IMPACT REPORT 2025-2026



ASNL
AUTISM SOCIETY
Newfoundland & Labrador

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the province of Newfoundland and Labrador as the ancestral homelands of many diverse populations of Indigenous people who have contributed to 9,000 years of history including the Beothuk on the Island of Newfoundland. Today, this province is home to diverse populations of Indigenous and other people. We also acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit.

COMMUNITY CODE OF ETHICS:

ASNL's Emotional, Physical and Social Safety Standards: When entering ASNL Spaces (virtual and physical) all patrons, participants and community members, friends and allies agree to be corrected if the language they use could be harmful to another person. All agree to open conversation where differences of opinion can be respectfully discussed to the limits of harm or forceful perspective.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Anything discussed with you, or in a group, remains in that space except for educational material.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Use communication to express your feelings sincerely with care, and be mindful of your impact despite intent.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR TARGETED VIOLENCE

No deliberate violence or aggression of any sort will be tolerated. Communication of stress responses is encouraged so ASNL staff can appropriately respond and support.

RESPECT TO ALL INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IDENTITY

ASNL welcomes individuals of all races, ethnicities, diagnosis, presentations, and expressions of gender.

VISION

A Newfoundland and Labrador where autistic people's rights are upheld, their supports provided, and their potential realized

MISSION

The Autism Society, Newfoundland & Labrador (ASNL), is a province-wide charitable organization dedicated to advancing the rights, supports, and opportunities of autistic people, their families, and caregivers through advocacy, education, and meaningful community connections.

MANDATE

- Advance the rights, supports, and opportunities of autistic people and their communities.
- Advocate for inclusive policies at both the individual and systemic levels.
- Offer educational opportunities that promote autism acceptance and understanding.
- Provide neuroaffirming programs and supports that foster meaningful community connections.

VALUES

At ASNL, we centre autistic voices and lived experience in all that we do

- **Rights** – We uphold the rights of autistic people and work to remove barriers to participation and support, fostering communities where autistic people, their families, and caregivers feel accepted, valued, and connected.
- **Integrity** – We act with honesty and transparency in all our work, provide reliable information, and take responsibility for our actions and decisions.
- **Confidentiality** – We respect privacy and handle all information responsibly, ensuring that trust is at the core of every relationship.
- **Collaboration** – We work openly and respectfully with autistic people, families, caregivers, and partners, valuing teamwork, dialogue, and approachability to strengthen supports and opportunities.
- **Learning** – We embrace continuous learning, welcome new ideas, and adapt evidence-informed approaches to improve programs, community connections, and outcomes.
- **Culture** – We foster a neuroaffirming workplace where our passionate team collaborates with respect, creativity, and care. Our unique culture strengthens how we support autistic people, families, and communities around Newfoundland and Labrador.



Message from the Board Chair

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with pride in what the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (ASNL) and the autism community have accomplished. Our board, staff, volunteers, and donors have demonstrated unwavering dedication to our core mission. Through our regional offices and community partnerships, we have expanded vital programs, enhanced navigation services, and deepened our advocacy efforts to ensure that autistic individuals and their families across Newfoundland and Labrador receive the respect, support, and opportunities they deserve. This collective dedication ensures we continue to break down barriers and build a province where neurodiversity is celebrated as a fundamental strength.

I am proud to highlight changes to our leadership team, beginning with the appointment of Leah Farrell as our new Chief Executive Officer. Leah brings a wealth of talent, passion, and deep sector experience to the role. We are also thrilled to welcome several new members to our Board of Directors. This influx of governance talent brings vital energy, diverse professional experience, and invaluable first-hand perspectives from the autism community. Together, this leadership transition ensures that ASNL remains deeply rooted in the community we serve while driving forward-thinking, neurodiversity-affirming systemic change. This renewed energy perfectly aligns with a historic milestone for our organization: the 20th anniversary of our signature fundraising event, Active for Autism, culminating on Sunday, October 18th. Guided by the theme "20 Years Active. Moving Forward Together," this year's province-wide campaign celebrates two decades of incredible community support while inviting individuals, families, businesses, schools, and municipalities to help build the next 20 years of impact.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend our deepest gratitude to our staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters for ensuring ASNL is positioned for a resilient, inclusive, and highly impactful future.

Robert Thompson
Chairperson, Board of Directors



Message from the CEO

As I reflect on the year behind us, I am filled with gratitude for the autistic people, families, caregivers, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters who continue to move our work forward. As a province-wide organization, we have the privilege and responsibility of advancing the rights, supports and opportunities of autistic people and the people who support them through advocacy, education and meaningful connections within our communities.

As we step into a new chapter, we are looking ahead with a clear focus: building a more inclusive, neuroaffirming Newfoundland and Labrador where autistic people are valued, supported and able to belong

Our work continues to be centered around three key areas: provincial neuroaffirming programs, education and individual and systemic advocacy. Through pre-employment programs, family events and social groups, we create opportunities for connection, participation and community. Through our presentations and workshops, we are helping build greater understanding of autism and what meaningful acceptance and inclusion look like.

Our advocacy continues to bring the voices and experiences of autistic people and families forward. This includes work around inclusive education, autism and aging, access to assessment and diagnosis, and examining how respite and other supports can better meet people's needs. We are also continuing to identify and address gaps in adult supports and services for autistic people with complex and high support needs.

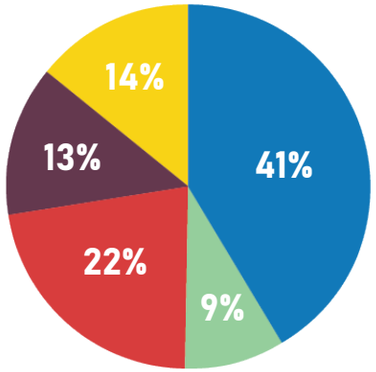
None of this work happens in isolation. Partnerships and collaboration are essential to creating lasting change. As we look to the future, we know there is more work to do. We will continue to listen, learn, advocate and create opportunities for connection and belonging. Most importantly, we will continue moving forward together.

Thank you for being part of that journey.

Leah Farrell
Chief Executive Officer

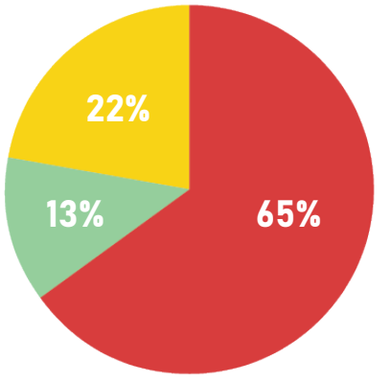
FINANCIALS

SOURCES OF FUNDS



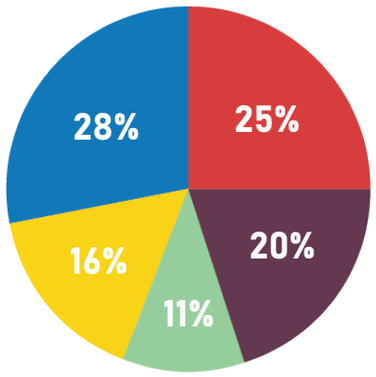
- SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
- DONATION/EVENTS
- GRANTS
- FEDERAL
- PROVINCE

USE OF FUNDS



- PROPERT & ADMIN
- SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
- PROGRAMS & SERVICES

PROGRAMS & SERVICES



- NAVIGATION
- RECREATION
- ADVOCACY
- SUPPORTS
- EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

ADVOCACY THAT DRIVES SYSTEMIC CHANGE

ASNL's systemic advocacy is informed by the experiences and concerns raised through the individual advocacy work of ASNL Navigators across the province.

In 2025 these conversations with community, focused on three priority areas for systemic advocacy: access to autism assessment and diagnosis, inclusive education, and the review of the respite program.

ASNL brought these priorities forward through meetings with Ministers Evans and Wall and participation in Education Accord NL, highlighting barriers experienced by Autistic individuals within the education system and advocating for more neuroaffirming environments in daycares, schools, and post-secondary institutions. ASNL also conducted community-led research examining barriers to autism assessment and diagnosis and challenges within the Respite Program under the Special Child Welfare Allowance.

The findings provided evidence to support recommendations to the provincial government focused on reducing wait times, improving timely access to assessment and diagnosis, and strengthening respite supports for Autistic people and their families.

By bringing community experiences, research, and recommendations to decision-makers, ASNL is working to address systemic barriers and influence changes that can improve access, inclusion, and supports across Newfoundland and Labrador.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025-2026

Robert Thompson - Chair
Rebecca Furlong - Vice Chair
Dave Bartlett - Treasurer
Sabrina Andrews - Secretary
Elizabeth Churchill - Past Chair
Dawn White
Allison Lamond
Melanie White
Shelly England
Sarah Hollett
Elaine Dobbin
Honourary member

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2025/2026 fiscal year, ASNL saw continued growth and consistent participation across our programming, social and support groups, and family events throughout the province.

This year, ASNL focused on creating greater consistency and cohesion in programming across our regional offices, while also expanding our offerings in response to community needs and new funding opportunities. With successful funding from ArtsNL, we were able to introduce several new arts-based programs designed to engage three different age groups, further expanding opportunities for creativity, connection, and skill development.

ARTS & RECREATION PROGRAMS

Our Arts & Recreation Programs included the Physical Art Troupe (PhArT), Art Exploration, Outdoor Exploration, Gaming Groups, Active Kids, Recreation Swimming, and Swimming Lessons through community partnerships. We continued to prioritize programming for a broad range of ages, from children under five through to autistic adults.
The PhArT program remains particularly popular, attracting more than 40 participants each time it is offered. This year, participants explored their creativity and physical expression through a variety of activities, culminating in an inspiring talent and variety show, the creation of handmade puppets, and hilarious improv skits.

SKILL BUILDING PROGRAMS

Alongside our Employment Readiness Programs, including Transitions and Employment Works, ASNL continued to offer our Life Skills Program each quarter. This program supports autistic adults in developing greater independence, confidence, and practical skills for everyday living.

This year, Life Skills expanded into our Eastern-Central regional office, with plans to bring the program to our Central-Western and Labrador regional offices in the coming year. Cooking Workshops and Gardening Programs also continued to grow. In the Central-Western region, participants embraced early spring gardening through programming offered in a local greenhouse dome in Corner Brook.













SOCIAL & SUPPORT GROUPS

ASNL continued to offer a range of social and support groups for autistic adults, youth, and families across all regions. A notable success this year was the growth of the family support group in the Bonavista region. Our Eastern-Central Community Navigator expanded navigation support into the peninsula, working alongside local parents and caregivers to establish the group and provide ongoing opportunities for connection, information, and support through regular visits and community events.

FAMILY EVENTS

Monthly family events continued to bring children, youth, autistic adults, and caregivers together to build connections and enjoy inclusive recreational activities. Events included bowling, recreational swimming, arts and crafts, outdoor barbecues, and seasonal celebrations.

A major highlight was the continued success and expansion of our annual Trunk-or-Treat events. In addition to offerings at all four ASNL regional centres, Trunk-or-Treat expanded into surrounding communities, including Gambo, with some events welcoming close to 100 participants. These events provided families with accessible opportunities to celebrate, connect, and build community together.

SOCIAL & SUPPORT GROUPS

ASNL celebrated another successful year of Family Summer Camp programming. Our camp at Lions Club Max Simms Camp welcomed more than 300 campers from communities across the island, providing families with opportunities to connect, relax, and create lasting memories in an inclusive environment.

In Labrador, ASNL hosted its first Family Summer Camp at a local cabin site. The camp featured a range of recreational and community-building activities, including a special performance by an Indigenous drumming and dance group, creating a meaningful opportunity for families to experience culture and connection together.

TOTALS

PROGRAMMING	870
EVENTS	2111
SUMMER CAMP	304
SUPPORT GROUPS	694
AUTISM ACCEPTANCE & UNDERSTANDING OFFERINGS	59
AUTISM ACCEPTANCE & UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPANTS	1401
COMMUNITY BOOTH OFFERINGS	11
COMMUNITY BOOTH PARTICIPANTS	362











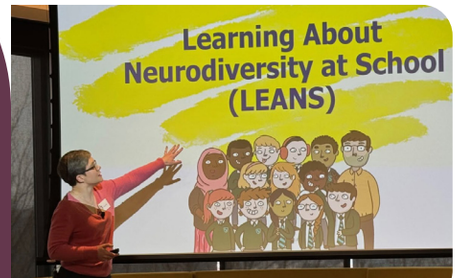


FUNDRAISING & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

What a year of community spirit and generosity! Throughout 2025–26, individuals, families, organizations and community groups came together in many different ways to support the Autism Society Newfoundland & Labrador (ASNL).

From the enthusiasm of Active for Autism and Chip in for Charity, to the Embracing Neurodiversity Conference, which brought people together to learn, connect and build understanding while also generating important fundraising support, each initiative helped advance our mission. The Ride for Autism Acceptance in central Newfoundland was another wonderful example of community coming together in support of ASNL, as was the generosity behind the Hair Factory Family Fund.

We are equally grateful to the many individuals who chose to make donations throughout the year, helping provide the ongoing support ASNL needs to serve autistic individuals and their families. Every event, partnership and personal act of generosity makes a difference. Together, these efforts raise more than funds—they raise awareness, create connections and help build a more inclusive Newfoundland and Labrador.



ACTIVE FOR AUTISM





SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The Pantry Café & Gardens

The Pantry Cafe & Gardens is a social enterprise of ASNL. The Pantry creates positive social impact by employing Autistic individuals and providing participants in ASNL's Transitions Program with hands-on experience in a busy café environment. Open to the public, The Pantry is a welcoming café where customers can enjoy delicious meals while supporting a social enterprise that creates employment and learning opportunities for Autistic individuals.

Cooking Programs:

The Pantry's cooking programs build essential life skills through hands-on kitchen experience. Participants develop skills in kitchen safety and equipment use, food preparation and recipe execution, ingredient costing and nutrition, and grocery shopping and making budget-conscious, healthy choices. Each class focuses on one or two recipes, guiding participants through planning, preparation, cooking, and enjoying the meal together. The program builds confidence and independence by helping participants develop the skills needed to prepare meals at home. In response to growing demand, The Pantry also expanded its offerings to include workshops, creating additional opportunities for individuals to participate.









THE PANTRY
CAFÉ & GARDENS







Training & Employment

Events & Community Engagement:

Throughout the year, The Pantry hosted a variety of events, such as Lunch with Bluey, Valentine's Brunch, and Breakfast with Santa. In addition to these signature gatherings, The Pantry catered daytime, evening, weekend and fundraising events including corporate lunches & conferences, holiday celebrations, fundraising dinners, private gatherings on- and off-site, and a large Canada Games reception.

Building on our Impact:

Building on the growth and community engagement achieved this year, The Pantry Cafe & Gardens will continue to expand its role as a welcoming café while creating opportunities for connection and participation. In the coming year, The Pantry will build on its events, cooking programs, training, and employment opportunities, with a continued focus on inclusive experiences for Autistic individuals and the wider community. With the ongoing support of community members, partners, and supporters, The Pantry will continue to strengthen its social enterprise model and create meaningful employment, learning, and community opportunities.

2025-26 Impact at a Glance:

10,000+
Meals served

248
Mentorship hours provided

6
Staff employed - **3** full time and **3** part time

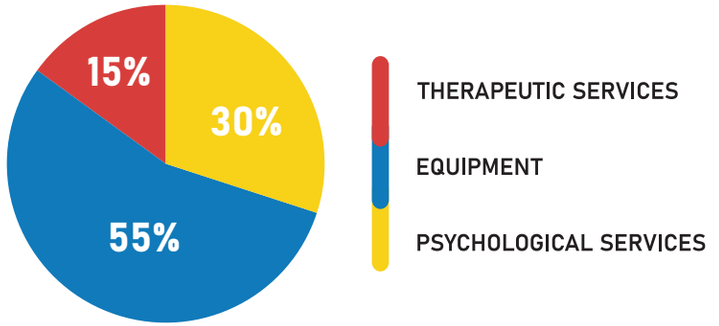
9
Transition Students work term placements

19
cooking classes & workshops

45
participants

FAMILY FUND IMPACT

Since 2019, the Hair Factory Family Fund has been helping Autistics and their families across Newfoundland and Labrador overcome financial barriers, making it easier to access programs, services, and supports related to an autism diagnosis. In 2025-26 there were 20 grants awarded.

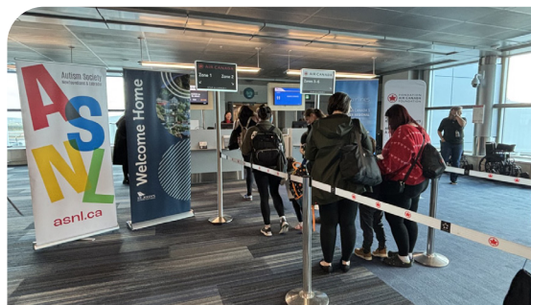


TRY A FLIGHT

On October 5, ASNL partnered with the Air Canada Foundation and PAL Airlines to offer Try-A-Flight: Family Edition, giving Autistic individuals and their families and caregivers an opportunity to experience the air travel process in a supportive, familiar environment. The 75 participants moved through each stage of the journey—from check-in and security to waiting at the gate, boarding, and experiencing takeoff and landing. By providing the opportunity to practice each step before travelling, Try-A-Flight helped participants build familiarity and confidence, reduce uncertainty, and prepare for future air travel.









MICHAEL SCOTT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to Jeremy LeBlanc, recipient of the 2025-26 Michael Scott Scholarship! Jeremy's perseverance, determination and accomplishments throughout his final year of high school is truly inspiring. While balancing an advanced course load in Physics, Calculus & Chemistry with part-time employment, Jeremy also took on a leadership role in the Marine Institute's 2025 ROV Competition, contributing as a propulsion and 3D-printed systems engineer and helping his team adapt, innovate and overcome design challenges. His achievements reflect both technical skill and a commitment to collaboration and personal growth. As Jeremy pursues his goal of becoming an Aerospace Propulsion Engineer and contributing to more accessible and sustainable spaceflight, we are proud to recognize Jeremy's accomplishments and wish him every success in the exciting journey ahead. Congratulations!

ASNL TOOLKIT

This year saw the launch of the Autism Society's World Autism Acceptance Day Toolkit. Created to support meaningful participation in World Autism Acceptance Day, the toolkit provides neuroaffirming information about autism, practical language guidance, research-informed resources, and accessible ways to take action and show support. Shared with schools, workplaces, families, and community organizations, the toolkit helps move beyond awareness and into action through education, celebration, and community engagement.





The gold infinity symbol celebrates Autistic identity, while the rainbow infinity symbol celebrates neurodivergence more broadly. Many autistic-led groups support both as positive, inclusive symbols.

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