

OPTIONS

Newsletter of the Independent Living Resource Centre (Manitoba)



Fall/Winter Issue

Fall/Winter 2025

Independent Living Resource Centre
100-167 Lombard Avenue.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0V3
Phone: 204-947-0194 (TTY)
Toll Free: 1-800-663-3043
Fax: 204-943-6625
Email: thecentre@ilrc.mb.ca
Web: www.ilrc.mb.ca

Chairperson

Ken Shachtay

Vice –Chairperson

Brian Baldwin

Treasurer

Neil McNiven

Secretary

Grant Young

Sharon Olson

Lucie Diane

John Pinkerton

Executive Director

John Young

Contents:

From the Soapbox	3
Quality Care ...	4
A Game ...	5
New Faces ...	6
Tech Corner	7
Winter Crossword	8

Created/Edited through the ILRC Options Newsletter Committee. The views and opinions expressed in this edition are those of the original authors and other contributors. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent those of ILRC

From the Soapbox

John Young



It has been years since the pandemic reshaped our streets and our sense of community. Yet, for many Manitobans with disabilities, something remains missing. Downtown still feels quieter than it once was—less vibrant, less visible. The faces and voices that once filled the sidewalks and cafés, including many from our disability community, are too often absent.

There are many reasons for this. Some still fear illness, or the chilling thought that if they became sick, society might simply let them fade away. Others face mental and physical barriers that are harder to see: the lingering anxiety of public spaces, the exhaustion of navigating environments that remain inaccessible, or the difficulty of finding reliable transportation.

For those of us in the non-profit sector, these realities are more than observations—they are daily challenges. Recruiting volunteers, rebuilding programs, and helping people feel safe again takes patience and empathy. At the Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC), we continue to recognize the right of every individual to make their own health and safety choices. Mask use remains welcome here, and we will continue to support an environment where people's comfort and autonomy come first.

Despite the challenges, there is progress. ILRC's community programming model is steadily growing again, reconnecting people to the services and training they need. Our taxi driver accessibility training continues to

thrive—ensuring that those who move through our city professionally understand the importance of inclusion and respect for all passengers. Our PACE program—Personal Attendant Community Education—remains one of the strongest examples of community-led innovation in Manitoba. For more than 20 years, ILRC has trained attendants through a lived-experience model, led by people with disabilities themselves.

Unfortunately, this vital work remains overlooked by our government. Despite the Manitoba NDP's stated commitment to accessibility and inclusion, they have not engaged with or supported this training program, nor have they reached out to understand the expertise available right here in their own province.

After more than three decades in this sector, including over twenty years as Executive Director, I am still surprised by how often government turns to private contractors rather than local non-profits for program development and policy solutions. It's not only a missed opportunity—it's a misunderstanding of value.

Non-profits like ILRC are not fringe players in Canada's economy; they embody lived expertise, community trust, and an authentic connection to the people they serve. In Manitoba, that expertise often goes untapped. Still, we continue. With resilience, with lived experience, and with a deep belief in community-driven change. The ILRC remains committed to creating an accessible, inclusive Manitoba—one where visibility returns, and no one feels left behind.

Quality Care Begins with You

Doug Lockhart

Often as our loved ones needs change these circumstances present situations that overwhelm us. ILRC provides opportunities for caregivers to reduce their inherent caregiving stresses by being better prepared with skills and resources to address daily needs with the utmost quality of care. By adding the family caregiver (FCG) component we offer the option to age in place with personalized care, design plans that suit individual needs, and ensure dignity and autonomy as one grows older or support needs change.

The benefits of the FCG program are:

- Improved safety and understanding between care providers and loved ones.
- Learning essential skills from those with lived experience.
- Reduced stress, isolation and burnout.
- Connecting to peers and community resources.

We have found that a prepared caregiver is a happy one who is efficient at offering quality care to their loved one. Anyone interested in being better informed and prepared for the challenges care giving brings can register for the upcoming training on the following dates:

Sessions November 3-5

- Nov 3 - AM Activities of Daily Living: includes feeding, nutrition, skin care, shower/bath routines, medication management, oral care, foot care etc.

- Nov 3 – PM Lifts and Transfers: Assistive devices, range of motion, body mechanics, transfers, fall prevention, repositioning, Hoyer/Sara/ceiling track lifts etc.
- Nov 4 - AM Bowel/Bladder Care: Peri care, personal hygiene, catheters, equipment and supplies, infection control, bowel disimpaction.
- Nov 4 – PM Wound Care: Wound identification, risk factors/prevention, infection control, cleansing agents, bandages, dressings, wound care management
- Nov 5 AM Respiratory Care: Anatomy, trach care, suctioning, ventilators, manual resuscitation, dressings, ties, mucous plug relief etc.
- Nov 5 PM Communication: Methods of communication, non-judgmental listening, non-verbal communication, independent living philosophy etc.

Cost is \$80 plus GST per session. Please contact ILRC at 204-947-0194 or email training@ilrc.mb.ca



A Game We Can All Play

Robert Mitchell

In the late hours of a Winnipeg winter, the glow of a monitor can feel like both hearth and portal. For many, the ritual is familiar: headset snug, hands curved over mouse or controller, the reassuring chime of an engaging video *game* as another digital night begins. Yet for thousands of Canadians with disabilities, that door into Azeroth (World of Warcraft)—or Sekiro’s unforgiving Ashina, or the wide plains of *Red Dead Redemption*—has too often remained barred. The obstacles are not dragons, but barriers no less insurmountable: small fonts, unmappable controls, relentless button-mashing.

Gaming, however, has never been just a pastime. For those at the margins, it is a meeting ground, a community, a stage for dignity and belonging. The difference between access and exclusion can decide whether someone joins a guild of friends or remains forever outside the city gates.

Canada is officially on a long march toward accessibility. The Accessible Canada Act sets 2040 as the horizon for a barrier-free nation, with Manitoba, New Brunswick, and others sketching similar ambitions provincially. We have learned in Manitoba that the Accessibility for Manitobans Act legislation is but a blunt instrument in a world where community innovation often outpaces policy.

It is in this space between policy and possibility that non-profits and industry have begun to act.

In Vancouver, Halifax, Winnipeg, and beyond, *GAME Checkpoints* have emerged. These

are not the bustling LAN cafés of the early 2000s or the internet cafes that followed but calmer, intentional spaces: adaptive controllers spread across tables, joysticks engineered for unconventional grips, mentors who know both the geometry of disability and the logic of circuitry.

The initiative belongs to Makers Making Change, a Canadian non-profit now leading one of the country’s largest accessible gaming programs (<https://www.makersmakingchange.com/>).

Their philosophy is simple and practical: put tools into people’s hands and let them play. A custom joystick rig can be 3D-printed at a fraction of the commercial cost. Volunteers build, test, and donate. The result is a new kind of public square where gamers once excluded can finally log in.

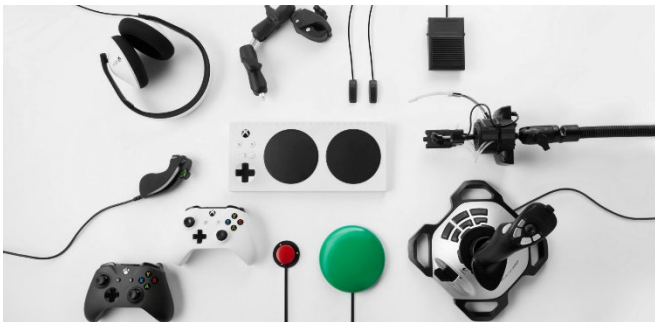
At the other end of the spectrum lies Ubisoft, the French giant with deep roots in Montreal, Quebec City, and Toronto. For decades, Ubisoft has exported Canadian-made worlds—Renaissance Florence in *Assassin’s Creed II*, occupied Paris in *Valiant Hearts*, and soon, the galaxy-spanning *Star Wars Outlaws*.

Recently, Ubisoft has been candid about accessibility. It helped launch the Accessible Games Initiative, an industry-wide effort to standardize accessibility “tags”—narrated menus, customizable subtitles, stick inversion, and more—so players know at a glance if a game will meet their needs before they buy it. Its engineers also developed Chroma, an open-source tool that simulates color blindness in real time, making inclusive design as essential as debugging.

These efforts are not charity but necessity. Games live or die by their communities, and communities thrive when no one is left behind. By embedding accessibility into design, Ubisoft signals that inclusion is not fringe but frontier. It's also good business – more gamers and stronger community equals higher profits and revenue growth.

Consider again the glow of that Winnipeg monitor, the click of mouse and keyboard. I may not need an adaptive controller, but I do use macros and sequencers to streamline my gaming experience. When a disabled player maps combat in *Sekiro* to a single adaptive device, or when a father and son ride side by side across *Red Dead*'s plains without inaccessible UI—these are not private victories. They ripple outward.

Gaming, like music or sport, becomes a shared language. Canada's disability community has long fought for ramps, buses, and jobs. Now it fights for raids, narratives, and the digital right to belong. And in this arena, it is winning: from grassroots labs to multinational studios, accessibility in gaming is no longer a quiet afterthought. It is loud, visible, and increasingly, expected.



New Faces; New Places

Natalie Pirson

Did you enjoy the freedom of being out on the water with our Able Sail program this past summer? If you did, we welcomed a new member to our team this year.

His name is Cameron Warren and he spent this summer learning how to support people with disabilities in our Martin 16 boats. Along with doing a lot of manual labor at the docks, he learned a lot about ILRC, our Independent Living philosophy and being more independent himself.

Cameron has now transitioned into the office setting, primarily supporting Natalie with administration in our PACE program as well as experiencing classes pivotal to supporting himself and others. He is a talkative guy which is a benefit in an office full of introverts and quickly becoming an asset in promoting ILRC at public events. We hope he continues to learn and grow.

Outside of a work environment, he enjoys listening to music, watching 80's and 90's movies, historical documentaries, tinkering with cars and cooking.

Welcome, Cameron!

Tech Corner

Jason Hirose

Let's talk about AI (Artificial Intelligence). I was fortunate to have attended this year's World Summit AI. My purpose in attending the summit was to find avenues where AI can be used to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Some presenters were surprised to see a disability organization represented, others had presentations ready for accessible solutions that were already in place. All were very welcoming and interested in hearing how accessibility could be incorporated in the future.

You may not be familiar with the concept of AI. At its core, AI is a field of technology that creates systems that can perform tasks usually associated with human intelligence. Examples you may have already seen include voice assistants (eg: Alexa, Siri), customer service chat bots and self-driving cars. If you're more familiar with the topic then you likely know names such as ChatGPT, Copilot and Gemini. These are known as Generative AIs: They take in prompts from users and create something from that prompt. Some of these prompts look much like how you would use a search engine. (Eg: When does ILRC open on Monday?) Other prompts might be to create text, images, computer code or even video. This kind of AI can save a great amount of time for certain tasks and is easy to use. You talk with it like you would a person and it gives you answers.

Generative AI is not without its downsides. The current models of generative AIs can be a security risk. Where they store the information you provide and who has access to that information is not entirely known. You never want to provide an AI with any

information that can identify you personally. (Eg: name, address, SIN, etc.)

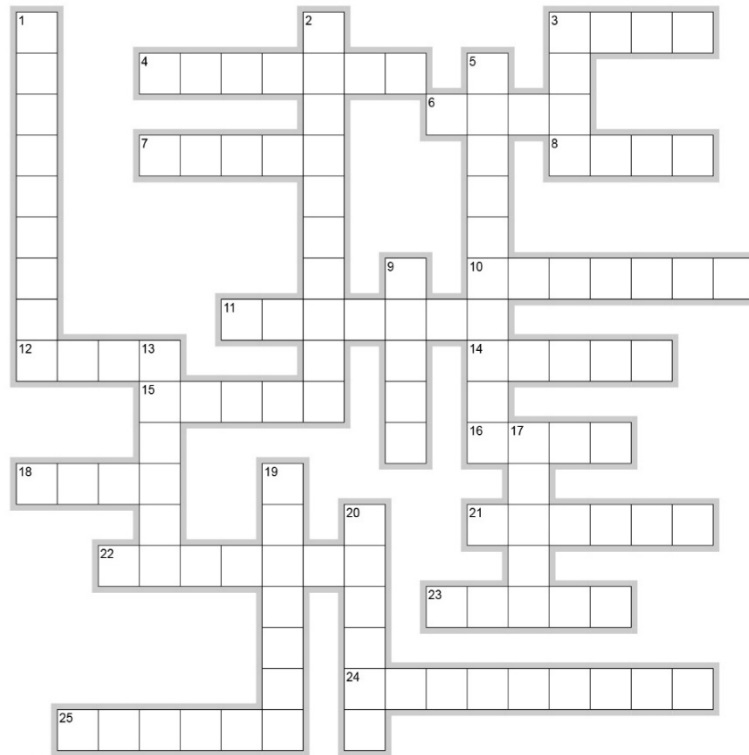
Another type of AI that you might not be familiar with is Agentic AI. This AI uses a specifically trained agent to help with a specific task. For example, many large companies will have an AI Agent that employees can consult for company policies. Agentic AI doesn't have the same security problems as Generative AI because you typically know where your data is and who has access to it.

There's a hidden cost to AI that many do not talk about – the impact to the environment. AI uses an immense amount of electricity and fresh water. The resources used to create the hardware that the AIs run on is also limited and mining it out of the ground has an environmental impact as well.

The purpose of this article is not to turn you away from AI. AI is a tool and just as any other tool it can be used for good or for harm. It's important to recognize that AI is here to stay. It's also important for people with disabilities to have their say in how this technology moves forward. AI has already improved the lives of many people with disabilities (Think about how voice assistants help people with mobility issues) but we need to ensure that it continues to develop and serve all people – regardless of ability.



Winter Crossword



Across

- 2. Month when fall begins
- 3. Where birds go for the winter
- 4. Fall desert made with oats and apples
- 7. Leaf colour number 3
- 10. Gathering of crops
- 11. Fall vegetable used in soups
- 13. CFL goblet colour
- 15. An orchard fruit
- 17. Hot apple beverage
- 19. Sweet tree that sheds its leaves
- 21. Canada's bird
- 24. A month to remember
- 27. Animal that gather food for the winter
- 30. Popular fall fabric
- 31. Popular fall sport

Down

- 1. Fall hunting season target
- 2. The days are getting...
- 5. Axl sang of this November meteorological phenomenon
- 6. Back to...
- 8. Blast of wind
- 9. Pie number 2
- 12. Spooky face covering
- 14. Leaf colour number 2
- 16. For a pie or a lantern
- 18. Fall's final month
- 20. A word for a bird
- 22. Pie number 1
- 23. A warm hat
- 25. Horn of...
- 26. Warming garment
- 28. Leaf colour number 1
- 29. What the leaves do

PACE

PERSONAL ATTENDANT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Employable skills today Experience for a lifetime

Start your career as an
[Independent Living Attendant](#)

PACE is a recognized training program designed and delivered by the disability community. Get job ready with the vital skills needed to make a real difference!



personal care * home management
communication * mental health * diet/nutrition,
body movement * workplace safety
assistive devices * emergency management
wound care * community accessibility

We Have Choices!



Family Caregiver workshops

Thousands of older adults and Manitobans with disabilities rely on **family caregivers** to live in their homes and communities.

ILRC provides essential training and support to family caregivers seeking to develop new skills and increased awareness.

Activities of Daily Living:

Nov 3, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Lifts and Transfers:

Nov 3, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Bowel/Bladder Care:

Nov 4, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Wound Care:

Nov 4, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Respiratory Care:

Nov 5, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Communication:

Nov 5, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

\$80 +gst per session



To register please contact:

Independent Living Resource Centre
100-167 Lombard Avenue.
Winnipeg, Manitoba



204 947-0194

training@ilrc.mb.ca

www.ilrc.mb.ca

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: _____

Postal Code: _____

STAFF ROSTER

Executive Director John Young

Project Development and Training Coordinator
Doug Lockhart

Operations and Administration Coordinator Robert Mitchell

Finance and Accounts Coordinator Eugene Del Mundo

Payroll Coordinator Sonia Muncal

Reception Kyle Jackson

Media/Web Administrator Jason Hirose

Information and Referral Natalie Pirson

Community Living - Qu'Appelle Housing/Brokerage/Self and Family Managed Care

Susianti Fierce

Krystal Polson

Tenant Resource Coordinator (Qu'Appelle) Kelly Thurston

Community Living Staffing

Romeo Recalde

Disability Awareness Resource Training (DART)

/Community Outreach

Patrick Stewart, Jason Hirose, Cherie-Lou Bagro

Personal Attendant Community Education Program (PACE)

Natalie Pirson

And many volunteers and members who support ILRC daily. We greatly appreciate these members of the **community team!**