

# PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE



**APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2021, 1:30PM TO 3:30PM**

**ZOOM VIRTUAL PEER GROUP MEETING NOTES**

**Hosted By:**

**Paul Gauthier**

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

**Ruth Marzetti**

Technology For Living

**Guest Speakers:**

- Kari Krogh, EcoWisdom
- Taylor Danielson, Technology For Living

More than ever, people with disabilities must come together as a unified group in society. How we support and help each other through crisis and every day hurdles will strengthen us as a community and as individuals. Living independently is a choice and comes with additional challenges. Through unification people with disabilities make a difference; each voice is important.

The goal of Pathways To Independence meetings are for peers to come together and share information and updates on current issues facing people with disabilities.

The April 2021 meeting was attended by approximately 78 people.

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## Joseph Theriault Recognition of Service to the Community

The meeting began with a special recognition to Joseph Theriault, President of the Board of Directors for the Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) Society.

Long has Joseph gone unrecognized for his background work around the Choice In Supports For Independent Living (CSIL) program. Approximately 27 years ago, Joseph teamed with Paul Gauthier to travel throughout British Columbia and with the work Paul was doing with the Ministry of Health, to create the CSIL program.

Through the ups and downs of the creation process, Joseph's unwavering support and contribution to the community was vital and has continued throughout the years. Joseph continues his support as a Board Member for the IFRC and with his attendance at the Pathways meetings.

The friendships formed over the years, and how Joseph gives so much of his time to support the community, is uncommonly generous and we want to give Joseph our sincere thanks and heartfelt appreciation.

## EcoWisdom – Kari Krogh

### *A Nature Wellness Program to Support Physical and Emotional Health*

Pathways is supporting three sessions for the series Accessible Wellness Program. An email will go out to Pathways peers with an invitation to join the sessions. The sessions will be held at times outside of Pathways meetings.

**Update:** Email invitation was mailed out on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Kari Krogh, who joined from Ontario, has been doing some incredible work around wellness and being able to connect with nature is something that is an interest to get away from the stresses of life. This is especially significant now, as we continue through the COVID-19 Pandemic, that we have a way of maintaining and increasing our overall wellness.

Paul Gauthier stated that he attended a couple of the sessions and highly recommends them for people with disabilities as they allow people to take a break from the stresses of life.

**Update:** The First Session is Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 2:00pm to 4:30pm PST

**Session Dates:** Further Session dates to be confirmed.

### **Kari Krogh**

I have my own experience with disability and chronic pain and found that nature connection and nature mindfulness has really helped me. I am excited when I see it benefiting other people and because we received a grant it means that people can participate in these sessions for free.

EcoWisdom has partnered with the Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) Society and Technology For Living (TFL) to present this Wellness Program in a three part series of workshops created to foster wellness, resiliency and community building. All three workshops will be held online and are graciously funded by TD Parks People Grants.

How can we connect with nature virtually? Hopefully, I can provide you with a little taste of that today and you can get a sense of what that feels like to connect with nature virtually.

The programs offer opportunities to connect with nature whether it is indoors with the house plants, gazing at nature images or going outside. If you want to see more samples of this, I have an Instagram account called Contemplative Forest Bathing where you can check to get a sense of how I use nature videos and nature images in this contemplative mindful process.



Click the Instagram logo to be taken to Contemplative Forest Bathing

The program is based on three bodies of research. Before I became disabled, I was living with chronic illness and was a professor of Disability Studies and worked in the area of personal support workers. Based on research in the area of Forest Medicine, there is a whole body of research that examines how we connect with nature and how it improves our emotions and our Physiology.

It is also designed using elements of neuroscience and research on health and urban green spaces. We use nature videos and photographs in the online programming and there are direct experiences both indoors and outdoors that people are invited to do and of course it is all Covid safe.

You get to choose where you are and how you interact to connect with nature. There will be some guided mindfulness exercises and this kind of practice is quite common in Japan. It is called Shinrin Yoku ( Forest Bath) and about 75% of the population uses this kind of mindfulness and nature practice to prevent significant health issues and to help alongside other medical interventions. The practice of Shinrin Roku supports all sorts of general wellness.

This practice is about opening all the senses and being present in the moment. There will be;

1. an online portion where we will gather in forum community and share.
2. guided nature mindfulness practices.
3. Some on-site elements where you will be encouraged, and notified of, to give some information about different accessible parks and other green spaces.

You will have an opportunity to share your experiences. The benefits of Forest Bathing are based in the whole body of research that have shown that when we spend time in nature, or when we spend time connecting to nature indoors, this really improves our relaxation and our physical immunity.

There are cells in our bodies called natural killer cells and they can help us strengthen our immune system, and when we engage in this process, we are changing our physiology. Forest Bathing can help to slow heart rate and it can lower blood pressure. It can also regulate blood sugar and lower levels of the stress hormone called cortisol.

Forest Bathing also helps with our emotional health and I do not know who could not use a little boost to emotional health given that we are all living through this pandemic. It can improve mood and our perceived quality of life, and it can reduce depression and anxiety.

Interestingly, I love providing these programs because I really gain a lot out of forming community with the people who participate. It facilitates the sense of social connection which is very helpful right now as a lot of us are experiencing some degree of isolation due to the pandemic. It is relevant to learning about and engaging in this forest bathing practice and we can increase our empathy towards one another.

For people with disabilities and care providers, Forest Bathing also helps with the self-caring and understanding the concept of interdependence. It can improve our cognitive function by improving our ability to sustain our attention and our capacity to remember. Forest Bathing can also increase our creativity for those artists, writers or painters and for those who are just seeking spiritual wellness it can also increase a spiritual connection.

The work is based on neuroscience and when we engage in these different practices, like body movements; sometimes I will be moving, and people will be imagining their bodies moving there in their space or moving through space or connecting. I show an image of my hand on a tree and what I am doing is activating what is called mirror neurons.

When I touch the tree, my brain is activated in a way that allows my brain to see a picture of my hand on the tree. Your brain will be activated in the same area. All of this is to say in terms of visualization. Sports athletes know all about how powerful visualization can be. We can be in the space, or we can visualize ourselves in this space. This is key to providing Accessible Nature Wellness Programming.

#### **Paul Gauthier comment**

I think about all of us here in the meeting who are advocates and it seems as though we spend most of our lives advocating against something, or working towards something else, so to take two or three hours in a session allows you to go away. For me personally, I never thought I would be interested in this. I thought it was kind of hokey but when I participated in a session, I did get this feeling of relaxation afterwards; my mind felt clearer.

I will never forget the image of Kari hugging the tree. At first you think “this is weird”, but she keeps the image showing for a while and although I initially felt like “I cannot do that, I cannot get out of my chair and hug that tree”, but I allowed myself to mentally think as if I was doing that and the reaction was just incredible. As a Paralympic Athlete I had some experience in visualization and that is something that Kari is able to help us do. It was incredible.

#### **Kari**

There is no charge for these workshops. Developing this series comes from a place of deep caring for people. I have been in the world of disability advocacy and I know how hard it is and we all need moments of break to rejuvenate and relax and take care of ourselves without pressure.

The May 8<sup>th</sup>, email invitation was sent out for May 15<sup>th</sup>, session. If you miss this session, you will receive an invitation to the next session.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view for the Nature Wellness Program to Support Physical and Emotional Health PDF presented at Pathways.

#### **Peer Open Discussion**

This hour is an opportunity for peers to engage in an open discussion. Topics were prepared, but peers were encouraged to discuss areas of concern, solutions or general information.

#### *CSIL Policy Exceptions Extension*

To often we hear that not everyone receives new, or updated, CSIL information which are being sent out by post or email, and so we bring them forward as we are notified of them.

On April 13, 2021, The Ministry of Health sent a letter to all Health Authorities, requesting they forward the information to CSIL Employers in their region. The letter stated that due to the ongoing pandemic and the challenges that CSIL clients continue to experience in maintaining continuity of care and safety, the Ministry is extending these temporary policy amendments until the emergency order is lifted, at which time the Health Authorities shall provide clients with a 90 day transition notice.

### **Payment To Family Members**

This is a significant update and enables CSIL Employers to manage their staffing needs and recruitment in a reasonable manner, while staying safe by minimizing infection risks. If you are currently hiring a family member, you can continue to do so, but you must keep your case manager informed if you hire immediate family members (parent, child or spouse).

As a reminder, your siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins are not considered immediate family members. You can hire them at any time, during or outside of the pandemic.

It is recommended that you continue to inform the case managers by way of a memo and submitted with your financial statements.

### **Sick Pay**

The time limited exception permits CSIL Employers to allocate surplus funding towards two weeks of pay for employees who are required to self quarantine.

Providing two weeks is something that you can choose as an employer; you do not have to, but if you choose to do so the exception allows for it.

If a CSIL employer lacks adequate surplus to cover the payroll burden, the Health Authorities will provide temporary financial relief on a case by case basis, with adequate justification and supporting documentation from the employer

### **Home Care Agencies**

The exception temporarily suspends the requirement to obtain prior approval to use agencies for emergency staffing.

It is recommended that you continue to inform the case managers by way of a memo and submit with your financial statements.

### **Universal Precautions and Safety Expense (PPE)**

CSIL Employers are temporarily permitted to expense greater than \$40 per month for universal precautions and safety.

If needed, the Health Authorities will provide additional funding for gloves, masks and hand sanitizers on a case by case basis based on adequate justification from CSIL Employers.

The Health Authorities were requested by the Ministry of Health, to notify all CSIL Employers. If you have not received it, it may be due to how your communication has been set up with them.

What we can do as a group is to keep each other informed of what is going on with respect to correspondence received from the Health Authorities. Emails and letters can be sent to Paul Gauthier, without the name attached, or we can remove your name and other identifiers for you.

### *CSIL Contract*

Most of us are aware of the two paragraphs of concern in the last CSIL Contract. On the advice of a lawyer, who is also a CSIL Employer, I personally made a decision on how I wanted to respond by crossing out the sections and submitting a letter. I am happy to share this with you if you email me.

During the meeting, we reviewed 12.2 ( c ) and 23, of the CSIL Contract and discussed everyone's concerns. The Health Authority removed the wording about acting unreasonably, however the wording change did not alter the intent and meaning of the term.

For those who wish to be followed up with individually to discuss this further and to see the example of my personal decision, please contact Paul Gauthier at [paul@ifrcsociety.org](mailto:paul@ifrcsociety.org)

### **Question and Answers**

**Q.** My understanding is that each of these regions have different contracts, is that correct? Or have they been made consistent now?

**A.** It is supposed to be consistent now, but we are unsure if all Health Authorities have implemented it yet. The Ministry of Health worked with all the Health Authorities to come up with a template that is supposed to be good for all Health Authorities.

### **Paul Gauthier**

If anyone receives a new contract, application package, related correspondence or hear new information, I would be grateful if you could forward it to me. My team follows up on the new information to see if there is something worth bringing back to our group.

### **Peer Comment**

I am in Fraser Health and I have not sent mine back yet, but I will, and I will be putting that response in there. I believe that they do it on purpose to make the contract so big and so legalized because God forbid someone with a disability might read through it to make sense of it.

### **Peer Comment**

We signed the contract but only sent them the page signed. We are waiting to see if they catch the fact that we did not follow their instructions about sending the whole contract.

### **Response**

That is a very interesting strategy and a different way to do it. I did ask my lawyer if I crossed it off and just initialed it, do I have to write something because I actually did write something? His answer stated that it is noted, which is good, but it is not necessarily strong.

What you have done is different than me and you just sent the signature page which means that you could, in court, say I signed the final page but there is no content to it. It would be interesting from a legal perspective.

**Peer Comment**

In Contract Law, and I did take Business Law, a contract has set up several requirements for fulfillment and one of them is offer and acceptance and by signing in and even if it is just the last page and sending in, you have pretty much given your acceptance. Now, I am not a lawyer but that is one of the legal requirements in fulfillment of a contract or are of contract being valid. By striking it out you have made it clear that you are not accepting those parts but by not sending the last page inside, that is pretty much written acceptance, I am going to guess that.

**Peer Comment**

Is there not more power in numbers; if everybody sent them in with crossing off the same thing it would be much harder to deal with everybody. They can knock one person down after the other but there is a lot more power in numbers.

**Response**

You are right and if you are in the Vancouver Coastal Area, they have a new administrator and he is very eager in his communications to CSIL Employers. It has been reported that he has emailed two or three times to people who have not sent their contract in. There is the opinion that he is not giving people enough time to do their due diligence as he is following up for a submission after only one week of people getting letters. I have been told that he is phoning people that have not put in their contract. This is a contract, and you have a right to review it and obtain legal advice.

It has also been reported that he is sending out email's to CSIL Employers who have had deficits at some point in the last year. He gives a whole list of your last 12 months if you are somebody that had a deficit at some point with language that has been perceived by the CSIL employers as lightly veiled threats.

Of course, on the CSIL Program you cannot be in a deficit. We all know that, but at the same time, we know that some of us are not getting enough home support hours to be able to balance our budget properly. However, he does state that if you do require more hours to contact your case manager and I know there has been some clients who have utilized the opportunity to say, *"Okay you are right I was in a deficit and you say I can talk to my case manager, so I am going to talk to my case manager because I need more hours!"*

Use the opportunity to turn that negative into a positive by pursuing this opportunity right away. Do not wait on it; if he sends his letter to you, take advantage of that right away and say, *"I am writing this because the administrator said that I need to follow up with you because I'm not getting enough hours to balance my budget"* and act on this right away and request a reassessment if this is your situation. I know it means you have to go through the process and many of us do not want to go through that but take the opportunity to explain your need for more hours.

**Q.** I am on the Vancouver Island Health and I am wondering why I have not seen a contract.

**A.** There are some people who have been part of a two year or even a three year contract and the latest email from some Health Authorities are saying if you are in good standing with your CSIL account, and have been for some time, they may decision to provide you with a three year contract.

If you are new to the program you may be required to sign a renewal contract after one year. What they are looking for in some Health Authorities is if you are not in a deficit, if you have submitted your financial statement on time etc.



I am hoping that at some point we can eliminate the need for monthly Financial Statements and use a quarterly or annual system of reporting; perhaps after the first six months.

#### Peer Comment

I am in a three-year contract that just started this year. I did not know that I could cross out the paragraph and do the initials. If I would have known that I would have crossed it out and did the initials, but I just did not want to be off the program.

**Q.** Do you have any advice for those of us who have already sent in our contracts without noticing those two paragraphs?

**A.** The only thing that comes to mind is I would want to connect with a lawyer. Those are answers I cannot give today without legal consultation.

For those who are interested in pursuing this matter, please email [Paul@IFRCSociety.org](mailto:Paul@IFRCSociety.org)

#### Peer Comment

I did receive my contract from Fraser Health and the letter that I got from my case manager said, "You got a five-year contract." I only pay revenue Canada quarterly, why do I have to do CSIL [financial statement] monthly?

**Q.** I just looked at my file and my contract ended in March of 2020. Would I be putting up a red flag if I say where is my new contract? Should I just let it be or do something about it? I am not sure I want to follow up with this.

**A.** It is interesting that they did not send you another contract. Even though you did not get a new contract to sign, the Health Authority can carry on with contracts.

#### Peer Comment

I am on a Micro board for a CLBC client, and I found it amazing and shocking that the board do not have to provide monthly reports, even though partial funding is from CSIL. If there is a Micro board involved, and maybe parents, the Ministry trusts them, but because we are an individual and a person with a disability, they do not trust us, they want us to do monthly, I am wondering why?

#### Response

That is interesting about the CLBC. My understanding is that there was a responsibility for CLBC to do a minimum over one year reporting, not monthly. I do not know why they are operating differently, but it is something we can add to our list of changes we want to see within the CSIL program.

**Q.** We are in the application process with CSIL now is there anything of importance at this stage that we should know?

**A.** My advice is to get on the program first and pick your battles of which issues you want to deal with afterwards. I do not think the current contract issues would be one that you would battle out right now. Others may have different opinions on that but I am only assuming most people who end up going on to the CSIL Program, have gone through a significant journey to get on the program. Let us get the funds flowing and then you can start picking your battles of different things to deal with. We are happy to

connect with you on some of these things to discuss as you are starting to think about when you get on the program.

**Q.** My question has to do with surplus. In my CSIL account, I have got a little bit of a buffer that I have kind of built up for once and I am wondering if the Health Authority could come in and randomly kind of scoop out some of my excess funds? I am worried about this and I want to enquire.

**A.** When it comes to surplus funds, the program allows you to keep up to one extra month of CSIL dollars. If you get \$5000 a month you can have a surplus of \$5000. Surplus over \$5000 and they can choose to take it at any point. In theory they are supposed to give you 30 days' notice by sending you a letter letting you know that they will reduce the following months funds to bring the surplus down to the one month allowable amount.

When you are doing your planning, a complete review of your budget will be important. My recommendation is to keep your surplus at a very minimum of half of your allowable amount. You could start making small adjustments to the hourly rate you pay your staff or make adjustments to your care hours because if you have the surplus, it's a good opportunity to do so.

If you have a large surplus, this could also be a good opportunity to investigate the possibility of having a benefit plan for your staff.

**Q.** Can they have a look at your [bank] balance?

**A.** No, they do not look at your bank balance by going into your account itself, however, they look at your financial statements and support documents [bank statements] that you provide. The bottom left corner of the financial statement is where you would find if you are either in a surplus or deficit situation. Do not depend on your bank balance because not all cheques may have not gone through, and you get the next months funding early. This makes it look like you have more money than you actually have.

#### **Peer Comment**

The other peer said that she does not currently have a contract. I would be putting my hand up because legally there is no authority for them to give you any money. They are doing it out of the goodness of their hearts and if the bean counters catch that you are getting money without a contract there is no legal authority for them to give you money if you do not have a signed contract.

The CLBC reporting port for our daughter which receives funding from Northern Health and CLBC. We do a monthly reporting for Northern Health as per contract. CLBC has a policy in all of their contracts. Does not matter whether it is for an individual or for a large agency if the contract is for less than \$50,000 a year there is no requirement for reporting it at all. If it is over 50,000 then it is when they requested. We have only had to submit financial reporting to CLBC once in about 10 years. That varies; there are some families that they brow beat into giving financial reports quarterly even though the contract clearly states they are not required to.

We did at one time, when early on, acquired quite a large surplus at Northern Health. They did not technically take the money; they just did not give us any more money until the surplus came down to what they felt was a reasonable level.

**Response**

That is how all Health Authorities do it. They would reduce the amount that they give you for the next month funding. They cannot take it away unless you write them a cheque. They do not have access to your CSIL bank account.

It is interesting on the CLBC component that it's once in 10 years. I have noted this. I think I have always been a real believer that people with disabilities and people with developmental disabilities need to bridge together to change the system. In your case your daughter was able to get separate Health Funding which of course is something that many people wish they could do today.

The Health Funding now goes over to CLBC for the dual funding now. People do not generally have control over negotiating with the Health System, they can only work with CLBC. However, some families have reported success in advocating for their family member with the health authority.

**Response**

There was discussion about Vela Micro Board Association and how Northern Health set up their criteria. Paul looks forward to communicating with Vela regarding Micro Boards for the CSIL program for an upcoming meeting.

**Peer Comment – Roger Jones**

I looked at my contract and it is good until March 31st, 2025. I have not had a new contract for at least 12 years, I think. The gentleman mentioned about not having a contract; what they would do is they would simply send a letter acknowledging the existence of a contract. After the initial contract that I received about 12 years ago; every two or three years they would simply send me a letter saying we acknowledge [the contract] and here are the amounts, carry on. This was the first year I have had a contract that I can remember and it is good until March 31st, 2025.

For those of you trying to figure out your client portion. I have little spreadsheet put together. It is a little bit complicated sometimes trying to play with those numbers so feel free to use this. Change it to whatever you want, you can plug in your income and it will calculate for you with the little formula that they use to figure out how much you have to pay into your client portions. I hope it is helpful to people.

Click the Excel logo below for access. You can change the Viewing tab, located at the top of the page, to Editing. If you are prompted for a password, use csil2021 .

**Response**

We have a Leadership group that has been designated for the purpose of Client Contribution and are looking at trying to eliminate or remove some of the barriers around Client Contribution. In one of our upcoming peer meetings we will provide an update.

**Peer Comment**

About the Health Authority taking your money back, it is interesting to know when I had a large surplus a couple of times in 15 years, in the next month they reduce what they send but not my Client Contribution. Client Contribution is always there, they never reduce that.

**Peer Comment**

I encourage everyone to plan so that you build up a one-month surplus. Do not avoid it; build it up because something could happen where you are not getting your funding or things could happen [unexpectedly] and then you need that money.

**Technology For Living – Taylor Danielson**

*Simon Cox Design Student Competition – People’s Choice Awards*

**Paul Gauthier**

I am very excited about this competition and the involvement with the Pathways Peer Group. It is very important to get your vote for the People’s Choice Award. The students have created some amazing technology and you get to help decide who is going to win the People’s Choice Award and there is a good chance that the product may make it’s way into the marketplace.

**Taylor Danielson**

I, and several other team members, have been working with the competition at Technology for Living for several months now. The Simon Cox Student Design Competition is an event put on by Technology for Living (TFL) every year. The late Simon Cox was the TFL Executive Director and he was well known for finding solutions to any problem that our members faced.

The Student Design Competition is a way of carrying on that legacy. We invite student teams from Universities across the province to compete by designing innovative new devices for people with disabilities. They are new projects usually based on ideas submitted by our membership, perhaps many of you. If you are not a member of TFL, I encourage you to become one.

Video shown during this Pathways Meeting highlighted the student’s submissions to the judges.

The peers were shown a video which highlighted all entries and instructed that they could only vote for one entry. A Zoom poll was sent live to each participant for their voting.

**The Awards Ceremony was live streamed on YouTube on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. For the results of the Simon Cox Student Design Competition click the YouTube Logo.**

**Paul Gauthier**

I am excited that The Pathways to Independence Peers had the opportunity to participate in the People Choice Award. Thank you to Ruth Marzetti and the rest of the amazing TFL team for including Pathways in that major decision.

**Chat Response to Peer** Freedom for your pet Automatic Pet Door.

[CLICK HERE](#)

## Closing Remarks

Thank you to everyone who participated today. The Nature Wellness Program with Kari Krogh and the Simon Cox Design Competition Voting, led by Taylor Danielson, certainly created a lively session, and I hope everyone had fun.

## Pathways To Independence Next Meeting Dates

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 1:30pm to 3:30pm

## May Topics

- Crime Prevention with the New Westminster Police Department
  - Topics will include;
    - Scams & Frauds
    - Vulnerable Person Abuse
    - Safety in the home
    - Tips & Tricks related to Employees
    - Resources
- Open Discussion

Peers are reminded that if they have a topic idea for a future meeting, to please send an email to [pathways@ifrcsociety.org](mailto:pathways@ifrcsociety.org)

**Pathways To Independence Peer Group Meeting Notes and pertinent documents are uploaded to <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>**

The Pathways To Independence Meeting is in partnership with Technology for Living, whose Technical Team, headed by Ean Price, successfully ensured that peers could connect to the meeting from across the province.

**THANK YOU EVERYONE, FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE MEETING!**