

A large, green, textured map of the province of Alberta is the central focus. The map is tilted slightly to the right. Overlaid on the right side of the map is the text "Storybook 2014" in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font, rotated to follow the map's angle.

Storybook 2014

**In Your Community.
Across Alberta.**

Storybook 2014

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In Your Community. Across Alberta.

Alberta is a great place to live! We have one of the best economies in North America, the highest number of sunny days in Canada and landscapes that vary from the majesty of the Rocky Mountains to lush boreal forest, from fertile prairies to desert badlands. Alberta is home to more than 600 lakes, 245 rivers, and rich mineral resource deposits. But, most importantly, Alberta is home to 4,025,074 people; people who live in the 17 cities, 108 towns, 93 villages, 64 municipal districts, 8 improvement districts, 51 summer villages and 8 Métis settlements that make up this wonderful province.

Another thing great about living in Alberta? Family and Community Support Services! Alberta is the only province in Canada with an FCSS Program, which is achieved through a unique provincial-municipal partnership. FCSS programs and services reach 319 municipalities and Métis settlements. Less than 3,800 Albertans live in communities that do not participate in the FCSS Program.

We want to celebrate and be proud of the work that is done under the banner of FCSS and that's what this year's Storybook will help to do.

FCSS staff and board members are often hesitant to tell the story of the good things they do in their communities. Sometimes, it takes an outsider to acknowledge it and let others know the difference our programs make. For example, those of you who attended the 2013 FCSSAA conference may remember the words of our closing speaker, Lorne Calvert, former Premier of Saskatchewan, who said to the Government of Alberta:

"In this Province you have pioneered and matured a model of preventive services, a model of municipal and provincial partnership, a model of family and community support services that I think far exceeds any other model I've seen in Canada, including in my own Province under my own government.

Through this model, as a provincial government, you have made immeasurable difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities. You have been leading in Canada and North America in preventive services and community based services. Do not let this go. Do not let your leadership diminish.

You've been doing this work with about two-tenths of one percent of the Alberta budget. You've held the funding at \$74.8 million for that last several years. The province is growing; communities are growing and the needs of individuals and families and communities are growing as well. Funding must grow as well. You can double the budget, to arguably where it should be and still not reach one half of one percent of the provincial budget. There must room in that budget to maintain Alberta's leadership and maintain the difference you are making in our neighbours lives."

He then closed with the following comments to conference delegates:

"That's about what I would say. But you can say it with passion and with knowledge. You have both the right and the responsibility on behalf of those you serve to make friends and influence all 87 Alberta MLAs... those ordinary folks who, like you, have extraordinary responsibility.

For seven years I had Ralph Klein telling me about the Alberta Advantage and Ed Stelmach telling me about the Freedom to Create and the Spirit to Achieve.

With what I have learned about FCSS, your work is the freedom to create and the spirit of achieve; you are truly the Alberta Advantage!"

The collection of local stories in our FCSS Storybooks is one way we DO say it with passion and with knowledge. We want to celebrate and be proud of the work that is done under the banner of FCSS.

This year's FCSS Storybook is a snapshot of the stories taking place on a daily basis across the province - they demonstrate the reach, breadth and impact of our tremendous Program. We took a slightly different approach to the Storybook this year, rather than working it around a specific theme, we thought it would be more powerful for you to hear about all the different types of programs and services that are being offered to the citizens of many cities, towns, villages, municipal districts, and Metis settlements.

The FCSS Story tells us: "Alberta's FCSS builds this province by transforming government money - provincial and municipal - into social profit. Many municipalities pay more money into FCSS than any agreement requires because they see the power in putting decisions about social well-being in the hands of local leaders and organizers, where they belong."

And that is the beauty of the FCSS program - local solutions to local needs with the same overarching outcome: strong individuals, strong families, strong communities.

We hope you enjoy hearing about local experiences and the difference FCSS makes to the lives of everyday Albertans. We know you don't hear these stories often, because:

"We don't hear about preventing disease, preventing drug and alcohol abuse, preventing crime, preventing loneliness and isolation, because when it works- and in Alberta it works like nowhere else- it's the opposite of intense and dramatic. Avoiding a crisis isn't news. But it is enormously worthy. It is worth even more investment, because our unique partnership between the provincial government, municipalities, service organizations, and volunteers creates prosperity by preventing pain and problems."

We like to think of ourselves as builders. We build Albertans. (from the FCSS Story)

If you would like to order additional copies of the 2014 FCSS Storybook, please contact the FCSS Association of Alberta at assistant@fcssaa.org.

Youth Employment Centre (funded by Calgary FCSS)

The City of Calgary Youth Employment Centre delivers a five week life skills program, called "Discovering Your Opportunities", to pregnant and parenting teen moms, aged 15-19, during July and August. This year, they are celebrating the 15th anniversary of the program.

Fifteen participants will take part in the program, which is a combination of in class curriculum and a work experience that is based on the participants' areas of interest. This provides the opportunity for the young moms to get hands on experience in the work world. This summer program assists participants in developing a career and life plan as well as focusing on self-esteem and job search strategies. Afternoons provide the participants with a valuable work experience placement, giving the women the chance to develop new skills and explore career options.



Discovering Your Opportunities is supported through a partnership between the City of Calgary (Youth Employment Centre), Calgary Board of Education Louise Dean Centre and Catholic Family Services.

This program is delivered as part of the Vulnerable Youth Outreach Program which is funded through FCSS.

The Aboriginal Youth Outreach Program Story: "A Year of Success." Calgary John Howard Society (funded by Calgary FCSS)

In the year 2008, the Calgary John Howard Society applied for funding to create a project to support urban Aboriginal youth. One full-time worker was hired to meet with Aboriginal youth in the community, offer them bus tickets to support with transportation and ensure their safety. In 2009-2010, a proposal for a second outreach worker was granted and the program capacity grew; in addition to connecting youth with community resources, networking became a priority within the Calgary community. In 2011, the program was still quite small with unestablished representation in the community. Twenty-one clients were served with the average length of stay being six months. 2012 was a notable year for the Aboriginal Youth Outreach Project; funding was received for a summer student and there were two full time workers networking with professionals in other youth serving agencies and supporting urban Aboriginal youth.

In 2013, the Outreach Workers began to offer more depth into the programming that clients were accessing. The program evolved to meet the needs of youth in our community by offering mentorship, advocacy, goal setting, and assistance in meeting basic needs, recreational opportunities, referrals to community agencies and cultural connection/reconnection.

The program utilizes a holistic approach when working with urban Aboriginal youth. The medicine wheel became a key tool used when working with youth during goal setting and identifying creative ways to meet basic needs, which has led to positive and successful transitions for these youth. A summer student has offered support in planning recreational activities for clients. These opportunities have enabled youth to develop life skills, discover personal interests, and participate in team building and identify alternatives to crime. With a larger focus on connecting with fellow youth supports we have created an environment for youth to develop their own sense of

community. Youth have the opportunity to decide which aspects of the program they want to commit to and many connect on a regular basis, which was unheard of in the early years of the program.

Due to the recent additions to the program, we have seen the highest success rate since the creation of the project. Our clients are youth who are involved or at risk of involvement with the justice system. Many of them have self-esteem issues, lack of motivation, have given up hope for a future, are in unsafe or unstable housing, have no involvement with Aboriginal culture, complex mental health, social and emotional issues, as well as addiction. Through their involvement in the Aboriginal Youth Outreach Program, our clients have experienced some degree of success in overcoming barriers. For the first time since the creation of the program we have had three youth graduate from high school with a diploma. Upon joining the program all of these youth were on the brink of dropping out and working in order to make money to support themselves and their families. With support from the program they have been able to explore options in the community as well as have the consistent support from the Outreach Workers. The Aboriginal Youth Outreach Program is assisting the community's young people break through barriers and end the cycle of trauma that so many of our young people face. As a community, we are helping create the successful individuals of tomorrow.



Donald's Story

Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (funded by Calgary FCSS)

Donald has been with our Calgary AfterSchool program in our Chinatown location since 2010. Over the last four years I have seen him change from a passive shy introvert, who doesn't raise his head to say please and thank you, to a more confident individual who speaks out more about his thoughts and opinions of things. His mom has signed him up every September at our Chinatown afterschool program, and he comes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 4-6 to take part in our homework help club. Over the years he has had a lot of trouble opening up and trusting our youth tutor volunteers, but this year we are seeing some obvious changes take place. He would look forward to seeing certain volunteers on certain days, and I see that he is more eager to do his homework, and is more engaged as well. Changes in children are not always evident right away, at times the progression is slow, but in time the end result is powerful and impactful.

This year I have had many conversations with Donald's mom, and in turn have established an open, honest and trusting relationship with the family. Through this I have seen Donald open up more to me, and other people around him. This past year, I offered to go with his mom to parent teacher interviews, as in the past she had always had a school interpreter present, who was unable to help her advocate for Donald. With these opportunities to connect with the family, I was able to get to know more about Donald's family, his life culture, and in depth struggles at school. On the surface, it appeared he may have had a learning disability, as his grades were much lower than his same grade peers, but as I got to investigate more into his situation, it looked like there was more to his story.

Donald has been with the same school teacher for the last few years, but his grades have not improved too much. After talking to Donald and his mom, they revealed that Donald feels hostile towards his teacher. Due to this, he has had a hard time concentrating and learning in school, because he feels she is always yelling at him. He chooses to give up in class, and shut school work out. It's a vicious cycle that has escalated for some time now. I opened up the communication channel with his teacher, and we are able to help Donald with his unfinished school work and homework here at the center during after school hours. We are also helping Donald move to a more suitable school, which turns out to be his designated school. This change is because the new school can provide a much stronger E.S.L. support to assist with his language skills. This transition will happen in September, with all three parties, school, parent, and Donald agreeing to it willingly, and happily. With a fresh new learning environment in September, and our continued academic, and social support, I look forward to see even more positive changes to Donald's life.

This past school year we have helped Donald register at the YMCA during the Christmas holiday, as well as in our Spring and Summer Camp. Through these social opportunities, Donald has been able to build stronger social

skills, and combined with the nurturing support of mentors, it has reinforced for Donald what is socially acceptable, and what is not. Through these experiences he has showed more appropriate behaviours and is learning to build friendships with fellow out of school care program and Camp peers.

The out of school care program has made such a positive impact on Donald's life. What he has learned, and the skills he has built, will leave a lifelong lasting impact on the rest of his life. Thank you Calgary AfterSchool for giving us the opportunity to reach out to all the children in our community!! They greatly enjoy and appreciate the time we give and share with them.



The Conversation Starts Here

Calgary Counselling Centre (funded by Calgary FCSS)

"Education is the key to understanding and opening up our society to change", said Alex Cameron, the male domestic abuse outreach coordinator, who is dedicated to creating a space where marginalized populations can have a voice and share their story.

At Calgary Counselling Centre, we strive to start the conversation about mental health in our community and our Male Domestic Abuse Program is no different. Male domestic abuse is an important and often underrepresented issue in our community; men are often more reluctant to report the abuse because of the stigma surrounding it. Turn ForThe Better, a group program funded by Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), has been influential in changing that paradigm in our community.

The purpose of Turn ForThe Better is to focus on change for men who want to be a part of a healthy relationship and a non-abusive future; men who want to change their lives for the better. This unique and leading edge program focuses on males who experience domestic abuse in our community.

Unfortunately, we know from research and experience, the largest obstacle to overcome is to seek help. Many fear their claim could be questioned, stopping them from seeking help. Calgary Counselling Centre seeks to reinforce the message, "we believe you, we will listen."

Clients in this sector are not always looking for formal counselling. Most of the time they are "looking for an outlet to share their story, voice their opinion, and finally get validation that their problem is legitimate and real. They want to be believed." The Turn ForThe Better program has been influential in getting the conversation started in our community. Through Cameron's experiences he has learned "once you are able to connect face to face with people and educate them on the issue of male domestic abuse, that's when the conversation actually gets started."

The program adapts to what each individual client requires, whether it be an informal conversation at a coffee shop or in a more traditional setting at Calgary Counselling Centre. Being accessible through various outreach techniques has enabled Cameron to continue to increase educational awareness and support throughout our community.

2013 saw the highest number of male clients seeking help for domestic abuse at Calgary Counselling Centre.

It's not easy to talk about such a sensitive topic, but Calgary Counselling Centre hopes to continue the conversation when it comes to males who seek help for domestic abuse. Calgary Counselling Centre understands through increased exposure, education, and awareness, more men facing domestic abuse will seek help.

Volunteer of the Year

Hull Services (funded by Calgary FCSS)

What could a former professional hockey player and horse trainer for Hollywood Actors and Arabian Sheikhs do as an encore to an already amazing life of adventure? Perhaps volunteer with some very special youth? Mike joined the Mentors Matter Program, funded by FCSS, over three years ago. He volunteers three times a week at Hull School, spending one-on-one time with youth facing behavioural and social challenges that stem from adverse childhood experiences (ACE).



Mike is a calm and experienced mentor role model, not fazed by difficult presenting behaviours, and is able to look past and work through them. Mike is so consistent in his approach with students and reliably volunteers whenever he is expected, never disappointing the youth. He makes the students feel valued and helps them realize their potential. Mike has so many interesting stories and life advice to share, and creative ways of engaging kids. In addition, Mike brings home – made baked goods and treats that some of the students have never experienced. He has a genuine desire to help young persons, and his interactions with them are consistently authentic and respectful. Mike has clearly had a positive impact on many of the students in the school, and they are motivated to spend time with him each week and gravitate towards him whenever he's around.

One student recently said "Mike has lots of good advice and tells me about California and all the things a person can do."

Not only, has Mike made a positive difference in the lives of students, he also provides tremendous support for the hockey program and has made an impact on the staff group and greater community as a whole. His energy and enthusiasm are contagious, and he expresses gratitude for having the opportunity to share in our students' learning and growth. Mike has commented on more than one occasion, that, even though he has had many amazing experiences in his life, his time volunteering at Hull School has been the most rewarding. He reminds Hull staff why we are here and the amazing impacts of consistent positive relationships. His attitude of acceptance of others and values of working hard has instilled lasting life skills into our youth.

Success Stories from Momentum

(funded by Calgary FCSS)

Financial Literacy- Youth Fair Gains

Christine is a young aboriginal mother who entered the Youth Fair Gains program when she was 19 years old with a six month old son. At the time she was trying to complete high school through Discovering Choices – an alternative high school and was connected to the Louise Dean Centre through the community outreach worker. She was living on minimal support from the government and made up the shortfall by working part-time in numerous customer service positions. Christine, who lives on her own in the northeast, commuted to the Louise Dean Centre to attend Youth Fair Gains. During the program, Christine connected with other teenagers like her, learned how to deal with credit card debt and gained new money management skills.

Christine's dedication to saving and attending the Youth Fair Gains program really paid off. As a result of her participation in the program, she saved towards her own education and an RESP for her child, and started paying down her debt. She is now studying to become a licensed practical nurse through a local college.

Financial Literacy – FamilySaves

Carolyn is a single mother of six children ranging in age from five to 16 years old, whose source of income was Income Support, Child Tax credit and a small amount of child support. Balancing her children's activities as well as her own has often been a challenge and in June the family had to move back to their reserve for the summer as a result of the flood. Carolyn had attended her initial Family Saves class as well as a Credit class, before their relocation, and decided that along with the change of residence they would change some habits. As a family they looked at some of their expenses and decided on some goals they wanted to achieve. As a result, Carolyn worked toward reducing her credit card debt from the \$9000 to \$5000 over six months and feels that she is on her way to "zero".

In September 2013, Carolyn started attending Mount Royal in order to advance her skills so that she can gain meaningful employment. She feels that with her increased knowledge of money management she will be able to help her family move forward to a life that they choose rather than one of reaction.



To Live and Dream Again

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area (funded by Calgary FCSS)

Three years after we came to Calgary, my daughters and I left an abusive home to enter a women's shelter. My two daughters had to leave behind their familiar neighbourhood, the schools they had attended for years, and the friends they had made in those years. My daughter Sophia, who was in fifth grade at the time, found it especially difficult and trying to fit in at a new school at the end of the year was not easy for her. Her grades suffered, and she cried often over the lives we had left behind.

For a year, my girls were provided outreach support by a social worker from the women's shelter, but then we were referred to Big Brothers Big Sisters. We applied for a Big Sister for Sophia, and that's how it started.

Jocelyn is a wonderful Big Sister. She is sweet, warm, patient and consistent with visits. Sophia has had the chance to meet Jocelyn's family, and she especially loves Jocelyn's mom's spaghetti and meatballs. Sophia got not only a Big Sister, she got the whole Big Family.

All of this extra love in her life has helped Sophia so much, not only with the struggle of the life changes we went through, but with all the struggles a young person faces. Sophia's confidence in school has soared since Jocelyn came into our lives, and Sophia has even started playing clarinet in the school band. This newfound confidence is helping Sophia not only academically, but also in making new friends at her school. Having Jocelyn in her life has helped Sophia learn to live and dream again; I almost cried when she told me her plans to attend university.

For the priceless gift of giving my girls their Big Sisters, I thank you very much, Big Brothers Big Sisters.



The Start of Something BIG

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area (funded by Calgary FCSS)

It's never easy moving when you are young; you leave behind your home, your friends, and maybe even your family. Sometimes, though, a big change can be the start of something big, and that's what Danysa discovered when she was just 13.

Danysa's big move was with her mother and her younger brother, leaving their home in Rwanda for a new home here in Canada. For Danysa, the move meant starting over: a new community, a new school, and a whole new country.

A teacher at Danysa's school recommended Big Brothers Big Sisters as a way to help her get her bearings and learn about Canada. Just three months later, Danysa met Ashley, her new Big Sister, and the connection was instant.

That instant connection was the result of a shared love for sports, a love revealed in the range of physical activities the two Sisters have done together. From skating to rollerblading, or just going for a walk, Danysa and Ashley love being active together. Of course, they still enjoy winding down at the mall or going to movies. Ashley, who works for a local media outlet, has even involved Danysa in her work life, bringing her to photo shoots and showing her another aspect of life in Canada.

"Danysa is eager to learn about all things Canadian and is always interested in trying something new," says Ashley.

Since being matched with her Big Sister Danysa's mother, Mutoni says she is happier, both at home and in school, and she finds that Danysa gets along better with her younger brother than she ever has before. Knowing that she will always have something fun to do on the weekend has made Danysa more relaxed throughout the week, and Mutoni credits all of this to having a mentor.

The two young women haven't been matched for long, but Ashley is already excited for the future. She can't wait to see Danysa continue to learn and grow throughout their time together, and she hopes that their time will continue.

"I'm looking forward to many more years of mentoring Danysa," says Ashley. "She's going to grow up into an amazing adult and I hope to be around to see it."

A Journey That Made Us, Shaped Us, Challenged Us, Changed Us **Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary (funded by Calgary FCSS)**

All her life, Stacey knew nothing of her heritage. When her six-year-old daughter, Nevaeh, came home after a feast and sweet grass ceremony at her school and declared to her mother, "I want to hoop dance!", Stacey was reminded of a longing she had felt for so many years but had never pursued, a longing to be connected to her heritage. Though she first thought Nevaeh's request odd, Stacey set out to make her daughter's dreams a reality. Stacey explains, "We were raised as a French family, however, my pure and innocent six year old knew no boundaries – she felt our family's heritage in her heart. I am forever grateful to her for that."

Stacey set out on a journey to discover her family's heritage, and was soon connected to Aboriginal Services at Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC). Stacey's children, now five and seven, actively participate in Aboriginal art, regalia making and beading at The Lodge with BGCC. The Lodge is a new space dedicated to offering a variety of programs for Aboriginal youth in Calgary; youth are provided with staff support, community resources and the opportunity to connect with cultural supports. Her children have also learned about drumming, dancing, languages, songs and stories that have helped shape their culture: "Nevaeh and Kail can often be heard signing in Ojibwa, Cree, Blackfoot. Usually, it's about the water, animals or family!" The children love being able to learn about different styles of art and different traditions.

Now that her children are following their dreams, Stacey set out to follow her dreams and discover who she is. Endless ancestry searches and conversations led her to proudly call her family Métis. Recently, Stacey and her family visited St. Kateri's shrine at Khanawaki, a Mohawk reserve near Montreal. Although this visit marked the completion of the beginning stages of Stacey and her family's journey to discover their heritage, Stacey sees this as an ongoing journey, one that will continually evolve over time.



Stacey is actively encouraging others in her community to pursue their dreams. She recently shared her story at a youth event, where her story impacted and inspired other participants to step outside their comfort zone in pursuit of their goals. In addition, Stacey has seen the positive impact that The Lodge has made in the lives of other families. At a recent dance, she watched the transformation as one very shy youth member took the stage to dance: "She showed the world that she may be small, but inside she is mighty...it was an amazing, heart-warming experience. This was made possible by The Lodge programming."



Stacey is also passionate about bringing more Aboriginal programming, awareness and opportunities into Calgary's schools, as she believes this would make a huge difference in the future of Aboriginal youth.

In Stacey's words, "As we know, learn and try to teach and lead by example, our stories in life are what shape us, make us, challenge us and change us. I am happy to say that Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, specifically Aboriginal Services, has had a profound impact on our story."



Empowering Calgary's Immigrant Seniors

Immigrant Services Calgary - Community Initiatives and Access Program for Seniors
(funded by Calgary FCSS)

Mr. D immigrated to Canada from India with his wife and younger sons in 1998 under the sponsorship of his eldest son. He used to work in the construction industry in India, but failed to secure employment in Canada in his field due to the lack of English communication skills. Eventually Mr. D landed a job in a furniture factory. Life was hard but satisfying as he worked diligently to establish himself and make a home for his family in this country. Nevertheless, after Mr. D retired in 2010, the initial feeling of leisure and freedom soon gave way to boredom and a sense of purposelessness, as his children were grown up and had families of their own and his wife was busy with work. Since he lacked adequate English skills and had difficulty understanding the Canadian accent, he feared venturing out into the community on his own, which further exacerbated his isolation and sense of disconnectedness.

In November 2010, Mr. D learned about the Community Initiatives and Access Program for Seniors (CIAP) through an outreach event held by Immigrant Services Calgary at his place of worship. He was excited to join the CIAP and started participating in the English classes and computer literacy programs that were tailor-made to suit the unique learning needs of immigrant seniors. Mr. D is an enthusiastic and conscientious learner; after three years in the program, he has vastly improved his ability in conversational English, both in terms of listening and speaking. Moreover, through CIAP's computer literacy programs, he has learned to set up his own email, Facebook and Skype accounts, which he now uses on almost a daily basis to stay in touch with his friends and extended family in and outside of Canada. Additionally, he utilizes the internet to do online banking, plan transit trips, book medical appointments, and conduct a host of other activities. Mr. D has changed from being technophobic to becoming a competent internet user and surfer, as well as a proud owner of his personal laptop computer. As his English ability and computer skills improved, so did his self-image and confidence. Upon encouragement by program staff, Mr. D

became a volunteer with the CIAP, and helped to organize special events and recreational activities such as the Seniors' Sport Day, National Seniors Day Celebration, Seniors' Stampede Breakfast, as well as day trips to the Glenbow Museum, Calgary Zoo, and Fort Calgary. After a while, he was willing to help out in the English and computer classes as a peer mentor to new immigrant seniors. Mr. D's confidence and personal capacity were markedly enhanced after taking up these leadership roles.

Through the CIAP, Mr. D made friends with seniors and youth from diverse ethnicities, which helped improve his interpersonal skills and cross-cultural competency. He also had opportunities to take part in various community events. The boost that he received from these successful experiences gave him the confidence to reach out and make more friends and build contacts in the community, thus increasing his community ties and broadening his social and support networks. Soon after, Mr. D began volunteering with the Guru Ravidass Immigrant Seniors Association, reaching out to newly arrived immigrant seniors and guiding them through their settlement process, providing information, assistance, friendship and support

along the way. The Association, greatly impressed by Mr. D's dedication and contribution, elected him to be its Vice President in 2013. Additionally, CIAP staff nominated Mr. D for a non-profit organization's immigrant seniors awards. Although Mr. D did not end up receiving an official award, his exemplary volunteer efforts and impactful community work were publicly recognized and he essentially felt like a well-rewarded winner, which motivated him to further increase his civic engagements.



In February 2014, Mr. D participated in a City of Calgary focus group entitled "Creating a more Age-Friendly Calgary". He shared his perspective and opinions pertaining to the adequacy of the existing infrastructure for seniors in Calgary, identified service gaps, and gave suggestions for improvement. In May 2014, Mr. D assisted a group of Nursing students from Mount Royal University by providing useful information and insightful observations that were valuable in helping them design their practicum research project. The resulting project was entitled "L.E.T.S. (Learning English Together Socially) Talk", a weekly English social group that helps immigrant seniors improve their English speaking and listening skills, which in turn helps to reduce the communication barrier between these seniors and their health care providers. The "L.E.T.S. Talk" program was launched in June 2014, and Mr. D played an active leadership role in the planning, development and implementation of the program, including choosing discussion topics in consultation with other seniors, preparing handouts for the group, and facilitating sharing and discussion among the participants.

Mr. D has come a long way since he joined the CIAP. The program's holistic approach has significantly enhanced his physical, emotional, intellectual and social wellbeing. He no longer feels isolated or depressed but is now a cheerful senior who is ever ready to lend a helping hand, who continuously contributes to the community through sharing his skills, knowledge and experiences. He is an active citizen leading a fulfilling life that gives him a great sense of belonging and contentment, an inspiring role model for other seniors and younger generations alike.



Mosaic AfterSchool Program (funded by Calgary FCSS)

“Santiago” (7) and “Angela” (9) came to Canada from Mexico in January, 2014. When they started school, Santiago and Angela spoke mostly in Spanish. When they joined the Mosaic AfterSchool Program, they were happy to meet program facilitators and volunteers who also spoke Spanish. The school and the Mosaic AfterSchool Program worked together to help Santiago and Angela learn English and adapt to the routines of a new country and a new school.

June 6, 2014: Santiago’s Story as told to Mosaic Family Resource Centre Volunteer

“When I came to the school, I was scared because I know no English and the other kids don’t know Spanish. I was lucky to get to know about this program from my teacher and my mother brought me and my sister to meet the people. I was lucky again because I met two people from here who speak Spanish and they helped me to get to know the other kids in the group. I know if I need help, I can ask Rosie and Amber and they will help me. Rosie and Amber also help me with school homework which is very good because in this way I can show my teachers that I know what to do. Also I have friends from all over the world; especially “Mark” who was my friend from the very first day. June 6, 2014”.

June 6, 2014: Angela’s Story as told to Mosaic AfterSchool Program Facilitator

My family made a big move to come here from Mexico and I was really scared about what it would be like in a country where I don’t really know how to speak the language. It is very strange to make new friends and talk to them when you don’t know their language. When Amber and Rosie met us and spoke in Spanish, I felt much better. When we all sat in a big circle I heard where all of the other kids were from and how some of them also could not speak English at the beginning. I have a good time here, I learn enough English to say almost my whole story, I have friends who will help me if I don’t understand and the program has helped me a lot with my questions about Calgary, about school and about life in Canada. I hope that I will learn more English over the summertime and that I can come back to this program when school starts again.”



Youth Central Society (funded by Calgary FCSS)

Alexandra’s Story:

Through Youth Central, Alexandra Wadey has found her voice.

Serving on the Mayor’s Youth Council for the past three years, she helps to choose topics relevant to youth and report her findings to the City of Calgary. The Mayor’s Youth Council generates positive, meaningful change in the community.

“As youth, we spend six to seven hours a day in a classroom getting talked at,” Alexandra says. “Because of what Youth Central does, there are people interested in what we’re saying and actually listening.”

The highlight of her experience in the Mayor’s Youth Council is meeting with Mayor Nenshi twice a year.

“I’m always so awestruck when we meet with him,” she says. “He is so engaged with what we present to him. He cares. Things change in the city because of what we say.”

In addition to meeting new friends on the Mayor’s Youth Council, Alexandra has also encouraged several friends to join the program, creating a ripple effect in her school.



She says, "I talk about Youth Central all the time, and so do my friends, because it's such a huge part of our lives. I didn't realize that volunteering could be this contagious. Even people I wouldn't expect to want to volunteer hop on board."

"I've learned how awesome it can be for youth to get together. When they actually care, really cool things can happen."

Alexandra says she is motivated to volunteer because she can see the positive outcome. She is also a part of the Youth Week Calgary steering committee, where she is a leader in connecting with businesses and agencies to encourage them to participate in a week-long celebration of youth every April.

Rebecca's Story:

Although Rebecca Yang is still in Grade 11, she is an advocate for youth volunteerism on a global scale.

She sits on the International Youth Advisory Board, representing 1,100 young people in Youth Central's Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC). As an ambassador for Calgary, which boasts the largest YVC in North America, she shares her knowledge every month with members from eight other cities in Canada and the United States.

"I'm honoured to be a part of Youth Central and in turn, the International Youth Advisory Board, which has changed the course of my future," says Rebecca. "I'm inspired to reach further, do more and see what I can accomplish. I've learned how powerful youth are and what we can achieve."



Rebecca has been volunteering with Youth Central for four years. Last year, she attended the YVC Summit in Kansas City, where she connected with other YVC affiliates and shared ideas on how to engage youth and make more of an impact in the community. She takes pride in using Youth Central's achievements to teach other organizations how to connect more youth to service.

In addition to her participation in YVC, Rebecca is also a Junior Editor with Youth Central's blogging program "Youth Are Awesome", and sits on the Youth Week Calgary steering committee.

"Youth Central is so special and unique," she says. "It really gives us the initiative to get involved within our communities, and gives us vital skills to go out in the world. I am way more open to new opportunities because of it. Without Youth Central, I wouldn't have been comfortable leaving Calgary. Now, I've overcome that fear and I'm ready to take on the world."

Nandan's Story:

When Nandan Nath and his family left their home country of Bangladesh six years ago, they chose Calgary as their sanctuary.

Nandan's parents, both doctors in Bangladesh, sacrificed their jobs in an unstable country to ensure Nandan and his brothers had a chance at a positive future.

"My parents are very selfless," Nandan says. "They made so many sacrifices for me and my brothers. I knew I had to make some sacrifices myself. "Calgary has accepted me so wholly. It just felt right to find a way to give back to a city that has given me so much."

Nandan has volunteered with Youth Central for two years, first joining the Youth Volunteer Corps and then the

Mayor's Youth Council and the Calgary Youth Foundation steering committees. He says his favourite experiences have to do with planning fundraisers and humanitarian projects.

Nandan says, "Youth Central has helped solidify the spirit of philanthropy in me. It's more than I could have ever expected. Volunteering keeps me morally and emotionally healthy. Making sure someone else's life is a little brighter makes my life better too. It has made me a better citizen overall, for my city, country and world."

After high school, Nandan plans to become a doctor, like his parents. His goal is to set up hospitals in impoverished areas in Southeast Asia and Africa.



First Annual Claresholm Women's Conference Claresholm FCSS

Even in a small town it is not always easy to be inclusive and help individuals build meaningful connections. People are busy with their own lives and occupations, and often separated by their differences. For women this often creates division by whether we are mothers or non-mothers; our different ages; or who belongs to what church or social club. It is not very often that these differences are transcended for a shared purpose. Late in 2013 the director of our local FCSS and the manager of our local public library came together with an idea: they wanted to have a women's conference. It would be an event to celebrate rural women, and bring together the women in our community on a larger scale than what we typically experience with a focus on women's wellness and empowerment...but where to begin?

These two women invited several others to join them on the initial planning committee; beginning with a local business owner and other library and FCSS staff, and then the list grew to include a couple of fitness/wellness instructors. Initial meetings led to the choice of theme (Empower Your Butterfly Spirit); a "tone" ("we want something more 'edgy!'") and a keynote speaker (an inspirational author and presenter whom one of the planners knew personally from previous employment).



We encountered difficulties finding funding, but then something amazing happened. FCSS was contacted by a manager at one of our local financial institutions; she had just received an award at her workplace and had money to donate to the charitable cause of her choice; she chose our conference, and we gained another valuable member on the planning committee.

Slowly the group gained momentum, brainstorming literally dozens of potential presenters and exhibitors. Through existing social and professional networks the group grew larger, and the agenda began to take shape. Letters to local businesses were drafted requesting donations of cash or prizes. Word was starting to spread. Other individuals and groups contacted our office to find out if they could contribute, from promotional items for gift bags, to handcrafted creations for door prizes.

The local community centre was chosen as our venue; a non-partisan location accessible to all. A female town councilor was invited to give a welcome address; local businesses were hired to do catering and design a banner. Exhibitors from the region were invited to have displays featuring a range of wellness-themed goods and services. As the keynote speaker's topic included escaping domestic violence, FCSS included a display with information on how to prevent violence and where to go for help, as well as advertising several proposed workshops from our interagency members on healthy relationships and self-esteem.

By the day of the event it had all come together. The planning committee, with the help of numerous other volunteers, carried out the details for a successful day. A survey was included with each registration package, fifty-one were returned from participants and fourteen from exhibitors. These were some of the comments:

- It was an amazing day. All the organizers did such a great job. I feel it was huge success.
- Please make this an annual event.
- I give everyone credit for creating such a magnificent environment for our community to gather
- I've been very joyously thrilled with it all – compliments to you all. Thank you very much.
- Getting together more often!
- I feel it was very well put together - fantastic
- Do the conference yearly
- Everything was perfect
- Loved the Nia (4)
- Food was very good, Nia
- Everything – it was truly a great day. I loved it all but especially the instruction by Lise (Nia). Thank you to all that had a hand in organizing such a great day!
- I like Nia breaks – nice to have activity.
- I loved it all – the speakers, the Nia, drumming circle, the exhibits, the food (even lemon water) the door prizes, the craft opportunity – amazing and the price!
- The whole vibe and focus on Women's spiritual wellbeing. Guest speakers were excellent! Wonderful variety of subjects and interactive material, drumming, Nia and vendors.

Level of satisfaction was expressed not only by the numbers, but by the enthusiasm in the comments. If you have not experienced Nia, it is a "sensory-based movement practice" kind of like combining dance and yoga. You might not think this would be hugely popular in a rather conservative, rural small town. However both the Nia activities, and a drum circle finale, were packed with participants. Women were bonding; friendships were forming; and ideas and excitement for next year's follow up conference were mentioned frequently.

The theme of empowering women was carried, and lived, throughout the day, and hopefully brought home by the approximately 85 women of all ages who attended (plus exhibitors). Butterflies were used as a beautiful reminder of our power to transform, and the energy of the event as a whole was transformative. It was the power of women working together that made it happen, and we are all excited to get to work on the second annual Claresholm Women's Conference and make it even bigger and better.





Nanton's Story

Nanton Quality of Life Foundation

The Nanton Quality of Life Foundation contracts with the Town of Nanton and the M.D. of Willow Creek No. 26 to manage and operate the Nanton and Area Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Program.



Early in 2007, the only licensed childcare centre in Nanton abruptly closed. This centre provided childcare for children up to the age of six, as well as out-of-school care for some school-aged children aged six to twelve. As a result of the childcare centre closure, the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation was flooded with phone calls from panic-stricken parents, caregivers, and guardians looking for childcare for their children. Due to major fiscal restraints and lack of qualified personnel, the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation was not, and is not, able to provide out-of-school care programming to the community. However, the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation continued to look for possibilities for facilitating out-of-school care programming.

The one constant barrier to being able to set up such program within the Nanton community was locating an appropriate space to house out-of-school care programming that would meet provincial licensing standards. It was at this time the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation started to work closely with the Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority to seek solutions to the childcare crisis in Nanton. Together, they came up with many "band-aid solutions", but were far from a stable, long-term solution. A partial response to the problem was found in the establishment of a Day Home Agency in Nanton, which was able to assist with the recruitment of approved day home providers. Once approved day homes were operational, families with young children now had the option of accessing licensed childcare within the community. However, there continued to be a huge need in Nanton for out-of-school care for children aged six to twelve during the before and after school care hours.

In 2007, the Government of Alberta announced that it would provide funding to communities that were experiencing a childcare crisis through their "Making Spaces Child Care Initiative". Funding would be available for communities that were struggling to create or sustain licensed out-of-school care programming. The funding would be allocated in the form of portable buildings, in which out-of-school care programs would operate, rather than actual dollars. As a requirement of the funding agreement, the portable buildings were to be located only on school grounds, and the school divisions would be responsible for making and submitting an application for funding.

In the winter of 2008, the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation, together with the Livingstone Range School Division, applied for the "Making Spaces Child Care Initiative" on behalf of the town of Nanton. As part of the application, the Livingstone Range School Division required a letter of support from the Town of Nanton. Again, the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation acted as a facilitator in the process by having the Foundation's Executive Director become the local "key contact" during the application process. This connection helped to ensure a local voice was present and that the needs of local families were being met.

The Nanton Quality of Life Foundation Executive Director met with Town Council to outline the high need for out-of-school care programming in town. She explained that the biggest barrier was access to available and appropriate licensed space, and told them that a solution to the space requirement was available, if the Town of Nanton would be willing to collaborate with the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation and the Livingstone Range School Division. They were told of the opportunity, through the government initiative, of no cost, portable buildings that could be made available to high need communities. Council was also told that, due to the severe shortage of licensed childcare options, the town of Nanton was flagged by the Government of Alberta as a high needs community, requiring one of the out-of-school care portables.

After much discussion about the high demand for a licensed out-of-school care program, Council agreed to provide a letter of support for the application, on behalf of the Town of Nanton. With this newly formed partnership, the

Livingstone Range School Division and the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation submitted a successful application to the "Making Spaces" initiative.

The Nanton Quality of Life Foundation continued in the role of facilitator for the out-of-school care program by initiating the process of locating a high quality and experienced out-of-school care program operator. This was a very taxing process, and took quite some time. However, through determination and resolve, they were successful in locating and securing the programming services of an extremely qualified, experienced, and accomplished program operator: the Diamond Valley Boys and Girls Club! The Diamond Valley Boys and Girls Club officially opened their Nanton program in 2010 and, since then, many local children and families have utilized the excellent out-of-school care program provided.



To this day, the partnership between the Nanton Quality of Life Foundation, Diamond Valley Boys and Girls Club, Livingstone Range School Division, and Town of Nanton remains strong and productive. Together, we have maintained a respected, top-quality out-of-school care program that is valued and cherished by children and families within the town of Nanton.



The 'Fight Back' Cancer Support Group

Provost FCSS

Just before Christmas 2012, the Provost FCSS office received a call from a community member wondering if there was a local Cancer Support Group. The caller, Bob, was told that one did not exist, but FCSS would look into it. "We really need one here," he said. "I have an incurable cancer, in Stage 4 and I need this group." After exhausting all avenues of research, a visit to "Google" one quiet Friday afternoon ended the search. A staff member contacted the Canadian Cancer Society's Edmonton office and spoke with Barbara Bird, Community Engagement Coordinator for Alberta/NWT Division. "Oh really!" she said. "We are just updating and finalizing the program materials for our Community-based support group. The Cancer Society recognizes that there is a need for groups in rural areas and we would be very happy to work with you to bring a support group to your community."

Although the training was extensive, the accommodation to a rural, remote community was exceptional. The Canadian Cancer Society sent the information, FCSS printed the manuals, and the classes were conducted over the telephone. After their training, Nurse Cheryl Babchuk and community volunteer Rhonda Degenstien were ready to facilitate, and the "Inspiring Hope" group was formed. The Society prefers groups be co-facilitated by a health care professional and a person who has experienced cancer. Their research found that eight sessions, each highlighting a relevant topic, to be most effective. Because the program is educational, the Provost Primary Care Network was able to fund most costs. The support given by the Cancer Society was outstanding. As well as thorough training they 'book-ended' each session by helping the facilitators to prepare for and debrief after each session.

It was just what they needed, but it wasn't enough. The members of the group decided to continue on their own. The "Fight Back" Cancer Support Group was formed and continues to meet once monthly at the FCSS Board Room. Members spoke of a need for their spouses to have a group of their own. At the 2012 annual FCSS Conference an FCSS staff member learned of a program offered through the Alberta Caregivers Association and decided to become trained as a facilitator. The Provost "Compass for the Caregiver" group completed its first eight week session in July of 2014. From the participants of this group, FCSS learned there was a need for the caregivers of Dementia and Alzheimer's persons to meet for support and education. In response, FCSS assisted in the formation of a support group. Along with assistance from Provost Primary Care Network and Provost Adult Learning, this group started in September 2014.

FCSS' role? We offer administrative support, encouragement, our networking expertise and our commitment to the well-being of our community. We organize advertising, and a place to meet. Our mission? "To build a better community by promoting personal and family development. "Community needs are addressed by providing, administering or assisting programs and services. Sadly, Bob died In June of 2014, and our story continues...



Building Connection - New Direction

Stettler FCSS

Stettler and District FCSS and Alberta Works staff have a close connection as we often work with the same clients. In discussing some of the needs in the community, we discovered that by collaborating we could be more effective. Alberta Works identified a group of clients receiving Income Support that would benefit from life skills training and group counselling. These women were isolated and felt stuck in their current situation. We partnered with Stettler Adult Learning to provide classroom training and FCSS staff provided an instructor and counselor for the group work.

Seven women attended an eight week Essential Skills program, which included three days of classroom time and a half-day of group work. Participants were taught goal setting, job interview skills, time management, life-work balance, dealing with stress, conflict resolution, and communication. The group time was designed to build connections with others, work on the barriers that kept them from moving forward, reinforce what was taught in the classroom and practice and apply newly learned skills.

Each participant has grown substantially and has taken the initiative to move forward in their lives. Two went back to school and graduated with their GED. Four women are now working and one woman entered rehab. These women have deep connections with each other and provide an encouraging support system. In addition, the majority of the participants continued their growth by attending our Resiliency Series, which helps people to develop or build the skills needed to bounce back from difficult circumstances or tragedy.

In October 2014 we will again partner with Alberta Works and Stettler Adult Learning to offer another Essential Skills program. The group identified for this program is single mothers receiving Income Support. Content is being designed to meet their specific needs.

The Essential Skills program helps individuals become more independent, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis. They have the opportunity to develop interpersonal and groups skills, assume responsibility for their decisions and actions and they are supported as they become active participants in the community.

Nick Did The Trick! **Vegreville and District FCSS**

One of the great things that happened in Vegreville in 2013 was the revitalization of our local senior's drop-in centre, The Senior Citizen's Sunshine Club. The club had found itself with only about 50 members, many of them not very active. Then along came a senior with a few inklings.

Nick Chrapko had a hunch that any good organization could be better, so he set out to learn as much as he could about how to run a charity in an effective manner. The Volunteer Centre at Vegreville and District FCSS was able to lend him some books and CDs so he could learn about how to be an efficient leader of volunteers. He took two or three resources at a time, in order to learn thoroughly and gradually. After being elected to the board of the Sunshine Club, he then learned how to be the Treasurer, so he could understand and help manage the finances of the group. He reports that because of the Volunteer Centre at FCSS, he has more knowledge about volunteer management. He also appreciated the opportunity to learn how vital volunteering is to the community, and how he can make a meaningful contribution to his organization.

After a few courses and some practice, he was able to prepare accurate financial statements and participate in the Annual General Meetings, building a lot of confidence in the strength of the membership. By convincing local people to join the group and try out some of the old and new programs at the centre, he was able to increase the number of members. Some unique ideas came to life and the Sunshine Club is shining!

Partly because of these brave innovations and creativeness, Nick was nominated by Volunteer Vegreville to receive a Minister's Senior Service Award through Alberta Health. He was chosen as one of five recipients across the province and continues to be a role model for other older adults. Nick participates in a diverse range of volunteer activities partly for his own enjoyment but mostly to provide benefit to others in the wider community. He embodies this definition of "social engagement".





Christmas Close To Home

Wainwright and District Family and Community Services

For the past seven years Wainwright and District Family and Community Services' (FCS) Christmas Close to Home Project has been bringing Christmas cheer to seniors living within the MD of Wainwright and the Town of Wainwright. Last holiday season 491 gifts were hand delivered.

"Christmas Close to Home shows our seniors that they are appreciated and not forgotten during the holiday season," said Cathy Charlton, Director of Wainwright and District FCS. "It also gives us an opportunity to provide social interaction for those older adults who may be spending the holidays alone."

The program hopes to reach as many seniors as possible. This year's gift comprised of a coffee mug filled with chocolates, a note book, and a calendar. Handmade Christmas cards created by students from Elementary Schools in Chauvin, Edgerton, Irma, and Wainwright were also included.

In November, elves from Wainwright and District FCS worked diligently to wrap all the presents. Wainwright and District FCS staff members, Meals on Wheels Volunteers, and Parent Link staff members assisted in delivering gifts. As well, Lil' Communiters, a group aimed at fostering volunteer spirit in young children, assisted by going door to door with presents at one of the manors in Wainwright.

Parent Link provided an intergenerational program at both Battle River Lodge and Points West Living. Preschool aged children and residents enjoyed some Christmas goodies and each other's company. They also created a Christmas craft and sang Christmas Carols. After the festivities the children personally delivered gifts to every resident.

Throughout the Holiday Season individuals and organizations from Chauvin, Edgerton, and Irma hosted Christmas lunches in their communities and any senior attending received our gift. The FCSS Seniors Coordinator personally delivered gifts to seniors in the MD of Wainwright and in the Town of Wainwright who were housebound.

It is amazing to see the smiles the Christmas Close to Home Program brings to seniors in our community. The gift is a small token to show our seniors we are thinking of them during the holiday season. The real gift we give is the gift of our time.

The Christmas season can be difficult for those seniors who live in isolation. The holidays can also bring up feelings of grief, thinking of loved ones who have died or how Christmas used to be. One lady shared with me that this was her first Christmas without her husband. When it was time for me to leave she said, "Thank you for taking the time to listen to me."

Another client was thrilled that I came to see her. She lives on her own out of town and is no longer able to drive. The calendar she received was filled with farming images. Together we looked through the calendar. Each picture evoked a memory and she shared stories with me about her years on the farm.

Another senior said, "Thank you, it is so beautifully wrapped, I am going to put it in my china cabinet." Seeing the joy on their faces reminds me of the true meaning of the season. As I listen to their stories of Christmas seasons that have come and gone I am grateful to have a glimpse into the life they have lived.





North West Edmonton Seniors Society Edmonton FCSS

In the fall, an elderly lady, Doreen, phoned the Centre looking for someone she could talk to. A home visit was set up for the next day, where the outreach worker met a very depressed, isolated lady recovering from hip surgery. She had recently experienced the loss of her "son", a boy she had raised since birth, who decided at the age of thirteen to live with a grandparent. Doreen lives in a very isolated neighborhood and had no transportation, no family nearby, and very few friends. The outreach worker encouraged Doreen to try coming to Calder's (as North West Seniors Society used to be known) Fun and Friendship coffee group. The worker provided taxi vouchers to get her to and from the Centre. Doreen took her up on her offer. She has since attended regularly.

She very quickly connected socially with others in the group, and was offered a ride to and from the program. With the encouragement of the group she joined the Fun and Fitness class that followed, and stayed for lunch and bingo. Doreen also attends all of the Health and Wellness presentations and is often seen on a Wednesday afternoon playing cards with her new friend, with whom she shares a ride. At a recent home visit she told the outreach worker that she is amazed at how her life has changed in two years. When she first met the outreach worker she was so depressed she felt her life was over. She said that through the supportive listening from outreach, the new friends, support, and social activities at Calder, she has a new life. She never thought she could be happy again but she is. She shared with the outreach worker that things are getting better with her "son", he may even move home; the supportive listening and encouragement helped. She now has a full calendar with her new social life. As well as coming to the Centre for programs during the week, she shares a ride with another participant she met through the program to attend weekend potlucks, bingos and pancake breakfasts.



Multicultural Women and Seniors Services Association (MWSSA) Edmonton FCSS

My name is Adam. I live with my son, his wife and two year old child in a one bed room apartment. I used to leave home every morning at 9:00 am when my son went to work so my daughter in law had some privacy. I used to spend all the time in the mall and return home after 4:00 pm when my son got home from work. Someone brought me to MWSSA. I also have some health problems and many other issues. MWSSA arranged for a yearly bus pass for me and made an appointment with a doctor who speaks my language. Now I come here for English and Exercise classes and other social activities. The staff speak my language and helped me to reapply for my Permanent Residency card, file my taxes and access the other services I need. I have made a few friends here so I can talk to them. Also I get information about Diabetes, Heart health, etc. I stay at the centre as long as I want. Now I feel more relaxed and happy.



Home Visitation Program Strathcona County Family and Community Services

This mom, a landed immigrant, entered the Home Visitation program in May 2012. She was referred by her child's school counsellor.

The Home Visitation initial assessment revealed that mom had suffered severe postpartum depression and was hospitalized due to suicidal thoughts. Mom admits to "losing it" and not being able to parent at the time. This mom was feeling isolated with no family and community supports. From the start of entering the Home Visitation

program, this mom has been determined to create a life that is joyful for her children and establish supports within her community. Mom has been active with her participation in the home visitation program as well as community events such as Home Visitation picnics, playgroups, Winter celebrations and National family week.

Mom started medication for her anxiety and depression after leaving the hospital and was attending counselling. Mom has become a participant in the Everybody Gets to Play program, which has allowed her and her family low-cost recreational programs. Through these opportunities, mom has learned the importance of self-care.

Mom has increased her knowledge of child development and positive parenting strategies through home visitation. Mom entered the program with very rigid beliefs around parenting, which she attributes partly to her upbringing as well as her culture. As Mom's anxiety and depression have decreased, she has been able to become more flexible and her expectations of her children have become more realistic. Mom attributes this to her involvement with the Home Visitation program.

Mom is off her medications and no longer is attending counselling, and is in the process of determining whether she would like to return to school or work part time. Mom has secured the necessary funding for schooling if needed, and is enjoying the feeling of being excited, rather than overwhelmed, about new challenges.



Small Jobs, Big Hearts - Helping When Help is Needed **Strathcona County Family and Community Services**

"There were three little angels that flew here" are the words spoken from a resident after volunteers helped him move boxes from his storage to his basement to make room for his scooter. Sometimes it is not huge interventions that are needed, but small things that can make the difference. Everyone could use a little extra help at times and with the Small Jobs Big Hearts program developed by Strathcona County Family and Community Services, help is given when help is needed.

In the past few years, staff have felt frustrated by the extra support clients require and the barriers they encounter in accessing help. As a result, FCS staff came together to talk about the needs of the people they were serving and how these residents could be supported. It was identified that residents in our community needed help to complete small jobs around their homes, often the little jobs that many of us take for granted, such as changing a light bulb or putting up blinds. For many of these residents they may not have friends or family nearby, perhaps they are hesitant to ask for help, or they may not be able to afford these types of supports. With so many skilled and talented people who want to give back, but have limited time to commit, wouldn't this be a great connection?



And so Small Jobs Big Hearts was developed. It is a unique casual volunteer program that matches residents in Strathcona County with volunteers in the community who have the skills and time to help. The program was designed to meet the needs of individuals who cannot complete the task on their own, are unable to afford to hire someone, or aren't able to access another service.

The program was also developed with the "busy" person in mind. With so many commitments it is often difficult for people to find time to volunteer. Small Jobs volunteers can give back to the community in a way that utilizes their skills, on a schedule that works for them. For example, hang pictures over their noon hour or help to plant a garden for a few hours on a weekend. No long term commitment is necessary. In fact, all that we ask is for the volunteer to complete a minimum of three small jobs within a one year time period.

The volunteer opportunity is suitable for all ages and skill levels, and allows groups who tend to be marginalized to give back in a meaningful way. We believe that everyone has gifts that they can share. For example, we were approached by a local agency wondering if some of their clients could be involved as volunteers with minimal support from their worker. Another volunteer, whose health issues have prevented her from working fulltime, continues to utilize her talents by giving back to the community.

Since its inception six months ago, sixteen volunteers, including university students, retired teachers, semi-retired handymen, persons with disabilities and their workers, and stay at home parents, have helped twenty residents with over fifty small jobs.

The completion of these small tasks have made a huge difference to residents, most often seniors, in our community by improving their quality of life, creating personal connections, reducing isolation, and building their capacity. Feedback from those who have used the program is overwhelmingly positive. One senior stated that "it's the little things that make me wonder if I should be living on my own. Since my husband died, many little jobs around the house began to pile up. It made me question whether or not I should move to a lodge. This program makes me feel more confident about continuing to live in my own home because it feels well-maintained again. I am very grateful for Small Jobs Big Hearts."

We have also received positive feedback from staff who feel safe referring vulnerable people because they know they will be matched with a screened volunteer. One of our Seniors Outreach workers stated "Our mandate is about empowering clients to do for themselves rather than staff doing things for them and this program supports this philosophy".

Unintended but positive outcomes that have emerged from the program include mentorship and social connections between volunteers. Volunteers working in the program are mentoring one another and teaching each other new skills. At times they are working together when a second hand is needed to complete a task and making valuable connections.

Small Jobs Big Hearts is the essence of what FCS is about. The program focuses on prevention, helping volunteers and participants develop interpersonal skills, build connections while enhancing the well-being of individuals, families, and the community as a whole.



Raymond Baker, Volunteer Work 2014 Barrhead and District FCSS

Barrhead and District Family and Community Support Services Society provides support and services to individuals and families in and around the small, rural, farming community of Barrhead, Alberta. Our organization employs more than twenty staff and used to share space with the community JUDO Club and a dance studio. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to move! The building was to be restored to a warehouse and the work ahead was enormous! Everyone was required to pack, move and salvage. FCSS Board of Directors and staff wanted to ensure that services were available to the community with as little interruption as possible.



Volunteers stepped forward! Families and individuals donated time and muscles to help us. All were so appreciated and helpful. One of the volunteers that stood out in his efforts was Raymond Baker. Raymond Baker is a praiseworthy Barrhead FCSS volunteer. While managing and operating his own business, Barrmart Foods, he still finds time to volunteer with Barrhead FCSS.

For the past few years, Raymond has regularly volunteered with two Barrhead FCSS programs. As a Community Volunteer Income Tax Program volunteer, he has helped numerous low income individuals and families by filing their income tax returns. Raymond is also a Volunteer Driver for Meals on Wheels, delivering hot meals to residents-in-need in the Town of Barrhead.

When Barrhead FCSS needed help moving its office this spring, Raymond was one of the first to respond. He offered his labour, his truck, and his large enclosed trailer. Raymond made several trips freighting office furniture, paper supplies, files, shelves, file cabinets, and a host of other items to our new location. He carried in load after load of goods and helped carry in heavier items like the shelf units. He even brought his dad, Gilbert, to help move items.

The slogan on Raymond's large enclosed trailer, Think Good Thoughts, not only embodies Raymond's philosophy but describes his actions as well. Barrhead FCSS is indebted to Raymond Baker and volunteers in our community just like him who wholeheartedly pitched in when it was needed.



"Celebrating Differences" Book Project Cold Lake and District FCSS

Take a moment and try to recall a favorite story book that you had as a child. It was that book that you had your parents read to you over and over again. Its pages were dog eared and faded. You could recite the phrases before you learned to read. You can recall the illustrations...

Not unlike the rest of Alberta, Cold Lake, a city of approximately 13,000 people in Northeastern Alberta is experiencing a major demographic shift. New people are being drawn to the community through work in the oil industry, as military personnel stationed at CFB 4 Wing Cold Lake, and under the Temporary Foreign Worker program. People who are re-locating to Cold Lake are not a homogeneous group. Newcomers to our community

are from across Canada and the globe. They are bringing to our city new languages, foods, manners of dress, customs and ideologies. This is an exciting time to be living in Cold Lake and seeing so many changes. Those of you, who are parents or know children, can appreciate the inspirational power of a well written children's story. What if we could write a children's storybook that conveys the message that we can create welcoming and inclusive communities in the Lakeland area?

In Spring 2013, students in the Lakeland area schools were canvassed for submissions from which a multicultural children's book would be created. The children were asked to share their hobbies and interests, along with their family's customs. Nine submissions were selected. The children in the book were from Europe, South and Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Newfoundland and Labrador, and a local First Nation. Cold Lake and District FCSS staff transposed the children's submissions into rhyming prose. The theme of the book is that while we may look or sound different, fundamentally kids are just kids and share many of the same experiences. The book was entitled, "Celebrating Differences". The book was beautifully illustrated caricature-style by Cold Lake artist Lauri Ansell. Five thousand copies of the book were published to be distributed free of charge.



Cold Lake and District FCSS staff reached out to local schools to recruit students who would read the book to younger students and help facilitate conversations and role playing exercises about how to create a welcoming school and community. Student volunteers were recognized with certificates of participation. Every student in participating schools received a copy of the book to take home. Each recipient of the book was given a mission to share the book and its message with their friends and family.

The role playing portion of the presentation was electric. Students enacted a few different situations involving a new student on their first day at school. In another activity, one student would act as the new student who brings an unusual and aromatic lunch to school. All the students could empathize with being the new kid who is struggling to fit in.

Response to "Celebrating Differences" in-school presentations was fantastic. Teachers reported that the student mentors took their role seriously. Even some of the shy students were eager to share the book with younger students. One school reported that their students invited the book's illustrator to visit their school to teach caricature drawing. The media rallied around the project. Stories about "Celebrating Differences" were featured in the Cold Lake Sun and on CTV's Alberta PrimeTime News. Cold Lake FCSS was contacted by another FCSS inquiring as to how they could emulate a similar project in their community.

Our hope is that "Celebrating Differences", becomes a beloved children's story that will be re-read and shared. Will this book inspire young people to make Cold Lake a welcoming and inclusive community for newcomers? Only time will tell. Judging from the responses to the book, Cold Lake and its youth are eager to take on this challenge.



Lac La Biche Little Sprouts Child Care Society and Day Care

Lac La Biche County FCSS

Supporting the development of community programs is one of the most critical roles Lac La Biche County's FCSS plays in our county. One particular instance shows how FCSS filled a need in our communities by facilitating the establishment of a new community day care.

In 2008, Lac La Biche's Portage College made a decision that dramatically reduced the number of day care spaces available for the broader community. Licensed day care spaces in the community were already sorely lacking, so this reduction became a key issue. Moreover, space to house a community day care was unavailable. FCSS was invited to a meeting with representatives from the Northern Lights School Division, Child and Family Services Authority, and Portage College to discuss the problem. A three-way community partnership came out of these discussions. Northern Lights School Division would provide space in a school and facilities staff to manage the renovations, and the Ministry of Child and Family Services would provide funding through the Making Spaces grant. The County's contribution to this project was Lac La Biche County's FCSS department's support for setting up the day care and board, and additional funding for the renovations.

FCSS staff then set up the day care, which included getting the society set up, establishing a board, producing all the policies and procedures that day cares need, buying equipment and supplies, and continuing to attend regular meetings with the project's partners. After the day care opened, FCSS staff advised the board for the first year of operations to ensure sound board management principles and processes were being followed.

Little Sprouts Day Care is always full at twenty-six children, and often has a wait list. Little Sprouts Daycare provides excellent care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by offering them the chance to play, explore, and socialize. And, its staff are passionate about including children with disabilities.

FCSS played a key role in establishing the Little Sprouts Daycare, which has impacted many young families in the community. Lac La Biche County's FCSS department is pleased to have been part of providing parents and caregivers with a quality child care option.

“Supporting the development of community programs is one of the most critical roles Lac La Biche County’s FCSS plays in our county.”



The Vital Connection Fairview and District FCSS

The Fairview and District FCSS Parent Network offered an eight week session from the Power to Parent Series on attachment, called "The Vital Connection". Eighty percent of parents who registered were foster parents. The session consists of eight, two hour classes and one hour of video, followed by a discussion and question period.

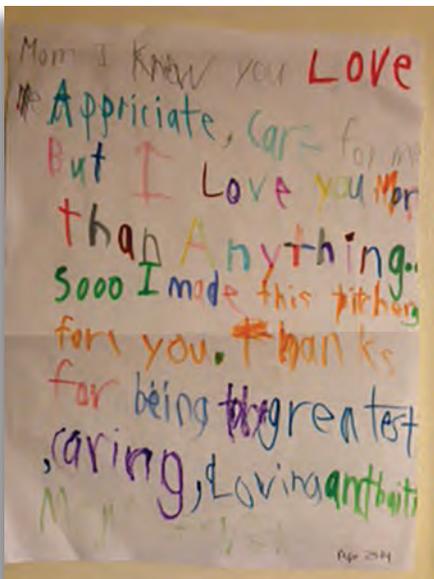
During one of the discussion portions, we heard from a mom, Andrea, who is also a foster parent. Andrea shared her deep sense of sadness and multiple attempts to attach to one of the children she's had since infancy. She shared her frustration and self-doubt in trying to understand why Sebastian didn't want to be held or cuddled, and didn't seem to reciprocate the deep love they had for him.

Andrea talked about trying Dr. Gordon Neufeld's (The Neufeld Institute) approaches, even though some seemed counter intuitive. Andrea and her husband, Phil, were soon going to leave for their annual retreat without children.



Andrea shared how every year they put in place everything they could to make their time away as stress free for the children as possible. The children stayed with the same respite family who they have known for years. She spoke about her guilt in leaving and that, while they needed the break, coming back was always such an adjustment period with the children, especially Sebastian, who seemed to pull back even more.

Andrea decided to implement one of the strategies Neufeldt suggests to maintain attachment when separation is necessary. Here is a letter Andrea shared with me:



Hi Mary,

I just wanted to share this experience I had with our son.

I had wanted to take part in the Vital Connections by Dr. Neufeld because of an attachment issues with our nine year old son. Just some background information:

Sebastian came to us as an eight month old baby that had extreme attachment issues. We were not able to hold him, feed him, and he never approached us for comfort.

My desire was to gain knowledge about attachment, find strategies to improve our relationship, and to gain what my heart has longed for...a son who is attached to me. Long story short, my husband and I were going away for nine days and our kids were going to our respite lady's place. In one of Dr. Neufeld's sessions, I had remembered him talking about giving your children something to keep attachment with your children while you are

away. So I bought two note books for our older kids. For each day we were gone, I wrote them a short note and asked them to write something or draw a picture. When we returned from our trip, I was given a letter from Sebastian. In our almost nine years as mother and adoptive son, these words have never been said to me or written either. I have attached his letter and a few pages from his note book. Please feel free to share this amazing story with those you feel need to hear it.

I also just want to thank you for offering courses on parenting, it has improved my relationships and I have gained priceless wisdom from taking part in this.

Sebastian's letter reads:

"Mom, I know you love me, appreciate, care for me but I love you more than anything. Soooo I made this pitcher for you. Thanks for being the greatest caring loving and buiful mom ever."

Notebook messages:

March 25, 2014

Mom: Write for me what your highlight today was...

Sebastian: I miss you so much already. Well the highlight of my day was writing for you. It fun. I'm going to make one for you.

March 28, 2014

Mom: Guess what? Dad and I will be home in five days. What have you missed about us?

Sebastian: I have missed you because I need more time to spend with you, I need more hugs and kisses and I always need more fun.

Best regards,
Andrea K.

It is stories such as this that makes FCSS's role in the community so important and rewarding. As we promote healthy, sustainable bonds between families and those with complex relationships, we connect people with each other, organizations, and the community.

Oh happy days.



Smoky River Ol' Tyme Family Night

Smoky River FCSS

Smoky River Family and Community Support Services was looking for a program that would be all inclusive; a program that would get people out and introduce them to a social environment that was alcohol and tobacco free. Someone told us about old time music events in British Columbia. We thought this was a great start. After looking into hall rentals and contacting musicians, we sent out invitations to the general public. Thus was Ol' Tyme Family Nite born.

When we began the program eight years ago, we asked how often people wanted to participate and everyone said "Every Friday"! So, for the first two years we held Ol' Tyme Family Nite every Friday from September until the end of June! Volunteer musicians showed up to play old time country music and people from every walk of life, every ability, and every culture and age came out to listen to the music, to dance and to



socialize. The Friendship Corner attendees are a huge part of our OTFN family. These people with special abilities greet us with huge smiles and always dance up a storm when they come out. From the beginning, two older gents always arrived within minutes of each other and always sat beside each other on the south side of the hall. One of them loved to dance while the other came out to listen to the music and enjoy the company. Two years later they passed away within days of each other, having never missed a Friday night! Shortly thereafter, we moved to a bigger hall within the community where we had storage space for our music equipment.

Our musicians have always been the core of the Ol' Tyme Family Nite program. They have been volunteering for every Friday night we hold the event. They are the main musicians and often play all night. This did cause a minor glitch as someone decided we should do what others do and have a sign in board where each player or band played just half an hour. We held a public meeting, with a mediator, and at the end of the meeting it was clear that the great majority liked what was happening and saw no need to change. So, our musicians continue to be the main set while always encouraging others to come up and play. The Ol' Tyme Family Nite (OTFN) band will step down, or remain, as requested.

We have seen much growth within the "family" of Ol' Tyme Family Nite. Our lead guitarist began as a guitar player and singer and has evolved to be lead guitarist, MC and singer, as well as sound man, even setting up the sound for Duane Steele when he visited us. One of our fiddle players decided - after four years - he would sing for us - always at the last part of the evening. Hank Williams Sr. is alive and well! New musicians have become a permanent part of the OTFN band and we have added newer and bigger sound equipment to our inventory. We have also had a few romances in our "family". There have been two marriages and one long term relationship as a result of the OTFN family connection.

Today Ol' Tyme Family Nite takes place the second and last Friday of each month, September until the end of May. Our goal of having an all inclusive event has been met. Participants look forward to attending other events in the summer and greet each other with hugs and smiles in the fall. We will celebrate our eighth anniversary in January 2015 and look forward to many more years of good music, great friendship and fun.





COPEing with Toddler Behaviour

Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS

COPEing with Toddler Behaviour is an eight session course for parents of 12-36 months old children. The program is facilitated by trained individuals and is designed to improve parenting knowledge and reduce the stress parents feel. Through videos, discussion, and skill building exercises parents will learn about encouraging and nurturing a good relationship with their child, and to use strategies to promote positive behavior and reduce the challenging ones.

Comments:

- "This was helpful for me in dealing with my children. The tools provided give me hope."
- "It is nice to know that my toddler displays normal toddler behaviour. I was always worried about what others would think and would stress out all the time. I have learned that it is ok if my child won't sit at the table the whole time, or that he can only have one thought at a time. I feel like I can relax a bit and I want to try to enjoy my toddler more."
- "I liked the perspective of picturing my child when he is 18 and he comes to the door. What would I like him to be like? I have a big job, but I know that I need to teach my child by my example and be more patient. Thanks."
- "This was a very helpful course! I feel more knowledgeable about toddler behavior and positive ways to deal with it. It was amazing to have the opportunity to take this class in my community. I feel I now have more strategies to draw upon as a parent, and perspectives I wouldn't otherwise have been introduced to. Although there's a lot of information out there on the internet, books etc. nothing can replace face to face interaction with a teacher and fellow classmates."
- "The Coach helped us understand the stages our children were experiencing and facilitated our expectations of our boys. We could relate how "behavior is communication". She gave us extra resources on how to effectively parent frustrated children, giving tips on anger management. This will help us for years in the future. We have lots of resources, tips and articles. We really enjoyed this class."
- "This class helped us to understand why our children behave the way they do. We also have a better understanding of how to act on their behavior to provide a more stable relationship with our boys. It is a worthwhile course for all parents to take."



Loss of Partner Support Group

Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS

This grief group is for individuals whose partner has passed away. The group members discuss the feelings, experiences, difficulties, and surprises surrounding the loss of their partner.

The group just completed their sessions, and is going to meet on their own from now as they have formed a tight bond amongst themselves and have created healthy coping mechanisms for themselves.

Comment:

"I truly thank you again for organizing and running the sessions! I don't know where I would be in my life without these sessions. I think I would be in a dark hole. I have become great friends with all the group, and (participant) and I click the most because we have the most in common.

Thanks again, you have helped us all more than you know. When we still meet once a week, the gang still continues to thank me for starting the group. They gained a lot and they also say that they don't know where they would be either in their lives. We just get it!

I hope widows will join your future sessions, because they are truly so valuable!"



More Than Just a Movie Day

Bassano FCSS

Movie Day is a long standing community program that is facilitated by Bassano FCSS and supports community connections for both children and adults. This monthly event happens because of the volunteer services provided by Bassano FCSS. It is a great way for student Board members to learn the value in volunteering but was also a great eye opener to the value of the services we offer our Community.

Movie Day takes place at our Community Hall and usually has an attendance ranging from 10-50 people. Our afternoon show this particular day was busier than usual but when it came time to air our evening movie...there was no one. Ten minutes after the movie was scheduled to start and cleanup had already begun, in walked a preteen boy, one of our regular attendees. We explained that no one had showed up but that if he would like to take the movie home to watch he was more than welcome, and we would send some popcorn with him as well. The two student volunteers and I thought this would be a great idea, the boy however showed no interest in taking the movie home. He was really insistent that he stay here and watch the movie with us. "Do I have to take it home? I'd way rather watch it here if that's okay?" It was this moment that awakened me to the value of something as simple as Movie Day. Here is this kid who would rather sit in a big, empty Community Hall and watch a movie alone than take it to the comfort of his own home and enjoy it there. Through the work of FCSS we were able to provide him with an escape from his home life and give him somewhere to take part in what our Community has to offer. This young man is now a regular and very eager volunteer at Movie Day, as he has a purpose in providing this opportunity for other Community members.

At our next Board meeting we were discussing whether the movie license was worth the cost, as numbers can get pretty low, when one of the high school members and I reminisced about this story. The cost is definitely "worth it," and after telling this story our Board agreed that this is the prime example of why we do what we do for our Community, be it for one person or for the whole Town.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Lethbridge

Lethbridge FCSS

Messages from Big Brothers/Sisters

"My experience has been very rewarding for both myself and my Little. We have fun when we are together. My Little has been through a recent crisis, and I was very happy to be a stable person in his life. "

"Being a Little in the past and a Big right now has changed my life forever. It is the most rewarding thing anyone can do for themselves"

"I am in the program to inspire and influence the life of a child in such a way that it helps them make better choices along the way. Life is about giving. I am blessed!"



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Some things "Littles" had to say:

"She is awesome, cool and about 1000 other great things"

"My big sister is the best... We do so many fun things together. Scrap booking, shopping, hiking, movies, baking, crafts... She is a part of my family and I am a part of hers."

Parents had a few things to say too:

"It's been an awesome experience for my daughter. She looks forward to every visit from her "big" "

"Ever since my children have been matched with their "Bigs" they have been much more sociable and happy. They have also been very happy once they are able to see their "Bigs" and always look forward to doing new and exciting things with them. I'm very happy with the matches, and I would like to say thank you to big brothers and big sisters for allowing me and my family to be with them!"

"My son has a wonderful man to look up to and aspire to be like."

Ready, Set, Go Fair

Making Connections - Family School Liaison (funded by Lethbridge FCSS)

The Ready, Set, Go Event was the first of its kind project in Lethbridge. The focus was on providing complimentary items and services to families who struggle and are in need during the "Back to School" time of year. The focus of this collaborative partnership included the following:

- Proactive, preventive and a focus on early intervention. The students in need were equipped on the first day rather than waiting until teachers identified students as not having supplies within the first week of school. This reduced marginalization and discrimination.
- 400 preselected children and youth and their families were invited. The children targeted for this project were among the most vulnerable and typically would not have access to community services and appropriate supplies.
- Cost effectiveness – each student received grade/age/school specific supplies based on the requirements of each school and class. Generic backpacks often include supplies that are not required or needed.

- Volunteers were on site to guide individual families through the fair. This guidance was welcoming, inclusive and ensured the family had access to the appropriate services.
- Volunteers, with a variety of language facilities also assisted families in completing the exit survey.

This project was not only about getting children and youth school supplies; it was also about community connections. There were over forty community agencies and service providers in attendance providing dental hygiene information, vision screening, nutrition education, on site immunizations, age appropriate children's activities, family photos and entertainment; all within a 'Fair' environment.

Through collaborative partnerships, the planning, execution and evaluation of the 'Fair' included, but were not limited to:

1. Alberta Health completed 175 immunizations and obtained consent for an additional 75 to be completed at a later date.
2. Ages and Stages: Over 35 ages and stages screenings were completed on children 0 – 3 years of age.
3. Vision Screening: 80 optical screenings were completed with follow up appointments scheduled.
4. Family Photos: 150 family photos were taken on site and distributed to participants in early September. Professional Photographers volunteered for this event.
5. Hair Cuts/Hair Styles: Purely Inspired provided 30 hair styles and 175 haircuts.
6. Boys and Girls Club shared access to services including the youth programming, after school care and children's programs.
7. Community Developmental Assets Collaboration provided information and shared water with messages about the value of asset building.



Lethbridge Family Services - Counselling Services

Lethbridge FCSS

"I actually have never been to a counselor before this. I did not know what to expect. I was very nervous and a bit scared but, as the weeks went by, I began to look forward to my sessions and couldn't wait to come and share my progress and self awareness. My counselor will do very well in her field. I hope she knows the huge impact she has made on me during this difficult time. And the tools she has given me to keep going forward. Time really does heal and I know that when I may need counselling again, that I have a safe, comfortable and confidential environment to come to. Thank you!"



MAT Youth Program and Services **Boys and Girls Club (funded by Lethbridge FCSS)**

We often have new youth register in the youth program. More often than not, those youth are quiet, guarded and seem to keep to themselves. As a staff member, I am encouraged to see these new youth connect with staff and volunteers as well as their peers. Over time the impact of these connections becomes very clear. One youth in particular has come a long way in the last year, struggling with substance abuse, self-harm and thoughts of suicide. Through positive connections at the MAT (Mentor, Assist, Transform) this participant was supported and provided with coping strategies which also lead to opening up to the parents. Today this youth is an active participant in the Drop In, Urban Skillz, and the student leadership team "Keystone", which just finished a three month course on mental health. They are now working in a small group to help develop an education/awareness campaign to share with the community based around stigma and misconceptions on mental health.

"Before I started coming to BGC, I treated people like really rude...I guess, and I know I wasn't the nicest person out there. I always thought I was out on my own and didn't really need friends and, like, need to be around anybody. When I started coming here I started interacting with people and treating them nicer, and I don't just like brush people off, and I actually like treating them as a person should be treated."

"New members come in nervous, not knowing what is going to happen and by the end of the night, it's like they're a regular. They know everyone, they are friends with everyone, it's like bang, bang, bang...and it's so nice that you are not excluded ever. You always have something to do here, and you always have people that you can do it with. Always."



Peace Tree Day *Medicine Hat FCSS*

What is a true reflection of diversity? What is diversity really? This has become an increasingly important question to ask for the community of Medicine Hat. It is an exciting time to be part of a growing and vibrant community like Medicine Hat. Moving from a community with few cultural groups to one that has many groups is an opportunity to foster a sense of understanding and acceptance among different cultures. The celebration of diverse cultures is one way we can move from a community with silos of cultural groups to a community that no longer operates in silos.

With the changing needs of the community, and the increased need for cultural acceptance and awareness, a celebration called Peace Tree Day was brought to the forefront. The idea of Peace Tree Day is based on a 2005 award winning short film of the same name by Mitra Sen.

Peace Tree Day was created as a celebration for children to embrace and understand the importance and beauty of diversity. During the celebration, children are exposed to different cultures through various mediums such as music, art, dance, games, food, and clothing. They decorate symbols of peace from around the world as visual representations of the beauty of embracing other cultures.



In 2014, the Community Workers for the City of Medicine Hat facilitated a full day Peace Tree Day celebration at Southview Community School. The school's culturally diverse demographic really leant itself to the ceremony and the teachers in the school were willing to speak to their classes about diversity.

The Community Workers accessed a number of community partners to participate in the Peace Tree Day event. Their partners included Saamis Immigration Services, the African Canadian Association of Medicine Hat, and the Helping Us Grow (HUG) program in order to create well rounded ceremony. Saamis Immigration was able to provide a young guest speaker from South Korea to speak about diversity and her culture, and a Filipino dance troupe.

The African Canadian Association of Medicine Hat provided a drumming demonstration and spoke to the children about the significant aspects of their culture. The HUG team agreed to carry on the theme of culture and diversity into the afternoon by having the children play games and decorated Peace Tree symbols that reflected cultural diversity.

It was really felt that the children would benefit from having a living reminder of the Peace Tree Day. The Parks and Recreation department of the City of Medicine Hat provided a live tree and irrigation bag (to help the tree root more deeply) that was planted on the school grounds as a permanent symbol of peace. Parks and Recreation also reached out to Sustainable Resources Alberta to procure sapling trees so that every child went home with a miniature Peace Tree.

The Peace Tree Day was designed to be an educational opportunity for the children to learn about various cultures and to ask questions. The day served as a mechanism for creating a positive school community and created good stewardship among students, teachers, and the community partners who so willingly gave of their time and their resources.

The success of this Peace Tree Day ceremony has planted the seed to branch out to make this a community wide celebration so that all people in Medicine Hat can experience positive education and cultural awareness. One of the partners emphatically stated that they would love to be part of Peace Tree Day again in the future.



What People Tell Us About FCSS **Volunteer Lethbridge (funded by Lethbridge FCSS)**

Dear Fellow Community Members,

I would like to thank Volunteer Lethbridge for the unexpected benefit of volunteering. It's not easy for a tough guy, trades worker like me to talk about these things but I felt that perhaps my story will encourage others to benefit as I have. A trades worker, and proud of it, is what I was until a medical condition made my job too dangerous to continue. It took me three months from the time I learned of my condition to finally quit my job and apply for long term disability, for the sake of my family and loved ones. Devastated and with absolutely no clue of what I was going to do for employment, I did nothing. Now a person can do nothing for so long before going stir crazy. I saw an ad in the local paper from Volunteer Lethbridge calling for people to help out, of all things, gift wrapping. I figured what the heck, my wife says I'm good at it and it gets me out of the house. (yah, how tough am I now?!)

From day one, I was pummeled with mountains of ideas, encouragement and potentially resources for a new direction in my life. I had no idea of the vastness of local programs and community groups Volunteer Lethbridge helps to support. The people whom I volunteered with were very social and, unintentionally made very good sounding boards. It wasn't long before I thought to myself "hey, I thought I was here to help others?!" I am still in the retraining stage but life has become challenging and rewarding again. Thanks greatly in part to Volunteer Lethbridge, the programs they support and fellow volunteers, I have broken out of my rut. If your life is in a rut right now, not just career wise but with life in general, I highly recommend you contact Volunteer Lethbridge and see what you can do for your community. The life you end up helping could be your own.

Sincerely,
Too tough to tell ya

Belonging: DELBURNE Project Red Deer and District FCSS

In late October 2013, the Village of Delburne (specifically with the guidance of Nora Smith, FCSS Community Worker), in partnership with the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, began to host a series of community conversations in Delburne, Alberta. The process was planned to unfold over a four month period and would be implemented by a diverse local leadership team, with the support of the talented Tamarack team. During this time twenty conversations took place and 245 surveys were completed.

A unique spin on the Delburne Community Conversations initiative was the incorporation of the “Belonging: Delburne” photo project. This project intentionally and effectively employed art as a medium to increase community engagement and build social capital via deep heart level connections. While participants were promised a copy of their own portrait captured by international photographer John Beebe, the hook was that everyone was asked to bring with them an object that represented a personal sense of “belonging”. Audio clips were also recorded of each person telling their story of their thoughtfully selected item and its heartfelt significance. Wonderfully, these art elements can serve as a striking touchstone for future community development work and will become increasingly precious overtime.



“What attracted me to be a part of this initiative is the incredible sense of belonging it is truly creating. When I see all the pictures and the incredibly diverse community members portrayed it makes me realize that we have a gold mine of knowledge, history and skill set right here at home with which to shape the future of Delburne. And make no mistake, we the community members get to drive this initiative forward.” – Community Member, Delburne.

Benalto Playschool Red Deer and District FCSS

People driving by our small community of Benalto may blink and miss it, but it is a tight knit community where residents experience close connections with almost everyone. The connections begin when our children attend our one-of-a-kind playschool. Relationships between parents and children are developed early and thanks to our friends at FCSS, these relationships are able to flourish, therefore positively benefiting our community. For families of all ages, relationships in the community are created through our play school. Fundraising that takes place during the year is one way we develop new acquaintances, or our Christmas Concert, where residents are encouraged to see how our children have developed. Getting up in front of a room full of new and familiar faces can be scary, but we encourage our children to participate and help them to feel confident. The outcome is a fantastic concert of songs, and dance. Our children are comfortable and have a reassurance that the community is there supporting them!

Without FCSS, and the community's support, our playschool would not be able to flourish as it does. It is a great place for children to learn and play. We have the ability to purchase educational tools to assist in the development of the children who attend. It is a structured program, and the children have a fantastic time. We encourage every parent to see for themselves how well their child is doing in the environment we create. Without having the Benalto Playschool operating, residents would be forced to commute to surrounding communities. We also have the privilege of offering a lower enrollment fee for students to attend, thanks to our wonderful funding partner FCSS. We are thrilled to offer such an amazing preschool program at Benalto. Having FCSS as a powerhouse support is reassuring; the tools are readily at our fingertips if assistance is needed. We look forward to continued support from FCSS, and our strong partnership for years to come. Thank you FCSS!



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Innisfail **Red Deer and District FCSS**

When most folks think of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the image that comes to mind is of a child in need of a positive adult influence in their life, who will derive a benefit from being matched with a caring adult. And while that is almost always the case, the relationship that develops often is symbiotic in nature; the adult, or in some cases the teen, will gain as much, or more, from the match. Relationships are always complex, and never more so than when a child starts a new relationship with an adult or teen with whom they have no background. The process of matching a child, or mentee, with a mentor is therefore a carefully choreographed ballet of baby steps allowing the mentee to become comfortable with their match. For adults, particularly those accustomed to moving things along a brisk pace, this initial period can be a frustrating time. As the relationship slowly unfolds, however, the mentor finds themselves becoming an integral part of their child's life. The weekly get-togethers become a cause for anticipation as both adult and child look forward to meeting up once more and the baby steps become a cause for celebration. Children find themselves with another 'friend' in their life, someone they can talk to, someone who is interested in only them for that hour or several hours a week, someone they can rely on; for the mentor, whether teen, working mom, businessman, or retiree, there comes a sense of fulfillment, a sense of making a positive difference in a young person's life. For most, the personal benefit far exceeds what mentors feel they are providing their young charges.

What follows are some real-life examples from Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Innisfail. We have changed the names of both mentors and mentees, however, each story reflects actual matches and how those changed lives.

"Courtney" became a volunteer for our organization after doing a college social work practicum placement with our agency. During her practicum she was matched to "Lisa" and another girl to work with them on social skills and support them, while linking them to each other as mutual peer supports during the breakdown of their families through separation and divorce. Lisa's parental situation was exacerbated by medical complications relating to her prosthetic leg and physical development issues which pulled at Courtney's heartstrings; she sought and was granted approval for their In-school match to continue for the next two years. Lisa has had three surgeries during their time together and Courtney was always there for support and to help Lisa deal with the emotional stress that comes with her inability to participate in activities other children take for granted. They had Wii sessions to help her build her muscles during their match time. Lisa said that having Courtney come to see her each week was a highlight and it meant the world to have a special friend in her corner. The years bonded them as friends and they decided they wanted to do things in the community together, so their relationship was transitioned into a Big Sister match. Courtney noticed that when they went swimming, and Lisa was without her prosthetic leg, she was the subject of

stares and what Courtney deemed inappropriate questions, however, Lisa responded openly and enthusiastically, answering questions with a candor that makes her a constant source of amazement and courage in all that life throws at her. During their friendship, Lisa's step-father left, her mom struggled financially, they lost their home, they moved, she had two school changes and three surgeries. Her Big Sister proved to be the one person that she could be a kid with, have fun with, and share her fears and tears with, because she felt like she had to be strong and support her mom as they were all each other had. Courtney and Lisa have been matched for two years now and their friendship has evolved. Lisa is now finishing Grade 9 and will be moving to Grande Prairie. Their match will close but their friendship will last forever.

"Marlene", a teen mentor, realized that "Brenda", the child she was matched with, was having significant anxiety over her mentor not showing up for their weekly in-school get-togethers. Marlene sought permission from her teacher to allow her to leave class five minutes early on mentoring day, in order to pick Brenda up immediately after school. This helped Brenda deal with her anxiety immensely. About half way through the year Marlene's caseworker suggested that Marlene start meeting Brenda at the normal time; the caseworker talked to Brenda about the impending change to ensure she was comfortable with the modification. Brenda indicated she now trusted Marlene and that reverting to the original arrangement would be okay. She said that a lot of people in her life had let her down because they do not follow through but Brenda knows Marlene will be there for her each week.

Our caseworker interviewed "Karen", a past mentee who wanted to become a teen mentor and when asked why she wanted to be a teen mentor, Karen said that she wanted the opportunity to be that important person to a child, like her mentor had been to her. When the caseworker asked what her mentor did that was so special Karen responded that she never gave up on her, came each week, and was her friend. The caseworker questioned if she felt she could switch roles from being the mentee to the role model and Karen said that she would do everything that her mentor had done: ask the child what she wanted to do, encourage fair play, and, especially, listen to the child. The caseworker shared what Karen had related to her past mentor; the volunteer was overwhelmed and emotional because she did not believe that she had made a difference to the child. Karen did become a mentor, delivered on her promise to emulate her own mentor, and matured significantly in her role.

Three stories; three lessons about the invaluable role of mentoring in lives of both the children being mentored and the adults and teens mentoring them. Children have an amazing well-spring of resilience to share with those who have the courage to undertake a relationship with them. It is often the little things that will stay with a child and impact their development for the rest of their lives. It is the role of a mentor to ensure that all of those 'little things' in the match are positive and memorable. Our archives abound with relationships that have lasted far into adulthood for the children involved. Inevitably, those children will recall the 'little things' that made a difference in their lives and defined the direction those lives took. For the adults and teens who took the time to make a difference in a child's life, the experience was one of the most rewarding of their lives. These matches would not have been possible without the funding provided by Red Deer and District FCSS funding. FCSS makes a difference.



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Creative Ladies' Evening Out

Red Deer and District FCSS (Elnora)



Elnora ladies evening out (an FCSS Community Worker sponsored event) started in January 2014 with an appetizer evening and no agenda. After one evening of wonderful conversation and delicious appetizers including perogies, veggie rolls, veggie wraps, tacos with dip, fruit and veggie trays, it was decided that a monthly ladies evening out was of interest. The second Elnora Ladies evening out was held in February where iris folding Valentine cards were created. Each lady was able to create at least one unique card to give to someone special on Valentine's Day. It was an evening of lots of chatting and giggling by everyone. The ladies had a wonderful time, feeling more connected with one another and excited about being creative. Everyone is very excited about planning more evenings out in the future!

FCSS: A Life Line

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (funded by Red Deer and District FCSS)

They gather every week for what many consider is the highlight of their week. Check closely, and you will discover that the participants of this group are immigrant women from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Peru, Croatia, El Salvador, South Africa, Vietnam, Jamaica, China, Chile, Nicaragua, just to name a few.

This gathering is the Learning Together Program, a support group for immigrant women that started more than twenty five years ago, and, because of FCSS, still plays a big role in the lives of immigrant women from Red Deer and surrounding communities. Many of the participants of this program came to Canada as refugees, who found trying to settle into a new homeland brings new challenges, such as isolation, loneliness, culture shock and language barriers. Through the financial support of FCSS, the program is able to offer learning opportunities and activities such as sewing, knitting, painting, crafts, educational presentations and tours, as well as celebrations of participants' birthdays and other special days.



Participants also have the opportunity to learn or improve their English skills, make new friends and share what special skills they have with the group. Take the participant from Peru who first attended the program about three years ago. She volunteered to share her skills in sewing, knitting and embroidery, and still plays a vital role today. Then there is the participant from El Salvador who paints, and offered to share her exceptional skills with the group, to the delight of the women who had a wonderful and exciting experience. That's why for many of these women, the Learning Together Program is something to look forward to each week – something to take them away, even just for a day, from the stresses of settlement matters. It's a place where they can come with no sewing skills yet are able to sew clothes and other items for themselves and/or their families in a relatively short period of time. It's a place where they also give back to the community by volunteering their time and skills on projects for other community organizations. That's why FCSS plays such a crucial role in the success of this program – it's making a difference in the lives of people – it's a life line.

The following words from Julia sum it up best:

"I have been attending the program for more than two years and it has been very beneficial to me, and I'm sure to the other immigrant women, especially the new arrivals in Canada. But besides learning how to make beautiful clothes and crafts, this program gives us the tools to interact with others we won't necessarily meet. Without your help none of this would be possible. Thank you from my heart."



Serendipity

Red Deer and District FCSS (Bowden)

This is a story of serendipity and of connection. A small town. A teenage boy, shy, awkward, not fitting in with peers, needing a workplace/volunteer experience. A wheelchair bound woman, in need of a friendly visitor, someone who could put things up on high shelves and reach down to pick things off the floor. A call to FCSS. "I'll see what I can do." A call to Family School Wellness. "Let's make this happen". A simple introduction, a schedule created. Three years of chores done, countless card and board games played, conversation and sharing. A high school graduation. A special guest of honour in her wheelchair invited. A celebration of accomplishment. A celebration of the impact of friendship and support across generations. FCSS and community - it matters.

West Red Deer County FCSS Connect with Seniors

Red Deer and District FCSS

Connect with the Seniors has been a true example of prevention; prevention of isolation and loneliness, and an example of stronger relationships and building coping skills amongst neighbours.

I had someone ask me why I started Connect with the Seniors in Spruce View, this is my FCSS story...

"Spruce View Golden West Drop-In Centre in danger of closing" was the headline in the Mountain View Gazette on March 13, 2012. The bottom line was that the Golden West Drop-In Centre in Spruce View was likely to be closing its doors unless more members were found to participate in functions and help with the upkeep of the building.

That's when, as the FCSS Community Worker in West Red Deer County, I decided that something had to be done and a Connect with the Seniors Program would be the perfect solution. Not only would it benefit the Golden West Drop-In Centre but it would also help to prevent isolation amongst the seniors that live in our community. What a perfect opportunity to develop a program to help connect the seniors to the centre through a learning series, and to help keep the facility sustainable and in use. Closing the only senior centre we have out in the west county was just not an option.

The very first Connect with the Seniors program was a simple gathering to have coffee, listen to the needs and wants of the seniors, and hand out a simple questionnaire to find out what programs/services that would be of interest to them. It was a simple approach but yet very effective.

And so began the Connect with the Seniors program in October, 2012- a learning series at the Golden West Drop-In Centre in Spruce View. Participants have come from Innisfail, Markerville, Kevisville, Penhold, Dickson and Raven.

Programs have included topics such as: Seniors fall prevention, Alberta Seniors Benefits, Red Deer County Emergency Management Preparedness, Fraud Protection, an Elder Abuse workshop, Alberta Health Services and an Aging Well conversation. The sessions are always very informative and always have a great number of participants. Ruth and John are the facility contacts, they open and close the door, make coffee, and make sure the Drop in Centre is always clean and maintained. They are incredible community members and dedicate a lot of their time.

A successful program, yes, but it's more than just the number of participants, it's more than the learning aspect. It's about getting that senior who just lost a husband or wife after fifty years of marriage, and who now spends most of their time alone, to come. It's about getting that senior to come so they can have a cup of coffee with someone who will listen to them talk about how good their garden is coming along, to talk about their grandchildren, or to talk about how things used to be when they were young. Sometimes, it's just about not being alone and having that connection with someone else.

FCSS funding has created and sustained community connections at the Spruce View Golden West Drop-In Centre where the mandate of "prevention" has been achieved. I am thankful that I have the opportunity to see what FCSS has done for the seniors in my community. The Connect with the Seniors group now has coffee time at the centre every Wednesday, which is attended by many seniors, sometimes accompanied by their grandchildren or family friends.



"It's a great way to meet new people in the community" says Alice, "It's also really informative and enjoyable". Alice now lives alone on a farm in Kevisville where she, with her late husband, raised four children and farmed all her life. "I am very proud of you Pam, for taking the initiative to get something going for us Seniors, we are all getting older now so it's nice to have the younger generation step up!"

What's in a Name?

**Central Alberta Refugee Effort - Engage Immigrant Youth Program
(funded by Red Deer and District FCSS)**

Engage is more than just a name, it guides the Immigrant Youth Program at CARE.

Thanks to FCSS funding, the Engage Immigrant Youth Program provides afterschool and summer activities for over 140 newcomer youth in Red Deer, giving them a sense of community, belonging and a safe place to play. Throughout the year, youth are engaged in the community through field trips, active information session, games and volunteering.

Accessed by walking or taking transit, youth visit, among others, the museum, the Kerry Wood Nature Centre, city parks, libraries and the Rec Centre to familiarize them with their new community, and empower them to access, with their families, all Red Deer has to offer. Youth become part of the community by volunteering throughout the year; you might even see them cleaning up school fields on Earth Day or helping at the food bank. Meeting at the library every week, members of a reading club spend time together improving their English and making new friends.

One of the participant's parents says it best:

"We immigrated to Canada from Tunisia in January 2013. Life here was very difficult and different but with the great help that we have received from C.A.R.E it became easier and easier. This was especially true for the children

as they missed their friends and were not familiar with the language or the traditions. Fortunately, with the amazing youth program and settlement workers my kids felt more comfortable and less isolated. They have new friends who speak their language and other languages and they all enjoy each other.

The youth program has helped them to integrate into Canadian society and get to know more about their surroundings and Canadian culture. They also really enjoyed being able to practice new seasonal sports, such as skating and skiing. In the summer, the youth program is a great way to keep the kids involved and learning about their new home. They improved their English with the Reading Club, they visited many new places and they had a lot of fun with their friends.

During the school year, they have a different program and new things to enjoy every week. The relationship between my children, the group leaders and the other youth is magnificent, with great respect and love."

Positive engagement helps newcomer youth settle faster in their new country with knowledge, confidence and community. Engage. Inspire. Succeed.

Thank you FCSS!

Thanks to FCSS funding, the Engage Immigrant Youth Program provides afterschool and summer activities for over 140 newcomer youth in Red Deer, giving them a sense of community, belonging and a safe place to play.

Strong Families, Strong Communities

Hinton FCSS

The Harvest Supper came about in 2012, as an idea from the FCSS Hinton-Parent Link Centre. They wanted to plan something new in the community that could bring families together for a good cause; however, it needed to be free of charge. The hope was that it could be supported by attracting community donations.

The goal of the Harvest Supper was to reach all families in the community no matter what their income level was, or where they lived. It was to provide an inclusive event to be held during Family Week and to give everyone a chance to connect while eating great food and listening to local entertainment.



One important way of making connections is that the dinner is first come, first served. This means families may be a bit out of their comfort zone in a way, as they may not be sitting and having their meal with their best friend. This enables the building of new friendships during the event.

In October, 2013, Parent Link Centre, FCSS-Town of Hinton, and Growing Great Kids Coalition came together again for a second successful Harvest Supper. The group this time built on the 2013 National Family Week theme of "Strong Families, Strong Communities".

This theme celebrates the role of families in creating a nurturing and supportive community

in which to live. It recognizes that communities are built by families, and families are supported by communities. Without everyone who volunteered their time there would be no community. This event was solely put on by donations.

We would like to acknowledge the support we received from business owners like Tarpon Energy, who covered the cost of the venue, Hinton Valley Freson Bros., which covered the entire cost of the food, and several donations from businesses for draw prizes. Additionally, donations were received from families to go towards our Women's Shelter and Youth Centre. Without this support, it would not have been possible to provide a free Thanksgiving turkey supper to 260 residents in the community. Not only did we bring in 260 plus residents, but we raised \$250 for the Hinton Women's Shelter and \$350 for the Hinton Youth Centre. We are hoping our 2014 October Family Week event will be another huge success!

LINKages Program

Hinton FCSS

Ever since 2010, Hinton FCSS has led an intergenerational program. Thanks to a rural training initiative offered by the LINKages program out of Calgary, FCSS staff learned how to facilitate purposeful relationships between teenagers and senior citizens. If you were to enter the doors of the Pine Valley Senior Lodge on a Tuesday afternoon,

you would see fourteen grade nine students chumming with ten lodge residents! These twenty four individuals voluntarily come together on a weekly basis to visit for one hour throughout the school year.

Although the primary objective is to get to know one another, a project is necessary to unite the participants and provide focus. The majority of Tuesday afternoons are spent completing a small craft or a simple recipe and everyone has fun. Yet, the results of a survey indicated that the senior citizens felt that most crafts were entertaining but disposable. They believed that most projects likely ended up in the garbage can, and this was wasteful.

This spring, a quilting project was initiated, so that once the school year ended there would be a tangible reminder of their time spent together. Keeping in mind the time constraints and the diverse abilities of each participant, a pattern was selected and materials were purchased. Each LINKages participant would commit to completing one square for the quilt.



As the weeks went along, some participants struggled with threading needles, remembering the stitch pattern, or tying knots. When a youth fumbled with their needle or a resident tangled their floss, you would hear "I can help you with that". Often times, things worth doing aren't easy to do. There were a few grumbles now and again, but there was a sense of accomplishment once the squares were completed.

A great outcome of an intergenerational program is that it dismantles stereotypes. Not all grandmas are master sewers and not all teenagers are nimbly fingered (text messaging aside). Interestingly, it was our male resident who stitched with ease. So, all stereotypes relating to sewing and quilts went out the window!

Another school year has come to a close and another successful LINKages program lines the pages of a photo album. What a wonderful year of building friendships and respecting members of our own community. There is value in each and every one of us! We had fun chatting over crafts and goodies, we have a quilted creation reminiscent of youth and senior citizens stitching away on a Tuesday afternoon, but most importantly, we have our memories and a positive view of life.



Senior's Week 2014

Hinton FCSS

Seniors' Week 2014 in Hinton was a tremendous success this year. The Hinton FCSS along with other community organizations planned a very busy week of events for our seniors. In total we held twelve events during the week, more than any other community in the province (of the ones that registered). This year we developed a passport of events where each event was displayed on the passport. For each event a senior attended they received a stamp. For each stamp received their name was put in to a draw for a great prize, which was a return trip to Jasper with Via Rail with an overnight stay at The Jasper Park Lodge. The passport portion of the week quickly became very competitive amongst the seniors with challenges on who could attend the most events. Our goal was to have the seniors attend one more event than last year. We surpassed our goal with no problem.

1038 participants over the week were provided many opportunities to socialize with people that they don't see on a regular basis. At one of the events I spoke with two seniors who hadn't seen each other for eighteen years, even

though they live in the same community. Many old friendships were renewed and many new friendships developed because of the variety of events offered. The average number of events attended by the seniors was six per person. Many comments were heard such as “we should spread this out over a full month” and “what are we going to do next week?” These comments are a good gauge of what may be missing from our community. Regular, scheduled outings are needed to keep our aging population active and healthy.



Mayor Rob Mackin is seen here getting his hands wet washing walkers.

One event that was very popular was the BBQ, Walker and Wheelchair Wash. One hundred and thirty-five hungry people showed up to enjoy a delicious BBQ at Pine Valley Lodge as well as eager volunteers who washed fifteen walkers, two wheelchairs and even one fellow’s boots.

An annual event during Seniors’ Week is The Seniors’ Lifetime Individual Achievement Award. Seniors in the community are nominated for serving the community through volunteerism and making Hinton a better place. This year four people were nominated. These four people had over 200 hours of volunteer service between them. FCSS then hosted a lunch, complete with entertainment, at which time the winner was announced. Grade 7 students from Mountain View School volunteered to serve lunch and refreshments for those in attendance. The seniors loved that the young people were there, and were so eager and helpful during the event. This event provided another great opportunity to bridge the gap between the younger and older citizens of our community. The students were able to witness the value of volunteerism for communities as this year’s winner had over 50 years of service to different agencies in Hinton. Overall, Seniors’ Week was a tremendous success and we look forward to enhancing our partnerships and ongoing involvement with our seniors on a regular basis.

Hinton Youth Centre

Hinton FCSS

When I first met A. in September of 2013, he walked into the centre with a certain confidence. He was a big kid. Stocky and thick, he definitely had a presence. He quickly introduced himself and proved an incredibly friendly and outgoing 16 year old.

But A. was in limbo. He was out of school. He partied a lot, binge-drinking most nights of the week. He had no motivation to do anything else. He was a fixture at the youth centre from open until close. All of his time was idle time. But in spending so much time at the centre, he got to know the staff well. He often would talk about his ambitions and what he wanted in his future, usually over a game of crib.

He was scheduled to return to school after Christmas, after almost a year in limbo. It was at this point A. started to make some positive changes in his life. By having a place to be, a purpose every day, he started to find other things to do as well.

He came to the youth centre one evening and asked for help drafting a resume. He wanted to get a part-time job. Some extra money would help in building a motorcycle, and he wanted to start with an old frame that had belonged to his grandfather. He was motivated and excited.

He now started to come to the centre for different reasons. Rather than spend the entire afternoon and evening hanging out, he came in for short visits with updates on everything. He earned his Learner’s Driver’s license. He was

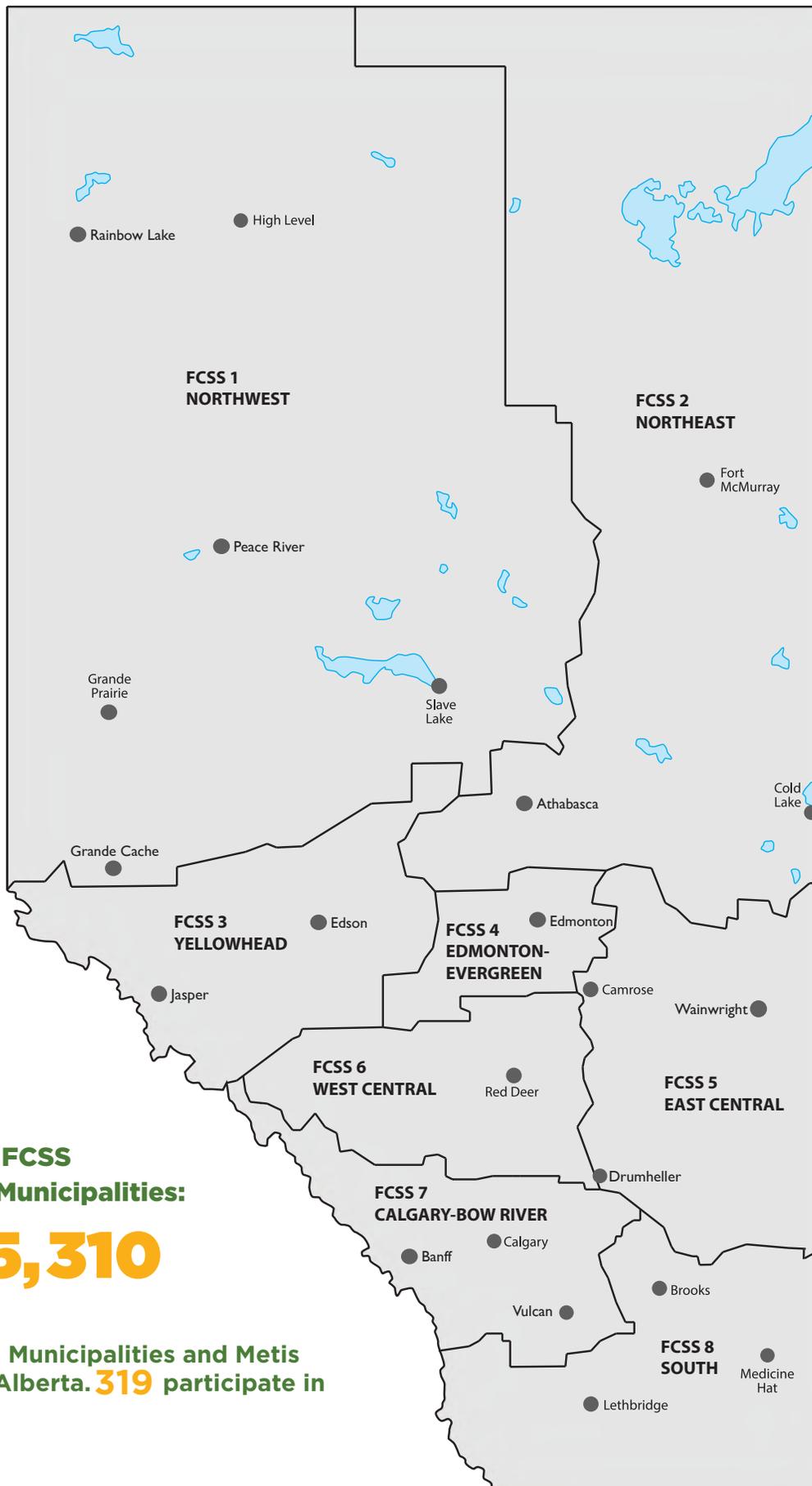
now working out with his uncle's home gym, and he upped his weights by 10lbs last night. He got 80% on a math test he wrote last week. He went out of town over the weekend to spend time with his Mom rather than party. He was always beaming with pride; he had a different confidence than when we first met.

Then A. came in one day. He said he didn't want to come to the youth centre as often. He said it wasn't the best use of his time. He had now realized how little he had accomplished when he attended the centre every day, but credited its staff for their friendship, support, and guidance. He still loved the place and wanted to pop by, but he now had better, more productive things to focus on.

We played some cribbage, and he left.

A. still comes to the centre, but infrequently. He plays a game or two of crib with the staff, or shoots some pool, or will come for the activities that interest him. He provides updates on how things are going, what he wants to do next, and then heads home.

FCSS Participating Municipalities and Métis Settlements

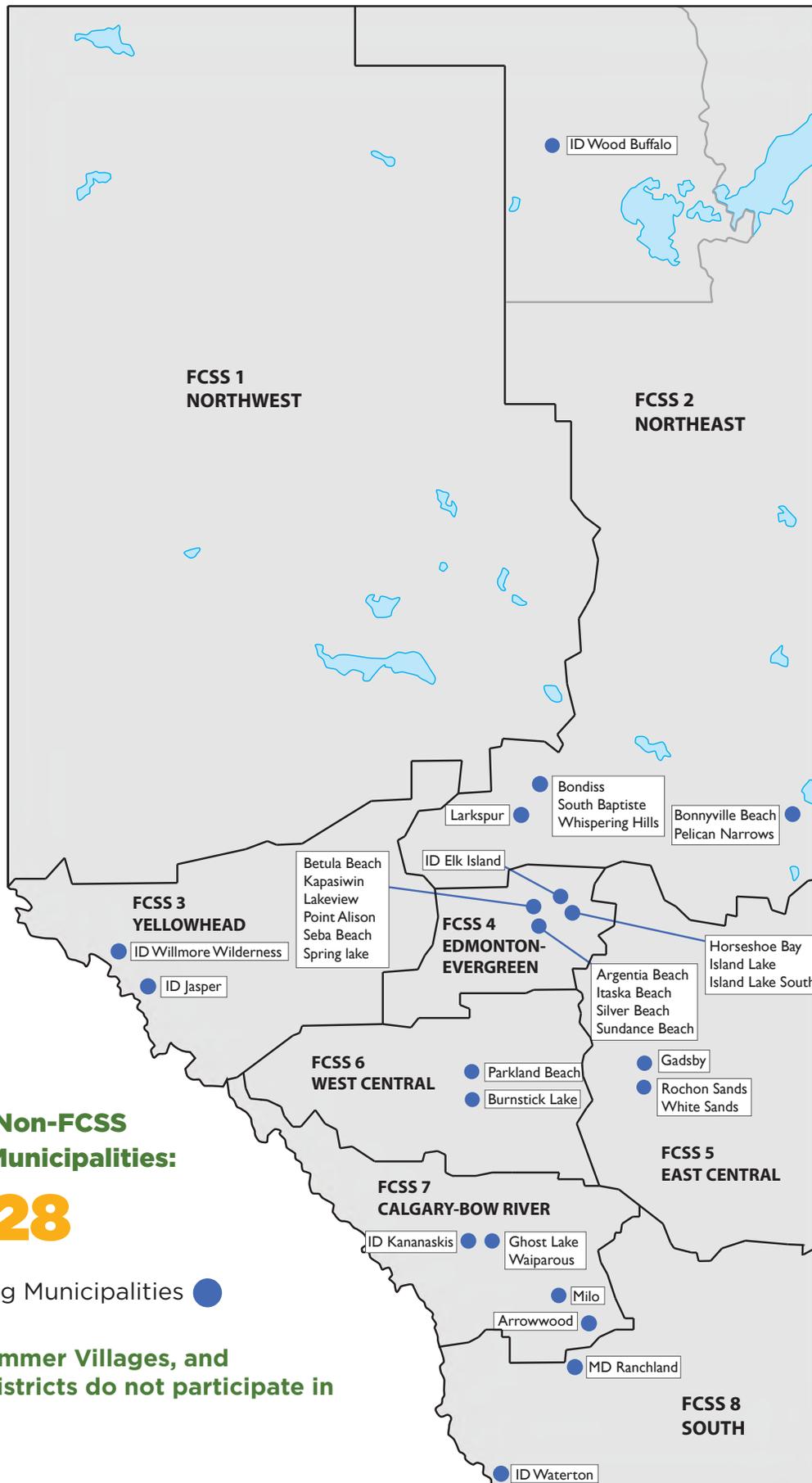


**Population of FCSS
Participating Municipalities:**

3,755,310

There are **355** Municipalities and Métis settlements in Alberta. **319** participate in FCSS.

Non-participating Municipalities and Métis Settlements



Population of Non-FCSS Participating Municipalities:

3,728

Non-participating Municipalities ●

35 Villages, Summer Villages, and Improvement Districts do not participate in FCSS.