

## Annual Election of Directors 2025

### New board member

#### Emi Linds

Emi Linds is a parent advocate, professional marketer, and business strategist dedicated to advancing autism policy and inclusion in Canada. With over a decade of experience in corporate marketing and stakeholder engagement, Emi specializes in bridging the gap between mission-driven advocacy and ROI-driven sustainability.

Emi brings a unique dual perspective: lived experience as a parent of an autistic child, combined with expertise in storytelling and strategic influence from grassroots advocacy to boardrooms.

She is passionate about ensuring that Canada's Autism Strategy moves from vision to action, creating meaningful, measurable change for autistic individuals and their families.



### Board members for re-election

#### Shino Nakane

Shino is currently the Provincial Director for Autism Society Alberta. She has volunteered on a variety of boards and committees over the past decade like the Alberta Children's Hospital Ethics Committee and most recently the External Advisory Committee on Regulatory Competitiveness for the Treasury Board of Canada. She is a Current Member, Past Vice Chair for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, an advisory body for the Government of Alberta. Shino is the mother of a non-speaking young Autistic adult. She is happiest walking and hiking with her son in nature. Her passion is to continually strive to spearhead efforts so that





**Autism**  
Alliance of Canada

Alliance canadienne de  
**l'autisme**

all people are able to live in accessible and inclusive communities.

### **Maddy Dever**

Maddy Dever (they/them) is a non-binary Autistic advocate, speaker, and parent of 4 Autistic youth & young adults residing in Smiths Falls, Ontario. As the founder and host of The Autistic Rambler podcast, Maddy delves into topics surrounding neurodivergence, mental health, and the intersections of autism and LGBTQ+ identities.

Maddy is a prominent voice in Canadian disability advocacy, currently serving as Interim Chair of the new National Autism Network and President of Autistic Bridge Inc., following their previous role as Co-Vice Chair of the Autism Alliance of Canada. Their advocacy spans education reform, accessible housing, and poverty alleviation for disabled individuals, grounded in a strengths-based approach informed by their lived experience.



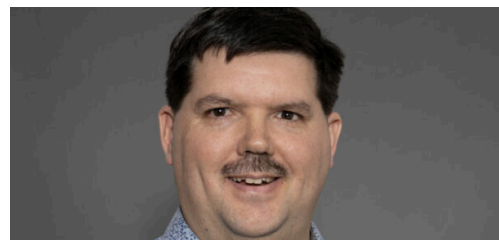
They have contributed to policy and systems change through positions on the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel & Implementation Working Group, the Children's Mental Health Ontario Autism & Mental Health Advisory Group, and have spoken on international platforms, including before the UN Human Rights Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Maddy has been a sought-after speaker at major conferences including the Canadian Autism Leadership Summit (2020–2025), Geneva Centre for Autism Symposium (2024), and OCALICONLINE (2021), among others. They also regularly guest lecture at colleges, universities, and community organizations, and served as a founding member of the Canadian Journal of Autism Ethics (CJAE) (2021).

Their research collaborations include the Autism Care Network and ECHO programs such as ECHO Autism and ECHO IDD Brain Health. As Director of Policy for the Ontario Disability Coalition and a leader in the National Disability Strategy movement, Maddy works to embed the voices of Autistics and caregivers in policy at all levels. Maddy's insights have been featured in national media and academic publications, amplifying Autistic-led perspectives on disability rights and both inspire change and promote acceptance.

Maddy writes and shares their speaking engagements at [autisticrambler.com](https://autisticrambler.com)

### **Corey Walker**



Corey Walker is an autistic self-advocate from Prince George, BC. Diagnosed with Asperger's in 2001, while in his early 20's, Corey's life mission is to empower autistics to live the best life possible, and to educate others about what makes autistics such wonderful, unique people with proper supports.

Corey has worked for several autism organizations in the past. His most recent position was with the Pacific Autism Family Network as a Program Facilitator for their EmploymentWorks program. Corey formerly served as the Project Lead for Sinneave Family Foundation on the Success in the Workplace: Strategies from Autistic Employees toolkit project. He also worked for the Canucks Autism Network as a Hub and Spoke Coordinator, where he led some panel discussions on innovative strategies to support employment agencies during COVID-19.

Corey is also an engaging and dynamic public speaker/trainer who is available to hire.

### **David Nicholas**

David Nicholas is a family advocate, researcher and social worker. He has been involved in the autism community for many years. He is Professor and Associate Dean, Research and Partnerships at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Dr. Nicholas' research addresses quality of life, transitions to adulthood, and greater access to employment, with a focus on autism and neurodiversity. He has offered presentations nationally and internationally in the area of autism, and has worked in the community to achieve greater equity and inclusion.



### **Debbie Irish**

Debbie is an accomplished not-for-profit leader with over 30 years experience in autism as well as developmental disabilities. She possesses advanced skills in the areas of community capacity building, partnership



development, program expansion, staff engagement and financial/marketing leadership.

Professionally, Debbie is currently employed as the Chief Operating Officer at the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW). In this role, Debbie has responsibility for all programs, HR and operations. Previously, Debbie worked at Geneva Centre for Autism for over 15 years in a number of progressive positions ending in the CEO role. Debbie has led system change programs, training and consultation programs and played an instrumental role in the development of a coordinated, collaborative service delivery system in Toronto, specifically in the area of developmental disabilities and autism.

Personally, Debbie values family above all else, having launched 3 fine young men into adulthood and now enjoying an empty nest with her husband, Glen and grandparenthood.