



IMPACT REPORT

2023-2024

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 Space (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 province where Autistics and their families are valued and respected, and where they receive services and supports based on their individualized differences, needs, and preferences.

MISSION

The Autism Society, Newfoundland & Labrador (ASNL), is a charitable organization dedicated to promoting the development of individual, lifelong, and community-based supports and services for Autistics, their families, and caregivers.

MANDATE

The mandate of ASNL is to collaborate and create connections by:

- Advocating and engaging with public policymakers
- Promoting and supporting self-advocacy
- Providing a source of credible, reliable information through all phases of an individual's lifespan
- Assisting Autistics and their support network in navigating systems
- Creating safe spaces and opportunities for connection
- Community-based research
- Providing learning opportunities and social connections through engagement in ASNL's social enterprise, The Pantry Café & Gardens

CORE VALUES



Accountability



Approachability



Confidentiality



Teamwork



Message from the Board Chair

In 2023–24, your Board of Directors built on our strategic direction in listening closely to the autistic community to ensure our organization was positioned to continue to work with and advocate for the autistic community – autistics, families, caregivers, and allies – throughout our province.

A significant part of this work was the launch of our Town Hall meetings. The initial meetings were held in Stephenville and Corner Brook in the spring, followed by St. John's in the fall and Central Newfoundland in the winter. The feedback has informed our work as a Board, and these meetings will continue in the coming year to ensure we reach the community province-wide.

Another key element of interacting with the community occurred at the Embracing Neurodiversity Conference in May. A number of Board members attended the sold-out conference and benefitted from the learning sessions; but most importantly, interacted directly with community members, thus opening a key line of communication.

Key takeaways from this collected feedback included:

1. The continuation of Pilot Programs to test levels of interest in the community – all of which were based on direct feedback and evaluation;
2. Increasing the role of Recreation Co-ordinators at our Community Resource Centres;
3. Beginning initial efforts to develop programming designed to serve the adult/senior autistic population.

Internally, the Board undertook a review of its policies and by-laws to ensure they reflect appropriate language and allow the Board to better serve community needs. Revised and updated policies are due to be released in the coming months. We welcomed new Board members Terry Bursey, Dr. Allison Lamond, Michelle Goodyear, Shelly England, and Rebecca Furlong – these additions make us stronger.

The Board expresses its sincere thanks to our professional award-winning staff, our many supporters, partners, volunteers, and ultimately our community. It is our privilege to work with you toward a more equitable and inclusive community for all autistics.

Elizabeth Churchill
Chairperson, Board of Directors



Message from the CEO

The psychologist and Spiritual Teacher Ram Dass once said “Be still. The quieter you become, the more you can hear”. In 2023-24, ASNL began seeing the outcomes resulting from listening more closely to the autistic community. The year started with the unveiling of our Rotary Welcome Room. Made possible by a kind gift of the Rotary Club of St. John’s, the space provides for a safe, affirming location for meetings and gatherings of all kinds

Right on the heels of this was the launch of ASNL’s Town Hall meetings, an initiative of our Board of Directors to ensure they, along with the organization, is hearing the voice of the community.

In May, Embracing Neurodiversity 2023 brought the community together in person and on line to hear from Meghan Ashburn and Jules Edwards, authors of the book *I Will Die on this Hill*. The authors talked of their shared quest for better services that are neuro-affirming and autistic led. We also heard from groups regarding issues identified as gaps by community, including financial planning and residential options.

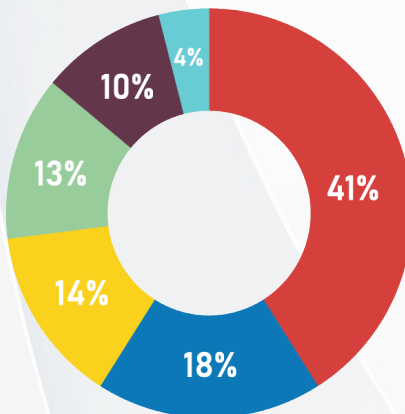
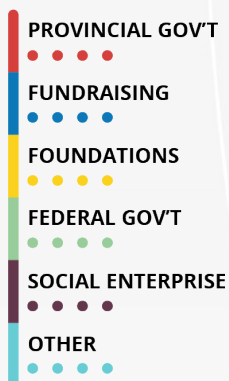
Connections with and about the community continued throughout the year, including our partnerships with the autistic community in Burin and Trinity/Conception. Many events driven by the voice of community happened across the province, including sensory friendly movie night, weekend camps, swimming, outdoor adventures and seasonal events such as Trunk or Treat and virtual meetings with Santa. The culmination of the year was the opening of a new ASNL office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, something the community had long wished to see happen. We are so pleased to be on the ground in Labrador, listening to and serving the community

Susan Wendell, Associate Professor of Women’s Studies, Simon Fraser University, noted “If disabled people were truly heard, an exploration of knowledge of the human body and psyche would take place”. ASNL agrees, and we continue to listen to our community and grow that neuro-affirming knowledge every day.

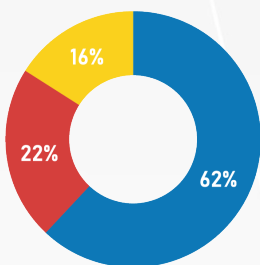
We look forward to continuing the journey.

Paul Walsh
Chief Executive Officer

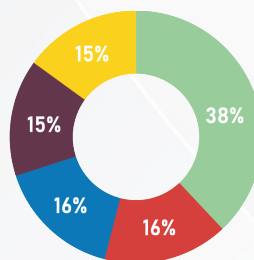
FINANCIALS



SOURCES OF FUNDS



USE OF FUNDS



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

▪ **Elizabeth Churchill**
Chair, K-12 Educator

▪ **Charlene Hann**
Vice-Chair, Clinician off Avalon

▪ **Karen Flynn**
Parent Representative off Avalon,
Chair Governance Committee, Secretary

▪ **Sarah Hollett**
Newfoundland & Labrador
Government Representative

▪ **Shelly England**
Caregiver Representative

▪ **Michelle Goodyear**
PR-Connections Representative

▪ **Anna Burke**
Self-Advocate on Avalon

▪ **Rebecca Furlong**
Parent Representative on Avalon

▪ **Matthew Norman**
Treasurer Finance Officer

▪ **Elaine Dobbin**
Honorary Board Member

▪ **Terry Bursey**
Self-Advocate off Avalon

▪ **Dr. Allison Lamond**
(Clinician on Avalon)

ADVOCACY

ASNL is committed to continuing to elevate and centre Autistic voices by connecting with and listening to our community. ASNL is continuing to build relationships and have systemic conversations with Provincial Government departments including monthly meetings with the Department of Education and quarterly meetings with Health and Community Services.

By being a part of such groups as the St. John's Inclusion Advisory Committee; Provincial Territory Autism Network (PTAN); the Autism Alliance of Canada; the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities; and the province's Autism Action Council, ASNL further highlights the perspectives and concerns of the Autistic community to groups on a municipal, provincial and national level.

“

**NOTHING ABOUT US
WITHOUT US.**

”

ASNL/PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MEETING

Thank you to Honourable Paul Pike, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the Community Sector, and the NL Housing Corporation; Terri-Jean Murray, Director of Disability Policy Office; and Gayle St. Croix, Director of Communications for Children, Seniors and Social Development, for meeting with ASNL's CEO Paul Walsh and Advocacy Manager Leah Farrell.



The openness to ASNL's systemic advocacy around respite, education and adult and senior support was appreciated and we look forward to continuing to build our connection in the future.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS

Education



Autism Society staff provide Autism Acceptance and Understanding (AAU) learning sessions to students, educators, health care practitioners, government departments, community partners, and private enterprises. These presentations are tailored to provide information relevant to the specific request, and work to inform and develop a deeper understanding of autistic culture and a build disability confidence within these organizations for a more inclusive society.

PEER AUTISM ACCEPTANCE & AWARENESS SESSIONS: 3064 PARTICIPANTS

AUTISM AWARENESS & ACCEPTANCE SESSIONS: 1817 PARTICIPANTS

Recreation



ASNL's recreational opportunities include neuro-affirming monthly family events, physical movement-based programs for all ages, and community partnerships. These engagements provide our community with a safe, inclusive space to learn, grow, and connect. ASNL's recreation programs were greatly enhanced in the regions serviced by our community resource centers with the generous support of Canadian Tire Jumpstart Grant.

FAMILY EVENTS AND RECREATION/SOCIAL PROGRAMMING:

OUTSIDE AVALON – 1465 PARTICIPANTS | AVALON – 725 PARTICIPANTS

SUMMER CAMPS – OVERNIGHT & DAY CAMP EVENTS: 269 PARTICIPANTS

Pre-employment

Transitions

- This year long program combines structured learning, in community volunteer opportunities, professional development, on-site job shadowing, and an apprenticeship, where participants embark on a 3-month paid work-term at ASNL's social enterprise, The Pantry Cafe and Gardens.

7 PARTICIPANTS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THIS PROGRAM

Students Transitioning to Employment or Post-Secondary (STEP)

- 9-month program designed for high school students to build self-awareness and skills through guided learning sessions and volunteerism to identify appropriate employment or post-secondary choices upon school leaving.

11 PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED VIRTUALLY, 12 ATTENDED IN PERSON

Employment Works

- 10-week (6 hours/ week) program designed for individuals who want to enter or return to the workforce, and who are interested in developing and practicing the skills needed for successful employment.

12 SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPANTS - 4 EACH QUARTER

Peer/Social Support Groups

Peer/Social support groups are led by neurodivergent staff members trained in Peer Support. These are a blend of mental health support, and social connection for folks with similar lived experience and interests. Peer led support groups provide a safe space where participants feel validated and understood, and are an excellent environment to build community and friendships. ASNL provides both in person and virtual offerings of these groups, for a variety of demographics and representing a mixture of intersectionality within the neurodivergent community.

SOCIAL/PEER SUPPORT GROUPS: 186 HOURS

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & FUND DEVELOPMENT

WHEN YOU INVEST IN THE AUTISM SOCIETY, YOU HELP TO ELEVATE AUTISTIC VOICES.



Embracing Neurodiversity 2023 took place on May 24 at the Emera Innovation Exchange with keynote presenters Jules Edwards and Megan Ashburn, co-authors of the book *I Will Die on This Hill*. Conference sponsors were Momentum Developmental Support; Cougar Helicopters Inc.; Harris Ryan; Keith Bradbury ReMax Realty Specialists; Empowered Parents; Black and Macdonald; People Stuff; Oral Health Centre; Marathon Gold Corporation.



Warmest thanks to event sponsors Always in Vogue; Diamond Design; Collingwood Spirits & Wines; Ocean Choice International; RBC; CAA Atlantic; The Vimy Boutique; Robert Decker; G.D. Sales; Service & Rentals Ltd., along with everyone who attended and made the **second annual Afternoon Tea a success on September 23rd!**

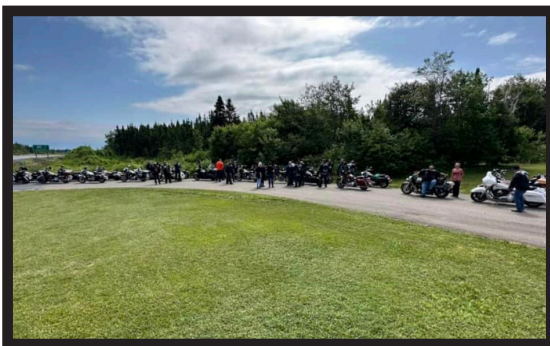
The second annual online auction took place in October with almost 50 items available for bidding. With a wide range of items including art, books, wine, vintage china, dinners, hotels, helicopter rides and hockey tickets – there was something for everyone! Our thanks to Bartlett's Auction, all suppliers and all bidders!



Active for Autism is ASNL's longest-running fundraising initiative! It encourages individuals to get together, get active and raise awareness and funds. Continued thanks to Pipers who have been the presenting sponsor since the beginning of this event.



Chip in for Charity Golf Tournament took place at Glendenning Golf on June 29! Heartfelt thanks to the Chip In Volunteer team for partnering with the Autism Society.



Mavericks Riding Club in partnership with ASNL held a Ride for Autism Acceptance on July 29! Sincerest thanks for your support and partnership!

Volunteers, supporters, participants, partners, and community members – you are at the heart of this organization! THANK YOU for your ongoing support!



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The Pantry Café & Gardens

The Pantry Café and Gardens is a social enterprise of ASNL. The Pantry aims to create a positive social impact by employing autistics and providing an environment where participants in ASNL's Transitions Program can learn the ins and outs of a busy café.

Throughout the past year,

The café served:
8,142 MEALS

Provided:
3,930 HOURS
Of training and employment

Provided:
144 HOURS
Of mentorship to one mentor

Employed:

3 FULL TIME INDIVIDUALS
4 PART TIME INDIVIDUALS
8 TRANSITIONS STUDENTS

3 NEUROTYPICAL AND
12 NEURODIVERGENT
INDIVIDUALS





A new initiative this past year was the cooking classes with Chef Brenda, which had 26 students enrolled. This program aims to teach everyday kitchen skills to participants. The skills practiced in the classroom include but are not limited to kitchen safety, food preparation, ingredient costing, and nutrition. The goal of the session is to instill confidence in the kitchen to prepare a full day of food; giving guidance and instruction on how to prepare a snack, breakfast, lunch, and dinner over three classes. The group sits and enjoys a meal together at the end of the class.

The Pantry hosted sensory-friendly Breakfasts in April during World Autism Awareness month and a Breakfast with Santa in December. Several “pop-up” events were held throughout the year, Wine and Dine Valentine’s dinner, Picnic Planting and Prosecco, and Happy Hours on the Deck, which were well attended and enjoyed by all.

The Pantry Cafe provided catering services for a diverse range of events throughout the year including a tea party fundraiser, holiday celebrations, personal life events such as bridal and baby showers, corporate lunches, conferences, and intimate private dinner parties. We served MUN along with the Health Science Centre and Janeway for multiple deliveries and gatherings within the dining room. Customers had the option to order from a variety of trays and options on our catering menu or create their custom menu developed for their specific needs and preferences. In addition to providing catering services, these events provide on-the-job training opportunities for students. They were actively involved in the preparation, execution, serving, and cleaning of several events, gaining hands-on experience in a real-world setting. This allowed the students to collect new skills and step out of their comfort zones.

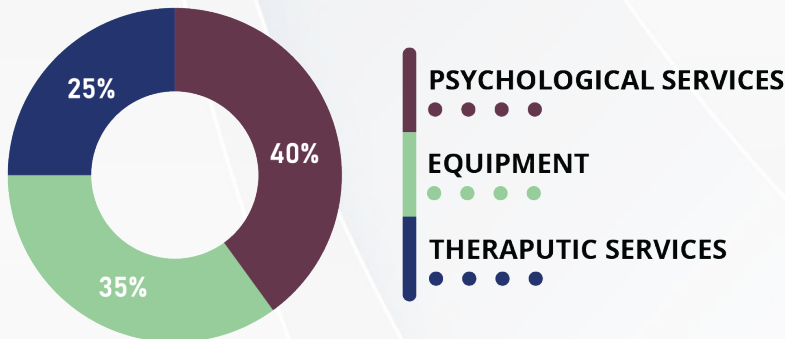


FAMILY FUND IMPACT

with

AUTISM SOCIETY
Newfoundland & Labrador

Established in 2019, The Hair Factory Family Fund assists individuals and families, in Newfoundland & Labrador, facing barriers to accessing programming and services related to an autism diagnosis.



NURSING STUDENTS DEVELOP SOCIAL STORY

Three third-year nursing students from MUN Faculty of Nursing in collaboration with ASNL developed a blood collection social story.



They began with a needs assessment and discovered that autistic individuals were seeking better information on medical procedures, as many had negative experiences with the healthcare system. They then developed a social story to address this need, focusing on bloodwork. While they visited the Janeway, they ensured the resources were applicable to all ages, and gathered feedback to enhance the final product. Thank you Abby, Sara and Kaitlyn; the social story is available on ASNL's website.



COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE TO OPEN IN LABRADOR

ASNL visited Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Sheshatshiu in February 2024 and held open community events to get feedback from the local community before the opening of our resource centre there.

With numerous families and individuals in attendance, we were able to hear the successes and concerns in the communities, informing us of a need and want for an ASNL presence. Having a resource centre in Labrador means we can meet our community where they are and within the cultural context of their lives. It makes a truly provincial organization.





MICHAEL SCOTT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to **Cheyenne Tremblett**, recipient of the Michael Scott Memorial Scholarship. Cheyenne graduated from Bishop White School in Port Rexton and has been accepted to Memorial University starting Fall 2024 to pursue social work.

An Honours student, Cheyenne has been on multiple school sports teams for many years, including volleyball, softball, co-ed softball, and badminton; she was on the student council since grade 7 and was a daily volunteer. Cheyenne has always set goals and attending MUN was one such goal. Hard work and dedication, coupled with the love and support of her family have helped her meet her goals.

Cheyenne chose Social Work because she loves the idea of helping people and believes that becoming a youth social worker is what she was meant to be. Cheyenne said "If it had not been for my brother having autism and going through his struggles with him, I honestly feel I would not have the knowledge that I have now and be so aware of this disability. A high school graduate, with more knowledge of Autism than I could research from a book, I live it on a daily basis! We have learned many things through my brother's diagnoses, like how to appreciate the little things and to see the world from a whole different perspective."

The Autism Society wishes Cheyenne every success as she seeks to fulfill her next goal: **"It's because of my brother that my next long-term goal is to become a youth social worker, ready and able to help many children in need."**



STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Throughout my time with ASNL, I was given the opportunity to work collaboratively in the development and piloting of the Life Skills group. My participation in this program allowed me to develop my skills in the areas of project planning, group facilitation, and relationship building.

The Life Skills group was especially unique as it took person-centered and strengths-based approaches to increase participant self-efficacy, give power in decision making, and lend itself to a sense of empowerment. As an aspiring social worker, these innovative approaches to group development provided many opportunities for mutual learning and encouraged self-reflection.

The staff at ASNL were pivotal in the facilitation of my learning and provided me with many opportunities to shadow their individual roles. They continuously offered their guidance and created a space for open conversation. The opportunities I was given to interact with program participants were beneficial to see the direct impact of the society's initiatives, mandate, and values. It was refreshing to see the importance that is placed on community input and feedback, and informative to see how this information is used to shape program offerings and implement critical changes. It emphasizes the person-centered approach and aspects of human caring that can sometimes be lacking in such organizations.

ASNL is a welcoming and supportive environment and I would strongly recommend a practicum here to any social work student who values diversity, social justice work, and is interested in a community-oriented placement."

Rachel Vey BSc, BSW, RSW
Social Work Student

MEET OUR TEAM

ASNL's staff is a team of autistics and allies who listens to, works with, and advocates for all autistics in our province. We proudly introduce our team to you:

Office and Administration Team:

Chief Executive Officer J. Paul Walsh

- Overall organization direction
- Strategic planning and implementation
- Public/Media Relations

Director, Finance and Social Enterprise Alex Collins

- Accounts payable/receivable
- Social enterprise
- Property

Director, Advocacy and Outreach Leah Farrell

- Systemic Advocacy
- Community-Based Research and Communication
- Social Media management
- Work term student inquiries

Director, Programs and Supports Rachel Hogan

- Program Development and Implementation Support
- Autism Acceptance and Understanding Professional Development Educational inquiries

Community Relations & Fund Development Candace Moakler

- Annual fund development campaigns and events
- Donor relations and stakeholder engagement
- Branding initiatives and media relations

Office Manager Cathy Drake

- Greet and assist visitors and participants
- Provides administrative assistance along with tech and website support
- Provides support with fundraising events

Property & Facilities Coordinator Adam Chafe

- Facilitates maintenance and safety
- Custodian supervision and support
- Supports Transitions program

Administrative Assistance – Central Stephanie Caravan

- Administrative support

The Navigation Team:

Navigators:

Kristen Winter – Avalon

Chris Dedde – Eastern

Kay Snow – Central

Paul Lockyer – Western

Jessica Keefe – Labrador

- Individual Advocacy Initiatives
- Systems navigation – health, government, financial, etc.
- Guidance – new diagnosis, funding, housing, education
- Autism Acceptance and Understanding Presentation and Professional Development facilitation
- Support groups
- Program Facilitators – STEP, Employment Works, etc.

The Pantry Café & Gardens Team:

Head Chef/Manager

Brenda Williams

Head of Front House/Server

Angel Howlett

Sous Chef

Iryna Chorna

Server/Baker

Colin Power

Restaurant Operations Assistant

Jessica Greeley

The Programs & Services Team:

Recreation Coordinators

Danielle Knustgraichen – Avalon

Angelina Fillier – Eastern

Elissa Chippett – Central

Jessica Wyatt – Western

Heidi Atter – Labrador

- Community Partnership Building
- Facilitation of community base programming
- Family Events

Program Assistant

William Feltham

- Assists in various programs and family events
- Self-advocate supporting Connections group

Transitions Coordinator

Sarah Hardiman

- Employment related guidance
- Recreation based awareness sessions
- Community partnership development

Employment Works Coordinator

Lisa Lovell

- Employment related guidance
- Employer partnership development
- Employer awareness sessions

Employment Works Facilitator

Terra Wadman

- Employment related guidance
- Employer awareness sessions

CONTACT US

Elaine Dobbin Centre for Autism

70 Clinch Crescent, PO Box 14078

St. John's, NL A1G 4G8

T: 709-722-2803

Community Resource Center Clarenville

383 Memorial Drive, Suite 211

Clarenville, NL A5A 1S2

T: 709-466-7177

Community Resource Centre Grand Falls-Windsor

7 High Street P.O. Box 133

Grand Falls-Windsor, NL A2A 2J4

T: 709-489-4190

Community Resource Centre Corner Brook

Commerce Court

50 Main Street, Suite 105

Corner Brook, NL A2H 1C4

T: 709-637-7450

Community Resource Centre Happy Valley-Goose Bay

2-4 Hillcrest Road

P.O. Box 1105, Station C

Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL A0P 1C0

T: 709-896-8964

E: info@asnl.ca

www.asnl.ca



@AutismSocietyNL