

Addressing Needs, Building Sustainable Solutions.

Organizational type: Non-profit

Mission: Our mission is to serve the urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous community alike by providing programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect, and friendship.

Vision: To act as a bridge to foster reconciliation efforts in the city.



ACTIVITIES

As an urban, Indigenous organization, First Light has significantly expanded its reach and services recently, focusing on supporting Indigenous individuals through its various programs and social enterprises.

The organization provides critical services, from emergency housing and affordable housing units to arts, culture, and recreational programming. These diverse program offerings allow First Light to create a comprehensive support system for the urban Indigenous community.

First Light's enterprises have significantly contributed to making First Light one of the largest non-profit employers in the city.

EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

First Light leverages a network of six social enterprises to address critical community needs while ensuring financial sustainability. These ventures directly target gaps in services.

Medical Transportation Services: Ensures clients have reliable transportation to essential destinations like medical appointments, pharmacies, and airports.

The Lunar Inn: Provides temporary lodging for individuals visiting St. John's for medical reasons.

Affordable Housing: Manages 15 existing affordable housing units and is expanding with 10 new transitional units this fall.

Centre for Performance & Creativity: Offers a vibrant arts center with a 500-seat concert hall, event spaces, and a commercial kitchen, fostering community engagement.

First Light Childcare Centre: The province's only Indigenous-run urban childcare center, providing a nurturing environment for young children.

Indigenous Cultural Diversity Training: Educates the community about Newfoundland and Labrador's Indigenous groups, promoting understanding and respect.

EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL FINANCE

First Light's journey into social finance began with micro-lending, specifically for practical needs like purchasing a tractor for snow clearing.

While this initial foray proved beneficial, it also highlighted the limitations and comparative disadvantages of micro-lending against grant opportunities. This experience, though singular, opened up broader considerations of financial strategies, steering First Light towards leveraging traditional banking systems and assets over pursuing other social finance avenues due to the organization's unique growth trajectory and needs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

First Light's Director of Business Operations noted that for organizations like First Light and others within the province, the path forward involves not only continuing to address community challenges through innovative and collaborative approaches but also enhancing their capacity for impact measurement and storytelling. By doing so, they can better articulate their value to funders and stakeholders, paving the way for a future where nonprofits play an increasingly central role in community development and problem-solving. This vision for the future emphasizes the necessity of empowering nonprofits and improving their ability to communicate their impact as key strategies for driving meaningful change in communities across the province.



Mapping Financing Opportunities and Experience Among Community Organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador