



## **The Context for OIFN’s Work of Facilitating Person Directed Change In Ontario**

For more than 30 years, there have been people committed to social justice for people with developmental disabilities, working toward a society that recognizes their rights as citizens and desire to belong and contribute as members of their communities. OIFN is a network of people committed to the work of social change that will result in social justice and more inclusive lives for people with developmental disabilities.

In the 1980s, the People First self advocacy movement, the inclusive education movement, and parent and family movement through Family Alliance Ontario, with family networks throughout the province, have made it clear that people with developmental disabilities:

- have the right to be treated as “people first”
- deserve to be recognized and treated as equally valued citizens
- seek to be included in all aspects of community life.

In the 1990s the language of “self determination” emerged to express the desire and need of people with developmental disabilities to direct the course of their own lives. The Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario raised the profile of the issue that if people were to direct their own lives, they needed to be able to receive and direct the financial and people resources available to support their lives.

During this period, it became clear that to create change that could lead to inclusion in community life, people with developmental disabilities and their families needed to be able to think and plan beyond the limits and boundaries of congregated services and programs that have historically been developed. Resources available to support life in community must not be limited to the existing programs and services available through the province.

People expressed the need and desire for assistance to facilitate the development of customized support that embraces and reflects their unique personality, needs, and circumstance within, and as members of, their community. Since this work is about change and community, facilitation assistance needs to be independent of, and unencumbered by, the service system as it exists.

“Independent Facilitation” grew out of this period as a “support” relationship and practice that can assist people with developmental disabilities and their families, friends and allies in

planning for, and acting to create the changes they are seeking within the community where they live, work, and play.

OIFN emerged in the 2000s, as the practice of Independent Facilitation grew in the province. People engaged in Independent Facilitation recognized the need to gather, reflect, and learn from each other, through their effort to create change in the lives of people with developmental disabilities, their families, their communities, and the supports and services intended to assist people in their daily living.

The OIFN “community of practice” is committed to building the relationships necessary to support social change and community inclusion with and for people with developmental disabilities and those who know, love and support them. OIFN recognizes that change can occur when there is an “eco-system” of interconnected relationships that include: people with developmental disabilities, and the People First self advocacy movement; families, Family Networks, and the Family Alliance of Ontario; the broad based Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario; people and organizations engaged in Independent Facilitation; people and organizations engaged in delivering individualized direct support; and allies within the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The work of OIFN is to deepen and broaden this interconnected network of networks that includes people and organizations committed to creating change and customizing support that enables people with developmental disabilities to live as valued citizens and contributing community members.