

## 2015 IIDL in Canada Gary Williams

I was sponsored by SAMS and Manawanui in Charge to attend the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL) in Canada in September 2015.

The other SAMS' people there were Mark and Audrey.

This was my third IIDL event having been to Auckland in 2013 and Manchester in 2014.

As is the format of IIDL, there was a pre-meeting learning exchange.

I chose the one hosted by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) in Winnipeg. While they only had three visitors, it was still very valuable for all concerned.

Our first event was a seminar on social impact research and evaluation co-hosted by CCDS and the Manitoban Disabilities Issues Office.

The seminar was very interesting because I could contrast it with another technique called the Most Significant Change.

We then had the opportunity to meet up with leaders from the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities and People First of Canada. The main thing that I came away with was the financial pressure for organisations because of the centralisation of funding to "peak bodies" and the non-funding of advocacy. Perhaps this might change with the election of the Trudeau government.

Our last event was a visit to the newly-opened Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We were able to have a Skype conversation with the creators of the disability-themed exhibition Out from Under. The exhibition that touched me the most though was the one on the Holocaust.

The IIDL meeting, itself, was held over two days in Vancouver. There was ample time to have informal chats with people like Michael Kendrick and Eddie Bartnik as well as attend a great range of presentations.

Mark presented on SAMS' approach to Developmental Evaluation. It was well received and I had a lot of positive feedback about it.

I found the presentation by the Irish Disability Minister, Kathleen Lynch, most inspiring. She spoke about the effect that the global financial crisis had on the Irish economy and the need to do things differently for disabled people. She was refreshingly honest and spoke on a range of issues for 30 minutes without consulting her pre-prepared notes.

Another highlight was to hear Carla Qualtrough who has subsequently been elected to the Canadian Parliament and is serving as their Disability Minister.

Looking ahead to the 2017 IIDL event in Sydney, I did make the offer that organisations I am involved in like SAMS, Manawanui in Charge, Imagine Better and Enabling Good Lives would be keen to host pre-meeting events in New Zealand.

Overall, it was a productive week to re-acquaint myself with colleagues and to make new contacts.

During the event in Vancouver, I had a bit of a realization. Most of us work in naive faith that people will do what they say they'll do in the timeframe that we think is reasonable. Unfortunately, we are often left disappointed by their tardiness and, consequently, lost opportunities as the world quickly moves on to the next distraction.

Our networks mean we can take the initiative.