



# RECONVENING ON FERTILE GROUND

Nourishing Ideas for Growth & Collaborative Change



facilitating change, customizing supports

# REFLECTING ON OUR TIME TOGETHER

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2025



Common Thread

# Denise Wilson



Share

Watch on  YouTube

- *A Song the Birds Believe* -

# OUR TIME TOGETHER

10:00am – 10:10am

**Grounded Together** - Welcome and Introductory Remarks

10:10am – 10:40am

**Grounded Together** - Whole Group Check-in

11:40am – 11:30am

**Tending to Our Roots - Re-visiting Our Shared Values & Purpose** - Breakout Conversations

11:30am – 12:30pm

**LUNCH**

12:30pm – 1:00pm

**Tilling & Turning - Priorities for the OIFN Community of Practice** - Whole Group Conversation

1:00pm – 1:30pm

**Seeds of Possibility - Next Steps and Timelines** - Breakout Conversations

1:30pm – 1:40pm

**Finding Our Place in the Soil** - Personal Reflection

1:40pm - 2:00pm

**Harvesting Our Collective Work - Questions & Closing Remarks** - Open Mic



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# OIFN - WHO ARE WE?

## OUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

OIFN is a Community of Practice that includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and/or loved ones, independent facilitators, and other allies who are interested in supporting people to live meaningful, everyday lives in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.

## OIFN LEADERSHIP

- Ashley White, Timmins
- Cathy Bloomfield, Durham
- Cathy Stroud, Winchester
- Colleen Mitchell, Windsor
- Joyce Balaz, London
- Megan MacDonald, Tavistock
- Roz Vincent-Haven, Waterloo
- Susannah Joyce, London
- Bill Rollo, OIFN Community of Practice Coordinator



# OIFN - OUR VISION & MISSION

## VISION

Our vision is an Ontario where all people experience full belonging and inclusion and have control over their lives – to make decisions, share their interests and gifts, and receive and direct the resources and supports they need in order to take their rightful place in Canadian society with the same opportunities as other citizens.

## MISSION

Our mission is to support people with disabilities, their family members and/or loved ones to pursue meaningful, everyday lives. We are committed to learning alongside others about the contribution independent facilitation can make to people strengthening their voices, claiming their power, creating change, and living full lives in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.



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# OIFN - OUR CORE BELIEFS

We believe in the rights of all people to set the pace and direction of change in their lives...as upheld by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People Living with Disabilities, Article 19.

We believe in people having support to determine their lives...with the support of their families and/or loved ones.

We believe in ensuring that people have meaningful support for decision-making...

We believe that natural neighbourhood connections and community resources are the first resort...

We believe in reflective practice and shared learning through a Community of Practice...

We believe that partnerships and collaboration are necessary vehicles for bringing about justice and social change...

We believe that sustainable options must be available for people and families who are looking for ways to manage their own housing, staffing, direct individualized funding, facilitation, and support resources...

We believe that Independent Facilitation has an action and change orientation with a focus on assisting to clarify vision, goals, and needs...

We believe that independent facilitators must be free of conflicts of interest in order to be in right relationship with people and families.



# WHERE ARE WE TODAY - OIFN ROLE & RECENT OFFERINGS

## GATHERINGS & LEARNING EVENTS

- OIFN Book Club
- Re-connecting on Common Ground – in-person visioning event in October 2024
- A New Story Documentary Mini-Series – virtual screening in February 2025
- Resuming OIFN Shared Learning Events

## SOCIAL MEDIA & OTHER ENGAGEMENT

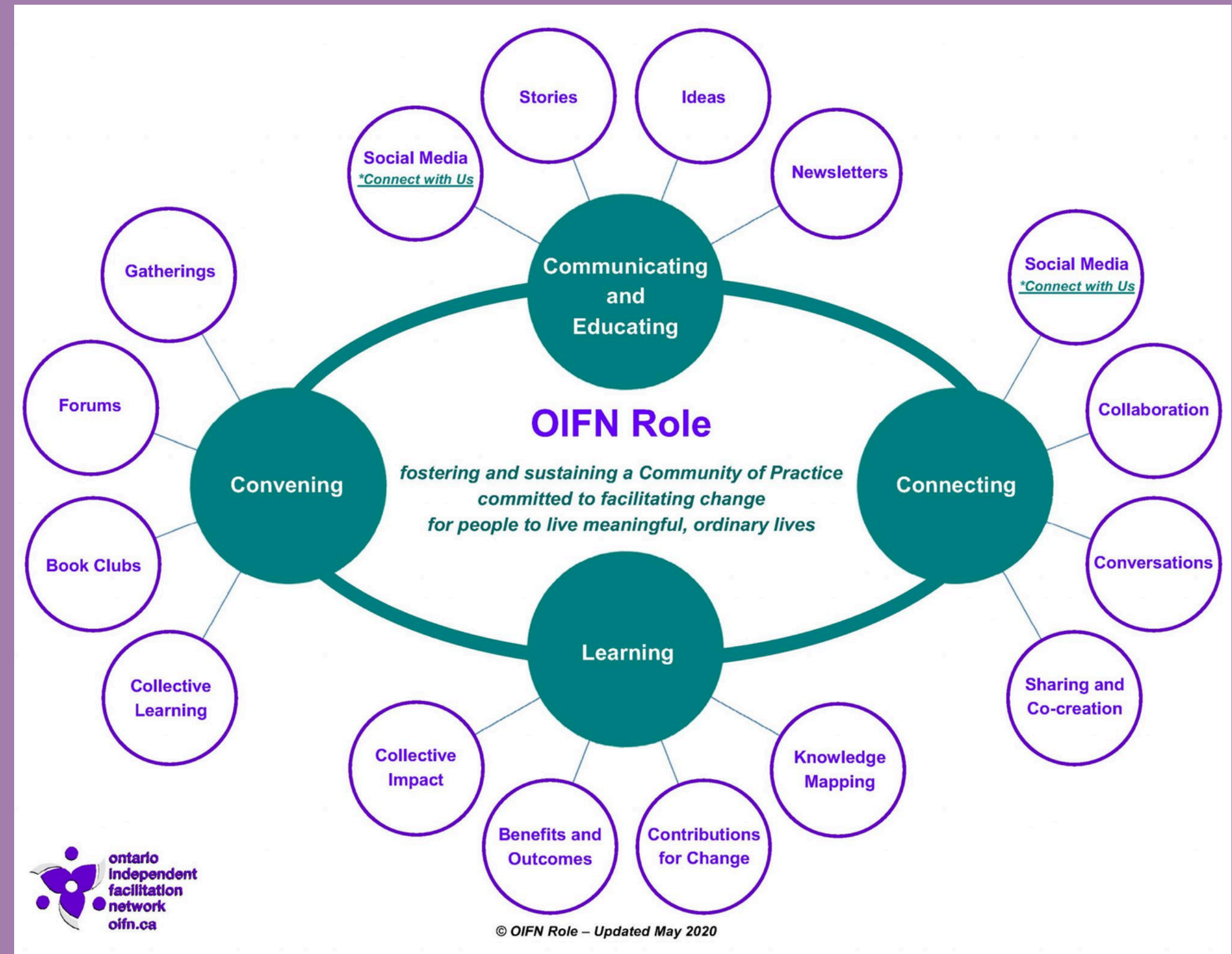
- Themed content around values and practice
- Weekly newsletter highlights
- Ongoing collaboration with provincial grassroots groups

## COMMON INQUIRIES

- How to find an independent facilitator
- How to become an independent facilitator
- Available training opportunities

## OIFN WEBSITE & RESOURCES

- Questions to ask your facilitator
- OIFN Independent Facilitator Listings
- Scope of Practice



# GROUNDING TOGETHER



“A vision without a task is a dream.  
A task without a vision is drudgery.  
But a vision with a task can change the world.”

Black Elk

“When we dream alone it is only a dream,  
but when we dream together  
it is the beginning of reality.”

Dom Helder Camera

“You see things and you say, ‘Why?’  
But I dream things that never were  
and I say, ‘Why not?’”

G.B. Shaw

“Ring the bells that still can ring.  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There’s a crack in everything; that’s how the light  
gets in.”

Leonard Cohen

“When I dare to be powerful,  
to use my strength in the service of my vision,  
then it becomes less and less important  
where I am afraid.”

Audre Lorde

# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - RE-VISTING OUR SHARED VALUES

Vision &  
Dreaming Big

Contributions  
&  
Opportunities

Inclusion &  
Belonging

Curiosity

Creative  
options &  
possibilities

Interdependence

Our shared  
Values

ALL means  
ALL

Being  
intentional

Accepting  
without  
Judgment

Caring &  
Heart

Collaboration

Mutual  
Respect



# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

What has been your engagement with OIFN in the past 1-2 years? What have you found valuable?

- **Grounding around OIFN values and bringing the work alive.**
  - Purity of vision – focus on hearing the voice of the person
  - OIFN Scope of Practice for Independent Facilitation
- **Coming together as a Community of Practice.**
  - Training and learning events (“A New Story” Documentary Screening, in-person events, opportunities to join the conversation)
  - Information and knowledge sharing (OIFN website, resources, weekly emails)
  - Networking, connection, and encouragement – Our struggles make us stronger, especially knowing that OIFN is there
  - Energizing nature of coming together in person
- **OIFN as a collaborative agent of change.**
  - Grassroots
  - Connections with other groups that share and broaden OIFN’s vision and values (IFCO, FAO, People First, PFPF)
  - Looking for ways to create change for people



# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

What has been your engagement with OIFN in the past 1-2 years? What have you found valuable?

What has Been your Connecting

- Not involved - IIII
- Involved - II

most new and excited to learn + join

Jan email  
Excited to learn  
More involvement

Independent Facilitation

- Documentary screening
- attend 1st in person - Oct 2021
- getting word out to others
- champions to have in-person events
- thank you for changing my life - OIFN independent facilitation
- on OIFN's behalf bridging with JFCO & other groups
- struggles have made us stronger
- visiting other groups to see how we can do things together - relationship building
- presented at conferences as OIFN rep
- more in-person get together

## Valuable:

- wanted to facilitate personal plans - looked into OIFN during pandemic
- supporting systems and resources to enhance personal plans
- can be very person directed
- emails / website (OIFN) are grounding and helpful
- purity of vision
- focused on the person
- look forward to the weekly emails

## Engagement in OIFN + the value its brought!!

- grounded me in my values, learning through C of P, training etc.
  - surrounded by allies who are passionate
  - website has been an important gateway to info. virtual events - newsletter / social media highlights are great!
  - last 2 yrs of been a huge part of that previously was very connected
  - encouraged by their perspective looking for new ways
- OIFN gathers the people



# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

Keeping in mind our shared values and OIFN's recent efforts, what would be helpful for OIFN to offer?

- **Broadening OIFN's reach and promotion.**
  - Continue regular social media contributions
  - Continue to present at conferences and other opportunities
  - Demonstrate to MCCSS what we do and the benefits
  - Promote and share resources that already exist (OIFN, orgs doing this work in Ontario and elsewhere)
  - Create new resources – real life stories
- **Continuing to connect and gather as a Community of Practice – in new and familiar ways.**
  - Continue in-person events (half-days work well, host a conference?)
  - Revive and/or create more local/regional facilitator networks and maintain link to OIFN
  - Explore how to bring together and amplify family voices so they are acknowledged
- **Expanding the capacity and availability of Independent Facilitation.**
  - Revive OIFN Independent Facilitator Listings
  - Advocating for Independent Facilitation – how is it sustainable and affordable? What does it take to embody the values?
- **Growing/re-engaging allyship – collaboration that includes self-advocates, families, agencies, etc.**
  - Connect with like-minded partners and allies
    - Grassroots provincial groups
    - National Planning and Facilitation Collaborative
    - Allies in other sectors (Ex. seniors)
- **Sustaining the network.**
  - Moving forward collectively – OIFN is everyone in the room
  - Succession planning
  - Finding funding



# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

Keeping in mind our shared values and OIFN's recent efforts, what would be helpful for OIFN to offer?

- OIFN needs to find a way to demonstrate to the Ministry what we do. Join with other provincial prog groups
- How to bring family voices together & be acknowledged
- continue:
  - social media contributions
  - in-person events
  - conference presentations
- how do we reach families who have little energy left
- OIFN looks for like-minded partners in other sectors.

- What can OIFN offer?
- Offer / create more local networks
  - Peer Support - all in this together - over coming barriers
  - Sharing Resources
  - How can local agencies be involved?  
collaboration - families, AIBs, agencies, Int Facilitator work together
  - Deep listening to the people we are working for - are they being heard? Person Centered
  - Stay curious - be open
  - Inter connection - Parents, siblings, Paid Staff need different supports
  - Changing mindsets "burden" - families "paid job" - staff  
↓  
Positive Possibilities  
↳ GIFS

- promoting existing resources / creating new ones "stories"
- Connect AFN & PFC  
to be part of a national initiative
- how do <sup>help</sup> connect & others  
link & network  
- look to international examples / may
- advocacy - support initiatives & provide evidence for the practice
- false list of facilitators
- think about how we bring volunteers in re: inquiry about IF  
succession planning  
in person gatherings  
maybe a conference!!

# TENDING TO OUR ROOTS - BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

Keeping in mind our shared values and OIFN's recent efforts, what would be helpful for OIFN to offer?

## What could OIFN OFFER?

Continue, expand, start:

- <sup>find</sup> funding for events and OIFN
- Advocating for Ind. Facilitation (how families can afford it, how it can be sustainable, & embody values of I.F.)
- Develop <sup>the</sup> role of families <sup>as</sup> self-advocates in supporting advocacy. Bringing forth family voice.
- Promoting training etc. - cont.
- List of Ontario Facilitators - where is that now?
- Local IF conversations - share with OIFN

- real life stories of facilitation
- continue half day format
- advocacy to government
- revive map - listing for facilitators
- revive regional COP's
- Share resources/knowledge of organizations doing this work
- advocacy for planning - access to waitlist

# TILLING & TURNING - POSSIBILITIES FOR OIFN MOVING FORWARD

## CHALLENGES - WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- Loss of momentum and connection
- Staying present across a broad geographical landscape (virtual does not work for all)
- Feelings of isolation and in survival mode
- Who upholds and promotes the values?
  - Moving from a welfare model and protection to building rich, meaningful lives
- Sustainability of Independent Facilitation and OIFN
  - Financial and human resources
  - Lack of independent facilitators across Ontario
  - Lack of understanding of Independent Facilitation and options
  - Loss of government support

## CHOICES - WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Involve family networks
- Continue OIFN gatherings
- Find champions in each geographic area
- Develop a plan/PATH for OIFN
- Explore government/grant funding
- Make information and resources easily accessible for ALL.

## OUTCOMES - WHAT IS OUR DREAM?

- Full inclusion
- People with disabilities living with dignity and choice (not one size fits all)
- Independent Facilitation available in every community
- Funding/budget for Independent Facilitation
- Building & rebuilding relationships, vibrant networks, and a “Bigger We”



# SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY - FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

How do we move forward together? What is possible? Next steps for action?

## IN 6 MONTHS

- Local/regional groups and organizations to share news to be featured in OIFN newsletters.
- CoP members to share resources with networks (Ex. distribute OIFN newsletters).
- Brainstorm potential partnerships.
- Increase OIFN membership/participation.
- Values training.
- Allies to add OIFN link in email signatures.
- Identify regional champions and gather on Zoom.

## IN 1 YEAR

- New stories on website about facilitation and network creation (videos, texts, comic book/graphic novel?)
- Tell OIFN's whole story (MAP/PATH?)
- Invite DSO navigators to share OIFN information and add to The Real Xchange.
- Host lunch and learns.
- Re-establish Ministry relationships.
- Host in-person gathering of OIFN, IFCO, FAO, PFPF, People First Ontario (Funding proposal?)
- Grant writing (connect with Kim Sproul?)

## IN 2 YEARS

- Curate the collective strengths of the OIFN community (Passion Audit?)
- Establish a funding strategy for OIFN.
- Support people and families to advocate for Independent Facilitation funding.
- Knowledge mapping for communities to exchange knowledge and resources.
- Host a "Meet My Facilitator" gathering to share stories.



# SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY - FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

How do we move forward together? What is possible? Next steps for action?

Move forward in 6 months.

- reach out to allied grps & organizations  
→ people & families - we want...
- support PFO & family network <sup>we need...</sup>
- review website to see if there are enhancements to make it easier for people & families to understand what independent facilitation is
  - Meet my facilitator <sup>Event</sup>
- More stories - of complex communication
  - where someone stood up for their rights
  - what I have achieved with my facilitator
- establish local/regional communities of practice
- comic book/graphic novel
- provide stories on social media
- Bring IFCD, OIFN, FAD, PFO, PFPF then a joint mtg with people & families work together on a funding proposal

- Look for funding opportunities - develop a budget
- Re-visit historical documents such as Common Vision & In Unison
- adding family support <sup>networks</sup> to social media postings
- add OIFN membership to email signatures

last 1-2 years

opportunity to find OIFN & join conversation

Weekly emails

Gathering together last year

Networking opps. Connection

Knowing that OIFN is there - grounded

Grassroots, liberation-oriented

- Held 1<sup>st</sup> Pilot project (it was spectacular then)
- Bill brings the work alive every week to share
- Posts courses, shares these (benefits IF's)
- Grounds us - volunteers provides common ground

2:

- Reinforces core values of the work
- Energizing (forums)
- Follow newsletters/social media
- Scope of practice

6 month plan

- send news to OIFN re regional efforts + gatherings + trainings to add to newsletter ✓
- promote regional I.F. networks
- add link to P4P to OIFN website for I.F. Ontario list if this is the go-to list.
- refresh efforts to have a searchable list of IF per region

1 year

- reach out to Reg. Family Networks so they can aid the connections
- add stories - personal (video/text) about support networks
  - see ebbs + flow
  - see how gathered
  - see challenges
  - see benefit of facilitation

2 year

- strategy for funding + for advocating w families
- provide more info re microboards vs support circles/networks
- community maps Zoom mtgs to share info re resources in each community - share knowledge



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# SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY - FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

How do we move forward together? What is possible? Next steps for action?

How Do We move forward together?

- 6 months:
- orgs to share resources in family groups
    - ↳ increase reach
    - ↳ utilize email list
  - give the website
    - e.g. E-blast newsletter
    - ↳ resources for families
  - partnership brainstorm
    - ↳ grow + extend
    - leverage connections / capacity
  - true, intentional partnership
  - \* giving agency to people
  - increase membership → recruit
  - do a PATH - who is invested
  - values training / transfer + review

1 year

- invite system navigators to blast OIFN info/resources
- have Person-Directed Planning as option via DSO
  - ↳ and directing them to resources
- Kim Sprack as grant-writing ally
  - ↳ support via info-sharing
  - ↳ utilize EAF as ally in this
- explore Lunch N' Learns for info sharing who we are @ agencies
- host OIFN resources on Real Xchange

2 years

- request agencies host OIFN website/resources on their websites
  - ↳ increased awareness / accessibility
- exploring financial partnerships and support
- true partnerships
  - ↳ aligned priorities + investments
- Succession planning for OIFN
  - ↳ intentionality (values alignment)

# SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY - FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

How do we move forward together? What is possible? Next steps for action?

- start organizational convos*
- ## 6 months
- *revive map / list*
  - another in person event
  - recognizing "sparks", fan the flame (document champions) - share
  - ✓ identify regional champions - connect them
  - start sharing and celebrating - create awareness of this work
  - affirmation & encouragement
  - advocacy for planning to be person inspired rather than systems
  - secure a PATH or plan facilitator
  - follow through? check ins

- create visibility*
- ## 1 year / 2 years
- *find community HUBS*
  - ✓ re-establish relationship with MESS - Christine K - research funding
  - identify a mechanism to safeguard the values of OIFN - oversee craft
  - reach out to (family networks) to involve them (self-advocates)
  - family to family connections
  - reach out to post secondary institutions as a resource / share info - INFLUENCERS -
  - educate at high school level

- think beyond <sup>ministry</sup> funding - access community resources - partnerships
- ✓ cultivate the collective strengths of the OIFN community - passion audit
- embrace AI in a constructive way
- is there any role in safeguarding AI
- is there a role for AI?
- how do we engage younger families? utilize strengths of young people?

# FINDING OUR PLACE IN THE SOIL - PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Attendees' reflections expressed excitement about the following priorities:

## 1. Connection, Networking, and Community Building

- Meeting like-minded people, peer support, and learning together
- Sharing ideas, stories, lived experiences
- Hosting OIFN gatherings in various Ontario regions

"Bringing people together offers us the opportunity to leverage the assets within the facilitation community."

## 2. Promoting and Expanding the Reach of Independent Facilitation

- Sharing the message: What Independent Facilitation is and why it matters
- Growing champions, members, and awareness in new communities/groups/regions
- Promoting through media and social media

"Creative ways to get the message out and share what Independent Facilitation is all about."

## 3. Shared Learning and Building Capacity of Independent Facilitation

- Opportunities for mentorship, reflective practice, and learning about the craft among people, families, facilitators, and allies
- Learning from stories: tips, wins, and challenges
- Building knowledge and resources together
- Reigniting hope, passion, and purpose around Independent Facilitation

"The desire for dreaming and not giving up — all words gathered have power."

## 4. Amplifying the Voices of People and Families

- Supporting people and families in saying "I want/need Independent Facilitation" and ensuring their voices are included and heard

"Influencing government re: listening to people and their families — not just organizations."

## 5. Sustainability and Succession Planning

- Building long-term strategies for OIFN
- Intentional partnerships and cost/resource sharing

"Passing the knowledge and leadership of the network to the next generation."

## 6. Strategic Action and Collaboration

- Collaborating with groups like IFCO, PFPF, PFO
- Creating action plans
- Refining core values



# FINDING OUR PLACE IN THE SOIL - PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Attendees' reflections expressed willingness to contribute energy to:

## 1. Local Leadership and Community Building

- Develop/re-establish and support local Independent Facilitation networks (Ex. London, Thames Valley, Waterloo)
- Act as regional champion or connect others to become one

## 2. Shared Learning and Training

- Attend future OIFN gatherings and other Independent Facilitation training
- Contribute to knowledge exchange and resource sharing

## 3. Promoting OIFN and the Story of Independent Facilitation

- Create/share stories of Independent Facilitation
- Amplify OIFN through personal/professional networks (Ex. Encourage sign-ups for the OIFN newsletter)
- Start and sustain values-based conversations at various levels
- Model the values through presence and principled actions
- Advocate for more funding for Independent Facilitation

## 4. Supporting Community of Practice Events

- Help to plan/facilitate OIFN events

## 5. Supporting Network Sustainability

- Facilitate an OIFN "Passion Audit"
- Serve as a "pathfinder" for OIFN
- Inform OIFN Leadership succession planning
- Explore government funding and grant opportunities
- Bring together allies to align efforts



# HARVESTING OUR COLLECTIVE WORK

## Questions and Key Takeaways

- **Succession Planning is Essential:** Planning for future leadership is a critical priority.
- **Shared Passion & Vision:** Deep appreciation for a collective commitment to Independent Facilitation and its values.
- **Belonging & Inclusion:** Emphasis on creating welcoming, accepting, and inclusive spaces for all.
- **Inspiration & Re-ignited Energy:** Participants felt renewed motivation and purpose to work together for a common goal.
- **Momentum for Action:** A burst of creative ideas emerged, many of which feel actionable in the short term.
- **Recommitment to the Work:** People expressed gratitude for being part of the movement and a strong desire to continue advocating, especially with people and families.
- **Hope in Emerging Leaders:** Optimism around the presence of new and younger people joining the work.
- **Connection & Collaboration:** The value of making new connections was strongly affirmed, with excitement for continued collaboration.



## "IF NOT NOW" BY CARRIE NEWCOMER

If not now, tell me when.  
If not now, tell me when.  
We may never see this moment  
Or place in time again

If not now, if not now, tell me when.  
I see sorrow and trouble in this land  
I see sorrow and trouble in this land  
Although there will be struggle we'll make the change we can.

If not now, tell me when.  
I may never see the promised land.  
I may never see the promised land.  
And yet we'll take the journey  
And walk it hand in hand

If not now, tell me when.  
If not now, tell me when  
If not now, tell me when.  
We may never see this moment  
Or place in time again

If not now, if not now, tell me when.  
So we'll work it 'til it's done  
Every daughter every son,  
Every soul that ever longed for something better,  
Something brighter.

It will take a change of heart for this to mend.  
It will take a change of heart for this to mend.  
But miracles do happen every shining now and then

If not now, tell me when?  
If not now, tell me when.  
But miracles do happen every shining now and then.  
If not now tell me when.  
If not now tell me when.  
If not now tell me when

<https://youtu.be/7bY585-fzSs?si=-h6ioibOb2ETaM2w>

