



2021-2022

ANNUAL REPORT



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CILT staff participate in Red Shirt Day during National AccessAbility Week to celebrate and show support for people with disabilities.



President and Chair

Jacques LeBlanc

THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE opportunity to serve as your President for the last three years, as they have truly been memorable.

Over the past nearly three years we have seen how COVID has exacerbated existing inequalities in our society and shown us some ugly truths about how the most vulnerable are treated within our society. As CILT is entering its 38th year, we have so much to be proud of, since CILT practices in a manner that respects the diversity, needs, values, and aspirations of the community. We have a critical role in elevating marginalized voices and working to create more inclusive communities across Ontario.

Since early 2018, I personally have had the privilege to work with CILT's talented Board and staff, who have been committed to our issues and programs while diligently applying Independent Living principles to all decisions and programs.

This past year, our Board members included myself as Chair, Buvani Sivagnanasunderam as Vice Chair, Deb Daniel as Secretary, Ken Conners as Treasurer, Vincenza Ronaldi, Darren Cooper, Jennifer Hines, Neil Mercer, Zinnia Batliwalla, Cathy Samuelson, Karen Denton and Sarah Owocki. We thank them for their dedication and commitment to the governing body of this organization and are truly grateful to these members who have volunteered their time to help guide CILT.

Special recognition also goes to our Executive Director, Wendy Porch. Wendy has been with us for four years now, and I have seen first-hand how she enthusiastically embraces

**“We
will be
measured by
our actions
not our
intentions.”**

—JACQUES LEBLANC

the challenge and brings in new ideas and perspectives to help us move forward. For example, this past year I had the pleasure to work with Wendy, hoping to modify the Temporary Wage Enhancement (TWE) for caregivers and PSWs from a temporary enhancement to a permanent one. After much communication through letters and Zoom meetings, we finally received notice in mid-July that the wage enhancement is now permanent. This showed that Wendy, with vast experience in so many fields, is extremely effective at using her skills through difficult times. Because of Wendy's long-term commitment to the viability of the community, whether through her work as CILT's Executive Director, or as a member of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), or even as Chair of the City's COVID Accessibility Task Force, the Board is extremely grateful for Wendy's thoughtful insights and vision for the future of CILT and our community.

As for our Financial Report, with the tremendous help of our staff and Board, we were able to continue our work and conclude the fiscal year with a balanced budget. I thank my predecessors for ensuring CILT was in a strong financial situation going into this period while allowing us to continue to take on new important initiatives. One can never repeat enough the appreciation my colleagues and I have for the extraordinary work of our staff who have worked to ensure that we continue to grow, mature, and respond to a changing economic and political climate. It is evident that we couldn't do what we do without them. So please join me in thanking them for all their hard work!

I would like to take a moment to once again

identify a sector that continues to find the courage to work through these difficult times and without whom life would have been tougher for many of us. For those who help to maintain our IL principles, the personal support workers and attendants who unselfishly work with the nearly one thousand Self-Managers under the Direct Funding program, we thank you.

And finally, we would like to acknowledge and thank our funders, without whose generous support we would not be able to address any community or member's needs. Our primary funders are Independent Living Canada, the City of Toronto, the United Way of Greater Toronto, and the Ministry of Health.

While our focus has been on supporting our membership, I personally look upon CILT as the most distinct for Independent Living. Our aim is to develop and implement dignified social services that empower individuals to take control of their lives, for we encourage people with disabilities to exercise their right to examine options and make choices. We hear often that our programs have life-changing impacts on the lives of our consumers. And for this I am extremely proud and grateful.

Let's be mindful that we have many challenges and great opportunities before us, we have a lot to do, and it's important to remember, "we will be measured by our actions, not our intentions." And with your help, we will meet them and make next year the best year in our 37-year history. So, on behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, it is our privilege to serve our membership throughout Ontario.

Thank you.



Executive Director

Wendy Porch

COVID-19 has transformed the world in many ways.

In the early days of the COVID pandemic, there were many unknowns. The world didn't know how the virus was spread (remember washing your groceries with disinfectant wipes?), who it would impact, how or if vaccines could work to protect us, or even if masking was helpful. By April 2021, we knew the answers to some of these questions. Masks were known to help prevent the spread of COVID, vaccines did not eliminate COVID but provided an important buffer against severe and life-threatening illness, and as for who was most impacted, we could see from the data being collected in Toronto and around the world that communities historically impacted by health inequities, like racialized, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ communities, were particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

We didn't know, and still don't, the depth of the impact the pandemic has had specifically on disabled people in Toronto, Ontario, or even Canada. Even though many new data collection strategies were introduced during the pandemic to understand how vulnerable communities were affected, disabled people still were not seen as a community anyone was interested in knowing more about. Elsewhere, in the United Kingdom and the United States, studies were published about the fate of disabled people, and the findings were bleak. The UK's Office for National Statistics reported that in the early wave of the pandemic 6 out of every 10 deaths were disabled people.¹ In the US, roughly 1/3 of the

“We at CILT will continue to work to support consumers in this ever-changing, complex, “post-pandemic” environment

—WENDY PORCH

1. “6 out of 10 people who have died from COVID-19 are disabled” at: <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/6-out-of-10-people-who-have-died-from-covid-19-are-disabled>

deaths related to COVID up to March 2021 were disabled people.² Despite CILT being among many grassroots partners asking that more attention be paid to our community in data collection and the resultant vaccine prioritization strategies, our pleas were largely ignored.

Flash forward to 2022. We still don't have a clear picture of the burden COVID has placed on the shoulders of disabled people in Canada. And now, despite knowing that masking and vaccine mandates can protect disabled people, neither of these public health interventions is required any longer. The burden to protect themselves has been shifted to disabled consumers alone.

In the early days of the pandemic, we heard from consumers who were afraid of the unknown; now we hear from those who are afraid of being forgotten and left behind. The pandemic exacerbated the range of inequities already experienced by disabled people. Many feel that this stage of the pandemic has left our community to fend for itself. In particular, consumers are reaching out more and more with issues related to food insecurity and lack of affordable and accessible housing. These long-standing barriers to Independent Living have been greatly worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CILT has continued to work to support disabled consumers to exercise their right to make choices about their lives. And given the current context outlined above, this has never been more important than it is now.

2. "Federal report finds foreseeable, disproportionate COVID-19 fatalities, heavy toll for people with disabilities" at: <https://ncd.gov/newsroom/2021/federal-report-release-covid-19>

The following is a report on CILT's programs to support consumers and to continue the fight for Independent Living.

Direct Funding

Our incredible Direct Funding team, led by Leisa DeBono, Manager of Direct Funding, has continued to support Self-Managers across Ontario to hire and manage their own attendants. Many hours were spent by DF staff integrating and adjusting to new ways of working and new funding requirements necessitated by the need for Self-Managers to access COVID-related items. As well, the DF team engaged with significant work to apply the Ministry of Health's Temporary Wage Enhancement to all 1,000 plus budgets offered by the program. The DF team also worked very hard to assist Self-Managers and attendants with understanding where and how they could access COVID vaccines. Self-Managers and attendants on the DF Program were able to access vaccines quite early on, and DF ensured that Self-Managers and attendants had the documentation they needed to demonstrate their fit among prioritized groups. To assist Self-Managers in addressing recruiting challenges, DF hosted Zoom webinars for all Self-Managers across the province. As well, two Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) webinars were hosted that focused on the needs of consumers. In November 2021, the DF Program also received news of an additional \$1.6 million expansion to the program. Thank you to the whole DF team for continuing to support Self-Managers through these challenging times.

ASAC

Our small but mighty Attendant Service Application Centre (ASAC) team, led by Danielle Daoust, continues to deftly coordinate attendant service applications for the greater Toronto and York areas. As we continue to see the impact COVID has had on our healthcare system, the coordination of ASAC and attendant service sector partners has necessitated ongoing flexibility and perseverance. Many attendant service sector partners have lost staff to long-term care and/or private agencies capable of providing higher wages and signing bonuses that are out of reach for IL sector agencies. Despite these challenges, ASAC partners have seen some new supportive housing opportunities develop and we continue to work with ASAC partners to match applicants to service availabilities to ensure consumers can live independently in the community. This year, ASAC also managed to address the significant backlog in waitlist assessments that had grown as a result of the pandemic. Thank you to our ASAC team for all you do!

Core

Led by David Meyers, CILT's vital Core team continued programs virtually this year and engaged consumers on issues related to COVID 19 and its disproportionate impact on our community. Core team program highlights this year included:

- Parenting with a Disability Network (PDN) Vibrant Songs and Discussion for Parents with Disabilities groups in partnership with Vibrant Healthcare Alliance.
- Presenting about PDN to George Brown College's Social Service Worker program.
- Presentation for SAIL ODSP Caseworkers about IL and Person-Centered Service.
- Ongoing Peer Connect sessions on topics including "Impact of Omicron," "Disability

Representation," "Changing Public Health Guidelines," and "Strategies for Managing Stress."

- Ongoing sessions with Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital including, "What are Attendant Services?" session in partnership with Holland Bloorview's "Youth Transitions Pop-Ups" program. This included lived experience stories and information about CILT programs and how to access them, as well as participation in Holland Bloorview's Resource Fair.
- Organized Gender Equity Strategy Consultations for the City of Toronto in partnership with Social Planning Toronto.
- Webinars for consumers including, "Staying Safe with COVID-19: Changing Public Health Guidelines in Ontario."
- Two Webinars on Accessibility Best Practice for the City of Toronto Vaccine Ambassadors and City staff on Aug 17 and Aug 31st.
- Training for the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Vaccine Engagement Clusters entitled, "COVID 19 Vaccine Accessibility – A Cross-Disability Lens on Vaccine Outreach and Community Uptake."

The Core team this year added two additional significant projects. CILT is the coordinator of the Accessibility Cluster for the City of Toronto's Vaccine Equity Teams, striving to work with other grassroots disability organizations to ensure that disabled people are targeted in vaccine outreach work. The Accessibility Cluster has positively impacted the accessibility of vaccines for disabled Torontonians.

CILT has also received funding to undertake our new IDE+A project, a project to grow the capacity of the not-for-profit sector organizations to embed disability equity/inclusion in their diversity and equity strategies, plans, and community engagement.

CILT, in partnership with disabled people and grassroots disability organizations, will develop an innovative training program that will target system-wide change by building the capacity of non-profit organizations to understand and be responsive to the needs of disabled people and to ensure that their programs and practices are inclusive from the ground up. The curriculum will be developed to centre disabled people's voices and will be taught by disabled consumers, who will receive experience in providing training and will be paid for their work and expertise.

Well done to the whole CILT Core team for maintaining a lively and dynamic set of Core programs for virtually providing several pandemic-related events and programs that reduced COVID-19 vulnerability for consumers.

Operations

CILT's efficient and innovative Ops team, led by Melissa Watanabe, continues to support CILT in meeting our work needs even while the world of work continues to be rewritten because of the pandemic. A major focus of the Operations team in 2021-22 was to enhance and support the remote work experience of CILT staff. Key technology advancements included migrating to a cloud-based phone system, replacing aging desktop computers with mobile laptops, upgrading servers, and improving CILT's back up and security posture. To aid new and current staff, we created an Employee Handbook and purposefully gathered for virtual all-staff, wellness, and training events. 2021-22 was also the beginning of another two-year PSW Training Fund cycle and we were pleased that our outreach efforts led to funding 57% more eligible organizations than the previous cycle.

The Operations team continues to dynamically support staff in their program endeavours.

Our thanks

I would like to say thank you to CILT's congenial and generous Board of Directors for all of your dedication to CILT and the work we do together to maintain and expand Independent Living. It is always a pleasure to consult with you and think through the complexities of CILT moving forward together. Special thanks to Board Chair Jacques LeBlanc for our many conversations and touchpoint sessions, for your leadership, for listening with an open mind and heart, and for always seeing the importance of IL to consumers.

CILT is a member organization. To our voting members – thank you for your support! We cannot do this without you. Given the range of organizations you could spend your time and energy supporting, we are grateful that you continue to support CILT's work in important and meaningful ways.

CILT receives funding from the City of Toronto, the United Way Greater Toronto, and the Ontario Ministry of Health. CILT also receives a grant from Independent Living Canada. We thank our funders for their ongoing support for IL and the rights of consumers to lead their own lives through supporting CILT's work. Thank you also to those who have donated funds to CILT to carry on our work. We are deeply thankful.

For some, the COVID-19 pandemic feels over. This is not the case for many disabled consumers. We at CILT will continue to work to support consumers in this ever-changing, complex, "post-pandemic" environment, as this work is needed now, perhaps more than ever before.



Treasurer's Report

Ken Connors

A CONDENSED VERSION OF CILT'S audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, is included in this annual report. A complete version of the report is available on request.

CILT's finances were audited by Kriens-LaRose, LLP Chartered Professional Accountants. As usual, CILT received a "clean" report from its auditors.

The top part of the condensed statements – **Statement of Financial Position** – shows CILT's assets and liabilities as of March 31, 2022, for all CILT's programs. Comparative figures from the 2020-21 fiscal year are also shown.

At year end, our Net Assets were \$449,339 – the same amount as the previous year. This amount is CILT's Reserve Fund and is what would be left over if all CILT's liabilities were paid out from its assets. This figure does not normally change from year to year because our funding agreements require CILT to operate on a breakeven basis – that is, we cannot generate an operating surplus to add to our Reserve Fund at the end of the year. Starting this year, however, the Board has decided to invest the Reserve Fund so that interest and dividend earnings will increase the Fund.

The bottom part of the report – **Statement of Operations** – shows revenues and expenses for each of CILT's three main programs, a

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—KEN CONNERS

total for all three programs together, and comparative figures from 2020-21.

The first column – **Core Programs** – shows the revenues and expenses for CILT's core programs and operations. Last year's Core revenues totalled \$1,276,941 from the various funders listed and from donations and other self-generated income. The self-generated income included fees for administering the Direct Funding Program on behalf of the Ministry of Health. This year, CILT deferred some of these fees to ensure that our revenues did not exceed our expenses; such deferred income can (and must) be used in a future year in which the Core Programs may end up running a deficit. The Core expenses consisted of personnel, program, and overhead costs.

Revenues and expenses for the **Direct Funding Program** are shown in the second column. This program had a total income of \$51,308,125 (down by about \$5 million from last year) mostly from the Ministry of Health plus some interest income. The largest expense item (\$46,682,915) represented subsidies to participants (Self-Managers) as well as to other Independent Living centres across the province that provide program and administrative support. Other Direct Funding expenses covered personnel and program costs and a portion of CILT's overhead costs.

The expenses also included an administrative fee for CILT's work in running the program, which became a revenue to the Core Funds. This program operates on a breakeven basis, so any unused funds are repayable to the Ministry of Health.

The third column shows the **Personal Support Workers (PSW) Training Program**. Under this program, the Ministry of Health provides funding, which CILT distributes among the various participating agencies that want to provide PSW training. In 2021-22, the Ministry approved funding of \$2,468,800 for PSW training, but because of a delay in the approval and receipt of the funds, we were not able to distribute any training money during the fiscal year – the income and expenses are both zero. The funding agreement covers two years so we will report the distribution of the 2021-22 funding on the 2022-23 statements. Because no funds were distributed, CILT was not able to claim the administrative fee which would have been a revenue to the Core Programs.

The day-to day accounting and preparation of CILT's budgets and financial reports have been done by Envision Accounting and Business Services (Envision) under the direction of Wendy Porch. I would like to thank Wendy and Envision for their able management of our financial resources.

CILT Condensed Financial Statements

Statement of Financial Position					
	2021-22	2020-21			
	\$	\$			
Assets					
Current Assets	16,316,345	11,206,044			
Capital Assets	114,983	124,239			
Total Assets	16,431,328	11,330,283			
Liabilities/ Net Assets:					
Current & Deferred Liabilities	15,981,989	10,880,944			
Net Assets/ Reserves	449,339	449,339			
Total Liabilities/ Reserves	16,431,328	11,330,283			
Statement of Operations					
	Core Programs	Direct Funding Program	PSW Training Program	Total 2021-22	Total 2020-21
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenues					
Min. of Health/ Toronto Central LHIN	559,596	51,220,166	- 0	51,779,762	57,486,615
United Way - Program Funding	125,200	- 0	- 0	125,200	136,057
Ontario Trillium Foundation	- 0	- 0	- 0	- 0	28,936
City of Toronto Grants	169,308	- 0	- 0	169,308	25,610
Self-Generated Income/ Other	422,837	87,959	- 0	510,796	495,387
Total Revenues	1,276,941	51,308,125	- 0	52,585,066	58,172,605
Expenses					
Subsidies to Participants	- 0	49,682,915	- 0	49,682,915	55,288,688
Personnel	876,488	991,719	- 0	1,868,207	1,798,166
Purchased Services	165,608	50,313	- 0	215,921	235,715
Administrative Expenses	49,223	318,574	- 0	367,797	419,403
Program Expenses	85,150	51,732	- 0	136,882	132,211
Building Occupancy	66,437	212,104	- 0	278,541	273,673
Staff/ Board Expenses	23,270	768	- 0	24,038	15,352
Amortization of Capital Purchases	9,397	- 0	- 0	9,397	7,842
Recruitment/ Outreach	1,368	- 0	- 0	1,368	1,555
Total Expenses	1,276,941	51,308,125	- 0	52,585,066	58,172,605
Excess of Revenue over Expenses	- 0	- 0	- 0	- 0	- 0

Meenu Sikand

2021–2022 Founders' Award Recipient



MEENU SIKAND HAS BEEN AN advocate and champion for people with disabilities for 30 years, as well as a leader who emphasizes that disabled people are as diverse as the communities from which they come.

Meenu first became involved with the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) in 1989, shortly after she sustained a spinal cord injury. Meenu's intention to live a fiercely independent life aligned perfectly with CILT's philosophy. She was the Chairperson of CILT's Board of Directors for three terms and was involved in numerous other CILT committees. She was also a member of the Board of Directors for Independent Living Canada, the national umbrella organization for IL centres across the country. She was Vice-President of Independent Living Canada as well as Chair of the International Committee.

As a parent with a disability, Meenu was keen to contribute to CILT's publication, *Nurturing Assistance – A Guide to Providing Physical Assistance for Parents with Disabilities*, that was published in 2002; she and her son are featured in the guide.

Meenu's contribution to raising awareness of the IL philosophy in Canada cannot be overstated. In addition to the valuable contributions Meenu made to advancing Independent Living in Canada, she has also been extremely active in several international disability-related initiatives. These include being involved in forums on disability issues in Russia, Beijing, and the United States. Meenu was a key contributor to Loud, Proud and Passionate, as well as IDEAS 2000, an important initiative that looked at microcredit programs and other entrepreneurial ideas for women with disabilities.

Until earlier this year, Meenu was the first-ever Executive Lead on Equity, Diversity

and Inclusion at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Again, she played a role pushing for the increased inclusion of ethno-racial and newcomer children with disabilities. Most recently, she was named Assistant Deputy Minister with Ontario's Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

Meenu has been described as a warrior who speaks for others who can't. She does not allow matters about accessibility or independence to be overlooked, and she will not be deterred by anyone who disagrees with her – she will always fight for what she believes is right.

When contacted about being awarded the Founders' Award by CILT, Meenu wrote: *"Among all the recognitions that I have received to date, the Founders' Award is the most special award. Upon acquiring my SCI, the IL community accepted me with open arms. Their leaders and members have nurtured me and have impacted my life journey positively in many ways."*

Meenu continues to push for better lives for disabled people. She is active with Disability Without Poverty, an organization pushing for the swift passage of the Canada Disability Benefit, and continues to engage groups marginalized within disability and ethno-racial groups. She is also the founder of Accessibility for All, an organization focussed on developing the capacity of organizations to provide culturally competent and disability aware social services. In 2021, she was inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame.

CILT thanks you, Meenu, for always pushing for change and for working tirelessly for the right for all disabled people to live independent lives that are driven by their own choices, hopes, and dreams.

2021-2022 Statistical Highlights

Social Media

174

Tweets /
243 retweets
@CIL_Toronto



1,857

Twitter followers



677

Facebook followers

CILT Peer Support Groups

451

people served by the
Peer Support Group and
Parenting with a Disability
Network Program

267

Facebook Peer
Support Group
members

88

Facebook
PDN Group
members



2021-2022 Statistical Highlights

Direct Funding



129,333

hours of service provided
by DF per month



140

completed
applications
received for DF



76

DF interviews
conducted

Participants on DF

(as of March 31, 2022)



662

on DF more
than 5 years
(72% of total
participants)

307

on DF more
than 15 years
(33% of total
participants)

176

on DF more
than 20 years
(19% of total
participants)

90

age of oldest
DF participant

General



55,938

number of visitors to
CILT website, including
ASAC website



70,415

inquiries received

923

participants in CILT
training workshops/
groups

2021–2022 Board Members



**Buvani
Sivagnanasunderam**

Vice-Chair

Buvani has over seven years of experience in policy analysis and research, health promotion, community development, and youth advocacy. She's currently a medical student at McMaster University's Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. Prior to this, Buvani worked as a Senior Policy Advisor for both Ontario and British Columbia's Ministries of Health. Her work centres around advancing health equity and addressing barriers

to inclusion and justice for diverse, vulnerable, and marginalized communities. Buvani has worked for various Canadian institutions and non-profit organizations in the areas of sexual health, LGBTQ+ health, and immigrant and refugee healthcare. She is passionate about promoting inclusivity and accessibility in our communities and serves on various boards and committees to advance this mission, including the City of Toronto's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Buvani holds a B.Sc. in Psychology and Health Studies from the University of Toronto and a master's degree in Global Health from McMaster University. When she's not working you can find her experimenting in the kitchen, discovering a new hiking trail, or off on a travel adventure.



Cathy Samuelson

Cathy Samuelson has worked in the community supporting persons with physical disabilities for 30 years. She is currently the Executive Director of North Yorkers for Disabled Persons, which provides supportive housing, attendant services, and augmentative communication facilitation.



Darren Cooper

Darren has over 15 years of experience as an accessibility professional, including his current position as the Manager, Accessibility with the Toronto Public Library. Darren has also served as

an Accessibility Consultant with the City of Toronto, the Accessibility Project Manager with the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Toronto Metropolitan University, an Accessibility Specialist for the City of Mississauga, and as the Accessibility Coordinator for the Town of Milton.

Darren holds an Honours B.A. in Communications from the University of

Windsor, a certificate in Municipal Administration from the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario, and the Canadian Certified Inclusion Professional designation from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Darren also serves as a member of the Board of Directors for Theatre Passe Muraille, a professional independent theatre company in Toronto.



Deb Daniel

Deb Daniel has been an allied health professional for over 15 years and has a master's degree in Health Administration, a Lean Green Belt, and a Project Management Professional (PMP) designation. She has worked in multiple areas of healthcare, including hospital, community care, laboratory, and home care in both project and quality capacities. In addition, she has served on a social services board and volunteered for various charitable endeavors.

Deb enjoys reading, running with her dog, travelling, and teaching fitness classes. She currently lives in Vaughan with her husband, son, and dog.

Jacques LeBlanc

Chair

Born in Moncton, N.B., Jacques' family moved to Tarrytown, N.Y., a quaint Hudson River valley township, 30 minutes north of New York City. This is where he found a propensity for architecture and the fine arts. In 1976, the family moved back to Moncton, and Jacques designed houses for families in the Moncton area. Two years later, he was accepted into the School of Architecture at Carleton University, Ottawa. A rare form of Spinal Muscular Atrophy known as Kugelberg-Wellander required the use of a wheelchair to navigate Carleton's campus. He graduated in 1982 with a B.Sc. in Urban Geography/Planning and pursued post-graduate studies in Environmental Studies at York University. After graduation, Jacques worked for a small company in Toronto called Direct Access Design. The company's primary responsibility was barrier-free designs throughout the city. From 1983-87, he worked in the Public Works Department for the municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

With the economic climate declining in 1987, Jacques made a career change and joined the *Toronto Star's*



editorial department, which allowed him to pursue his childhood passion: the world of sports. He remained with the *Star* until retirement. Jacques also wrote for many publications worldwide with a focus on travelling with a disability, including *Reader's Digest*, *Spyker* (Holland), *The Daily Observer* (Antigua & Barbuda), and *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans). Since retirement, he has remained involved with real estate and consulting in barrier-free designs for local businesses. When Jacques began feeling an emptiness because he knew he could contribute more (not for himself, but for others), he approached CILT asking if there was anything he could do to help on a volunteer basis. Jacques served as a consumer panelist interviewing applicants for the Direct Funding program and in January of 2018 was asked to join CILT's Board. In 2018-2019 he served as Vice Chair, and the past three years he proudly served as President/Chair.



Jennifer Hines

Jennifer is a mother of two daughters and is delighted to have a very active grandson! Retired after close to 25 years in a senior leadership role at a major financial institution, she has worked to increase her involvement in the not-for-profit realm, focusing on persons with disabilities and youth. As part of the CILT Board, she is excited to continue as an advocate and ally for individuals with disabilities by supporting CILT's work facilitating Independent Living.

Always active in the community, her focus sharpened to the disabled community and activities to

enable Independent Living because of experiences encountered early on with her younger daughter who lives with a physical disability.

Jennifer has been involved with a variety of community organizations supporting persons with disabilities, including: working with Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital on programs both to support children with disabilities in the public school system and for teens and their families as they develop a transition path to Independent Living; as a Board member for Silver Creek Pre-School, which serves children with special needs; fostering 10 puppies as a part of the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides foster puppy program; establishing an Access BOOM sailing for the disabled program for kids with disabilities at a local yacht club; and supporting

PowerHockey Toronto and PowerHockey Canada.

In the corporate environment, Jennifer actively searched for ways to contribute to strategies for persons with disabilities through diversity leadership councils, particularly focussing on increasing hiring, accommodation, and retention of employees with disabilities.

She brings to the Board corporate experience in strategic planning, change management, finance, operations, and regulatory advocacy and consultation, combined with an MBA (Rotman) and B.Comm (Queen's).

Jennifer looks forward to continuing as a CILT Board member and supporting CILT's vision of social and economic equity for people living with disabilities.

Karen Denton

Karen surrounds herself with the disability community both personally and professionally as an educational assistant in the TDSB. It makes her really happy and proud when an individual can stand up for

themselves and advocate for what they need. Karen truly enjoys being on the Board because it doesn't just provide her with the opportunity to learn and grow as a person, but CILT also has the same message to deliver its services as she does.





Ken Conners

Treasurer

Ken is starting the fourth year of his term and is CILT's Treasurer. He previously served on the Board from 2008 until 2014 and was Treasurer during those years.

He has a wealth of experience with non-profit organizations and their Boards and has served as Treasurer for the Evangel Hall Mission, his condominium Board, and the Mariposa Folk Foundation.

Now retired, his

professional experience included providing accounting, financial management, and day-to-day bookkeeping services to a variety of not-for-profit organizations in Toronto.

For many years, Ken served as the Executive Director of Three Trilliums Community Place, a non-profit organization providing attendant services to adults with physical disabilities who wish to live independently in the community and direct their own care.

More recently, he provided payroll and bookkeeping services to people with physical disabilities under the Self-Managed Attendant Services – Direct Funding Program operated by CILT.

His background includes work in the Northwest Territories for the Fort McPherson Incorporated Band Ltd. and for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and international work in South Africa and Ukraine.

His education includes a Master of Public Administration, a Master of Arts (Russian Literature), and a Bachelor of Arts (Political Studies).

As a volunteer, Ken continues to provide annual income tax preparation for seniors and people with low incomes at West Neighbourhood House (formerly St. Christopher House) and at Ukrainian Canadian Social Services.

Neil Mercer

Neil Mercer is a freelance graphic designer/artist for over 30 years. Most recently, Neil produced artwork for Muscular Dystrophy Canada's 2021 Dr. David Green Recognition Program award. Other notable projects have been for Tobias House Attendant Care inc., AYAAA – a Youth Aids organization in Africa – and Spectra Talent Showcase.

Alongside his artistic talents, Neil has served many years as a Board member

for various organizations including CILT, Tobias House Attendant Care Inc., and Spectra Association of Canadian Artists. He is also a successful event organizer of many past projects such as DreamsAway and the Sean Ross Memorial Summer Classic.

Neil has also lent his support to Tecla, a hands-free assistive device giving people with upper-body mobility impairments the ability to fully access smart devices and technology, by actively testing and appearing in promotional



videos. During his spare time, Neil is a goaltender in the Toronto Power Wheelchair Hockey League, a member of Equal Grounds – a social enterprise dedicated to creating opportunities for people of different abilities – and recently began working as an accessibility tester for FableTech Labs Inc.



Vincenza (Enza) Ronaldi

Vincenza resides in Pickering with her husband and two sons. As a woman with a disability Vincenza brings in-depth knowledge of the history and issues that people with disabilities face today and the changes required to confront bias and systemic barriers to creating a more diverse and accessible province. Vincenza strongly believes that diversity is the strength of any society.

Vincenza has a passion for promoting accessibility in various capacities, which include helping to establish the Ontario Public Service

Disability Advisory Council and past participation on various committees and board of directors, such as the City of Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Rouge Valley Health System (Centenary Hospital and Pickering Ajax Hospital), the Redwood Woman's Shelter, and Springtide Resources.

After graduating from the University of Toronto, Vincenza began her career at CILT, where she embraced the Independent Living Philosophy and the powerful concept of peer support. She then joined the Ontario Public Service with the former Advocacy Commission of Ontario where she worked to help people with disabilities and seniors know and defend their rights and improve their quality of life. Since joining the Ontario Public Service,

Vincenza has held progressive leadership level positions that helped influence and drive horizontal policy, programs, and partnerships to improve the lives of Ontarians.

Currently, Vincenza is the Vice President of Corporate Services and Operations for Destination Ontario, a commissioned public body agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, where she oversees all agency business and operational support services, including strategic and operational planning, financial management and controllership, human resource management, and procurement. She also leads ten provincial travel information centres located across the province.

Zinnia Batliwalla

Zinnia has worked in various roles across Ontario's health system that align with her vision for a more just and equitable healthcare.

In her current role as Health Systems Planning Specialist at Kensington Health in Toronto, Zinnia is supporting the development of the Mid-West Toronto Ontario Health Team. In this role, Zinnia is focused on integrating health

and social care to improve population health outcomes. Previously, she spent five years at March of Dimes Canada, where her work spanned multiple departments and her responsibilities as a manager included overseeing the organization's research unit and government relations and advocacy portfolio.

Zinnia has her Master of Public Health from Western University and Master of



Health Science in Health Administration from the University of Toronto. She previously completed an internship at the United Nations Secretariat in New York City.

2021–2022 Staff



Abdullah Duranai

Acting Financial Assurance
Manager

Direct Funding Program

I started working with CILT in October of 2011. I work with Self-Managers from all over the province

on various matters. The best part of my job is starting new Self-Managers (Direct Funding program participants) on the program. Outside work, I volunteer with a community not-for-profit organization assisting newcomers to Canada. I enjoy long walks with my wife. I also enjoy watching Bollywood movies and dramas.



Andrea Rae

Service Engagement
Coordinator

I have been working at CILT since 2005. I have a Bachelor of Music degree from Queen's University and

a Master of Arts degree in Canadian Studies from Carleton University. Along with Robin Simmons, I do service navigation, responding to inquiries and providing information regarding Independent Living and disability services available in the city. I do a regular media scan for articles of interest to the disability community and perform community outreach to ensure that CILT maintains a coordinating role regarding disability-related services in the city. In previous years, I coordinated the volunteer program at CILT, which unfortunately is still on hold. A simple pleasure of mine might be coming across live music, beautiful murals, or farmers' markets when I'm out cycling (often between CILT and home).



Danielle Daoust

Program Manager
Attendant Service Application
Centre (ASAC)

I'm relatively new to CILT after joining the organization in February 2021 as the Program

Manager of ASAC. Prior to my role here, I worked in the disability sector for 30 years, dating back to high school. It has been an interesting transition to a new agency, not only because my last role lasted 15 years, but starting through a pandemic, working remotely, and having never physically met any of my co-workers. Regardless, I am excited to join the CILT team and to have the opportunity to lend some experience and continue to advocate for Independent Living and inclusivity for all. Although raising my girls isn't always simple, the simple pleasure is their presence in my life and how simple it is to love them unconditionally.



Danielle Vinciguerra

Financial Assurance Coordinator
Direct Funding Program

I have been a member of Team CILT since early 2015. As Financial Assurance Coordinator, I enjoy working with

Self-Managers and bookkeepers to ensure everyone has a seamless transition to Direct Funding. Outside of the office, I love exploring locally and abroad and eating lots of (typically) unhealthy food. I find joy drinking a cup of tea while doing a puzzle and listening to a podcast.



David Meyers

Senior Program Manager
Independent Living Programs

I identify as a Black man with a disability and use he/him pronouns. I've been in my role with CILT since 2018 and

am thrilled to work every day with a great team and partners advancing Independent Living for disabled people of all identities. I began my career doing child and family counselling work after graduating from the University of Waterloo. My later career highlights include several years of anti-poverty organizing work in coalition with dedicated partners and leading disability inclusion policy and programs at Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre in Toronto. While there, I partnered with CILT on several projects advancing disability access and even served on our Board of Directors. Besides disability justice organizing, two things that bring me joy are losing myself in art and amateur photography.



Elaine Chu

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer
Direct Funding Program

I started working at CILT in May 2019 with the Direct Funding Program, where my role is to review

quarterly reports from Self-Managers and to assist them in utilizing their funding. I feel privileged and honoured to be a part of DF and working with amazing people who care about the work they do every day. I am a shy and quiet person, but I love to share experience and knowledge with others and help people in any way I can. In my spare time, I like to read books and practice meditation. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is sleeping in as long as I want on the weekends or just lying there and watching the sky.

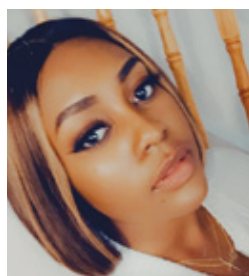


Elizabeth Rodriguez

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer
Direct Funding Program

I joined CILT in July 2021 as a Bookkeeping Report Reviewer for the Direct Funding Program. I review Self-Managers'

quarterly reports and assist them in any inquiries regarding their funds and reports. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is watching Korean shows. Outside work, I like to spend my time watching Korean shows.



Gold Olatifede

Intake Administrator
Direct Funding Program

I joined the CILT family on a contract in September 2020 and resumed full-time as the intake administrator of the

Direct Funding Program in February 2021. I completed my master's degree in Global Management at Royal Roads University and have years of experience working in administrative, human resources, and customer service roles. My job includes responding to inquiries, assisting with applications, and receiving, reviewing, and inputting Direct Funding applications into the database. I feel fortunate to work for an organization that changes lives and exposes me to interesting people in our community. I also enjoy travelling, painting, and watching movies.



Hadeel Dajani

Review & Audit Advisor
Direct Funding Program

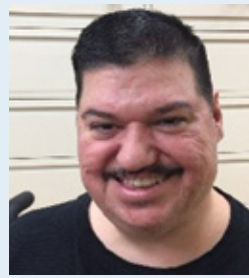
I am fortunate to have joined the CILT team in June 2018. I have been working with Self-Managers, reviewing some quarterly reports, and auditing some Self-Managers' accounts. In addition, I take care of wrapping up the accounts for the exiting Self-Managers. In my spare time, I love to travel, try new restaurants, and play with my babies.



Jennifer Marr

Program Administrator
Attendant Service Application Centre

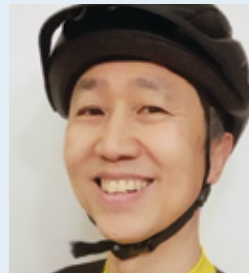
I joined the ASAC team in May of 2021. I hold degrees in English and Psychology and had been working as a writer, artist, and educator prior to hiring on at CILT. My role within ASAC is to respond to general inquiries related to Supportive/Transitional Housing and Attendant Outreach services, process applications, follow up on missing information, confirm eligibility requirements, explain the application process, and assist applicants who require support in filling out their applications. I also maintain the Consumer Attendant Roster website. My favourite part of the job is listening to and connecting with applicants. I love helping our community feel supported and heard. Something that brings me joy is my pedal-powered wheelchair. I have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the city on it.



John Mossa

Independent Living
Skills Coordinator

For the last 22 years, I have been working at CILT with consumers with disabilities on developing their skills to self-advocate for their rights and responsibilities on a wide range of issues, from attendant services to Wheel-Trans. Also, I provide short-term crisis peer support, facilitate skills development workshops, and make CILT presentations to consumers and service providers. I have led and/or supervised several participatory action research projects on disability issues within Toronto. I am a member of the GTA Disability Coalition. I enjoy movies, music, sports, and online games. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is good Italian food with an exceptional wine.



John Tam

Database Administrator
Direct Funding Program

I've been a member of the CILT team for nine years: initially, as a Direct Funding report auditor. When not working, I volunteer with Toronto Trailblazers Tandem Cycling Club (blind tandem cycling). To relax, I enjoy exploring summer outdoor street festivals in the city and watching movies at the cinema.



Kate Welsh

Project Coordinator
Disability Inclusion Project

I am a queer, disabled artist, community activist, and educator. My work focuses on the impacts of ableism and oppression

on mental health. I have been a researcher on various projects including student mental health, the disability and pregnancy study, disabled joy, and LGBTQ disabled mental health. I am currently a disability affirming mental health counselor and facilitate workshops on a variety of topics. I am currently part of the CILT Core team and run the IDE+A Project. Check out katewelsh.ca



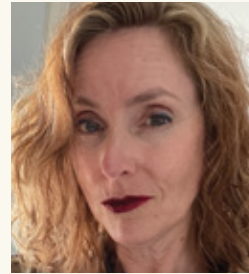
Kim Adlard

Project Coordinator
COVID-19 Vaccine Engagement Project

I began my CILT journey in the beginning of 2019 as a (seasoned adult) placement student

with the CORE team. After my placement, I continued my involvement through the GTA Disability Coalition. Having spent many years working within the community sector, as well as several years volunteering with the ODSP Action Coalition after landing on ODSP during my foray into critical illness disability, I was keen to engage in opportunities to advance disability justice. When the pandemic hit and CILT developed a cross disability community response, a collaborative that would work with the City of Toronto to ensure accessible COVID-19 outreach, I eagerly threw my hat in for the project coordinator role. While we continue to experience challenges within equitable COVID-19 responses, I am incredibly grateful to be working with extraordinary CILT staff and our community partners. In

addition to working part-time, I'm a student in the Disability Studies Program at Toronto Metropolitan University (previously Ryerson). So, finding moments to restore and rejuvenate brings me joy, and simple is the key word! Heading to (non-crowded) water or green spaces does the trick.



Leanne Larmondin

Provincial Program Coordinator
Direct Funding Program

I interview program applicants anywhere in Ontario, help participants problem solve, liaise with program staff across

the province, consult on legal issues, review payments to participants, and coordinate and write promotional materials. When I'm not at work, I row (competitively), run (for fun), and read. A simple pleasure that gives me joy is having my dog, Lulu, curled up beside my desk, snoring softly (sometimes not-so-softly) while I work.

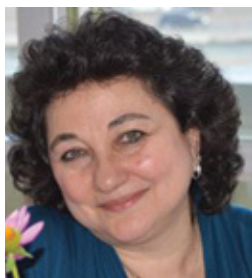


Leisa DeBono

Program Manager
Direct Funding Program

I started working at CILT with the Direct Funding Program in July 1994 and have been fortunate enough to stick around

for the past 28 years. Originally hired as the DF Administrative Coordinator, I became the Program Manager in 2011. One of the greatest privileges of my career was to work beside my friend and mentor, Ian Parker, who passed away in April of last year. Ian and I watched the program grow from 75 Self-Managers in the pilot project to almost 1,000 people when the program is at full capacity.

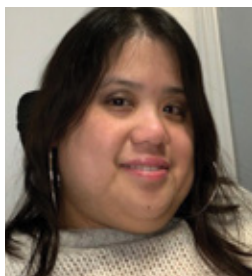


Marisa Falzone

Senior Report Coordinator & Advisor
Direct Funding Program

I have been with CILT and the Direct Funding program since 2012.

One of my roles is to review the quarterly reports from program participants, which gives me the privilege to assist and witness Self-Managers on their journey to living independently. I also provide support to bookkeepers, new DF staff, and other Independent Living Resource Centres across the province on various matters. In addition, I'm responsible for generating the bank direct deposits for the program participants in the Kingston area. When I am not working, I consider myself to be a fun and dedicated Nonna, who enjoys traveling, gardening, art, life, kayaking, etc.



Marlene Benedicto

Intake & Resource Facilitator
Direct Funding Program

I am a graduate of the Journalism program at Humber College, and prior to joining CILT I spent several years working as

an administrator for a distribution company. Outside of CILT, I enjoy writing, working on my podcast, "The Ling Podcast," checking out Toronto's food and restaurant scene, and going to concerts (whenever that is safe to do again). A simple pleasure for me is spending time with my friends on a restaurant patio in the summer.



Melissa Watanabe

Human Resources /
Operations Manager

This was my second year as HR/Operations Manager. Prior to CILT, I worked in not-for-profit and charitable

organizations that focus on arts and culture, the environment, and regulation. At CILT, the Operations team (Nadine, Raihan, and I) contribute towards managing CILT's people, financial, technological, and office resources effectively, efficiently, and responsibly. We also collaborate with CILT staff to provide the support, resources, and tools that they need to do their work (in balance with their lives) and advance CILT's mission. I'm a mother of two teenagers and have mixed emotions about my oldest heading off to university this fall. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is seeing my tiny food garden grow and getting to harvest the fruit and veggies before the urban wildlife get to them!



Nadine Azore

Operations Assistant

I have been a member of the CILT team since 2017. I completed my Bachelor of Arts at Trent University in English Literature and Cultural Studies and my

Social Service Worker Diploma at Fleming College. Prior to joining CILT, I worked as an English teacher in South Korea for three years. I enjoy travel, food, and movies. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is listening to a good audio book, watching a new series or movie, or listening to some good music.



Peter Judge

Financial Assurance Manager
(on leave)
Direct Funding Program

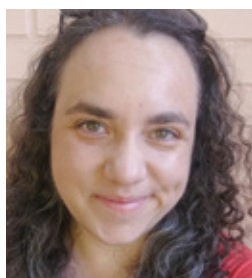
Toronto Metropolitan University with work focusing on disability and inclusion. I have an episodic disability (which is often invisible) and multiple chronic illnesses. I love to create through knitting, crocheting, writing, and cooking. A simple pleasure that brings me joy is fitting in the final piece of a puzzle, and I can't help but smile when accidental bubbles float away from the dish soap container.



Raihan Hussain

Operations Assistant
My responsibilities are in reception desk duties, IT support, office services, and assisting with special projects. If you have contacted CILT

or plan to come to CILT, you are most likely going to speak with me. I graduated from Toronto Metropolitan University's (formerly Ryerson University's) inaugural Sport Media program in 2019, and so I'm a diehard sports fan but also regret to inform you that I'm a sad Toronto Maple Leafs fan. I'm also an avid gamer and love following the genre. Some of my favourite video games include: the Final Fantasy series, the Soulsborne series, Super Smash Bros., the Witcher, and Japanese RPGs. A simple pleasure that gives me joy is drinking coffee under the breeze.



Rebecca Wood

Peer and Parenting Program Coordinator

I have been the Peer Support Program and Parenting with a Disability Network Coordinator since I joined the Core team

in 2019. I have master's degrees in Women and Gender Studies from the University of Toronto and in Early Childhood Studies from



Robin Simmons

Inquiries Generalist

As a member of the Core team, I respond to inquiries from consumers and provide information about Independent Living and disability services. I

also provide short-term peer support when needed. I have a background in Social Services from Humber College. When I am not at CILT, I enjoy spending time with my family, friends, and of course my cat, Charlie. What is a simple pleasure that brings me joy? Colouring and creating anything with Lego.



Sara Stonehouse

Agreement & Resource Administrator

Direct Funding Program

I have been a member of the CILT team since early 2021. As the

Agreement & Resource Administrator, I work on communications (including newsletters), statistics, agreement renewals, and many other Direct Funding projects as needed. I have a background in teaching and information science. Outside of work, I love travel, books, music, and cross stitch. One simple pleasure that brings me joy is bubble tea.



Wendy Porch

Executive Director

As a person with a disability, I have been working in the field of accessibility, disability, human rights, and education for more than

25 years. I started my work life at ARCH Disability Law Centre, responding to the needs of people with disabilities across Ontario. I worked in research and development at the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto, and in 2005 I was a Research Fellow in Accessibility in Educational Media at the Open University in the United Kingdom. Before joining CILT in 2018, I was Manager of Episodic Disability Initiatives at Realize, a national organization supporting people living with HIV and/or other episodic disabilities. I have an M.Ed. in Counselling Psychology from the University of Toronto and worked with the Body Image Project at Women's College Hospital. I was recently a member of the City of Toronto's Accessibility Advisory Committee, and I currently chair the City of Toronto's Accessibility Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccines. I am a proud mom to my son Jasper, and I work to raise awareness of the needs of parents with disabilities. A simple pleasure for me is singing along to the Moana soundtrack with my family as we get ready in the morning.



Zdravka Gueorguieva

Program Administrator
Attendant Service Application
Centre

I started working at CILT in April 2010. The Attendant Service Application Centre (ASAC)

at CILT provides a centralized point of access for individuals with permanent physical disabilities applying for Attendant Services in the city of Toronto and York Region. With a single application, applicants can apply to a variety of attendant services projects including supportive housing, attendant outreach services, and transitional and life skills programs. My role as an ASAC Program Administrator is providing administrative support – receiving new and updated ASAC applications and managing the waitlist in the ASAC database. ASAC is the place of liaison between applicants and service providers. I respond to Inquiries from the applicants and from the representatives of different service providers as well, preparing lists of applicants for them when a vacancy occurs. The Waitlist Collaborative process, established in 2018, is trying to assess and prioritize all the applicants on the ASAC waitlist, and I prepare the documents for the monthly meetings of the assessors. I feel proud that my life as a member of the CILT team is dedicated to helping people from the disability community. Working, travelling, walking outdoors, watching movies, swimming, meeting with friends – these activities are the things I enjoy in life.



CILT in the news

Access, Equity and Human Rights Awards: Honourable mention, Wendy Porch

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/awards-tributes/awards/access-equity-and-human-rights-awards/>

City of Toronto's COVID-19 vaccine engagement program extended

<https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-torontos-covid-19-vaccine-engagement-program-extended/>

**Does Ontario's COVID Plan Ignore Disabled People?
| The Agenda**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJcpIGPd84>

Press Conference about provincial mask and vaccination mandates with GTA Disability Coalition (of which CILT is a partner)

<https://youtu.be/yUSQ-TYHAKM>

When Gabriella decided to have a child, she looked to other disabled parents for support

<https://hollandbloorview.ca/stories-news-events/BLOOM-Blog/when-gabriella-decided-have-child-she-looked-other-disabled-parents>





Your Feedback Matters

Peer Connect

- “The sessions help me feel less isolated. COVID isn't helping, but I found it hard even before to find a space where other people could understand some of the struggles I face as a disabled person. I find the guest speakers very relatable, and I leave with something to think about, which is great.”
- “It was great to be able to discuss such a personal topic with everyone and share personal experiences in a supportive environment. I felt my experiences were validated through listening to others. I really liked how we talked about ableism in society. Sometimes it is difficult for me to express how ableism impacts me, but I felt really comfortable.”
- “I really appreciate the chance to feel less isolated.”
- “I really enjoyed hearing from people having a variety of backgrounds. Some people live on their own, some in group homes, and someone I think lived in a nursing home. I don't very often have a chance to hear from people first-hand who are not in the same socio-economic space as me. The session reinforced for me how much we all have in common because of our experiences with ableism.”

I am so deeply grateful for Peer Connect. It's the one place where everyone gets me. No need to convince anyone that my struggle

and suffering is real. It's amazing because even though I feel pain and nausea every day, and sometimes vertigo, I honestly forget how awful I feel sometimes because it feels so nice to be part of this group. And everything feels so easy and calm.”

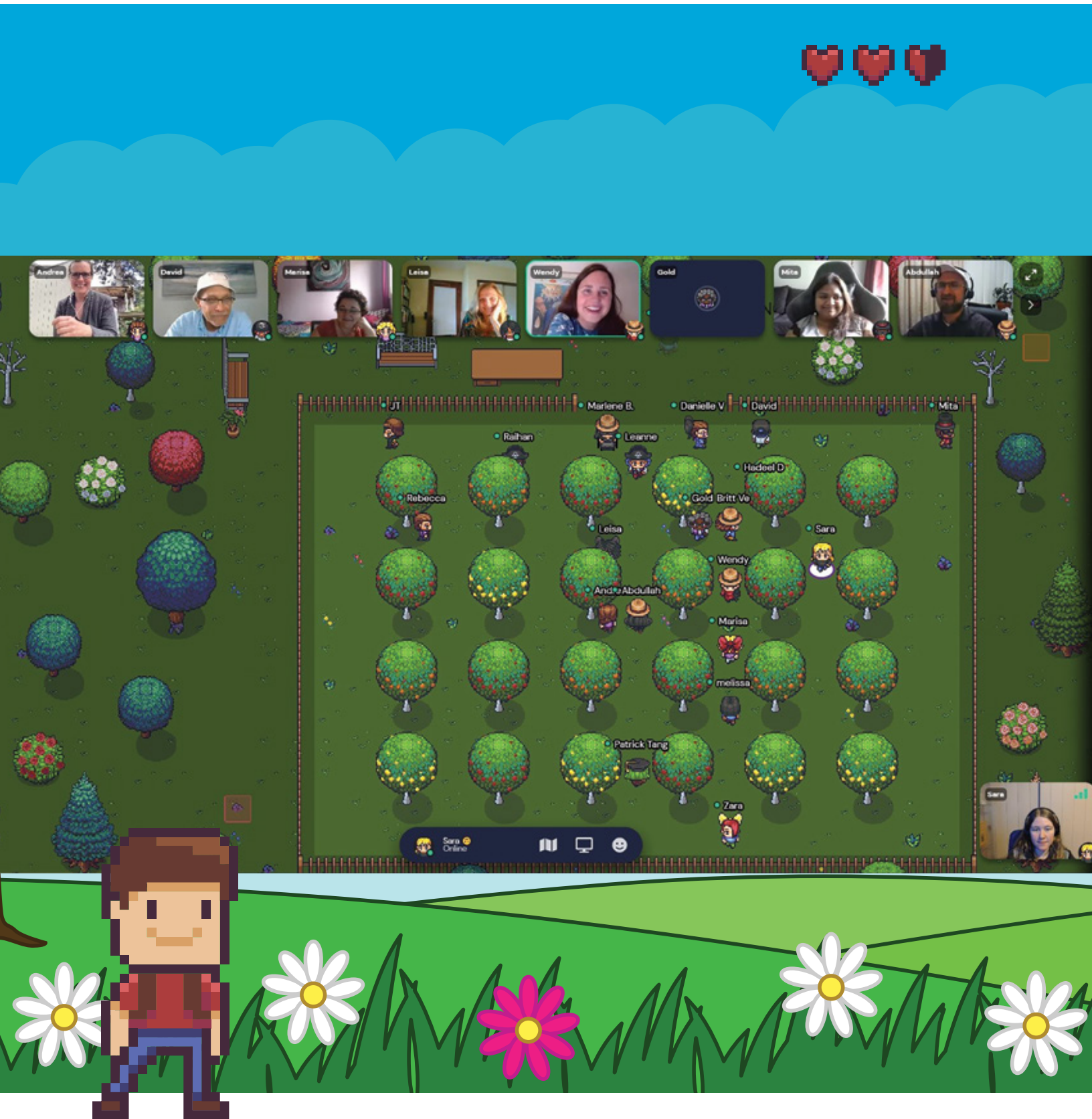
- “Peer Connect is a valuable resource. It is an inviting safe space, where I can be myself without expectations and judgements. It is a space where I don't have to worry about encountering ableism and barriers which can happen for a person with a disability. The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto staff are very helpful and supportive.”

Parenting with a Disability Network

- “We love the programming and really appreciate the sing along and group discussion via zoom. The opportunity to connect with other families with disabilities has meant a lot to my daughters and me, especially during the pandemic.”
- “We have gay and trans family members and especially appreciate the LGBTQ+ theme during Pride month. We have substantially ordered the recommended children's book. Thank you.”
- “We love having a playtime that's consistent every month, time to sing songs with my daughter and the group.”



CILT staff participate in an outfit contest to raise money for United Way.



Staff gather for the annual CILT picnic – virtually (no bugs!)



**CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT
LIVING IN TORONTO**

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