



FIRST LIGHT



2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

59  
staff members



5  
locations



9  
board members

First Light 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.



[firstlightnl.ca](http://firstlightnl.ca)

**Headquarters**  
40 Quidi Vidi Road  
726 - 5902

**Administration**  
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



# MESSAGE FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

First Light has come a long way in its 38 years of existence. It is hard to believe that this organization had such humble beginnings in an office at Memorial University. We are so thankful for the many individuals who have paved the way for our achievements.

Our community continues to inspire and motivate us with their strength and resilience. We were able to not only adapt to the ever changing guidelines of the COVID-19 pandemic but make this one of the most successful years to date.

First Light finalized the purchase of 40 Quidi Vidi Road and now operates from five locations. We continue to grow everyday and have created new positions to respond to organizational needs. Programming has also expanded and due to increased physical space, we are able to serve more members of the community.

While there has been a lot to celebrate in the past year, there has also been a lot of pain and sadness. In May, 2021, the remains of 215 children were found at the site of a former residential school for Indigenous children. Since then, more than 7,000 remains continue to be uncovered. Staff and volunteers were able to drop everything, assemble quickly, and come together to grieve for the lives lost to residential schools while honoring the survivors.

In October of this year, our beloved friend Andrew Harvey, began his journey to the spirit world and our community felt a deep sadness like no other. Andrew will always be a member of the First Light family and we hope that his positivity inspires all those who had the privilege of knowing him. Through our songs, stories, and medicine, we were able to start our path of healing. I can not express our gratitude for the support that we have seen and felt from our many partners and friends.

We are so grateful for the work of our volunteer Board of Directors who went above and beyond this past year in supporting our organization and staff. There has been a lot of hours of dedication by the Board members to participate in training, revise the policy manual, and develop new policies. We appreciate their commitment and guidance.

We would also like to thank our Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, funders, volunteers and community members for supporting First Light and making a difference in the lives of the urban Indigenous community.

Wela'lin,  
*Stacey Howse*  
Stacey Howse

## **OUR BOARD**

Catherine Fagan  
**PRESIDENT**

Sharon Harvey  
**VICE PRESIDENT**

David Works  
**TREASURER**

Tama Fost  
**SECRETARY**

Sophie Bennett  
**YOUTH DIRECTOR**

Emma Reelis  
**ELDER**

Susan Onalik

Patricia Keough

Edie Newton

# 2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## Afterschool Program

This Fall we were thrilled to see the return of First Light's Afterschool Program. This free program for children ages 5-11 focuses on leadership development, cultural teachings, and recreation. The program is delivered five days a week at our headquarters location. The Afterschool program has replaced the licensed program that had been delivered at our daycare since 2016, which recently expanded its preschool offerings to better serve the demand for childcare spaces for children ages 2-4.



## CHILDCARE CENTRE

We have  
**31**  
children enrolled.

**70%**  
are Indigenous.



## TRAINING

We delivered  
**52**  
training sessions to

**992**  
participants, and

**70%**  
were held virtually.



## Backpack Program

First Light was fortunate to be a recipient of the Royal Eagles Backpack Program this year. This program provided over 100 students with stylish backpacks and all the school supplies needed for the year. Staff and volunteers went above and beyond to ensure backpacks were reflective of the interests of the children. A special thanks to RBC staff, as well as our very own board member & retired RBC employee, Dave Works, for volunteering to help with the packing and distribution of backpacks. So many families have said that this program made a huge difference in the stress of back to school shopping.

## MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

We provided  
**11,182**  
total rides, with an average of

**932**  
total clients.

# EMPLOYMENT

We had

# 38

youth applicants,

# 22

completed pre-employment sessions,

# 14

had successful job placements, and

# 6

are now pursuing their education goals.



# 2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## DecolonizeYYT

The Decolonize YYT: Pathways to Reconciliation policy conference was hosted by First Voice and Memorial University. Bringing together key stakeholders to define what Truth & Reconciliation looks like in St. John's, we were able to establish a commitment to align on taking swift and collaborative action. Recommendations from the conference will inform the priorities addressed in the forthcoming community action plan.



Housing & Homelessness



Infrastructure & Service Delivery



Health & Wellness



Training & Employment

## Language & Culture Camp 2021

Our hybrid in-person and virtual event started with a bang as we welcomed Waneek Horn-Miller to kick things off with a live keynote speech. This year's format allowed for hundreds of participants to view live events, while still hosting upwards of 70 participants for our in-person workshops. Indigenous languages were spoken throughout the week as we held crafting sessions, film screenings, feasts, ceremonies, language cafes, and more! Feedback from community members made it clear, this was a bright spot during a challenging year!



## CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE & CREATIVITY

We had approximately

# 7430

total visitors.

We hosted

# 320

total bookings.

We had a monthly occupancy of

# 98%

in our housing units.



# OUR FUTURE PLANS 40 QUIDI VIDI

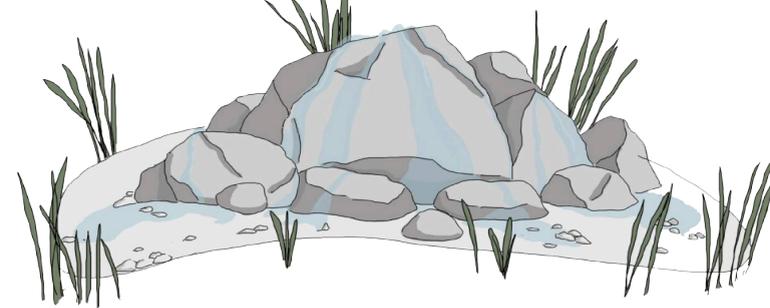


# RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL MEMORIAL GARDEN

Our Residential School Memorial Garden will be located at our 40 Quidi Vidi location. We have been consulting with survivors & Elders to ensure their stories and perspectives are being shared throughout the design of the garden. Included here are some initial preliminary concept drawings of some elements from the garden.

Corten steel posts will stand throughout the garden carved with patterns representing Indigenous cultures and artwork. This type of steel weathers & becomes stronger with time, which is a beautiful representation of the resilience of our survivors & Elders.

We want to thank everyone for the financial support over the last year towards the development of our residential school memorial garden. We look forward to sharing more updates on the garden in 2022!



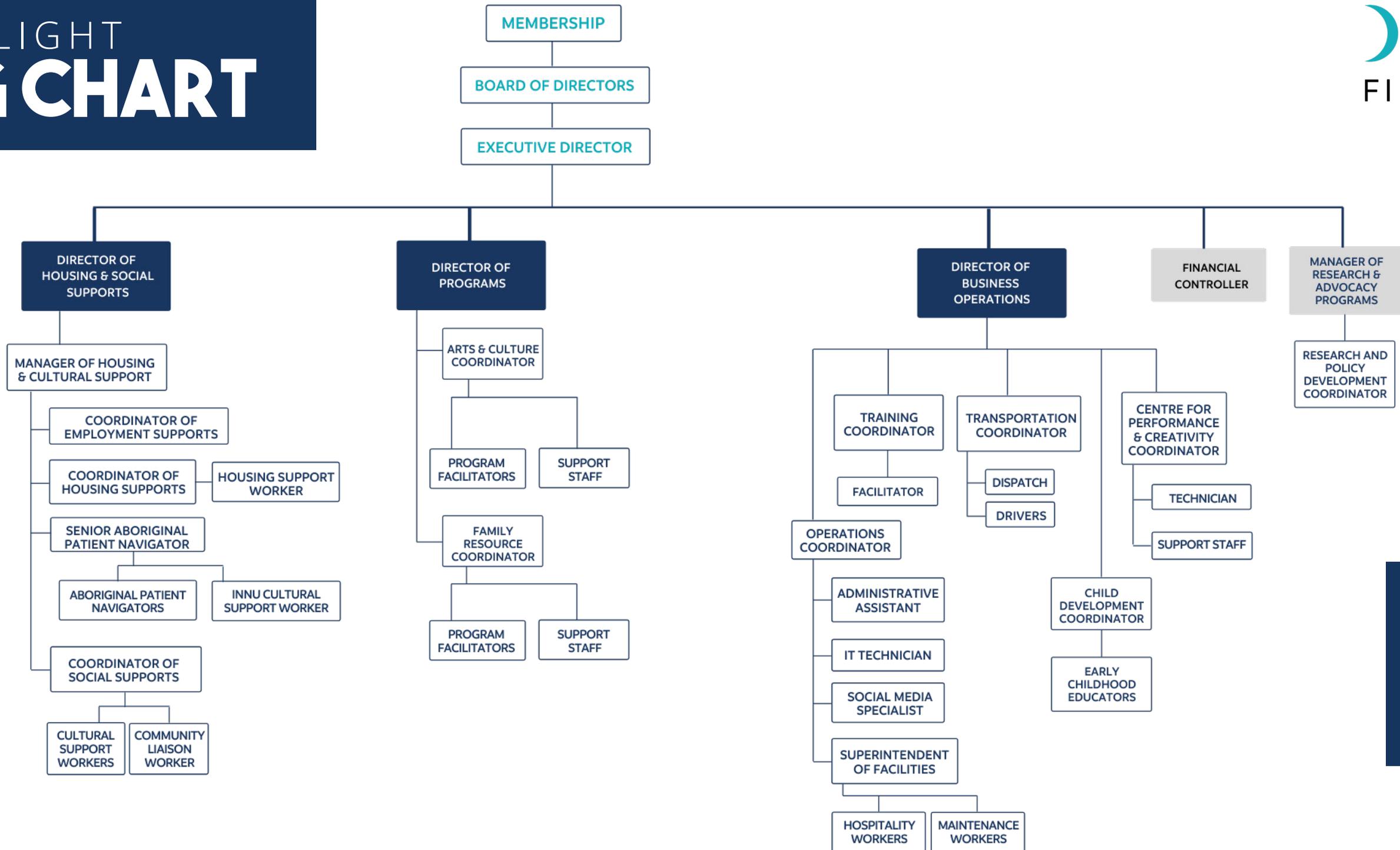
Home to the future First Light headquarters, our new building at 40 Quidi Vidi Road is being prepared for construction to better suit the needs of the urban Indigenous community and surrounding neighborhood.

First Light is currently seeking financial support to execute the plans, and we anticipate starting construction in 2022.

We've raised  
**\$103,080**  
towards the memorial garden this year.

You can donate to the garden at:  
**[firstlightnl.ca/donate](https://firstlightnl.ca/donate)**

# FIRST LIGHT ORG CHART



We created  
**17**  
new positions  
this year.



# ANDREW HARVEY

Andrew Harvey was the light of our organization. He was more than a colleague- he was a friend, he was family, and he was a true inspiration for anyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

The outpouring of support received after Andrew's passing was a true indication of just how special he was to so many people. Andrew was a support and advocate for everyone he cared about. His impact on our community will be forever. It was rare to see him without a smile on his face, and we will never forget his laugh. We will try our best to bring as much joy and happiness into each day as Andrew did.

We continue to send our thoughts and prayers to Andrew's partner Jay, daughter Ava, and the countless friends and family members who miss him everyday.

Ne'multus (Until We Meet Again) Andrew.





# ABORIGINAL PATIENT NAVIGATORS

We've worked with

# 1,347

total patients.

# SOCIAL SUPPORTS & INTERVENTIONS



## CULTURAL SUPPORT

The cultural support team has been holding weekly visits to the Clarenville Correctional Centre for Women, and provided virtual programming during COVID lockdowns. The cultural support team made 1,743 points of contact throughout the year, along with 932 additional points of contact within Federal Corrections.



- 53% Innu
- 31% Inuit
- 15% Mi'kmaq
- 1% Non Status

## HOUSING

In January 2021 we made the difficult decision to close our 15 bed emergency shelter. Since this time we have focused on growing our Indigenous Housing Team to increase the number of community members we can assist in finding housing while providing any necessary support.

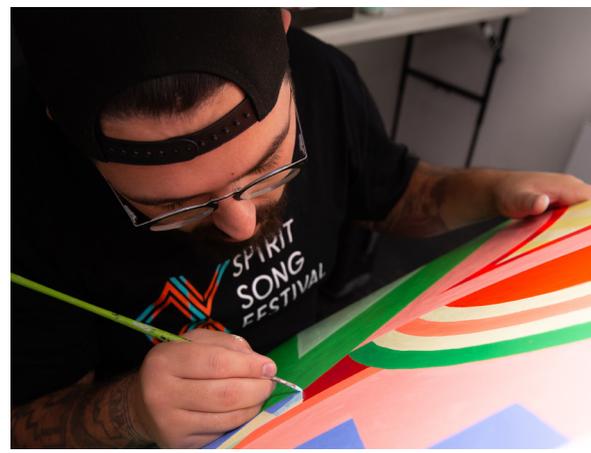
We housed  
 **42**  
people.

We made  
 **2,539**  
points of contact.





# SPIRIT SONG FESTIVAL 2020



Celebrating its 8th year, Spirit Song Festival looked very different in 2020. The pandemic presented a unique set of challenges, but it did not stop us from celebrating some of the biggest and brightest Indigenous talents from across the province; we were even able to welcome back some friends from Nova Scotia! Presenting an almost exclusively virtual event was a first for us, but it allowed the festival to be more accessible than ever.

The 2020 festival included main stage virtual and in-person performances by Tom Jackson, Silver Wolf Band, Eastern Eagle, Eastern Owl, Jennie Williams and Tabitha Blake. Knowledge sharing events included artist talks with Meagan Musseau and Jordan Bennett, caribou tufting workshops with Amy Malbeuf and Susan Onalik, printmaking and painting with Jessica Winters, sweetgrass basket weaving with Burlington Tooshkenig, powwow dancing with Possesom Paul, Inuit drum building with Solomon Semigak, and First Nations drum building with Colin McDonald and Brian Knockwood. Spirit Song's artists in residences included a visual art residency with Jordan Bennett, an Indigenous dance residency with Meagan Musseau, Rebecca Sharr and Possesom Paul and an Inuit Throat Singing residency with Jennie Williams and Tabitha Blake.

# 3

performances

# 10

workshops

# 3

artist residencies



# NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION ORANGE SHIRT DAY

September 30, 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Also known as Orange Shirt Day, September 30 is a day to honour the survivors of Canada's residential school system and to remember those who never returned home to their families. It is also a time for all Canadians to pause and reflect on this country's ongoing legacy of colonialism and to take stock of the work that remains to be done to implement the Calls to Action & Calls for Justice.

Throughout the day, we saw individuals, organizations, and governments observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We saw people wearing orange and starting conversations about colonialism, systemic racism, and ways that we can and should work together to build a more inclusive Canada.

We encourage everyone to be mindful that these conversations should serve a larger purpose: reflection must be followed by understanding, and understanding must be followed by action. Although we wear orange for September 30th, we encourage all to wear their orange shirts any day of the year, and keep those conversations going.

While First Light has been recognizing Orange Shirt Day for many years, this year was especially difficult. With the discoveries of unmarked graves, what has been known and shared by survivors in the past was ultimately confirmed. First Light chose to hold a small gathering for Survivors and those personally impacted by the legacy of residential schools, and produced several resources to share with the general public.

The outpouring of support from the general public was overwhelming, and we look forward to continue recognizing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation together as a community in the future.

#OrangeShirtDayNL had a reach of over  
**2,500,000**  
across social media!



2,755

follow us on Twitter.

3,139

follow us on Instagram.

7,801

like us on Facebook.



14,309

people visited our website.

We had a reach of **388,747** across our social media platforms.



OUR IMPACT **ONLINE**



THANK YOU **PARTNERS**





FIRST LIGHT

St. John's Friendship Centre