



IMPACT Bulletin

Winter 2024

Around the world, individuals with intellectual disabilities encounter exclusion: social isolation, difficulties finding accessible housing and a lack of meaningful activities to name a few. L'Arche has a positive impact - creating inclusive communities and empowering people to live full lives. Enjoy reading these stories of belonging!

The Spirit Project: *Where Every Voice Finds a Song*

Picture this: a company of amazing artists—with and without disabilities—coming together to tell a story through musical theatre. It's like making a big, colourful painting with memorable characters, music, song and dance.

For a fifth year, L'Arche Fredericton is teaming up with Solo Chicken Productions and the Charlotte Street Arts Center for the Spirit Project. This year, they are developing their very own musical, *Taking Root*.

Why a musical, you wonder? Because this group just loves to sing and dance! It's a company of artists who celebrate their differences as a powerful creative tool. "We work together in community to create great art that showcases the power of inclusion to the broader community," says Lisa Anne Ross, founder of Solo Chicken Productions.

Under the guidance of Lisa Anne and her colleague Kaylee

MacNeil, the company has embarked on nine months of intensive training. This phase of work builds a dynamic 'paint palate' of dance, song, and playwriting that sets the stage for the creation of an original musical which will be performed for a live audience in 2025.

Taking Root is much more than a show. It's about creating a space where everyone belongs—and celebrating what makes each one of us special.



**Sarah
Kreplin**
National Director of
Philanthropy

Warm greetings! It is a pleasure to introduce myself as the new National Director of Philanthropy.

My story with L'Arche started when I was studying at Saint Francis Xavier University where I signed up for a tapestry weaving

class. For the course, we worked in pairs and I was partnered with a lovely woman named Miriam, a member of L'Arche Antigonish. For the next few months, we met weekly at the studio to work on our weavings.

I learned much more than the art of weaving that semester. Miriam taught me how art can be a tool for communication. Our work together on the tapestries led to a remarkable experience

of compassion and friendship for me. I learned firsthand that everyone has a unique and valuable gift to contribute to society.

It is a joy to be back at L'Arche! I look forward to getting to know you over the coming months, over a call or coffee, and together build a more inclusive world.

Wishing you health and happiness for 2024!

On Belonging with Tiana Kirkegaard

"I experience belonging when I'm part of the group and when people openly welcome me," said Tiana when asked about what belonging means to her. "I belong when I can truly be myself and others can be truly themselves too. I've learned that I don't have to be like anybody else. I can be me and I can show love for everyone. That's what I'm passionate about."

Tiana also shares the

challenges she's encountered in her own life. Now an accomplished dancer, her first-time experience in the dance studio was hard. "I didn't feel included when nobody wanted to talk to me, so that made me feel like I didn't belong," Tiana explained. "Inclusion isn't enough. We need to have our voices heard and have a way to express ourselves. We need to participate," she said firmly.

"My friend uses sign language to communicate so I am trying to learn sign language so I can hear her voice. I'm still learning how



to make people feel like they belong."

Tiana lives with her family in Vancouver. She will emcee the third annual online Canadian Health and Wellbeing in Developmental Disabilities Conference.

L'Arche Bethlehem in the Shadow of Conflict

Since October 7th, the eyes of the world have been on Israel and Gaza. In L'Arche, our minds and hearts have turned to our brothers and sisters in Bethlehem who are suffering from the terrible conflict that is so close to home.

L'Arche Bethlehem includes over 50 people with intellectual disabilities. They have found a place of belonging and meaningful work in the community's workshop that produces woolen handicrafts and at its guest house that

welcomes tourists.

With rising tensions, the guest house has closed and the workshop was not able to sell its crafts at Christmas markets this year.

L'Arche Bethlehem relies on income from the workshop and guest house to keep the



community going. Thanks to the outpouring of generous donors from Canada and around the world, L'Arche Bethlehem has been able to get through the holidays. The support has been critical in enabling the community at this time of loss and uncertainty.

At this writing, L'Arche Bethlehem remains in an unpredictable and tense situation.

We are all deeply grateful for your continued prayers and generosity.

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L'Arche Canada Foundation, 300-10271 Yonge St, Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3B5, Canada

1-800-571-0212 ext 1 or 905-770-7696 ext 1 | www.larchefoundation.ca
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