



LIVING'S J

Social Renewal Strategy

**ANNUAL
REPORT 2020**





A YEAR OF CHALLENGES



Photo: Telegraph Journal

2020 has been a true test for Saint John and our collective impact movement.

This time last year, we found ourselves without key staff and executive leadership. No sooner had we filled those positions on a temporary basis, when COVID-19 struck and the real work began. We were particularly grateful to Cathy Wright had just come back from an “early retirement” to act as interim ED.

Looking back, I marvel at the response you, our partners, and leaders put together so very quickly. Within days, for example, a collaborative food security program was operating at maximum capacity. The collective also pulled together 750 “home study kits and tools” to support students in their at-home learning.

The recent news that our long-awaited Community Hub and Learning Centre for the Central Peninsula will be a reality is a fine example of another collective impact outcome.

Living Saint John’s Task Force was formed, under the leadership of Craig Estabrooks in June and recently delivered its first draft report. It is recommending significant changes to our governance model and suggestions for our future direction. Our Leadership Team will be meeting in smaller groups, early in the New Year to begin to plan our next steps.

In September, we welcomed our new staff: Executive Director Dominic Moran and Collective Impact Coordinator Jan Vesna.

Our Executive Team consisting of Missy Bewick, Gord Ashe, Jen Brown, Steve Carson, Ray Robinson, Monica Chaperlin and myself have met on many occasions this year and have been instrumental in guiding our decisions. Many thanks to the Team.

I am very excited for the future of collective impact in Saint John.

Living SJ Co-Chair Brice Belyea

Emergency Food Program

COVID: COMMUNITY STEPS UP

The Saint John non-profit community came together during the early stages of this year's COVID-19 crisis, launching an Emergency Food Program in the wake of the declaration of the state of emergency in March.

They united to bridge the gap created by the sudden loss of school breakfast, lunch and snack programs, with more than 1,500 food packs delivered in the greater Saint John area. That's around 47,000 meals for around 3,000 people of all ages.

It served as a heart-warming example of the generosity of the Saint John community with more than \$100,000 raised in a word-of-mouth, grassroots effort to fund the program. Indeed, organizers said the collective impact approach served as a model for other communities in the province and country.

"This emergency program formed because of a variety of stable programs and services around the city coming to a halt due to COVID-19 and everyone collectively saying, 'We need to do something together.' Our organizations pivoted and addressed the need," said Dustin Leclerc, executive director of Carleton Community Centre, one of the founding organizations of the program.

Other organizations that provided assistance to the Emergency Food Program included the Waterloo Village Neighbourhood Association, Inner City Youth Ministry, PULSE, the Crescent Valley Resource Centre, the Boys & Girls Club of Saint John, Horizon Health and Pennies and Sparrows.

"We were able to really focus on having access to fresh fruit and vegetables and added other staples like milk, eggs and bread along with canned items, many of which were donated by companies like Irving Oil and Crosby's," said Penni Eisenhauer, community navigator for the Waterloo Village Neighborhood Association.

A network quickly coalesced around the Program with the United Way, Living SJ, BCIPI, Port Saint John, Rise Up Saint John, local food banks, then Saint John Harbour MLA Gerry Lowe and the Saint John Human Development Council providing support.



SOCIAL INNOVATION PROJECTS

The Social Innovation Fund is a strategic partnership with the Province of New Brunswick to experiment, innovate and test new initiatives to:

- Close the education achievement gap;
- Connect low-income residents to employment through education and training
- Improve the resident's health through neighbourhood-based models of care and
- Transform low-income neighbourhoods into vibrant mixed income communities.

45%

Ward 3 Child Poverty

44.6%

Ward 2 Child Poverty

2018 Statistics Canada T1 Family File
(via HDC)

ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Saint John has become one of the first Canadian cities to implement the Self-Healing Community model on childhood trauma impacts on individuals and the community, with the Horizon project team supporting organizations in embedding the science of ACEs in policy and practice.

Annual Highlights:

1. The ACES team have exceeded their target for second-tier instruction with 338 individuals and 29 Master Trainers having received training.
2. ACES has pivoted in response to COVID-19, offering two virtual trainings for trainers and a virtual connection with program developers for Master Trainers.
3. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has offered to translate all materials into French so that the training can be offered to their staff and schools.

Landbank

The Landbank has been funded to obtain title to vacant and derelict properties with the objective of repurposing these properties as a diverse housing mix, green spaces and development projects.

Annual Highlights:

1. Landbank has adopted a new acquisition policy and has signed an MOU with Develop Saint John for the disbursement of operational financing through Q1 2021.
2. Work is underway with the province and city to reduce the time buildings remain vacant before going to tax sale, with a focus on high priority abandoned buildings that represent the highest risk to the community.
3. Policy, financing, and systemic change are lined up to remove problematic properties from priority neighbourhoods and provide new homes for Saint Johners.

When Children Succeed

When Children Succeed looked to address the education achievement gap in schools with high concentrations of child poverty and to use the learnings to strengthen NB education policy and practices.

The project operated for 1.5 years with promising results before COVID-19 curtailed the ability to measure the intended impact over three consecutive years. The NB government's COVID-19 interventions for schools ensured the K to 2 students are continuing to benefit from small class sizes.

Project Highlights:

1. Children - Academic Skills: The literacy and numeracy achievement of the Kindergarten children matched the School District average within one year, closing the gap. The Grade 1 and Grade students made notable progress, indicating the gap would close, given more time.
2. Social-Emotional Skills: Teachers reported substantial improvements particularly in children's confidence and their readiness to learn. Behavioural incidents declined markedly.
3. Parents were surveyed and 97% reported that they felt welcome at their child's school and that their child enjoyed school.
4. Chronic absenteeism of students was reduced from 21.7% to 14.9%.

More SIF Projects

Bridge to a Brighter Future

Bridge is an innovative project testing the use of structured goal setting and incentives to help move individuals living in poverty toward economic self-sufficiency. Following a hiatus due to COVID-19 and a change in project leadership to the Women’s Empowerment Network, work is set to resume.

Annual Highlights:

1. Seventeen individual’s lives have been positively impacted by this project. Successful participants have grown their healthy networks, improved their physical and mental health, have less precarious housing, have completed education or training programs, and they have gained employment or taken critical steps towards employment.
2. Mentors have a deeper and more structured relationship with their clients.
3. There is tremendous benefit to incentivized goal setting, clearly demonstrated by the continuous increase in goal actualization rates over the two years of the project.

Working 4 Change

Through Working 4 Change, the Women’s Empowerment Network (WEN) worked to demonstrate the value of an outreach, connection and learning model that could prepare and build skills, and annually transition 60 plus individuals along a pathway to employment. It focused on efforts to better prepare individuals in their journey out of poverty and heighten alignment of services and policies by ensuring individuals are connected to desired next steps in their journey.

Due to COVID-19, the eighth cohort was unable to complete its program work, disbanding in March, and the decision was taken to finish the project with a report and audiovisual project.

Annual Highlights:

1. The professional relationship built during one-on-one coaching assured participants would feel comfortable coming to WEN for support once the program and coaching was completed.
2. Because the project phase of the program often took place in the community, people formed relationships and attained a sense of connection with their community centres and other service providers.
3. Community partners and business partners played a key role in expanding the horizons of and providing information to participants.

Education Success Advisor

The Advisor, a teacher at Harbourview High School, works individually with approximately 30 students who are at risk of dropping out to help them overcome barriers and thrive in school and life.

Annual Highlights:

1. Two events were held for 18 students in which they were encouraged to engage with the Trades and attain culinary skills.
2. The YCAN program held three events at the school. The program works with underrepresented youth to develop and deliver service projects that respond to issues and needs that matter to them in their local community.
3. COVID-19 has caused the program to pivot and apply new ways to stay connected with the students and continue to support their progress





Yet More SIF Projects

Parent Child Assistance Program (PCAP)

PCAP is an evidence-based, 36-month program for women with addiction issues who are pregnant or are 12 months post-partum, offering home-based services.

Annual Highlights:

1. Effective rapport building with the Moms in the program is evident and substantial. Moms who have open files with Child Protection and Legal Services are trusting and inviting us now to attend Permanency Planning meetings for their children and Justice Case Conferences in an advocacy role.
2. Self-referrals are increasing. More Moms are self-motivated to engage. PCAP had eight intakes since July with four of those self-referrals.

Thank you for being u and being not only a great support worker but being such an amazing friend. I can now call u family. We love u and appreciate you more than u know.” PCAP Mom

Speech Language Pathologist

This project has as its objective improved levels of oral language development for students living in priority neighbourhoods through the provision of a dedicated Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). The program also seeks to demonstrate that policies concerning access to SLP services need to reflect the unique needs of children living in poverty. The work of the SLP was disrupted by the pandemic but has resumed this Fall.

Annual Highlights:

1. During the school closure, the SLP collaborated with literacy and numeracy leads to create a comprehensive home learning package that included calendars of daily activities and strategies to promote oral language and literacy skills using everyday household materials.
2. The SLP collaborated with a Literacy Subject Coordinator to identify appropriate assessment tools to collect information on baseline oral language and phonological awareness skills.
3. With the October resumption of school, the SLP immediately began to work on the oral language assessment protocol and launched into the assessment of approximately 700 students. This, to provide classroom teachers with relevant data for each child in the identified areas in order to quickly determine the needs of students and plan for instruction.

Transition to Work

The Transition to Work project, run through the Saint John Learning Exchange, seeks to demonstrate that setting and completing goals and earning financial incentives for goal completion leads to positive behavioural change (increased achievement) and that coaching on goals improves outcomes (develops capacity of participants). The project aims to translate findings into real changes to government policies.

Annual Highlights:

1. Development of a culture of coaching and goal-setting and resulting participant successes.
2. 236 unique in-house participants this year and 44 successful GED tests in the last six months.
3. Development and on-going delivery of a soft skills curriculum - workshops, distance learning packages and tools - that demonstrates behavioural change in participants.

ESIC

Living SJ serves as the Community Inclusion Network Coordinator for Sussex, Saint John and Grand Bay Westfield for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC). As part of ESIC, Living SJ works to promote anti-poverty initiatives in accord with ESIC's Overcoming Poverty Together mandate, including work in reducing transportation barriers, ensuring food security and addressing mental health issues and addictions.

Annual highlights:

Emergency Food Program: (also see page 2)

With the return to "normal" in September, the Emergency Food Program disbanded, having fed more than 3,000 individuals. The partners continue to meet as the newly formed Food Secure SJ collaborative and are working to determine the group's role, priorities and action items.

BEST (Building an Early Start Together)

Due to the pandemic, BEST moved as much programming as possible online in an attempt to remain connected with parents and families and to provide some support while families were in lockdown and in need of activities for their pre-schoolers and support from other parents.

Virtual programming, while not ideal, did demonstrate that some program aspects did lend themselves to different delivery methods and may have attracted families that were not typically engaged with the program previously. In September, BEST programming began to return to in-person delivery, within public health guidelines and with the safety of all participants in mind.

CATAPULT

CATAPULT works with individuals with multiple barriers who want to work but need support to achieve their employment goals. While the pandemic created some challenges to supporting program participants in working towards their goals, staff continued to work with participants to the best of their ability – with one individual even being supported in successfully achieving their Red Seal designation despite the shut down. Staff also used the time between April and the September re-opening of programs to plan and determine how best to continue supporting participants in the immediate post-pandemic world and beyond.

Sussex Dial-A-Ride

Responding to ESIC's prioritization of regional transportation, staff, volunteers and partners in Sussex stepped up their service and outreach to individuals and organizations. The foundation for Sussex Dial-A-Ride has been strengthened during the COVID crisis with access to funding and increased outreach efforts. The momentum is strong and the service will continue to grow. Rides are now being provided into Saint John regularly as well as into other communities to support community members.

Living SJ will be launching a regional transport study in support of the ESIC program profiled below



Some Final Thoughts

This has been a year of challenges both for Saint John and the Living SJ collective.

COVID-19 has deepened the distress of those living in poverty in our community and made more difficult the work of groups established to address the underlying causes.

The crisis has served to underline the crucial importance of our work to develop a collective impact coalition, working together to tackle systemic issues that have left far too many in our wonderful city in poverty.

We are now embarking on changes both to our governance structure and the work itself to position Living SJ for the last phase of the Social Innovation Fund and the years that follow.

Jan and I look forward to working with you in solidarity and community in 2021.

- Executive Director Dominic Moran



With thanks to our sponsors



LIVING SJ LEADERSHIP TEAM

Business

Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, Brice Belyea, Co-Chair of Living SJ
Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, Monica Chaperlin
Chapman Group, Tanya Champman
Delta Saint John, Paulette Hicks
Economic Development Greater Saint John, Ron Gaudet
Economic Development Greater Saint John, Michele Lodge
Fawcett Cutler Lawyers & Advocates, Cathy Fawcett, Project Review Committee Co-Chair
Huddle, Mark Leger
Price Waterhouse Cooper, Gord Ashe
Port of Saint John, Craig Estabrooks
RBC Dominion Securities, Tom Gribbons, Project Review Committee Co-Chair

Government – Municipal

City of Saint John, Mayor Don Darling
City of Saint John, John MacKenzie
City of Saint John, Jacqueline Hamilton
City of Saint John, Phil Ouellette
City of Saint John, Steve Carson
City of Saint John, Greg Cutler
City of Saint John, Stephan Drolet
City of Saint John, John Collin
Town of Grand Bay-Westfield, Grace Losier, Mayor

Government – Provincial

Horizon Health Network, Heather Chase
Horizon Health Network (Mental Health), Sue Haley, Director
Horizon Health Network, Dr. Bridget Tutschka
Horizon Health Network, Dan Doherty
Horizon Health Network & Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick, Dr. Sarah Gander
Horizon Health Network, Stephanie Nielson
Horizon Health Network, Samantha Wentzell
NB Economic & Social Inclusion Corporation, Stephane LeClair
NB Economic & Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), Brittany Merrifield
NB Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Paul Graham
NB Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Mike Griffin
NB Department of Social Development, Mark Doyle
NB Department of Social Development, Wendy MacDermott
NB Department of Social Development, Brian Marks
Provincial MLA Representative

Government – Federal

Federal MP, Saint John-Rothesay, Wayne Long

Education

Anglophone School District South, Zoe Watson
New Brunswick Community College, Catherine Sidney
University of New Brunswick – Saint John, Dr. Petra Hauf

Philanthropic, Non-Profit Organizations and Neighbourhood Organizations and Community

Association Regionale de la Communauté francophone de Saint-Jean, Michel Côté
Bee Me Kidz, Missy Beswick
Carleton Community Centre, Dustin Leclerc
Community, Donna Beaton
Community, Jen Brown
Crescent Valley Resource Centre, Anne Driscoll
Elementary Literacy Inc., Dr. Erin Schryer
The Community Foundation, Michelle Thibodeau Coates
The Community Foundation, Kelly Evans
Human Development Council, Brian Stephenson
Human Development Council, Juanita Black
Human Development Council, Randy Hatfield
ONE Change, Tamara Kelly
P.U.L.S.E.(People United for Lower South End), Mary LeSage
Saint John Boys & Girls Club, Amy Shanks
Saint John Learning Exchange, Christina Fowler
Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, Sister Mary Beth McCurdy
United Way Serving Saint John, Kings, Charlotte Counties, Derek O'Brien
United Way Serving Saint John, Kings, Charlotte Counties, Alexya Heelis
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