




FIRST LIGHT

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



WHO WE ARE

First Light is a registered non-profit organization that serves the urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous community alike by providing programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect, and friendship.

69
STAFF

4
LOCATIONS

Headquarters

716 Water Street
726 - 5902

Centre for Performance & Creativity

42 Bannerman Street
754 - 2532

Childcare Centre

97 Elizabeth Avenue
738 - 8467

Boutique Inn

36 Quidi Vidi Road
726 - 5908



Board of Directors

Susan Onalik
PRESIDENT

Catherine Fagan
VICE PRESIDENT

Rochelle Côté
TREASURER

Edie Newton
SECRETARY

Sophie Bennett
YOUTH DIRECTOR

Ellen Ford Hunter

Caitlin Urquhart

Message from our Executive Director

As we reflect back on First Light's activities in the past year, we are extremely proud of the resiliency and strength of our staff and community. The beginning of 2020 was off to a challenging start with the State of Emergency which saw closure of many programs and services, except for our essential services.

As all other organizations were, First Light was affected by COVID-19 pandemic and shut down of non-essential services. Although the programs and services were adapted in how they were offered, staff again ensured community members were able to avail of essential services. First Light created a COVID-19 support tab on the website where community members could receive food support, medication, traditional craft and medicine, personal care items, virtual programming, and emotional support.

I would like to recognize the staff for their hard work and dedication in keeping First Light stable and supportive during these times of crises. I can gladly report that we were successful in maintaining our entire funding base and were able to keep all employees on payroll during this unpredictable funding climate.

Although we had to overcome a few obstacles in the past year, First Light has steadily moved forward in the purchase of 36 Quidi Vidi in December 2019 and efforts are now in progress to purchase 40 Quidi Vidi, known as Caledonia Place. First Light is also continuing to look at developing an Indigenous performing arts centre at 81 Cochrane Street. This is a very exciting time for the organization to be able to strategically move ahead on all of our capital projects in order to meet the growing needs of our community.

As we celebrate our 37 years of existence, First Light has grown tremendously with 69 employees with approximately 5 million in overall funding and additional infrastructure funding of 3 million. We have so many people to thank every year who have led the way; we appreciate each and every one of you and the contributions you have made. We are so grateful to be a part of such a strong and vibrant community that continues to guide First Light in the current and future years ahead of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our many funders, volunteers and community members, Board members and staff for supporting First Light in making a difference in the lives of people that we serve every day.

Thank you,

Morgan Hare

Morgan Hare



2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Youth Digital Storytelling Project

In January 2020, First Light partnered with the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education (NCCIE) to complete a youth digital storytelling project. Staff worked with six youth from various parts of NL who all currently live in St. John's to tell their story using various techniques including videography, photography, voice recording, and video editing. The project was a great success and the youth shared amazing stories discussing their culture and traditions. The videos will be used as a resource on NCCIE's website and were also showcased on First Light's social media outlets.

Childcare Centre

First Light Childcare Centre is fully licensed for children from birth to 12 years, our infant program increased to a full capacity of 6 children in January 2020. In March, the Centre had to close due to COVID-19, but was then required to reopen during the shut down and provide care to children of essential workers. Staff kept connected through virtual cultural teachings and provided traditional craft and medicine kits to all enrolled families. The Childcare Centre is now up and running again at full capacity ensuring the children are gaining social and cultural programming on a daily basis.

Centre for Performance & Creativity (CPAC)

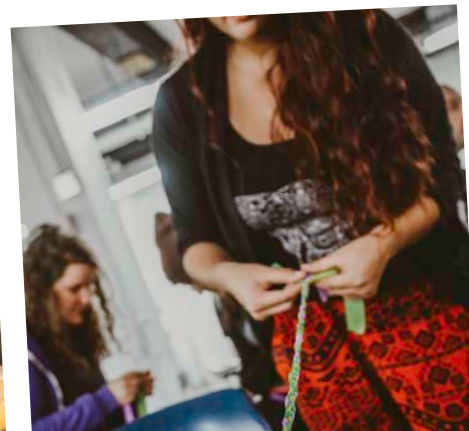
While CPAC operations were significantly impacted during the pandemic, the space has become a hub for the organization in the past number of months. The space allows for safe socially distanced programming, and an exemption from Public Health has permitted us to re-open the performance centre for crowds as large as 202. Our focus continues to be on internal First Light programming to ensure that the community can come together safely in person. First Light continues to have 100% occupancy in its 15 affordable housing units.

Youth Employment Program

First Light implemented a Youth Employment Program in 2020 which provides support to youth between 15-30 years of age. It provides an opportunity to develop skills and employability in order to prepare youth for the labour market. This includes one-on-one support, job readiness workshops, and work experience programs. Intake for this program is ongoing, if you know a youth interested in the Youth Employment Program please contact the Employment Program Coordinator Molly Shiwak at molly@firstlightnl.ca.

Crafting with Katelin

Crafting with Katelin is a new program and place where community members can share crafting skills and learn traditional and contemporary crafting techniques. Participants work on larger projects like beading or sewing with traditional materials in a group setting. Traditional crafting is not often accessible for community members to start on their own, so this program offers guidance and instruction via the program facilitator.



2019 - 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Medical Transportation

One of many essential services continuing to operate throughout the pandemic was our Medical Transportation. The team worked tirelessly to meet the needs of clients who simply could not isolate, and needed to be in the capital city for medical reasons. We cannot thank the drivers enough for their willingness to go above and beyond to be available to clients, and their commitment to health and safety. We continue to adapt to the public health crisis, and have installed plexiglass barriers, invested in high powered disinfecting sprayers, and added a vehicle to our fleet to adjust for the reduction of clients who can be in a vehicle at one time.

CLIENT RIDES
2019-2020
8769

In exciting news, the Transportation Program moved to a new home at 36 Quidi Vidi Road, and will assist staff at the Boutique Inn with providing the ultimate guest experience in 2021.

Indigenous Cultural Diversity Training

Our training program continues to grow each year, and we have seen requests come in from a variety of new and returning organizations & individuals. Although the pandemic initially caused a temporary halt in our training operations, the team quickly transitioned to offering virtual sessions. This new avenue allowed for the rescheduling of any previously cancelled sessions, as well as a wide variety of new opportunities. While we have started transitioning back to in-person sessions, with proper precautions in place, we still are receiving many requests for virtual sessions.

SESSIONS
2019-20
44

This year, we were also able to expand our training to include additional modules based on requests from past training participants. These topics include family structures, intergenerational trauma, systemic violence & MMIW, and will be launched in 2021.

Intergenerational Women's Empowerment Program

The Intergenerational Women's Empowerment Program is a new mentorship program at First Light that focuses on providing participants with a welcoming, safe place to share their knowledge and traditions with younger generations. Women in our community currently meet once a month to form connections with one another as well as explore mentorship themes in preparation for future engagement with female identifying youth in the community. The program began in the fall of 2020 and First Light has already seen immense interest from community members.

Sports Program

First Light was excited to receive funding through the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) to support sport initiatives in the community. While the program implementation was greatly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, there were still several highlights with the program. Based on feedback from a community survey, staff implemented various programming such as a virtual steps challenge, virtual monthly fitness challenges, three sponsored volleyball teams in the NLVA league, walking groups, yoga, ultimate frisbee, youth horsemanship programs, and sport implementation in our Childcare Centre programming. Staff also worked closely to develop partnerships with various provincial and municipal sport organizations which will allow First Light to offer quality sports and recreation programming to community members.





ADAPTING TO COVID-19

From the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic First Light adapted to rapidly changing Public Health measures to support the community. Early on in the lock-down, we moved to support the community by offering check-ins with community members, offered food hampers, delivery of crafting supplies, and medicines.

Virtual Programs

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, First Light's programs were 100% in-person. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, First Light staff quickly mobilized and transitioned programs to an online platform within the first week.

To continue programs that promote holistic health, First Light delivered program kits to community members so they could take part in program activities and workshops via telephone conference calls, online meeting platforms and Facebook Live. Virtual programming was widely received as an essential part of community health, social interaction and peer support during the province's lock down.



Thank you to the organizations who have provided support during COVID:



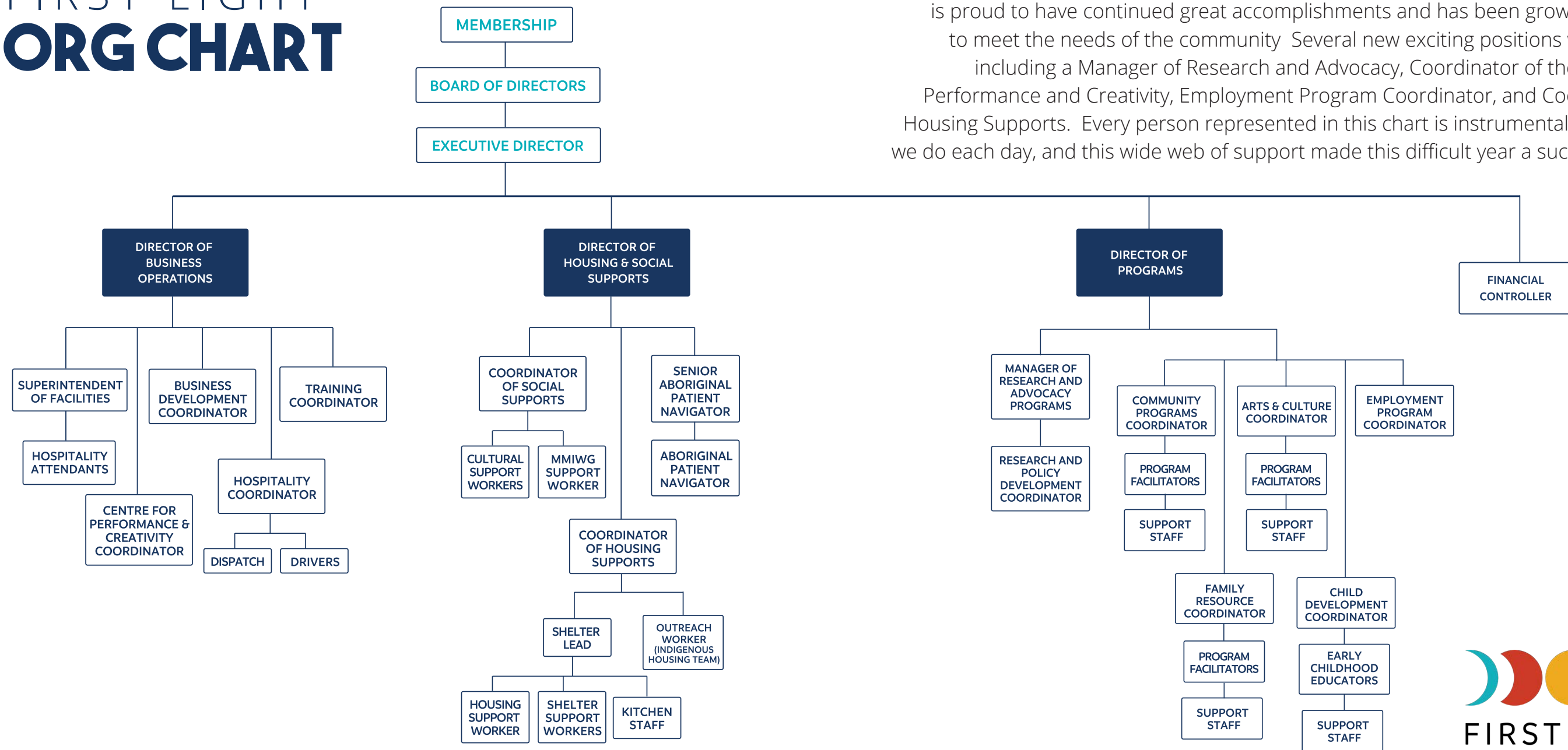
community food centres
CANADA good food is just the beginning



National Association
of Friendship Centres
Association nationale
des centres d'amitié



FIRST LIGHT ORG CHART



Although First Light had to overcome major challenges this year, the organization is proud to have continued great accomplishments and has been growing its team to meet the needs of the community. Several new exciting positions were added including a Manager of Research and Advocacy, Coordinator of the Centre for Performance and Creativity, Employment Program Coordinator, and Coordinator of Housing Supports. Every person represented in this chart is instrumental in the work we do each day, and this wide web of support made this difficult year a successful one.

FIRST VOICE

Introduced in the spring of 2019 as the St. John's Urban Indigenous Coalition, over the last year the coalition relaunched as First Voice in order to better reflect the identities and values of the urban Indigenous community. Bringing together more than 25 organizations at the local, provincial, and federal levels, throughout 2020 First Voice prioritized partnership-building and advocacy work. Major achievements include adopting formal Terms of Reference; recruiting six Community Advocates and establishing a Partnership Table to lead the project; and creating an online presence at firstvoicenl.ca and on social media platforms using the @FirstVoiceNL handle. In addition, First Voice worked directly with St. John's City Council to pass a formal Declaration on Indigenous rights while also collaborating with Memorial University to host Decolonize YYT, a virtual policy conference that will help inform the development of the coalition's forthcoming Community Action Plan.



"I really loved living in St. John's, but I faced many challenges simply because of who I am and because of what my ancestry was."
Charlotte Winters-Fost

Indigenous Advocate of the Year

In June, 2020 First Voice announced that Charlotte Winters-Fost had been named the inaugural recipient of the coalition's new Indigenous Advocate Award.

In rendering its decision, the Nominations and Selection Committee cited Charlotte's more than forty years of advocacy in promoting cross-cultural understanding, her efforts to build a strong urban Indigenous community in St. John's, and her work to advance truth and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in NL.

Charlotte was born in Hopedale, Nunatsiavut, in 1954 and moved with her family to Happy Valley-Goose Bay at the age of 13. Although she initially left high school without graduating in order to travel throughout North America, she returned to Happy Valley-Goose Bay at the age of 20 and received her high school equivalency diploma. Two years later, in 1976, she earned a college diploma and was accepted into Memorial University. She moved to St. John's and, while raising two of her three children, completed a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1981 and then a Bachelor of Special Education in 1982. She went on to become a special needs teacher with a career that spanned 27 years, retiring in 2009.





INDIGENOUS HOUSING TEAM

Through the Reaching Home Indigenous NL Covid-19 Economic Response funding Stream, we were able to Secure funding to establish our new Indigenous Housing Team (IHT). This small, but mighty team has been working since August with Indigenous people in St. John's at-risk of, or experiencing homelessness. To date, the Indigenous Housing Team has already supported 32 individuals, 12 of whom are now stably housed.

We expect the Indigenous Housing Team to grow in the new year, with additional funding expected to come from the Reaching Home Indigenous NL stream. This project has also been an excellent opportunity for us to work closer with community partners to identify Indigenous Individuals in need of support.



CULTURAL SUPPORT TEAM

The Cultural Support Team continues to support community members, through the difficulties of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Even through the early days, staff were available to check-in with community members who may be feeling isolated, or needed someone to talk to. The Cultural Support Team also purchased medicines and crafting materials, and would drop-off packages based on the community members interests, to help them feel connected to their culture, and community.

First Light was also able to receive several pots of funding specific to food distribution, allowing us to create a Food Distribution program, delivering food hampers, or grocery gift cards to community members in need. Through partnering with Food Rescue, we will also continue to receive large shipments of food (Chicken, Fish, Wedges, etc.) which we will distribute to community members and other organizations in need.

"It is important to me that I have my own place so that when my mom visits from Labrador she can spend time with me at my place and I can cook for her instead of her staying in a hotel."

IHT Client - Oct 2020

"I was given some bad news and was having a bad day. Then I went to Men's Group and Michael and Boyd talked to me and helped me feel better. I appreciate all the support I have received from First Light. It really makes a difference and helps me stay on the right path"

Men's Group Participant

Based on Facebook Analytics:

33,000
PEOPLE REACHED

9,000
ENGAGEMENTS

11,000
VIDEO VIEWS

“An incredibly inspiring day and week! We began our day listening to Chief Mi’sel Joe and now end it by listening to the closing by Emma Reelis. Thank you, First Light for your leadership, your grace, your wisdom”
Community Member

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

Despite not being able to host NIPD celebrations in person this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, NIPD 2020 was a huge success. This year First Light represented all Indigenous cultures in the province through a wide range of cultural activities and arts-based practices through NIPD programming. There were drum building workshops, story-telling videos and workshops, live musical performances, ceremonies, Inuit games, training opportunities, and many other family and crafting activities. Local artists provided artwork that were purchased for contest prizes. The team delivered craft kits to homes so that participants could have the materials they needed to participate. Through partnership with Fishing for Success and Belbin’s grocery, First Light provided a virtual feast to over 75 participants!



SPIRIT SONG FESTIVAL 2019

Every year First Light looks forward to the growth and evolution of Spirit Song Festival. It has gained popularity, community support and attracted many performing and visual artists to showcase since its formation.

The festival is accessible and free, with activities aimed at attracting a diverse audience. In 2019, we saw the biggest year to the festival yet! We produced three major stage shows with performances from the biggest names in Canadian Indigenous music. The shows were all ages and consisted of a dance night with the Snotty Nose Rez Kids, a soft seater at the Arts & Culture Centre with Jeremy Dutcher, and a community showcase with the Jerry Cans.

Thanks to sponsors like the Canada Council for the Arts, Canadian Heritage and ArtsNL, we were able to offer a series of performance and visual arts related workshops called the Knowledge Share Series, as well as a dancer in residency program. The festival saw approximately 1500 participants for 2019, doubling the attendance in 2018. St. John’s was buzzing with excitement and the media hailed the festival as a roaring success.



LANGUAGE & CULTURE CAMP

Language and Culture Camp was extremely successful this year. The Camp focused on developing skills in many different artistic disciplines while incorporating Indigenous languages. First Light held facilitated sessions in Inuit drum-dance, First Nation drumming, working with seal skin products, traditional tattoo practices, several sessions on beading, working with porcupine quill, and weaving. All invited artists were from Newfoundland & Labrador. Facilitators encouraged peer support, with more experienced community members helping novice learners.

The camp also had several lands-based activities, including snow-showing, cooking on the fire and constructing Innu tents for classroom spaces. We had over 150 participants register for the weekend, and still had a long wait-list. We hope to expand to meet the total need of the community for future camps.

"Participating in workshops as a family was a shared immersive experience that is difficult to replicate in any other learning model."

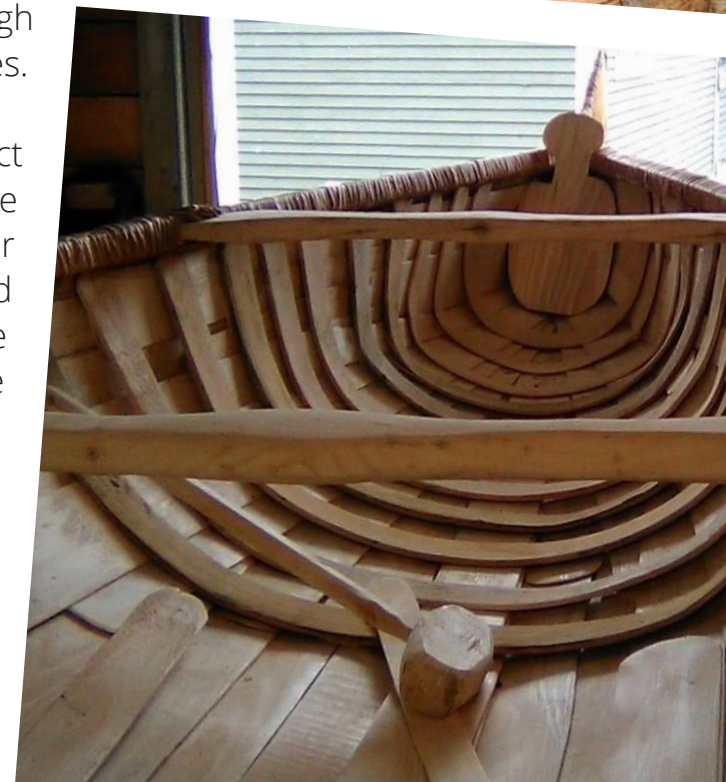
Community Member

CANOE PROJECT

During a previous Culture Camp, community members were introduced to working with birch bark and spruce root, including the construction of model birch bark canoes. In 2020, First Light partnered with Miawpukek First Nation and Parks Canada to host a 10 week canoe build at the Parks Canada Signal Hill site. The project started in March, with an original plan for community members to visit the site and help construct the canoe with guidance from Master Canoe Builder Billy Joe and his team.

The goal was for the canoe to be a collaborative project, and to demonstrate reconciliation through engaged artistic experiences.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the project had to be put on hold and adapted. The canoe builders continued working in late September in a new location, closed to the public and adhering to public health regulations. To ensure community members were still engaged, there were several live streaming events discussing the process of building the canoe, which included a special visit from the Chief of Miawpukek First Nations, Misel Joe. First Light also hired a videographer to film a mini documentary to be able to share traditional knowledge with community members.



ORANGE SHIRT DAY

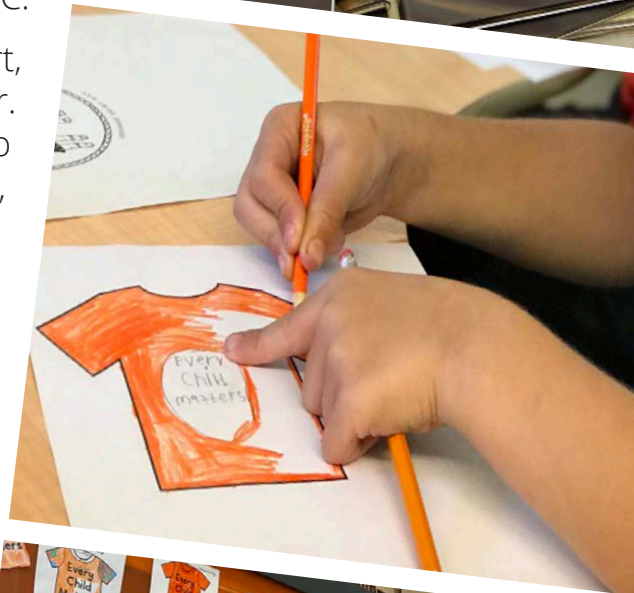
This year we were proud to launch a collaborative pilot project for Orange Shirt Day. On September 30th, we wear orange to recognize and raise awareness of the history of residential schools. This was made possible with funding from ExxonMobil, as well as the support of community members, the Newfoundland & Labrador English School District (NLESD), Department of Education & Early Childhood Development (EECD) & CBC.

A contest was held for the design of our Orange Shirt, and the winner was 12-year-old Dakota Dicker.

Lesson plans were created for grades K - 12 to educate on Orange Shirt Day and residential school, and were sent out to all schools within the NLESD.

Schools within the metro region received physical copies of the books, and CBC helped produce video read alongs of the stories to be used in classrooms that did not have the books available.

Orange Shirt Day 2020 was a massive success, and the participation and support shown online was inspiring. Schools across the province participated in so many unique ways. We're already excited for Orange Shirt Day 2021!



Based on Social Media Analytics:

34,500
PEOPLE
REACHED

119
SCHOOLS
PARTICIPATED

538
PHOTOS
SHARED

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS





FIRST LIGHT

St. John's Friendship Centre