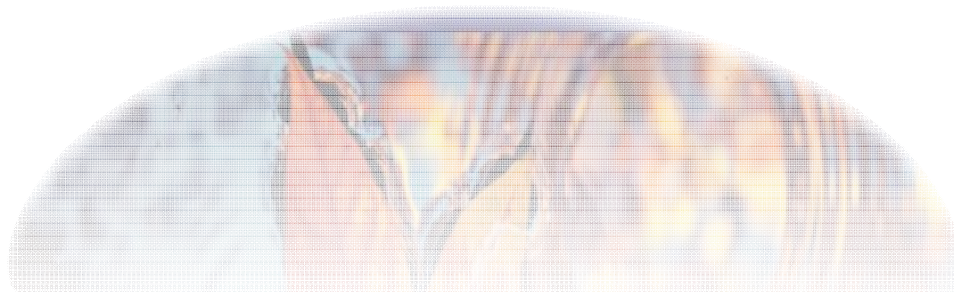




OIFN Reflective Practice Conversation November 18, 2020

Staying Brave Stories – Creating an Ordinary, Everyday Life

Our Conversation Story



OIFN believes ***“in reflective practice and shared learning through a Community of Practice*** that engages people with disabilities, family members and/or loved ones, independent facilitators, and other allies, in a collaborative approach, to co-create knowledge and reflect deeply on principles and practice.”

Why Reflective Practice Conversations?

OIFN is a [Community of Practice](#) that includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and/or loved ones, independent facilitators, and other allies who are interested in supporting people to live meaningful, everyday lives in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.

As a Community of Practice, OIFN is committed to expanding and strengthening relationships and bringing people together for shared learning, collaborative action, and mutual growth. Reflective practice is about exploring ideas and making meaning together. When the Community of Practice comes together, we remain open to change and reflect deeply on principles and practice.

To make the best use of our time together, most of the Reflective Practice conversation took place in small “breakout” groups of about 5 people, so that space was created for meaningful connections to happen, for all people to have opportunities to share and have their voices be heard, and for shared learning and growth to be cultivated.

Framing Our Time Together

Drawing from themes and ideas shared at the past two OIFN Reflective Practice Conversation in June and November 2020, OIFN’s Community of Practice continues to gather regularly for opportunities to grow and learn together and contribute to a greater movement for people living with developmental disabilities.

75 people expressed interest in participating in this session, with ultimately 42 people participating in the conversation. At this gathering, we had our highest turnout thus far, with many familiar participants returning, and a number of new people who were inspired to join us. The response to OIFN’s Reflective Practice Conversations thus far has been very encouraging, and we are pleased to know that these conversations are valuable!

This conversation on “Staying Brave Stories – Creating an Ordinary, Everyday Life” was grounded in the following OIFN Core Belief:

We believe in a new framework for developmental services that acknowledges the uniqueness of each person and affords people freedom and support to direct their lives, rather than “doing for” people. We believe that sustainable options must be available for people and families who are looking for ways to manage their own housing, staffing, direct individualized funding, facilitation, and support resources, rather than control resting with any single organization.

OIFN’s Core Beliefs can be found in full on the OIFN website:
<https://www.oifn.ca/what-we-believe/>

Reflecting on What Matters

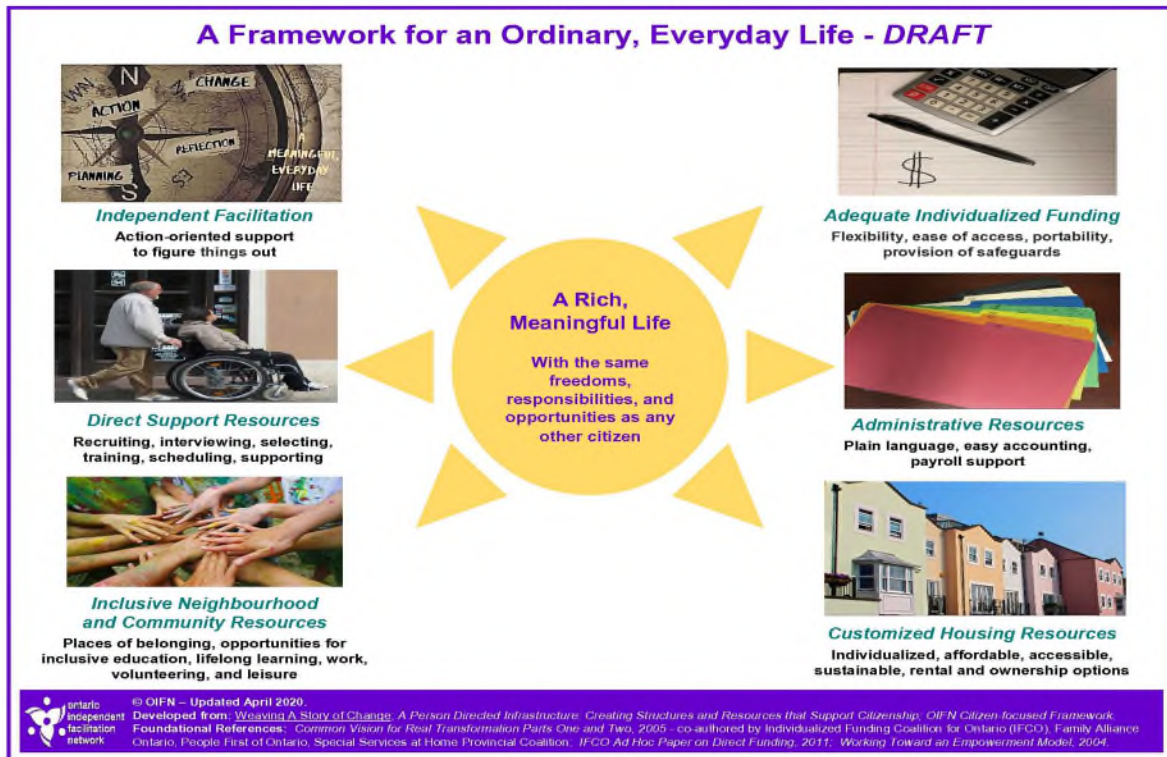
Setting the tone for our time together and inviting participants into a space of inspiration, connection, reflection, and growth, Wendy Newbery - an independent facilitator from Kitchener, Ontario - led a reading of an excerpt from Peter Block's The Answer to How is Yes: Acting on What Matters.



Moving into Breakout groups, participants had an opportunity to connect with one another in small groups and share what brought them to the conversation and what an everyday, ordinary life means to them.

OIFN's Framework for an Ordinary Everyday Life

On behalf of OIFN, Colleen Mitchell, an OIFN Steward and independent facilitator from Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports, provided an overview of OIFN's Framework for an Ordinary, Everyday Life, highlighting the elements needed to support a person to experience a rich, meaningful life in the neighbourhood and community of their own choosing.



[Click here to download OIFN's Framework for an Ordinary Everyday Life](#)

Staying Brave Stories – Kirby's Everyday, Ordinary Life

Following Colleen's introduction, Kirby from Windsor, Ontario shared her journey, along with the support of her loved ones, independent facilitator, and other community partners, to customize her supports and create a rich, meaningful life.

As Kirby mentioned, she began to take many action steps toward her vision through her involvement in the I-Decide Project, a time-limited project led by Legal Assistance of Windsor that provided rights-based education and services to community members with intellectual disabilities, in order to promote self-directed decisions and planning.

Although the project has ended, the I-Decide documentary is available for viewing at <https://www.legalassistanceofwindsor.com/i-decide>.

"If you ask me what I came to do in this world,
I, an artist, will answer you:
I am here to live out loud."

- ÉMILE ZOLA -

Light Bulb Moments

Following small group discussions on possibilities for people with disabilities to have the freedom and support to direct their lives, participants were invited to share a single word, a picture or image, a quote, or a gesture to express their thoughts.

Common themes and patterns emerged as people shared:

- **Coming Together in a Movement of the Heart**
 - Listening deeply to one another leads to acknowledgment, respect, and action
 - Conversations create opportunities for progress; sharing stories invites inspiration, rather than resistance.
 - The voices and experiences of people and families and the role of Independent Facilitation can impact society by shifting perspectives and working together toward a shared vision.
 - “One bright light can change an entire room.”
 - The voices of people and families are strengthened when we engage others; we need to welcome in our allies.
- **Courage to Ask Questions, Power to Influence Change**
 - We have power in our thoughts, words, and actions.
 - Recognizing that we are agents of change and have control over what happens in our lives can give us courage and strength.
 - There is bravery in the act of questioning; asking questions rather than accepting that there are no other options creates opportunities for change.
 - Being open to possibilities allows us to seek inspiration from others, collaborate, and bravely give of our gifts and receive the gifts of others that are offered to us.
- **Growth and Change is a Journey over Time**
 - When people are supported to direct their own lives, they control the pace of change and are supported to assert their own readiness.
 - Independent facilitators plant seeds of change and walk with people over time, facilitating a process of learning and exploration.
 - Readiness is a journey of patience and being supported to move toward our own awakening.
 - The time to act is when readiness meets opportunity.

As we start to really get to know others, as we begin to listen to each other's stories, things begin to change. We begin the movement from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to trust, from closedness to openness, from judgment and prejudice to forgiveness and understanding. It is a movement of the heart."

- Jean Vanier



Graphic created and shared by Wendy Newbery


Moving Forward

We concluded our time together by listening to the song “Bound by a Thread” by Gaelynn Lea.

Gaelynn’s performance echoed the theme of our conversations, reminding us of the power and strength that we share as we journey together in a movement of the heart.

“Bound by a Thread” by Gaelynn Lea

Bound bound bound By a thread Going down down Through the ages You could’ve stayed But you came here instead To fill my life’s empty pages	Bound bound bound By a thread Going down down Through the ages You could’ve stayed But you came here instead To fill my life’s empty pages
And I I do believe We’ll see the fruits of our labor Maybe not now Maybe lifetimes ahead If only love would be our guide	And I I do believe We’ll see the fruits of our labor Maybe not now Maybe lifetimes ahead If only love would be our guide
(INSTRUMENTAL BREAK)	Our guide Our guide Our guide Our guide If only love would be our guide



YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeZJtFcFDN8>

We invite you to [stay connected](#) to OIFN for updates about upcoming opportunities for us to once again come together *in hopeful and brave spaces*.

Voices of the Community of Practice

When asked to share any additional comments about the gathering, participants said:

“Loved the passion and discussion and feeling that we were a group working together toward the same end. Very heartfelt.”

“I am so glad that OIFN is reaching out with a regular CoP.”

“That was inspiring to continue doing the work that I do.”