



# Fort St. John Association for Community Living 2021-2022 Annual Report

The Fort St. John Association for Community Living would like to gratefully acknowledge that we live, work, learn, and play on the traditional territory of the Dane-zaa people, within Treaty 8. Our Association recognizes and supports the inherent Indigenous rights and titles throughout British Columbia, the 94 calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the BC Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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## ABOUT OUR AGENCY

The Fort St. John Association for Community Living (FSJACL) is a non-profit society dedicated to ensuring people with disabilities and complex needs lead active and productive lives in their community. The FSJACL was founded in 1960 by parents who dreamed of a better life for their sons and daughters. They wanted their children to learn in school, have friends, and be accepted in their communities.

For more than 60 years, the FSJACL has provided a variety of services and programs to individuals with developmental disabilities and complex needs within Fort St. John and the surrounding area.

## CARF ACCREDITATION

The *Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)* surveyed the FSJACL in December of 2020, and awarded us our 6th three-year accreditation. Obtaining this achievement is an indication of our commitment to improving the quality of the lives of persons served, and showcases that we meet a high standard of quality.

Our next CARF survey is scheduled to take place in the spring of 2023. We are already hard at work reviewing changes to the CARF standards, to ensure our Agency has needed documentation and procedures in place.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,



This has been a season of accelerated change, both within the organization and in society as a whole. It is tempting to shrink back and take a defensive position in times like these, and while this may limit some risks, it also creates missed opportunities. Our board members, stakeholders, leadership team, staff, self-advocates, and families and caregivers all rose to the challenge and created a very robust and comprehensive strategic plan that will guide the growth of this organization for years to come. Many of the initiatives are already well underway, and the Board feels confident the leadership team and staff will make great progress towards these goals.

In his role as Executive Director, Joe continues to make our job as a Board very easy, freeing us up to focus on building organizational policy and promoting the Association. He keeps us well informed of all the challenges and accomplishments within the organization, and has an amazing ability to find win-win solutions when faced with difficulties.

We are very fortunate to have Joe in our community, as his endeavors are bringing together a network of partnership opportunities that will benefit the vulnerable populations in our area far into the future. We have the utmost confidence that the Fort St. John Association for Community Living is in the best of hands under his leadership.

It takes courage to see a better future in the midst of chaos and constant challenges!

We have one Director who resigned from his position on the Board. Joshua Cullen transferred with his family to another city, and we will miss his humour and the insight he brought as a member of the RCMP. We wish him and his family all the best, and know he will have as great an impact in his new

community as he did in Fort St. John.

What can I say about the upcoming year, except HOLD ONTO YOUR HATS!

Joe has detailed many of the projects underway in the Executive Director's Report, which I encourage you to read. The Board is working closely with Joe to ensure the leadership team, staff, and self-advocates are receiving the resources and support they need to succeed.

Recruitment has been a challenge for the Association, and coupled with the pandemic and a looming strike by the BCGEU, this has put a lot of stress on the team. The commitment and care demonstrated by staff, supervisors, and management during this time has revealed once again their incredible hearts of service. We are so grateful for, and proud of, the way everyone has stepped up!

We are also overwhelmed by the generosity of the community as fundraising events came back into action this summer. DGS once again chose the FSJACL as the recipients of their summer golf tournament, raising over \$65,000 – the highest amount ever! And the *Of the Vine* event being held in October has already sold out. There were many other donations made over the year both great and small, and each one is so appreciated.

Once again I want to recognize and thank members for their continued support of the Association. We look forward to another year of building on the solid foundations already in place, and increasing the capacity of the FSJACL to support Self-Advocates in achieving full and meaningful lives in our community.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Conkin*

**President, FSJACL Board of Directors**

## 2021-2022 BOARD

Guidance and direction of the FSJACL is set by a volunteer Board of Directors. One member is always a Self-Advocate.



**President**  
Sarah Conkin



**Vice-President**  
Byron Stewart



**Treasurer**  
Tara Waddy



**Secretary**  
Krista Peregoodoff



**Director**  
John Lambert



**Director**  
Tania Bell



**Director**  
Kelly Clark



**Director**  
Darrell Blades

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



The FSJACL has continued to grow over the last year, developing new partnerships and exploring new programs and services. Individuals in service and staff have newfound energy as COVID-19 restrictions lift, allowing us to re-connect with the community.

We've had many positive moments this year. Inclusion BC will be highlighting our Careers program, featuring us in a short film promoting supported employment across BC. Our *Art of Inclusion* program successfully completed its first year, and our *Growing Connections* program is in its second summer. We've added an Aquaponics system to *Growing Connections*, which has added a third site to this program, and secured a rental building to house the system; the rental also includes a separate space for the art studio. Both the Art Program and the Agricultural Programs received grant funding this year. Local media continues to be a support for these new programs.

Our CLBC funded programming continues to grow with the expansion of the outreach program connected to DJ's Hope Centre. This program serves individuals with complex needs, including those with mental health and addictions concerns. In addition, we are currently engaging in negotiations with CLBC, attempting to develop a multi-disciplinary team for the Northeast region of the province. This team would work with individuals with disabilities who are chronically homeless, and with youth who are transitioning into adult services.

This year we finalized an exciting new Strategic Plan, which will continue to lead and direct the FSJACL's growth and development as we partner with other non-profit organizations to provide services to our community. This plan was created with input from all levels within the Association, families, community partners, and local government. The plan includes the development of a new FSJACL multi-service location within Fort St. John;

we have begun to reach out to designers and architects to assist us with this endeavor.

Another focus of the Strategic Plan is to broaden our services to individuals with complex needs and youth. Thanks to the United Way and a number of generous community donors, we have partnered with a team of local counselors to create a self-esteem group for youth who self-identify as having a disability. This group, named *Becoming ME*, will start its second round of sessions this fall. We also just received a substantial amount of funding from the BC Arts Council, to run *New Path*, a First Nations Carving program for youth, in partnership with Project Thunderbird Society.

Also in alignment with the new plan, we have been meeting with Northern Health and partner First Nations organizations to explore the creation of needed treatment programs within Fort St. John and the surrounding region, to better serve the individuals in our area with more complex needs, including mental health and addictions issues. We continue to provide training to partner agencies, and will soon be able to provide Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) to staff and other organizations. As well, we are seeking to provide significant contract services to Northern Health and have been exploring ways to further partner with BC Housing as we try to better serve the community.

As things have started to re-open after COVID, we are able to actively engage in fundraising. The DGS Golf Tournament in August was a wonderful success, raising \$65,000 for our Agency, a tournament record. We look forward to a very successful *Of the Vine* event in October. As we come out of two very challenging years, I see a wonderful year ahead for the FSJACL and the individuals we are honoured to support!

*Joe Lang*

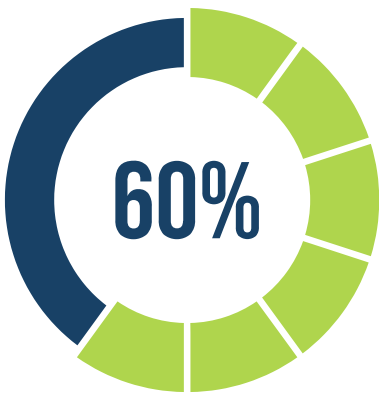
**Executive Director**



## WHO DO WE SERVE?

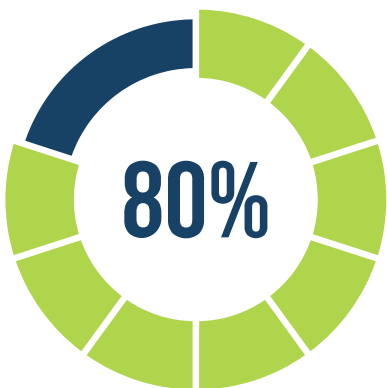
During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, our agency provided services to 70 individuals with developmental disabilities and complex needs. Services for these individuals were funded through Community Living British Columbia (CLBC), and were provided across a broad range of supports – residential programs and HomeShare, supported living, outreach services, supported employment, and community inclusion supports.

This year, the FSJACL moved from their Outcomes Management reporting process to a streamlined Performance Improvement Report, in order to better align with CARF standards. For the purposes of this Annual Report, we have summarized the demographics of individuals served in 2021-2022 below; to see a comprehensive breakdown of demographics across our departments, please request a copy of the Performance Improvement report from our office, or review it on our website.



### GENDER:

- 60% of persons-served are male.
- 40% of persons-served are female.
- No demographics on other genders were collected in 2021-2022.



### AGE:

- 80% of persons-served are between 18-40 years of age.
- 17% of persons-served are between 41-65 years of age.
- 3% of persons-served are between 66-85 years of age.

## OUR SERVICES

The FSJACL is proud to offer a variety of services and supports:

### STAFFED RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

The FSJACL operates four homes with 24-hour staffing. Each of these homes is considered a separate program; the level of support in each program is dependent on the needs of its residents. Currently, 19 individuals live in our staffed residential programs, which means each residential program is at full capacity.

### HOMESHARE PROGRAM

Our Agency manages 18 HomeShare contracts, one of which is a variable respite contract. HomeShare is a service that allows individuals to live within the community, where they receive supports within a community member's - a HomeShare provider's - home.

HomeShare providers are not FSJACL staff, but are contracted by our Agency. If you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a HomeShare provider, please contact our office and leave a message for our HomeShare Coordinator.

### SUPPORTED LIVING

Individuals living independently in the community can access Outreach supports for activities such as housekeeping assistance, bill-paying, budgeting, and meal management. Our DJ's Hope Centre, a home for individuals who also struggle with mental health or addiction concerns, is staffed through the Supported Living program.



## INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS

Some individuals receive specialized one-on-one support from staff to learn life skills. These skills may take place in an individual's home, or within the community. Many neurodivergent individuals (such as those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or Autism) receive services from our Association this way.

## INCLUSION SERVICES

The FSJACL supports approximately 41 individuals through our Inclusion program, known as Community Connections. This program gives individuals the opportunity to participate in activities that suit their interests, and assists them in accessing the community. Activities are a combination of FSJACL programming and activities within Fort St. John and the surrounding area. The *Art of Inclusion* and *Growing Connections* programs are staffed and run via the Inclusion program.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Our Employment Program helps find individuals jobs in the community. Services include initial job coaching, and regular check-ins and supports once individuals are working independently. Our program is country-renowned and is often highlighted within the sector.

The Association continues to promote awareness and provide resources and training around inclusive employment, both within our community and on a larger scale. At this time the FSJACL supports approximately 22 individuals through our Careers program, and supports are available for both individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as neurotypical individuals approved for CLBC funding.



## TRAINING & RECRUITMENT

In order to provide quality services, all FSJACL staff receive initial and ongoing training. This training allows us to meet our contractual and legal standards, and includes training on medication delivery, crisis prevention, and various forms of developmental disabilities. In 2021-2022, there was an increased focus in providing mental health and addictions training to our staff, to support our Association's expansion into supporting individuals with complex needs.

This fiscal year there was also a focus on developing the skills of our leadership team, as well as providing Train-the-Trainer opportunities. This is in alignment with our new Strategic Plan, as it supports career development for our staff and allows us to provide needed training to other organizations within our community.

Some of the focused training this year included:

- Trauma Informed training through STARR Commonwealth.
- Addictions training through the Canadian Mental Health Association.
- *Essential Skills for Today's Leaders* through CL&F Consulting. This year-long training was offered to our Supervisory team.
- Trainer training for ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills). Two staff have been enrolled in this training and will be able to provide workshops to FSJACL staff and other community organizations by fall 2022.
- *Leadership for Positive Social Change* through the Justice Institute of BC.

Our Careers team also got to participate in the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) conference in Winnipeg this year.

## RECRUITMENT

As the Agency grows, the FSJACL continues to focus on hiring staff that are passionate and committed to making a difference within our sector. However, navigating the current job market has been challenging, and we've had to get

creative with our recruiting efforts. Top challenges include limited availability (due to employees having to work multiple jobs because of inflation and the high cost of living), and long-term staff leaving our agency to take schooling and the attached jobs through Northern Health.

To counter this we have done the following:

- Reworded job postings to include questions about availability.
- Made separate job postings for casual staff specific to the Inclusion program.
- Created an FSJACL Instagram page to promote our Agency to a new audience.
- Utilized grants from Canada Summer Jobs to fill four student positions.
- Participated in two Job Fairs.
- Continued to accept expressions of interest from staff who wish to participate in our Acting Supervisor or Management Mentorship programs.

## **GERRY ECKERT BURSARY**

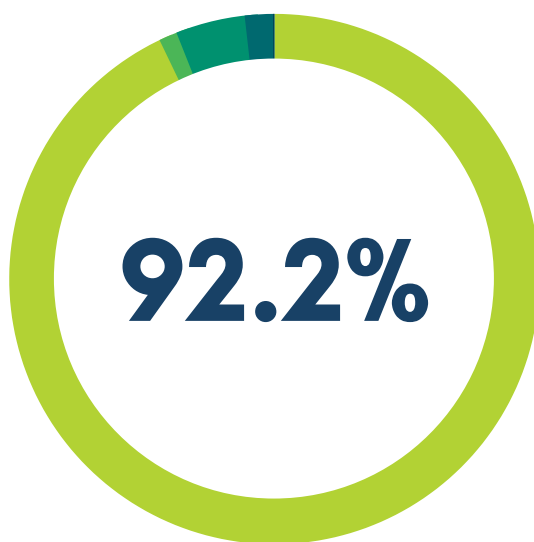
In 2021, the FSJACL launched an educational bursary in memory of Gerald Eckert, who received services from our Agency for many years. This bursary allows FSJACL staff the opportunity to be reimbursed for education that contributes to the development of our agency, and therefore the developmental services sector.

2021's bursary was awarded to Trina Sperling, for her course in Human Resources Management. Since taking the course, Trina has streamlined many of our HR processes, including recruitment procedures. Thank you Trina for your continued commitment to our Agency and those we serve!

## FINANCIALS

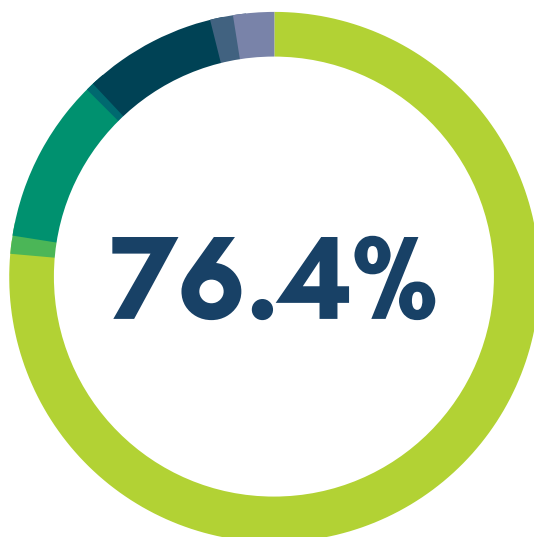
Our Association continues to maintain a good financial position, and we continue to care for our capital assets. Currently, we have reserves set aside for accessible vehicles and new buildings.

Our financials for the 2021-2022 fiscal year were audited by KPMG LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants. Contact the FSJACL office for a copy of the audited statements.



### WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM:

- **92.2%** CLBC
- **4.2%** Rent & Expense Recovery
- **1.7%** Employment Contracts
- **1.1%** Fundraising
- **0.4%** BC Housing
- **0.03%** Grants
- **0.01%** Other



### WHERE THE MONEY WENT:

- **76.4%** Staffing
- **10%** Contracting (HomeShare)
- **8.1%** Program Expenses
- **2.5%** Professional Fees, Office Expenses, & Membership Fees
- **1.4%** Property Maintenance & Improvements
- **1.1%** Training & Education
- **0.5%** Fundraising Expenses

## STRATEGIC PLAN

FSJACL's Strategic Plan outlines the goals of the Agency; these goals position us for growth and allow us to better support the individuals we serve.

Throughout 2021, our Agency collected data from our Board of Directors, Management Team, Leadership team, general staff, supported individuals and their families, community partners, and other stakeholders. This data was used to develop a new strategic plan spanning the years 2022-2025. During the strategic planning process, both the FSJACL Vision and Mission statements were reconfigured.

## VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement details where an organization wishes to go and the impact it wishes to have. Our new vision statement reads:

**"Individuals with diverse abilities are recognized and included as a vital and contributing part of the community. We are all connected. Everyone belongs."**

## MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement defines what an organization does and who it serves. Our mission statement was rewritten to reflect the broadening of FSJACL services to include youth with developmental disabilities, and/or individuals with complex needs, such as mental health diagnoses, addictions, and others. Our updated mission statement reads:

**"The Fort St. John Association for Community Living Supports individuals with developmental disabilities or complex needs achieve full and meaningful lives in our community."**

These shifts were due to changes in our funder's focus, as well as consideration of local community needs.

Also considered during the process were our Agency's previous strategic goals, two of which we've carried forward into this version of our Strategic Plan (transitions from youth to adult services and housing).

## **STRATEGIC GOALS**

The FSJACL's goals and objectives for the years 2022-2025 are:

- Facilitate a smooth transition for youth moving into adult services.
- Become an employer of choice, where the right people are attracted to our team and want to stay with us.
- Create a Fort St. John and Area strategy to support individuals with complex needs.
- Collaborate with appropriate partners to develop innovative and inclusive housing solutions for individuals with developmental disabilities and complex needs.
- Create diverse programming, giving individuals an opportunity to access unique experiences that facilitate inclusion/involvement within the community.
- Engage the community to co-create a culture of inclusion.

If you wish to have a more comprehensive look at these goals, including their rationale, you may request a copy of the 2022-2025 FSJACL Strategic Plan from our office.



## CHALLENGES

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, our Association faced some barriers that impacted our agency and the individuals we serve. Many of these were a direct result of the global pandemic and the current employment environment within Fort St. John and the province.

### COVID-19

Changing COVID-19 restrictions hindered the lives of many individuals, and were the biggest barrier to those we support. Restrictions caused service disruptions, and made it difficult for individuals to see friends and family, or participate in their community. Some individuals supported through our Careers program were laid off from their jobs, or had their working hours cut back.

Many of the goals individuals had for themselves this year were not successful due to the restrictions. Many individuals were unable to access new opportunities while the pandemic took place.

### STAFFING

Our agency had a high level of staff turnover in 2021-2022. We lost staff when vaccine mandates were put in place, and had many experienced staff leave to work with Northern Health when they announced their Care Aide bursary program. Many of our permanent positions remain open.

Due to a low unionized starting wage, coupled with the high cost of living, it has been difficult to attract new staff with open availability, as many people are working two or three jobs. We've seen a large change in when staff are available



for shifts, causing us to need to hire three casual staff to cover each available position.

As our Agency grows, we have created new Management and Supervisor positions. Although this is ultimately a positive, it creates a period of transition while staff awarded the position learn their new role. In addition to this, new positions within the excluded staff were created and saw turnover.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Although the FSJACL faced challenges, we worked very hard during the 2021-2022 fiscal year to create connections and partnerships within the community, and have many exciting projects currently underway. Many of these have been listed in the earlier Executive Director's Report.

We received many grants this year, which allowed us to launch programs we otherwise wouldn't have been able to. One of the grants went towards the purchase of an aquaponics system for *Growing Connections*, and another allowed us to partner with local youth counsellors to run the *Becoming Me* self-esteem group for youth with disabilities. Grant funds also allowed us to add a therapeutic plant nursery to the Community Connections program.

Other highlights include the completion of our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, the addition of numerous new Leadership positions within our Agency, and the addition of new programs based on the needs and interests of the individuals we serve.

You may request a copy of our Performance Improvement Report for a full overview of FSJACL operations this year.



## SERVICE AWARDS

The FSJACL wants to recognize the following staff for their years of service:

### 25 YEARS

- Shirley Ramos.

### 15 YEARS

- Tracey Hotston.
- Sheri Ashdown.
- Tanya Neil.

### 10 YEARS

- Janet Christian.

### 5 YEARS

- Michael Currie.
- Melissa McComber.

We also thank Pat Taylor for her 27 years of service to our Agency, and wish her all the best in her years of retirement!





FORT ST. JOHN ASSOCIATION FOR  
**COMMUNITY LIVING**



10251 100 Ave  
Fort St. John, BC  
V1J 1Y8

250-787-9262  
info@fsjacl.com

fsjacl.com

Interested in a career in  
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