

## Iris Saunders

**Iris Saunders** was the driving force for EmployAbilities for over 28 years.

Throughout her career, **Iris** fought tirelessly for inclusion of people with disabilities and had an incredible vision for the future. **Iris** was first hired in 1986 as a job developer for what was at that time called Employment for the Physically Disabled. **Iris** was named Executive Director of the three-person organization a short time later.

Under **Iris's** guidance, the organization (renamed EmployAbilities in 1992)

expanded; now employing 40+ staff and contractors. EmployAbilities offers eight different programs in eight different communities, including Edmonton, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, St. Albert, Vegreville, St. Paul, Lac La Biche and Hinton. In 2018/19 more than 488 individuals with disabilities and/or barriers received EmployAbilities' support to build a better life.

**Iris** was recognized across Canada for her lifelong passion, dedication and innovative ideas that brought awareness to the untapped workforce of people with disabilities and barriers. She received countless awards and honours in her 28-year career with EmployAbilities. She was the first recipient of the Lumina Award; was named a Global Woman of Vision in 2003; was awarded the Lois Hole Community Award and the Marion Shipley Award by the Junior Leagues of Edmonton in 2009; and was nominated for the Order of Canada in 2010. **Iris** passed away suddenly in 2014, leaving a legacy with the Iris M Saunders Bursary Fund for students with disabilities.

