

Community Capacity, Engagement and Inclusion
Experiences from Alberta, Canada
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- **Capacity:** the ability or power to do, experience or understand something (+ your imagination!)
- **Community Capacity** is realised when informal and formal generic organisations, associations and their members invite and welcome individuals with disabilities to become participating members.
- Create policies and priorities to sustain and facilitate inclusion
- Recognise the societal good achieved by inclusion
- Experience and acknowledge the mutual benefits of inclusion
- Recognise the individual and societal harm of exclusion
- Embrace inclusion – none of us has to earn it, its like the air that you breathe
- People with an intellectual disability have a much higher rate of poverty than everyone else
- People with an intellectual disability have no access to 3rd level education
- Friendships: people with an intellectual disability have far fewer people in their lives and its even more challenging when you have a significant intellectual disability
- Many people with an intellectual disability experience extreme loneliness
- We need to address these issues with a raised consciousness
- We need to develop a community of interests (common interests)
- Community capacity stretches to include more people
- Inclusion is the means to a life of meaning, belonging and possibilities
- It requires immersion in the valued normative pathways of family and community life - as a person, friend, associate, participant, interested party but not client
- It requires counter critical analysis and reflection
- Staff need to learn to be “invisible” in communities. If the staff person is seen in the community as the “expert”, people in communities may think that they cannot support people with intellectual disabilities in communities.
- We have a capacity to miss the obvious, the value of relationships in peoples lives, the harm of segregation, the capacity of communities – its depth and breadth to foster inclusive lives
- With inclusion came a parallel growth in human services, not a parallel growth in community engagement
- We all need to have people around us who have the highest expectations for us – usually people live up to high expectations
- Be true to people’s choices
- Qualities for people who support people with an intellectual disability - “two feet and a heartbeat”
- Supporting a person with an intellectual disability to be included in their community takes time and patience – it doesn’t happen overnight – sometimes things won’t work out and you will have to look at new ways of doing things. And the same things won’t work for everyone. Everyone is an individual.

How well do you know your community?

- Enter the community with the question – how can this setting or association take up responsibility for inclusion?
 - Thoughtfully weigh their fallibilities and limits
 - Sing their songs
 - Learn their language
 - Honor their purpose
 - Consider their culture, history, traditions and identity
 - Discover the customs for decision-making, deliberations and persuasion

- Nurture allies in the community
- Build relationships
- Be clear about your long term vision and how to act on it
- Be very thoughtful about what you ask for – don't look for short term gain
- Its important to “be part of” and “in” the community – it keeps you more authentic
- Networking is very important – including business networks that can lead to employment for people
- To really influence a network or association, you need to join up yourself

Some networks in Ireland that could provide employment opportunities

- Lions Club - <http://www.lionsclubs.ie/>
- Business in the Community - <http://www.bitc.ie/>

Workshop Facilitators

Bruce Uditsky, M.Ed., is the CEO of the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) and an Adjunct Professor, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary. He has been invited to speak and consult on a wide variety of disability practice and research issues in Canada, United States, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Bruce is also the author and co-author of numerous publications on community inclusion and social justice. He has been recognized for his public advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and their families as the recipient of a number of awards. Bruce is also noted for his development of innovative community inclusion initiatives and his leadership in social policy change and development. He is the father of two sons one of whom has intellectual disabilities.

E. Anne Hughson, Ph.D., is the Director of and Associate Professor with, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary and a Chartered Psychologist. She is a recipient of the Faculty of Education Excellence in Teaching Award and the author and co-author of a number of texts and many chapters and articles on a wide range of disability-related subjects. She has lectured and taught in many countries. As a researcher in disability studies and a teacher in program evaluation her work is grounded in the lived experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Anne has been noted for creativity in advancing community inclusion and her leadership in supporting and sustaining unique approaches to community inclusion.