



Spring Issue 2024

OPTIONS

Newsletter of the Independent Living Resource Centre (Manitoba)



Spring Issue – Our Well-Being

Spring 2024

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Important Note:

All subjects, materials and dates contained within are subject to change due to the COVID-19 situation and closure of most facilities and programs at the ILRC.

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From the Soapbox

John Young



Training and professional development play a significant role in enhancing both mental and physical well-being, extending far beyond just skill enhancement or career progression. Mental health training programs in the workplace, for example, are not just beneficial but essential for maintaining a positive company culture and employee well-being. They provide employees with the necessary tools to manage daily stressors, thus preventing mental health crises and promoting psychological safety. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of engagement and lower levels of burnout. Moreover, such training can significantly reduce workplace conflicts by improving communication and trust among team members.

By prioritizing mental health, organizations can also see a reduction in healthcare costs and risks associated with physical health issues, such as heart disease and inflammation, underscoring the interconnectedness of mental and physical well-being. We have seen an upsurge in public and community interest in our various training programs, with Mental Health First Aid garnering significant interest across the field.

Professional development, on the other hand, offers a plethora of benefits including career advancement, skill enhancement, and a boost in confidence and job satisfaction. It encourages employees to stay up-to-date

with industry trends, thereby maintaining sharpness in their skills. Companies that invest in their employees' professional growth not only foster a stronger team but also improve their retention rates and attract better talent. This demonstrates a clear commitment to their workforce's success, cultivating a more engaged and productive work environment.

Personal development, encompassing aspects like mental, social, emotional, and physical growth, is equally important. Engaging in activities like creative writing courses, workshops, or even rest and relaxation, can significantly improve mental fitness, resilience, and self-awareness. Social connections, gained through networking opportunities in professional settings, enrich personal development by enhancing communication skills and relationship-building. Emotional intelligence, a key component of personal development, is developed through experiences that help individuals understand and manage their emotions and those of others. It is no coincidence that there are increasing numbers of workshops and learning opportunities centred on emotional intelligence.

Incorporating training and professional development into personal and organizational practices can therefore have profound benefits on an individual's holistic well-being, underscoring the importance of a balanced approach to mental and physical health. Feel free to connect with our training team if you are interested in any of our courses.



Rita Paynter

Doug Lockhart

ILRC has lost a dear friend and staunch advocate for the disability community.

When Rita walked into a room, her presence was instantly known. She would address you directly and say, “Hey, I need to talk to you.” Her upfront and genuine nature could only be rivaled by her infectious laugh and love for life like no other. You could always find Rita at a local sporting event with her husband Ray or attending one of the CP bike races, enjoying her community in various ways.

She was the kindest, most gentle, caring, sweet person to interact with, but also a devoted friend and somebody who was relentless in ensuring that her needs and those of others with disabilities were being met in a respectful way. Her contributions to ILRC’s PACE program led the way with consumer control over all aspects of care that impacted the quality of life of persons with disabilities on a day-to-day basis. She was also a regular at ILRC AGMs and always had

something to say or was willing to vote on the passing of a motion that would impact the progress of our community. Rita was also a regular contributor to ILRC’s options newsletter and was always very poignant and thoughtful in the information she provided to our community.

When fighting for her independence, no one was a better self-advocate than Rita. She certainly could be a menace, but she always approached you with a smile on your face. She was fiercely independent and always knocked on the right doors to address her needs and lead her desired quality of life. But once the door was opened, we would get greeted with the biggest smile, and she always found a way to break down the walls of indifference, prejudice, and discrimination with her kind-hearted, sincere approach.

She advocated for herself and always kept in mind the impact her successes would have on the broader community. As a result, she was actively involved as a peer and a mentor in various ways, some informal and some formal, but she made a noticeable difference wherever she went. You would often see Rita chatting in our common areas with people trying to learn from her and understand how Rita lived such a successful quality of life. Or they just wanted to chat, and she was good at that, too.

Rita, your presence and contributions will be remembered forever, and you will be dearly missed.



The planned main transit network and its supporting routes are being developed with these objectives in mind.

As we anticipate the unveiling of these new plans and the start of construction, it's crucial to remember the importance of excellent customer service, particularly in terms of accessibility and inclusion. I've been disappointed with Winnipeg's bus service lately. For instance, when a friend who uses a wheelchair and I tried to board bus #55, the driver refused to deploy the ramp, claiming he was short on time, and drove away. This left us frustrated and forced us to alter our plans to wait for a different bus.

Sadly, this kind of experience isn't rare. Any upgrade to the transit system must prioritize customer service and respect, possibly through updated training and a renewed focus on accessibility. We'll see what changes the new Transit Master Plan brings. For those interested in learning more, visit the project's website at winnipeg.ca/primarytransitnetwork.



Transit Woes

Sharon Olson

Winnipeg is close to completing the design of a revamped bus system for the area. Residents have long awaited improvements in bus services, and the city is now ready to share their updated plans. These plans are the culmination of extensive design efforts and community input, aiming for a launch in June 2025.

Feedback indicates that people in Winnipeg desire a bus system that offers more frequent, efficient, reliable, and accessible services.



The Dangers of Over-Thinking

Robert Mitchell

I came across an interesting article from the Harvard Business Review this month, and it fits perfectly with our theme of seeking better mental and physical wellness. In today's fast-paced work environment, the wealth of information and heightened demands have inadvertently paved the way for a new professional pitfall: **overthinking**. A considerable segment of the workforce, ranging from half to nearly three-quarters of adults, confess to getting caught in the web of excessive thought (Wilding, 2024). Overthinking can deplete personal energy and stymie organizational agility, adopting a culture of missed opportunities and risk aversion that impedes growth.

There are three types of Overthinking:

1. **Rumination:** This form of overthinking traps individuals in a loop of past events, often laden with regret and self-reproach. It's characterized by a fixation on negative feedback and a persistent rehashing of past setbacks. To counter rumination, experts suggest allocating specific "worry time" to contain these thoughts, preventing them from overwhelming your day.
2. **Future Tripping:** Unlike rumination, future tripping manifests as anxiety about what's to come. It manifests as an excessive preoccupation with planning for every possible outcome, often at the cost of appreciating current successes. Techniques like temporal distancing, where one imagines oneself in the future to gain

perspective, can help mitigate the intensity of these concerns.

3. **Overanalyzing:** This involves an in-depth scrutiny of situations or decisions, often leading to paralysis by analysis. The recommended approach to combat overanalyzing is satisficing—aiming for "good enough" decisions rather than perfect, guided by key decision criteria to prioritize the most crucial factors.

I am guilty of all three types of overthinking, and if it gets away from you, you can find yourself ruminating in isolation. You can get trapped by self-doubt and fear of what might be or could have been. How do you get over overthinking? The first step is recognizing the overthinking at play. Then, exercise the recommended approach to deal with it. Understanding and addressing overthinking is paramount as we navigate the complexities of the modern work world. By acknowledging its various forms and implementing targeted strategies, we can improve personal well-being at home and in the workplace.



Siblings of the Seasons

Brian Smith

*Spring is a time of renewal.
Renewal of life, renewal of hope and a
renewal of romance.
It is also a time for dissipation of winter ice.
A fresh start; a clean slate.*

*We emerge like butterflies unhurried
from our winter cocoons.
Slow, but steadily,
like our ebbing lawn glaciers,
our summer selves reappear,*

*rejuvenated.
Reanimated from the frozen-in-time status
which we fell into last fall.
We spread our wings wide*

*and smile like suns
while we admire the renewed world around
us,
As components of this earth, we are akin to
the new Winds;
both exchanging the stagnant winter air
from our bodies.*

*It is Spring and we are re-birthed
as with all that Spring renew!
Being children of Mother Earth,
She, has made us
Sibling of Her seasons. . .*



New Faces, New Places

Kyle Jackson

The Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) is pleased to announce Hannah Szymanski as its newest Independent Living Consultant. Hannah initially joined ILRC as a volunteer in December 2023, where she was involved in assembling and organizing brochures and materials for the PACE and Information and Referral programs. Following approximately a month of volunteer work, she began her position supporting the Leisure Education Program.

Hannah brings a rich and varied experience to her new role. Before her journey into volunteering, she dedicated over five years to administrative roles with the Province of Manitoba. Seeking a change, Hannah shifted her focus to volunteer work. Additionally, she possesses teaching experience, having spent

around five years in Bangkok, Thailand, as an English teacher for kindergarten students. Initially planned as a one-year tenure, her contract was extended multiple times, culminating in five years of teaching.

Outside of work, Hannah has a passion for photography and pottery. She studied at the PrairieView School of Photography, focusing on commercial photography, particularly for Winnipeg's restaurant scene. Additionally, she finds pottery to be a therapeutic hobby, attending weekly classes at the Winnipeg Art Gallery to relieve stress and engage with fellow pottery enthusiasts.

Ready, Set – Go!

Natalie Pirson

Growing up, I was never into sports or any physical activity. I hated gym class – this one particular teacher would make a point of telling the other students to treat me as "special" due to my physical disability and encouraged them to encourage me. It wasn't very comfortable when, as a kid, I just wanted to blend in with others my age.

Fast-forward to 2013. Seven years after becoming a wheelchair user, I made a bet with someone to do the Super Run at the Manitoba Marathon (just shy of 5 km). I kind of trained for it, not expecting much and was fairly sure it would be my only race. Surprise, surprise, I ended up loving it, so I started participating in some smaller local races with my standard manual folding wheelchair chair.

I was looking for other wheelchair users to start a club, maybe, but that never materialized. So I ended up joining run clubs with able-bodied people. That was over 11 years ago and was one of the best things I've

ever done. Meeting so many people, exercising, gaining confidence, increasing my self-esteem and promoting integration. I was always taught to socialize with everyone. It was more eye-opening for the runners than anything else, but they learned quickly that I was serious about integrating myself into the communing of running.

I have always wondered about other para-athletes—those who compete on a serious level or have the proper chairs and equipment. So I happened upon an activity in the Leisure Guide this year called "Track and Field for Para Athletes," and I joined up. In a few short classes, I have already learned SO much! I'm still using my sports chair, but another athlete is using the long racing chair, so I am learning how that equipment works. It's no easy feat, but I may try one eventually. In any case, I am learning techniques and lingo and getting the chance to expand my skills and hopefully get faster. Eventually, we will learn the 'throwing' part of Track and Field.

In contrast, I am also part of the Manitoba Runner's Association Track Club, so I am getting the best of both worlds and able to practice my technique on a longer track. Amongst friends, I've known for a while and meeting new ones. I am the only wheelchair user in that track club and have so much pushing myself alongside able-bodied athletes, learning from each other.

If you are interested in joining the Track and Field for Para Athletes, there is a Spring Session posted in the Leisure Guide. You can register online for \$40.00 starting April 9th. Classes take place at the St. James Centennial Pool.

There are additional Sports resources to connect with, such as:

The Manitoba Wheelchair Sport Association at <https://www.inclusiverecreationmb.org/manitoba-wheelchair-sport-assoc>

Accessible Sport Connection at <https://ascmanitoba.ca/> or <https://ascmanitoba.ca/play/> (many additional resources listed here!)

Manitoba Blind Sports Association at <https://manitobablindsports.com/>



Did You Know?

Hannah Szymanski

1. "A Prescription for Nature": The BC Parks Foundation launched PaRx in 2020 to connect Canadians with nature's health benefits, starting in British Columbia and expanding nationwide, including Manitoba in October 2021. With over 11,000 registered prescribers, PaRx collaborates with organizations like Parks Canada to provide free or discounted access to green and blue spaces for patients in need. Particularly beneficial for those with depression or anxiety disorders, the natural prescription is not a cure-all but can be an alternative or complement to medical treatment. <https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/>

2. Empowering Métis Wellness: The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) broke ground on Michif Manor, a culturally focused lodging for Métis families traveling to Winnipeg for medical care. Located near the Health Sciences Centre, the facility will offer 12 private units with washrooms, communal kitchens, a dining room, a workout room, a children's games room, indoor and outdoor seating, laundry facilities, and a cultural/resource room. Expected to open in fall 2024, Michif Manor will prioritize empowering Red River Métis Citizens and visiting families with unique support services, including educational programs and workshops. This initiative aims to enhance well-being by fostering a sense of community and resilience.

<https://www.mmf.mb.ca/news/mmf-invests-millions-into-healthcare-for-families>

3. Manitoba Blue Cross has taken a significant step in enhancing wellness support by developing an assessment tool that delves into six key dimensions of well-being: Emotional, Occupational, Financial, Social, Intellectual, and Physical. This assessment is designed to guide individuals on their wellness journey, providing insights into areas of strength and improvement. Building on this foundation, Manitoba Blue Cross has introduced a comprehensive digital wellness plan and online platform. This user-friendly platform serves as a central hub for Manitobans, offering a holistic view of their wellness status and providing personalized recommendations for improvement. It empowers individuals to take charge of their well-being by accessing various resources tailored to their needs. Notably, this platform is accessible to all Manitobans, free of charge, and ensures complete confidentiality

without needing a Manitoba Blue Cross membership. Moreover, integrated into the platform, the wellness plan unlocks a wealth of additional resources and services to support individual well-being further.

<https://wellness.mb.bluecross.ca/>

Tech Corner

Jason Hirose

Unless you have no interest in new technology, you've probably heard or seen something about Apple's new Vision Pro headset. Looking like a pair of oversized ski goggles, the Vision Pro is Apple's attempt at creating a virtual reality headset. The headset provides the user with visual and audio stimulation to encourage them to believe they are in a different reality. The Vision Pro is primarily controlled through hand gestures and cameras that track the wearer's eye position. The device also supports control via voice and can be configured to use any of these control methods, in combination or alone.

Virtual reality has real-world applications. Most notably, it can simulate dangerous situations without exposing anyone to danger. (Think invasive surgery or bomb deactivation.) The Vision Pro does not, thus far, support such applications. This is an expensive device - \$3500 US is a hefty price for any household device. It is fragile – many parts are made of glass, and many users have already reported that their unit's exterior screen is cracked. It is heavy – one and a half pounds might not sound like much, but when it's hanging off the front of your face, it's quite a bit. That weight also does not include the external battery pack.

This leads me to a question: Who is this device for? For example, would you go out in

public while effectively blindfolded, wearing an incredibly visible and expensive device? Who would want to be that vulnerable? I'm not just talking about people with disabilities, either. Criticism has been made about Apple's advertising campaign – who they chose to market their device. No one with any features outside of the "norm" – no facial differences (which could make it difficult to fit on the face), no large hair (which could interfere with the head straps) – just your stereotypical people from stock photos.

Technology can be a great equalizer; however, the Vision Pro is an example that creates disparities rather than eliminates them. Yes, the device has accessibility features, but who was consulted when developing the features? Do these features go far enough to enable access for people with disabilities? Imagine a device being launched with the endorsement of a major disability organization. This is a missed opportunity for both Apple and the community of people with disabilities. When developing any new technology, accessibility must be a factor in development; otherwise, we risk leaving many people behind.



Access Unlimited – Unleashed

Patrick Stewart

By the end of spring (2024), ILRC and its community partners are on track to complete the massively successful 'Access Unlimited' project, funded in part by the 2023-24 Manitoba Accessibility Fund. The project's primary goal is to collaborate with a handful of community organizations to improve the accessibility of their physical premises, service delivery, and web presence and to help reach provincial standards established in the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. To date, ILRC has engaged three partner organizations: Artbeat Studio Inc., Urban Design Ltd., and Sara Riel Inc., each representing different challenges according to their location but with the goal of removing any barriers (physical, information, policy, etc.) that prevent full participation.

The Access Unlimited project consists of 3 main phases. First, after an initial consultation, ILRC's team of auditors begins to compile an accessibility review of the partner's physical location, assessing entrances, parking, washrooms, office layout, website (you get the idea) according to universal design guidelines, and, of course, lived experience. Second, an interactive workshop is held with all staff to unpack accessibility concepts like "reasonable accommodations" and to put auditing tools (like checklists and measuring tapes) in the hands of the participants. A flaw of traditional audits can be that front-line staff are not engaged in the process, limiting their 'buy-in'; Access Unlimited aims to change that. The information gathered in the workshop phase is then integrated into a final accessibility

report that can help organizations focus their efforts and establish unambiguous accessibility goals. The third and final phase is follow-up and support, helping partner organizations connect with the resources they need to achieve their goals, including further training opportunities, funding possibilities, and consultation with ILRC. The result is a shared vision fueled by direct community engagement, providing the best opportunity for meaningful change and the elimination of barriers.

Without compromising confidentiality, we can enthusiastically say that progress and accessibility improvements are already underway for all partners, including accessing additional staff training opportunities, acquiring funding to support accessible renovations, and engaging the City of Winnipeg to remove barriers created by construction. Not all improvements require significant construction; many barriers can be addressed through improved signage, thoughtful design layouts, increased awareness, and policy development. In a word, Access Unlimited provides a "holistic" review rooted in the day-to-day lived experience of people with disabilities.

The Access Unlimited project will continue beyond the sponsorship dates established by the Manitoba Accessibility Fund as a unique service available to the entire community. If you or an organization you work with/for are interested in improving customer service, increasing awareness, and leveraging community knowledge, Access Unlimited is for you because accessibility is for everyone!



Spring Into Action – Don't Miss it!

Hannah Szymanski

1. Dome@Home Planetarium:
February 29, 2024 to October 31, 2024
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Dome@Home is a FREE virtual program hosted by the Manitoba Museum. It invites Manitobans to explore the universe with Planetarium Astronomer Scott Young. As pioneering Canadian astronomer Helen Sawyer Hogg always said, “The stars belong to everyone”.
2. Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq:
Experience free admission to the WAG-Qaumajuq every second Sunday of the month. Explore the 185,000-square-foot cultural campus, including the stunning Visible Vault showcasing thousands of carvings and more. Each month features special themes and activities for all to enjoy.
3. Winnipeg Leisure Guide: To register, call 311 or visit <https://winnipeg.ca/leisureonline>

- Community Night at Sargeant Tommy Prince Place (90 Sinclair St.)
Free weight room and gym access on Tuesdays from 5:00PM – 9:30PM
- Free Senior Walk – Run – Chat at Peguis Trail Health & Fitness Centre (1400 Rothesay St.)

4. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Manitoba (CPAWS) – Nature Club:

CPAWS Manitoba’s Nature Club is designed to help Manitobans get outside, make new friends and learn about the wonders of nature. These are community-building programs designed to inspire people to:

- Explore Manitoba
- Gain the confidence to get out into the wilderness
- Develop new skills; and
- Learn about Manitoba’s wildlife, birds, plants and natural environment.

To sign up for their ongoing complimentary group hikes, visit this link for more details: <https://cpawsemb.org/nature-club/events/>

PACE



Personal Attendant Community Education

PACE is a widely recognized training program, designed and delivered by the disability community, providing real world experience and guaranteed job placements city wide.

Training - Certification
& Employment !

Fulltime, part-time & casual job placements. Hours that match your schedule and lifestyle.



YOU HAVE CHOICES!
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Five weeks of attendant care training!

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- Personal care.
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thecentre@ilrc.mb.ca 204 947-0194
www.ilrc.mb.ca/pace



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Your membership helps support newsletter distribution. Being a member has its benefits in that you can vote at our next annual meeting and receive exclusive invitations to community events. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so. The cost is **\$5.00**.

Please inform us about the following:

New Member

Renewal

I prefer not to receive any mailings from ILRC.

Name: _____

Org. Name: _____

Visit Us at www.ilrc.mb.ca

Phone: _____

Address: _____

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