



CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication
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April 2026



BECOMING A PERMANENT RESIDENT IN CANADA “ IT WASN'T EASY BUT IT'S WORTH IT ”



Becoming a permanent resident in Canada is a dream for many. A dream for a journey that will change a life forever. The application and process were not easy but what's more empowering is not the approval itself but the gained trust, perseverance and patience along the way.

At first, I was hesitant to apply to come to Canada, but with consistent encouragement and persuasion from my husband's auntie, I decided to give it a go. From that day, I realized that the job I was about to take will help someone to live a normal life in their own home and with that, I know that I made the right decision.

It was Gerard O'Malley (former owner of Metro) who started the application. Along with my husband's auntie Robylin Bautista, who is the owner of the Bay Coin Laundromat here in Barry's Bay, they helped me with my application.

It was just propitious that my pathway is under HSWPP (Home Support Worker Pilot Program). When Gerard passed away, my life had become a roller coaster, facing the unknown of what would happen. My faith in GOD has been my anchor in these times. I believe that He will lead me to the right people and the right company to finish what I had started. And that's where MVACL came into my path. They gave me hope and full support to complete my work experience so I could apply for my permanent residence status here in Canada. MVACL is my heaven sent! I am now a permanent resident of Canada! And I will live up to the work I have started.

Eleanor



CELEBRATING A \$5,000 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT FROM WESTERN FINANCIAL

THANK YOU

We're thrilled to share some exciting news—MVACL has been awarded a \$5,000 Infrastructure Grant from Western Financial Group Communities Foundation!

This generous investment is worth celebrating. While infrastructure funding often happens behind the scenes, it plays a powerful role in making everything we do possible. From strengthening our systems to supporting the day-to-day operations that keep our programs running smoothly, this funding helps build a stronger foundation for our work.

Thanks to Western Financials support, we're better equipped to grow, adapt, and continue delivering meaningful, high-quality services to our community. It's an investment not just in our organization, but in the people and communities we serve every day.

We're incredibly grateful to Western Financial for believing in our mission and for helping us build the capacity we need to make an even greater impact.





Happenings at Community Connect

Community Connect continues to be a place where friendships grow and meaningful connections are made. Participants aren't just attending activities together—they're building real relationships that extend beyond our programs. Many people who first met at Community Connect are now making their own plans to get together, whether it's going bowling, heading to the pool for a swim, or cheering on their favourite hockey teams together.

What makes Community Connect truly special is the way participants support one another. Whether it's helping a friend try something new, offering encouragement, or checking in to make sure everyone feels included, peer support is at the heart of everything we do. Participants look out for each other, celebrate successes together, and create a welcoming space where everyone belongs.

Participants are also actively shaping what happens next at Community Connect. Through conversations, feedback, and shared ideas, participants are helping choose upcoming activities and events. This shared decision-making ensures that our programs reflect what people truly enjoy and want to explore together. At Community Connect, every voice matters—and that sense of ownership continues to strengthen our community.

Two groups enjoyed a memorable horse-drawn sleigh ride in Boulter on February 19 and February 23, surrounded by fresh snow, plenty of laughter, and great company. Despite the chilly temperatures, spirits stayed high as everyone took in the beautiful winter scenery, sipped hot chocolate, and shared the experience with friends. The outing was full of excitement and joy—from gliding along snowy trails to making snow angels and simply enjoying time together outdoors. It was a truly uplifting experience that created lasting smiles, strengthened friendships, and sparked enthusiasm for doing it all again next year.



Walter, Scott, Tom, Amanda, Lisa and Peter having fun on the sleigh ride



Lisa, Matthew, Amanda and Tracy enjoying Winterlude



STAFF CORNER



"Hello everyone! My name is Ivory Featherstone, and I am thrilled to be joining the team as a Direct Support Professional. I'm originally from the area and have always felt a deep connection to this community, so being able to contribute in this role is very meaningful to me.

When I'm not at work, I'm usually outdoors. I have a major passion for botany and plant identification, you can often find me out on a trail with a field guide in hand or at home working on my herbarium collection. I also love spending time in the kitchen baking for my family and friends.

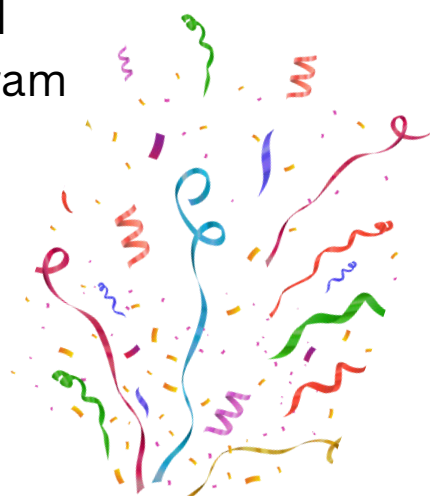
I am looking forward to getting to know all of you and supporting the wonderful work being done here at the association!"



Congratulations!!

Candice Budarick

has successfully completed
the **DSW Apprenticeship** program
through Loyalist College.





NEW MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM



Hutch Afalla



Lovepreet Singh Kamboj



Ivory Featherstone



HR Happenings

Microcredentials: Fast, Flexible Learning for Developmental Services

In developmental services, staying current isn't optional, it's essential. Supporting people with diverse needs requires up-to-date knowledge, strong communication, and adaptable skills. But finding time for lengthy training can be a challenge. Microcredentials offer a practical solution: short, focused learning that builds skills you can use right away.

What Are Microcredentials?

Microcredentials are bite-sized courses that focus on specific competencies. They can often be completed in a few hours to a few weeks and typically result in a digital certificate or badge.

In developmental services, they often focus on areas like:

- Trauma-informed support
- Mental health and crisis response
- Infection prevention and safety practices
- Person-directed planning
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Communication and de-escalation strategies

Why They Matter in Our Work

Microcredentials are especially valuable in developmental services because they:

- Fit busy schedules – Ideal for shift-based roles
- Support quality support practices – Keep skills aligned with current standards and person-centred approaches
- Address real-world challenges – Focus on practical, scenario-based learning
- Enable continuous development – Build skills without stepping away from the people you support
- They're also a great way to support career growth for direct support professionals, supervisors, and other team members across the sector.

Where to Get Started

Here are reputable platforms and programs offering relevant microcredentials:

- Micro-credential Portal
- Ontario Tech University- Ontario Tech University Learning Catalog
- edX – edX Courses | View all online courses on edX.org Includes programs in global health, leadership, and healthcare management from universities such as University of Toronto
- FutureLearn – Online Microcredentials | Top Universities - FutureLearn Courses on dementia care, mental health, and social care practice
- CAMH – Continuing Education Programs & Courses | CAMH Offers mental health and addiction courses tailored to Canadian care settings

Concluding Remarks

Microcredentials make it easier to stay current, confident, and capable in a rapidly evolving sector. Whether you're supporting individuals in daily living, community participation, or complex needs, these short learning opportunities can make a meaningful difference, for you and the people you support.

Jaclyn



Health & Safety



Stepping Safely Through Summer: Why Proper Footwear Matters

As the warmer months arrive, many of us welcome the change with lighter clothing and more time outdoors. While summer brings plenty of opportunities for fresh air and activity, it also introduces unique safety considerations—especially when it comes to footwear. For Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) working at MVACL, choosing appropriate footwear is not just about comfort—it's an important part of preventing injury and maintaining a safe environment for both staff and the people we support.

The Risks of Inappropriate Footwear

Wearing inappropriate footwear significantly increases the risk of injury in the workplace. For specifics about what is appropriate footwear at MVACL, employees can refer to the Footwear Policy. Common hazards include:

- Slips, trips, and falls due to lack of grip or support
- Foot injuries from dropped objects or accidental contact
- Reduced stability when assisting individuals with mobility or transfers
- Exposure to spills or biohazards in care environments

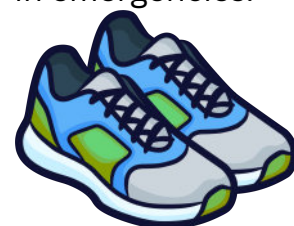
In fast-paced or unpredictable situations, proper footwear can make the difference between maintaining control and experiencing an accident.

Why Proper Footwear Matters in Community Living

DSPs play a hands-on role in supporting individuals with daily activities, which often includes walking on uneven surfaces, assisting with transfers, and responding quickly in emergencies.

Supportive, closed-toe shoes with non-slip soles provide:

- Better traction on indoor and outdoor surfaces
- Improved balance and stability during physical support tasks
- Protection against workplace hazards
- Comfort for long shifts spent on your feet



Wearing the right footwear helps ensure you can perform your duties safely and confidently throughout your shift.

Supporting a Culture of Safety

Workplace safety is a shared responsibility. By making thoughtful choices about footwear, DSPs contribute to a safer environment for everyone. Managers and Direct Support Supervisors can also support this by reinforcing the Footwear Policy and encouraging conversations about seasonal safety risks.

Final Thought

Summer is a time to enjoy the outdoors and stay active—but safety should never take a back seat. The right footwear is a simple yet powerful way to protect yourself and those you support. When you step into your shift, make sure you're stepping safely.

Stay safe, stay supported, and have a great summer!

Jason



Come out and join us for Community Living Month



2026 COMMUNITY LIVING MONTH EVENTS



**MAY
1**

KICK OFF BBQ - ON THE "GREEN" 12:00 PM - 2:00PM

**MAY
5**

PAINTING ROCKS FOR KINDNESS - RAILWAY STATION 1:00- 3:00 PM

**MAY
6**

TRIVIA NIGHT - VITO'S 6:30 PM - 8:30PM

**MAY
14**

**HOSPITAL TOKEN APPRECIATION DAY - HOSPITAL PARKING LOT
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM**

**MAY
16**

BAY DAY - MAIN STREET 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

**MAY
22**

**BBQ AND LIVE MUSIC FEATURING CORI COULAS & JACKSON KARGUS
BARRY'S BAY LEGION - 5:00PM - 8:00PM**

**MAY
29**

BASEBALL DAY - PAUL J YAKABUSKIE COMMUNITY CENTRE 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM



From the Board President

While winter seems to have lingered just a little longer than usual this year, there is a distinct sense of excitement as we watch the season change. Just as spring brings a sense of renewal and growth to the Madawaska Valley and area, our association is looking forward to the "new things" and fresh opportunities blooming within our community.

We are especially thrilled to gear up for Community Living Month in May! This is a vibrant time of year for us to celebrate inclusion, diversity, and the incredible contributions made by people of all abilities. We have a calendar full of exciting events planned, and we can't wait to see everyone participating.

Light It Up **Green** and **Blue**!

To help us commemorate the month and show your support, we invite you to participate in our community-wide display of solidarity. Place blue and green lights outside your home throughout the month of May with the goal of shining a light on inclusion and turn our community into a beacon of support for Community Living.

Joanne

From the Executive Director

Work in Human Services; supporting people, is hard.

At Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living, we acknowledge this is hard work. Our work asks a lot of our employees, families, volunteers and the people we support. It requires patience, creativity, resilience, and a deep commitment to others. But just as importantly, it is good work. It is meaningful work. And it is work that truly matters.

Every day, our team shows up with compassion and dedication, supporting individuals to live with dignity, choice, and inclusion in their communities. Whether it's helping someone achieve a personal goal, building connections, or navigating challenges together, the impact of this work is profound. These moments—big and small—are what make our efforts so worthwhile.

The month of May gives us a special opportunity to pause and reflect as we celebrate Community Living Month. It is a time to raise awareness about the important role that community living organizations play, and to highlight the value of inclusion, belonging, and respect for all people.

It is also a time to say thank you.

To our employees: your commitment does not go unnoticed. The care, professionalism, and heart you bring to your work each day are the foundation of everything we do. You are the reason individuals and families feel supported, empowered, and connected.

May is also a time to celebrate. Over the past year, we have seen countless achievements—personal milestones reached, new opportunities created, and stronger connections built within our communities. These successes are a testament to what can be accomplished when people come together with a shared purpose.

As we move forward, we remain grounded in the belief that everyone deserves to belong and to live a life of meaning and choice. The work is not always easy, but it is always important—and together, it is work we can be proud of.

Thank you for being part of it.

Monica