

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





FIRST LIGHT

Headquarters

716 Water Street
St. John's, NL
A1E 1C1
726-5902

Centre for Performance & Creativity

42 Bannerman Street
St. John's, NL
A1C 3M6
754-2532

Childcare Centre

97 Elizabeth Avenue
St. John's, NL
A1B 1R6
738-8467



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & PRESIDENT

As we reflect back on the past year, we recognize that it has been a time of positive change, investment, and growth. In November 2018, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association evolved to become First Light St. John's Friendship Centre Inc. First Light has also undergone an organizational restructure to align better with other non-profits of our size and stature. First Light is now structured into three departments: Business Operations, Programs, and Social Supports and Interventions. These changes have positioned our organization to receive federal investment in infrastructure expansion through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan. We look forward to continuing to expand our programs and services to meet the needs of urban Indigenous people.

In the past year we have said Nmultis (see you later) to our previous Executive Director and long-time member of staff Christopher Sheppard. For 12 years, Chris has held many roles in our organization. We would also like to thank Daniel Pottle who stepped in as Interim Executive Director. We appreciate the guidance, support, and leadership from them both and wish them all the best.

Our organization has grown tremendously since our humble beginnings in a small office at Memorial University. We have so many people to thank 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 able to serve such a strong and vibrant community that continues to inform the direction of First Light. Community leadership is demonstrated in the stats, success stories, and updates throughout this report.

As we celebrate our 36th year of operations, we are excited for what the future has in store. We look forward to building upon our strong foundations as we move into the next phase of growth. Thank you to our many partners, funders, volunteers, and community members.

Wela'lin / Nalummek/ Tshinashkumitin

Emma Reelis *Stacey Howse*

Emma Reelis
President of the Board

Stacey Howse
Acting Executive Director

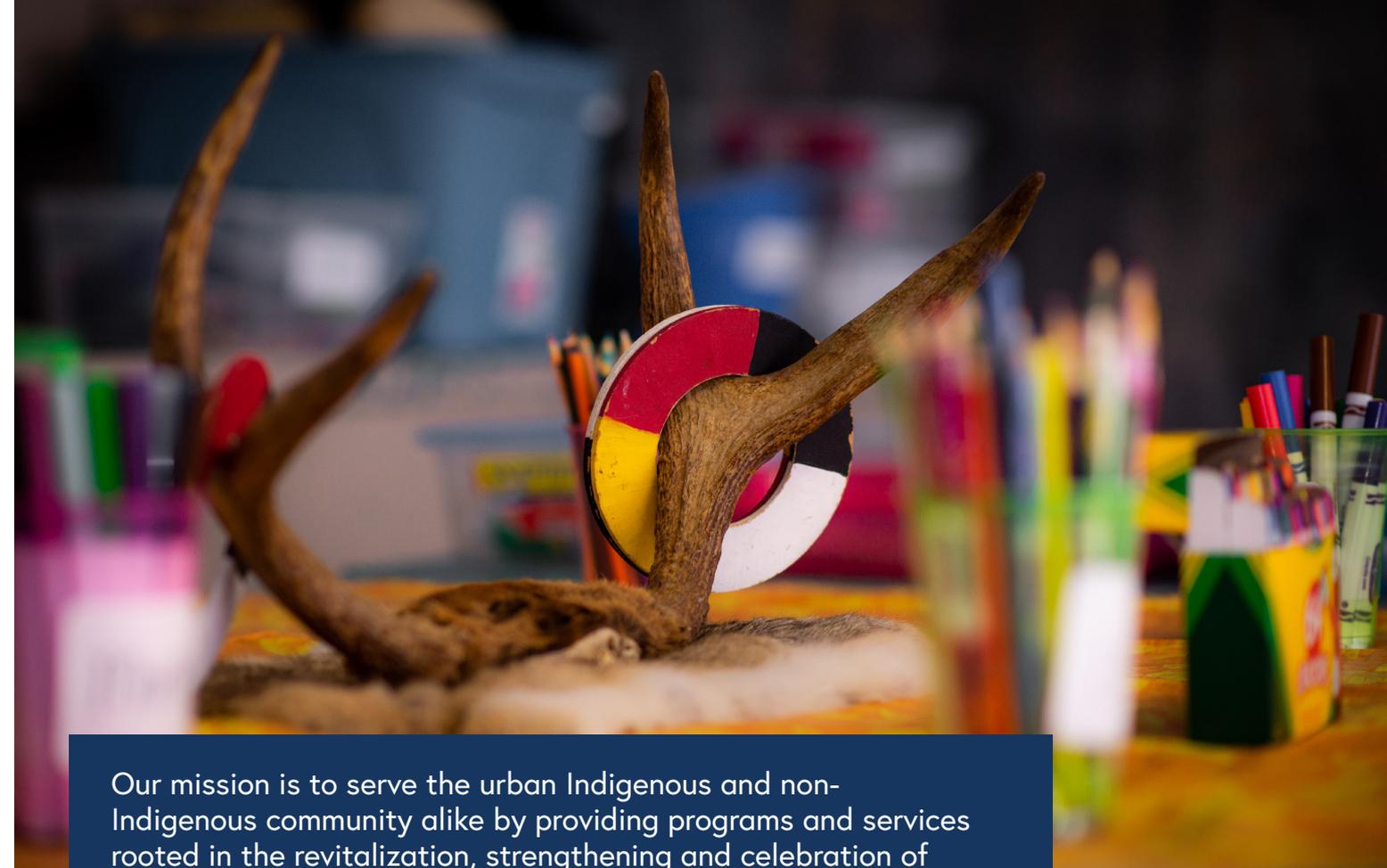
FIRST LIGHT

To mark our 35th anniversary, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre evolved to become "First Light". A new name, logo, brand, and website were created with the intention to evoke the same feelings of support, kindness, and friendship the organization strives to deliver at each of its locations across the city.

The word "first" gives proud recognition to the First Peoples of this land. The word "light" suggests the idea of a guiding light when we need it, a beacon for those looking to connect with and celebrate culture, and a welcoming light for those interested in reconciliation but not sure where to start. When put together, First Light connects us to our geography and reminds us that we are the first on the continent to see the sunrise every morning.

The logo in its entirety includes important symbols of Indigenous culture, although it can represent many different things. The circle has no beginning and no end and is central to our new logo. It represents a history that has no beginning and no end, and provides us with a guiding symbol of strength, equality, and unity. For many Indigenous peoples, the shape of a circle is indicative of the power of healing in a talking circle. The centre sun represents the power of nature and the strength of the organization.

The organization continues to develop its branding in order to enhance the organization's visibility and promote the objectives in its strategic plan.



Our mission is to serve 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.

55

STAFF

9

BOARD
MEMBERS

27

VOLUNTEER

3

LOCATIONS



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Northern Youth Abroad

Northern Youth Abroad (NYA) is a not-for-profit organization that cultivates youth leadership, individual career goals, cross-cultural awareness, and international citizenship amongst youth from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Crystal Enoogoo from Arctic Bay, Nunavut joined the team for July and August through the NYA program. Crystal was placed in summer camp and assisted with day-to-day activities and shared her culture with our youth. She contributed a lot to the program and we would like to thank her for spending her summer with us. We hope that this experience aids in her future aspirations.

Elder's Wisdom Circle

Elder's Wisdom Circle is a new cultural and social program for community members. Elders and seniors are held in high regard in Indigenous cultures. They are the keepers of knowledge and wisdom and ensure that cultural traditions are passed on to future generations. Elders hold crucial roles in an urban setting, where access to culture and traditional activities can be difficult. In this respect, there was a need for improved Elder interaction, support, and empowerment. Wisdom Circle is a program led by Elders and supported by staff. Activities are open to all community members.

Wape'k Muin Drum Group

To the excitement of many, 2019 saw the return of the Men's Drumming program. The group meets weekly and has also performed at several events, including NL Folk Festival.

Volleyball

First Light sponsored three teams – two female and one male – in the NLVA league this year. This sponsorship provides more than 30 community members an opportunity to be active and to be included in a team environment.

First Light staff, volunteers, and community members had a phenomenal weekend at Culture Camp 2019. Taking place at Burry Heights, there were more than 129 community members who participated in the three-day event. This year's camp included a wide variety of activities such as Inuit drum making, birch bark canoe making, print making, beading, Ji'kmaq workshops, tea and medicine workshops, Inuit Games, Inuit drumming, First Nations drumming, sweat lodge ceremonies, and more.

A Junior Culture Camp took place simultaneously to allow parents and guardians to participate in the main workshops while children participated in age-appropriate cultural activities.

Thank you to the following artists who helped make the event successful:

Susan Onalik
Odelle Pike
Michael R Denny
Sol Semigak

Billy Joe
Derek Stride
Jerry Evans
Rose Michael

Thanks also to all staff and volunteers who contributed to this banner event.



CULTURE CAMP



NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

For National Indigenous Peoples Day 2019, First Light hosted a week-long celebration that included cultural humility sessions, powwow dance workshops, throat singing workshops, and powwow drum teachings. Events took place all over the city and were well attended.

On June 21, we opened the day with the best-attended sunrise ceremony we've ever held and rounded out the day with a large Mawi'omi at the Techniplex. The Mawi'omi featured diverse cultural traditions representing all Indigenous groups in the province. Participants shared in food, dance, songs, and games.

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

APN Program

Our Aboriginal Patient Navigators take pride in the work they do within the healthcare system. Not only are they able to provide support to patients and their families during their medical stay, they are also able to help Eastern Health staff better understand Indigenous peoples, cultures, and health.

Cultural Support

The cultural support team has been providing one-on-one and family support for cultural and emotional care, referrals, accompaniments, systems navigation, and case management.

NL Correctional Centre for Women

The team has been providing weekly support to Indigenous women, in both group and one-on-one settings. Each week includes a smudge as well as various other cultural activities.

Men's Group

Focus has been on land-based group activities including cultural outings for fishing, hunting, foraging, berry picking, komatik building, boil ups, and beach fires.

1454

PATIENTS SUPPORTED (APN)

83%

OCCUPANCY (Shelter)

FIRST LIGHT EXPANSION PROJECT

On August 12, First Light staff were joined by members of the Federal and Provincial Government as they announced a multi-million-dollar contribution toward the expansion of First Light's infrastructure. The announcement was in response to a request made by the organization earlier this year, which focused on the acquisition and/or renovation of three key properties. These properties were identified as suitable to match the needs identified in the feasibility study carried out by the organization in 2018. The total financial contribution from the Government of Canada is \$3,049,728.00.

The First Light Expansion Project will roll out over the course of the next four years, with a phased approach to completion:

PHASE

1

Property Acquisition (36 Quidi Vidi Rd)

Property identified as suitable for Medical Hostel Social Enterprise to meet the needs of clients travelling to St. John's from Labrador. This property is scheduled to be secured by late fall, with a soft opening tentatively scheduled for early Winter 2020.

PHASE

2

Property Acquisition & Renovation (40 Quidi Vidi Rd)

Property identified as suitable for relocation of current administration, program, and service delivery. Currently working through initial stages of planning, with hopes of securing property early Fall 2020.

PHASE

3

Property Acquisition & Renovation (42 Bannerman St)

Currently occupying this property, and working with community partners on strategic plan for this enterprise. This project will require significant investment and engagement from community. The strategic plan is expected to be finalized by late Fall 2020.



"The relocation of the new First Light Headquarters to Caledonia Place and the Cochrane Centre renovation will provide the people of St. John's with a safe and inviting space to promote and showcase Indigenous art, advance reconciliation projects, and cultivate a sense of belonging and support within the community."

*The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister Infrastructure and Communities*

Childcare Centre

First Light Childcare Centre is now fully licensed for children from birth to age 12. Our infant care room officially opened in February 2019 and we began with 3 infant spaces and will be soon increasing to our maximum of 6.

We believe that family and community are just as important as the Early Childhood Educators and routinely invite them, along with traditional knowledge keepers, to our Centre to share teachings with children and staff. This year we had the amazing opportunity to learn from traditional knowledge keepers such as Possesom Paul, Ursula Johnson, Tama Fost, Hilary Rich, Christopher Mullett and Michael Johnson.

Medical Transportation

The Medical Transportation team at First Light have the great responsibility of navigating our visitors from around the province to and from the airport, appointments and hotels. Our team of five prioritize safety and comfort, and enjoy getting to know our visitors while they are visiting the capital city.

Cultural Diversity Training

Our Cultural Diversity Training program continues to grow, and we have been delivering training sessions across the city. Our largest number of participants come from other non-profits, although we have also been delivering sessions for government departments, businesses and post-secondary institutions.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

13,501
TOTAL RIDES

658
PARTICIPANTS





CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE & CREATIVITY

The Centre for Performance and Creativity is First Light's newest Social Enterprise. Located at both 42 Bannerman Street and 81 Cochrane Street this heritage property is grand in size and hosts an ambitious vision: that the space act as a bridge to foster reconciliation efforts in the city.

In January of 2019, First Light assumed operations of this facility through a meaningful partnership with Cochrane Community Outreach and Performance Centre (CCOPC): a not for profit organization and the original visionaries for the evolution of the property. First Light continues to work with the board of the CCOPC toward the ultimate goal of restoring the property to reflect its unique heritage through the celebration of Indigenous artists in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This project will take a multi-year, phased approach to development as we continue to seek out partnerships that will be instrumental in the success of the enterprise.

"Art transcends our spoken word, transcends our individual cultures. When we are trying to work through shared histories that are hard to revisit, art is a platform that allows us to express history and healing in a way that can be received by people of all heritages."

Jenelle Duval, Arts & Culture Coordinator

Spirit Song Festival took place in November 2018. It was an exciting two days of Indigenous arts and performances. We had an incredible mainstage show that featured national artists The Twin Flames, as well as many other talented Indigenous artists. Our workshop series taught participants various disciplines of contemporary and traditional Indigenous art practices. Festival events took place at the Centre for Performance and Creativity, First Light's newest Social Enterprise. We took the time to introduce community to the new space, and to the new brand of First Light



SPIRIT SONG FESTIVAL

SPECIAL PROJECTS

St. John's Urban Indigenous Coalition

One of 32 Urban Indigenous Coalitions supported nationally by Indigenous Services Canada, the St. John's Urban Indigenous Coalitions is a multi-stakeholder network that provides the opportunity for all levels of government and community organizations to collaborate on a wide range of issues faced by urban Indigenous people. The priorities of the Coalition are four-fold and include (1) Infrastructure and Service Delivery; (2) Housing and Homelessness; (3) Education, Training, and Employment; and (4) Health and Wellness. Recognizing that violence against Women and Girls is interwoven throughout all four of these priority areas, the Coalition is committed to implementing the Calls to Justice.

Empowering Indigenous Women for Stronger Communities

The Empowering Indigenous Women for Stronger Communities (EIWFSC) Project provides a platform for Indigenous Women to improve their social & economic realities in their home communities. The project is currently in the workshop implementation phase. Peer Facilitators are working in their communities to complete culturally based workshops within each of the four target areas stated above.

By providing women and children with these tools through each workshop we hope to strengthen communities at a grassroots level by increasing confidence, expanding capacity, and empowering communities to ensure their own well-being.



OUR PARTNERS



FIRST LIGHT

St. John's Friendship Centre