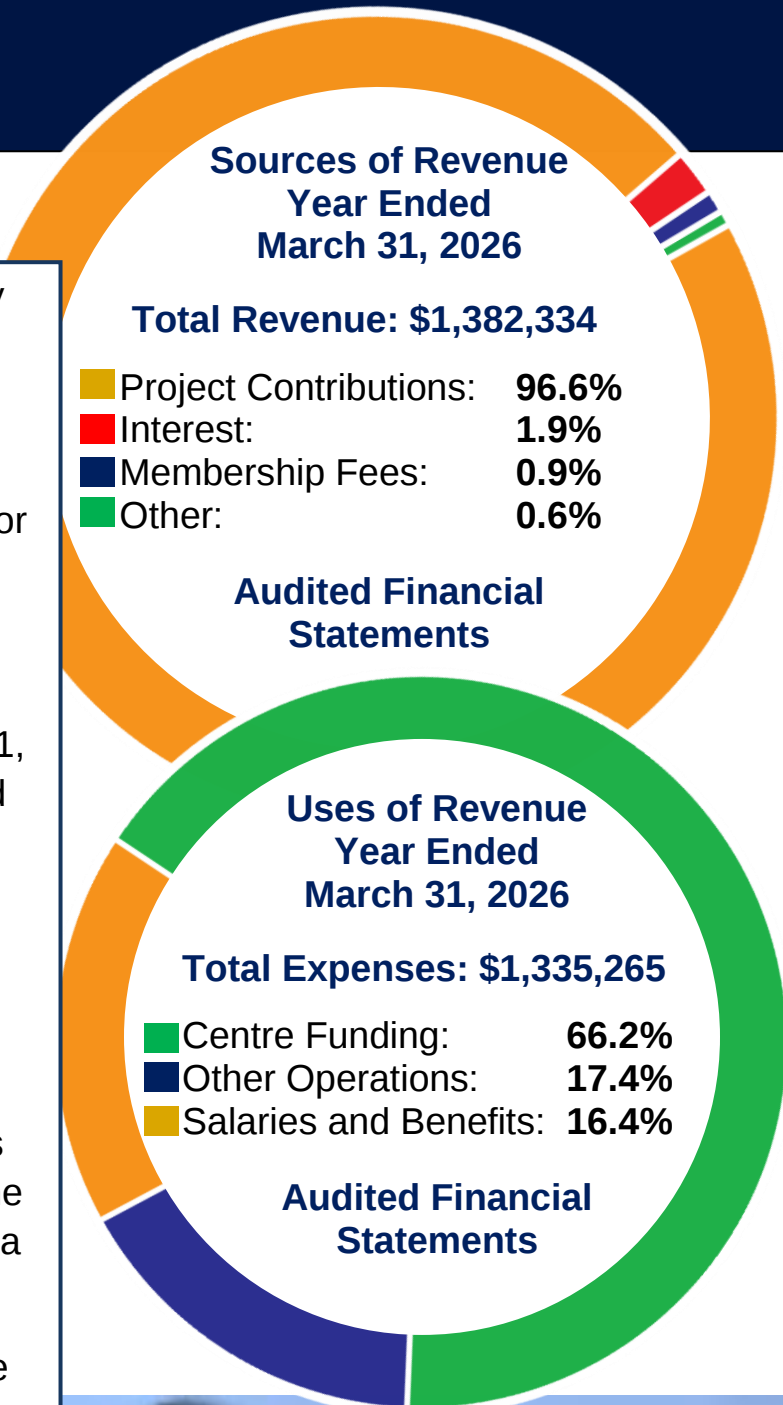
Total revenue for the year was \$1,382,334, and our total expenditures were \$1,335,265, which shows a surplus of \$47,069.

At the start of the year, our fund balance was in a surplus of \$264,609, and at the end of the year, March 31, 2026, our fund balance is in a surplus of \$311,678.

The work of IL Canada would not be possible without the contributions of our funders, to whom I would like to express a sincere thank you for your continued support and belief in our organization. We look forward to our continued successful partnership with you.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve as your Treasurer.

Sue Larocque
Treasurer



IL Canada Financial Summary

Condensed Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2026

Assets	2026	2025
Current Assets		
Cash	\$368,998	\$325,157
Accounts Receivable	\$10,666	\$169
HST Receivable	\$13,809	\$11,879
Prepaid Expenses	\$6,884	\$5,156
	\$400,357	\$342,361
Capital Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Assets	\$400,357	\$342,361
Liabilities and Net Assets	2026	2025
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued	\$44,086	\$27,794
Deferred Revenue	\$44,593	\$49,958
	\$88,679	\$77,752
Net Assets		
Invested in Capital Assets	\$0	\$0
Unrestricted Funds	\$311,678	\$264,609
Total Net Assets	\$311,678	\$264,609
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$400,357	\$342,361

We strive for ethical and transparent stewardship of all contributions to IL Canada!



Detailed Audited Financial Statements for IL Canada are Available upon Request

Condensed Statement of Revenue and Expenses

For the Year Ending March 31, 2026

Revenue	2026	2025
Project Contributions	\$1,335,581	\$1,441,856
Membership Fees	\$12,000	\$12,000
Other	\$34,753	\$29,052
Total Revenue	\$1,382,334	\$1,482,908
Expenses		
Total Expenses	\$1,335,265	\$1,433,108
Excess of Revenue Over Expenses	\$47,069	\$49,800

40 Faces of IL: A National Recognition Campaign!

As IL Canada marks its 40th anniversary, the *40 Faces of IL* campaign shines a light on the people whose lived experience, leadership, and commitment have shaped the Independent Living movement across Canada.

Each face represents a unique journey, but together they tell a shared story of resilience, advocacy, community, and the belief that people with disabilities have the right to make their own choices and live life on their own terms.

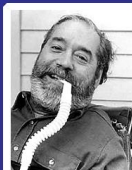
The campaign was created to honour the many individuals who have helped build IL Canada over the past four decades—from founders, staff, and Member Centre leaders to advocates, peers, youth, and community members. While 40 people were featured, the campaign also recognizes that there are countless more faces behind this movement: people who have offered support, challenged barriers, created change, and carried the work forward in their own communities.

As we celebrate 40 Years and Onward, *40 Faces of IL* is both a tribute to our history and a reminder of where our strength comes from. The future of Independent Living will continue to be shaped by people with disabilities—leading, connecting, and creating change together.

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Gerber DeJong



Ed Roberts



Henry Enns



Alan Simpson



Traci Walters

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Vic Willi



Paula Saunders



Cathy LaFrance



Paul-Claude Bérubé



Meenu Sikand

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Sandra Carpenter



Debra Kennard



Rick Goodfellow



Cecilia Carroll



Steve Estey

Celebrating the People Who Shape Our Movement

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Vince Miele



Mike Murphy



Jim Harnden



Kelly Nadeau



Dave Shannon

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Gilbert Brunette



Jihan Abbas



Christine Malone



Susan Forster



Michael Horne

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Lois Miller



Ella Huang



Maureen O'Neill



Katie Pialunga



Tracy Knutson

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Louise Bergeron



Denis Boileau



Patrick Curran



Anne MacRae



Freda Uwa

Faces of Independent Living in Canada Visages de la vie autonome au Canada



Ashlie Drake



Wendy Porch



Kathy Hawkins



Wendy Cox



Diane Kreuger

40 Faces of IL strengthened connection across the IL Canada network by giving audiences an opportunity to see themselves, their peers, and the many paths that lead to Independent Living.

The campaign celebrated lived experience, amplified disability leadership, and reminded communities across Canada that the movement's greatest strength has always been its people.

Living Our Way!

Towards Tomorrow

As IL Canada celebrates 40 Years and Onward, we reflect with pride on the movement we have built together—and look ahead with purpose to the future we continue to shape.

Tomorrow means more than the day after today. It is the future we are building now: one where people with disabilities have greater choice, dignity, inclusion, and opportunity to live life on their own terms.

In a changing and competitive funding environment, our sustainability depends on clearly demonstrating the value and impact of our work. IL Canada and our Member Centres create meaningful social and economic change every day. By capturing our achievements, sharing our stories, and measuring our progress, we can celebrate growth while identifying where more work is needed.

As we move forward, we will continue to listen, learn, and respond to the priorities of the communities we serve. We will strengthen our capacity, build on the leadership of people with disabilities, and ensure our work remains relevant, responsive, and rooted in the principles of Independent Living.

Your continued support is vital. Together, we will carry the impact of the past 40 years forward—strengthening the Independent Living movement and shaping a more accessible, inclusive Canada for generations to come.

Youth Leadership in Action

Over the past year, IL Canada's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has brought fresh energy, insight, and lived experience to the Independent Living movement.

Since its launch, the YAC has created meaningful opportunities for young people with disabilities to connect, share priorities, and help shape conversations about the future of accessibility, inclusion, and disability leadership in Canada. Through ongoing engagement, the Council has helped ensure that youth perspectives are not simply heard, but reflected in the work of IL Canada.

The YAC has also supported new ways for young people to access information and connect with resources, including the continued development of the IL Canada Youth website and its MIRA chatbot.



By engaging youth with disabilities as leaders today—not only leaders of tomorrow—the YAC is helping IL Canada remain responsive, relevant, and rooted in the voices of the communities we serve.



Tomorrow's IL Canada – Today!

Youth Advisory Council



**For youth with disabilities by
youth with disabilities!**

The IL Youth Advisory Council has big plans to connect and collaborate with all youth across Canada. There is no limit on how this will positively impact the emerging Canadian disability landscape – changing youth's with disabilities lives for the positive!



Vision

We envision a Canada where youth with disabilities are empowered, their voices are heard, and they have equitable access to opportunities that promote independence, growth, and inclusion.



Mission

To provide a voice for Canada's youth with disabilities, fostering inclusive opportunities for Independent Living and empowering communities.



Values

- Inclusivity
- Diversity
- Growth
- Respect
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Diligence
- Collaboration



For the most up-to-date information regarding our Youth Advisory Council or if you'd like to get involved:
please visit their website at
www.ilcyouth.ca



National Office
PO BOX 74085, Ottawa
RPO Beechwood, ON
K1M 2H9

Phone: (613) 402-9101
Email: info@ilc-vac.ca

Business Number:
129334082RR0001

www.ilc-vac.ca

**INDEPENDENT
LIVING CANADA**

40 Years and Onward!

**VIE AUTONOME
CANADA**

40 ans et toujours là!

40
1986 - 2026

CELEBRATING
40 YEARS

CÉLÉBRONS
40 ANS

