



Autism Nova Scotia ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



Moving Forward *Together*


autism
NOVA SCOTIA

Moving Forward *together*

Since its inception, Autism Nova Scotia's mandate has centred around 'community.' As a community-based organization, our vision, principles, and goals have been driven by our collective desire to meet the needs of autistic individuals and their families by creating a society where they can thrive and live life to its fullest. This is the true definition of community – one that can only be achieved through understanding, acceptance, and inclusion. As we have all experienced over the past several months, when we come together and work together, we ALL move forward – together.

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



DELIVERING
INNOVATIVE
EDUCATION &
TRAINING



ADVOCATING
FOR THE AUTISM
COMMUNITY



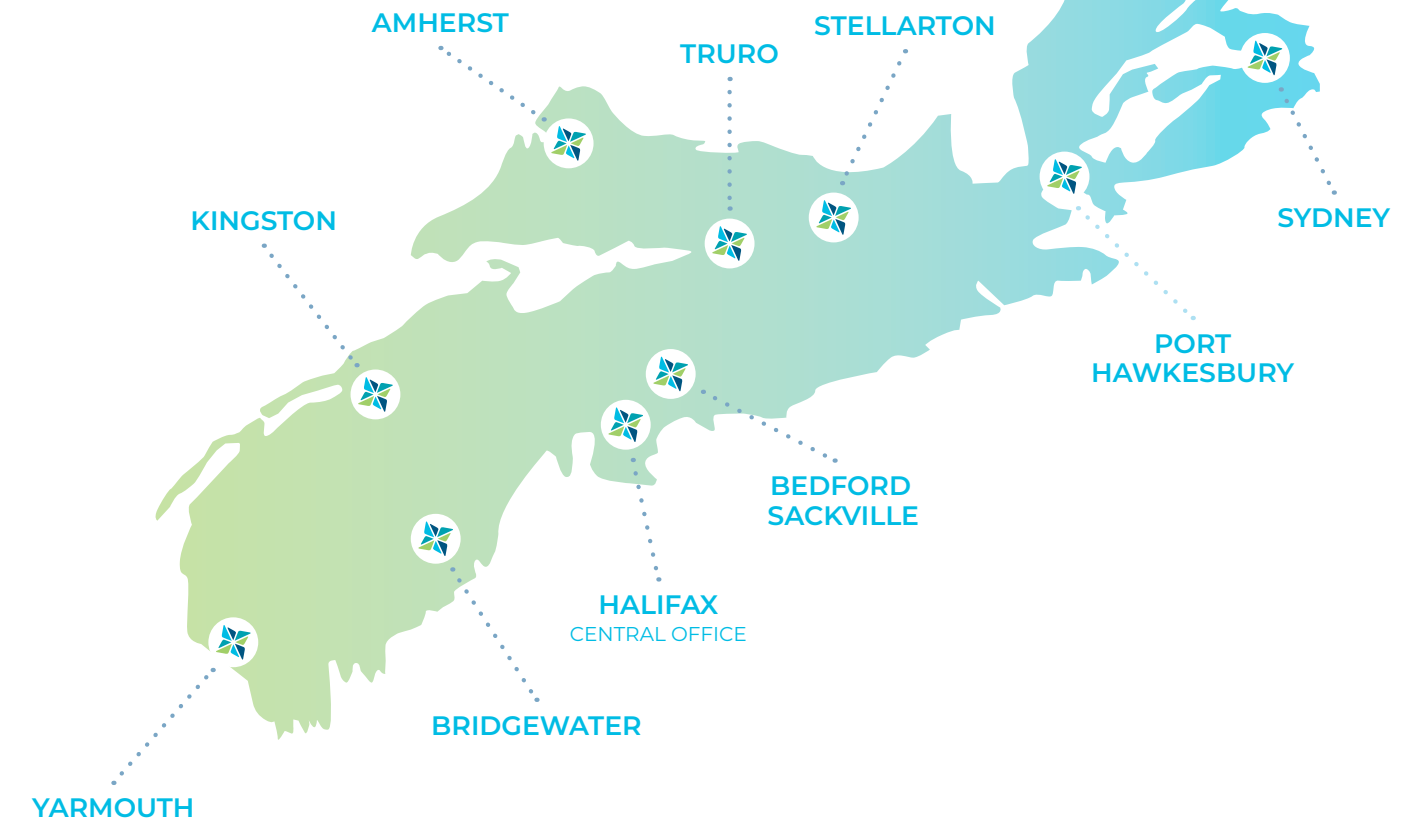
BUILDING
CAPACITY IN OUR
COMMUNITIES



PROGRAMMING
EXCELLENCE



LEGACY
PLANNING



autismnovascotia.ca



Understanding  Acceptance  Inclusion



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Parent





Moving Forward Together

There is no denying this has been a difficult year. The impact of the COVID-19 virus outbreak has been unprecedented and has left many families across Nova Scotia and the world uneasy, isolated, and exhausted. For the first time in our history, Autism Nova Scotia needed to close our physical doors to the community and transition to a new model of service delivery. The autism community was hit particularly hard as society shut down and family connections, regular routines, and access to support became restricted overnight.

Yet even during this challenging time, the autism community persevered and found renewed hope. Hope for individuals and families with autism came, as it always has, from the continued commitment to supporting one another each and every day. Hope came from the many advocates who used their voice to highlight the needs of the autism community. Hope came from respite workers who video chatted with their clients, from professionals who offered crucial online services, and from parents who watched Frozen 18 nights in a row and *still* sang along every time. Hope came

from the countless inspiring stories of strength and love that made us laugh, cry, and hold each other close. The resilience and courage of the autism community has been nothing short of miraculous and continues to inspire Autism Nova Scotia's commitment to walk with you and your family in these challenging times.

To continue to support the autism community during this pandemic, Autism Nova Scotia had to restructure and rethink all of our supports and services across the province. This meant not only orchestrating the delivery of current programs online, but also creating new supports for the changing needs of our population in response to the specific challenges of physical and social distancing mandated by our province's collective response to COVID-19. From Virtual Club to family support groups; from online employment cohorts to post-secondary support sessions; from Craft & Connects to one-on-one parent coaching, Autism Nova Scotia and our dedicated partners found new and innovative ways to connect and support the community.

Our pandemic experience has shown that every cloud has a silver lining. For Autism Nova Scotia, that silver lining came in the form of the new and innovative ways we have been able to support individuals on the spectrum and their families, and the many new connections we have made.

The launching of so many online services allowed new families and individuals—particularly those in rural regions—to connect to autism supports for the first time. Increasing online services also challenged us to be more innovative than ever before, and to collaborate with professionals across the country to ensure crucial supports continued to be available.

Although the sudden shift in our day-to-day operations was unexpected, the team learned some extremely valuable lessons. As we move forward together, Autism Nova Scotia will use what we have learned to make our programs and services more flexible, accessible, and impactful than ever before.

Despite the many challenges posed by COVID-19 and the health measures we have collectively undertaken to protect our communities, this passed year also ushered in the promise of a renewed federal commitment to those with autism. In 2019, the federal government prioritized a National Autism Strategy after a blueprint was put forward by the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance in collaboration with Autism Nova Scotia and other autism organizations nationwide. The implementation of a National Autism Strategy will drive real action to ensure all autistic Canadians and their families have full and equitable access to the resources they need across the lifespan regardless of where they live,

so that they may lead full and active lives in the communities where they reside.

In Atlantic Canada, we saw the expansion of our Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Autism program, which empowers autistic adults to maintain meaningful, healthy relationships and improve their sexual health and long-term quality of life.

Here in Nova Scotia, we saw the province launch a Person-Directed Planning Pilot, an initiative advocated for by Autism Nova Scotia to give people in the disability community the opportunity to direct their own lives based on their individual goals and dreams.

And in communities across the province, we saw the incredible progress self-advocates and their supporters have ignited to make inclusion a part of everyday society.

Autism Nova Scotia continues to be inspired by our autism community and is so incredibly proud to support our shared vision of a world where autism is understood and accepted, and everyone is living their lives fully. This year has been challenging, but the autism community has continued to move forward (in some instances in new and unexpected ways) with the same resilience, grit, and sheer courage that has defined our community from the

start. We have come together and supported one another through the long nights and even longer days and have held strong in the face of protective health measures that were, by design, intended to keep us apart. We have been challenged by COVID-19 together, we have demonstrated resolve together, and we will continue to move forward.

Together.



Ian Sutherland
Board Chair



Cynthia Carroll
Executive Director



"What does Autism Nova Scotia mean to me? It means bringing hope to those in Nova Scotia who need its help."

– Robert (Bob) Craig, Long-time Supporter

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Working Together on a National Scale

Autism Nova Scotia's national advocacy efforts to support the greater needs of individuals on the Autism Spectrum and their families took a historic turn last year.

On April 2nd, 2019, Autism Nova Scotia's Executive Director Cynthia Carroll, Chair of the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA) at the time, presented a National Autism Strategy Blueprint on Parliament Hill with Senator Jim Munson. The goal was simple: receive a commitment from four federal parties in the Fall 2019 election to prioritize a National Autism Strategy.

And that is exactly what we did!

The efforts of CASDA, its members, partners, and all Canadians advocating for over a decade for a National Autism Strategy were given hope when all four federal parties made written commitments to work with the community to develop a National Strategy in the last federal election. These efforts were further solidified by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in December 2019, when he announced his support of a National Autism Strategy, followed by the addition of the strategy in the federal minister

of health's mandate letter. It was a historic day for the autism community, but the work is just beginning.

In the coming months, Autism Nova Scotia will continue to advocate for a strategy that drives real action and is developed in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, autism experts, and autistic Canadians and their families. We need a strategy that will consider the unique geographical scope of our country—including northern and remote regions—and one that identifies Indigenous needs, is culturally responsive, and respects the diversity of all Canadians. Autism Nova Scotia is proud to be part of the leadership team on this important initiative and we will continue to see it through until it crosses the finish line.

Special thanks to the many organizations, professionals, caregivers, family members, and, most importantly, autistic individuals who contributed to the creation of the National Autism Strategy Blueprint through the National Needs Assessment Survey, the Canadian Autism Partnership Project, and CASDA's annual leadership summit.

Vision:

All Canadians with autism and their families have full and equitable access to the resources they need across the lifespan where and when they need them.

Principles:

Person centred, reflecting needs across the spectrum and lifespan	Inclusive of pan-Canadian stakeholders	Co-designed with first-person perspectives: nothing about us without us	Includes a separate co-designed Indigenous approach	Culturally responsive and appropriate, especially for vulnerable Canadians	Reflective of different regional needs, especially northern, rural, and remote communities
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AREA 1: Federal leadership

Federal leadership facilitates pan-Canadian coordinated impact through knowledge exchange and dissemination.

AREA 2: Immediate Federal Action



AREA 3: Cross Government Approach to Autism

A cross-government approach ensures federal action is coordinated and integrated across all policies that affect people with autism.

For more information about work on the National Autism Strategy visit: www.casda.ca

Making Strides Towards Supported Housing

When people think of home, they often recall a place of comfort, happiness, and safety. Yet for more than 1,500 Nova Scotians with disabilities on a waitlist, this is not the case. Uncertainty is an everyday reality for both adults with disabilities and parents/caregivers who worry about what will happen when they are no longer here to care and support their adult child or children.

It has long been clear to Autism Nova Scotia that strong leadership, community collaboration, and decisive action is required to address supported housing in the province.

In October 2019, we addressed this priority issue by hosting the second and final Supported Housing Summit, titled *Solutions*. The goal of the summit was to ignite a cross-community, collaborative conversation about the future of housing for persons with autism and developmental disabilities in Nova Scotia. The outcome was a comprehensive, community-informed white paper that made 29 **recommendations** to government and community.



The two-part summit engaged over 250 autistic individuals, family members, community organizations, service providers, and government representatives, all of whom actively participated in the conversation and had their voices reflected in the final document.



Autism Nova Scotia was voted Halifax's 3rd Best Activist Organization by The Coast in 2019



Attendees on October 19th prioritized five recommendations that required immediate attention in the supported housing landscape. The summarized themes of the top five included:

- 1 A larger investment in supportive housing options and flexible funding for individualized housing arrangements.
- 2 Increased and improved training for support staff on behavioural supports and person-directed decision making and planning as core competencies.
- 3 Collaboration with all sectors to create improved crisis stabilization tools and tactics that meet immediate individual needs and transitions people to a proper home, as soon as safely possible.
- 4 Government should work with all stakeholders to provide clear direction on how to access supported housing planning and improve awareness about options for supports and housing.
- 5 Create a dynamic webpage that helps people understand how to access funds and what areas of a housing arrangement (rent, supports, food, furnishing) those funds could be used.

Special thanks to our community partners who came on this journey with us and continue to champion this priority issue in our province: Community Homes Action Group (CHAG), Nova Scotia Association for Community Living (NSACL), Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO), Independent Living Nova Scotia (ILNS), People First, and Breton Ability Centre.

Supporting Success & Belonging in Our Communities

Integral to the mandate of Autism Nova Scotia is working to increase opportunities for and success in social and community inclusion for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Our staff have developed and implemented programs that are supporting outcomes such as self-determination skills, decision-making, self-advocacy, employment skills, increased independence, and ultimately an improved quality of life. In addition to serving autistic individuals and their families across our province, we were able to open up several programs to the autism community throughout Atlantic Canada when COVID-19 pivoted many of our programs and services to online delivery. A few of this year's program highlights include:

Bridges to Success

The **Bridges to Success** program focuses on life, recreation, and social skill development that promotes community exploration and engagement. The first cohort of Autism Nova Scotia's *Bridges to Success* pilot was a tremendous success and has been extended for



another year. Special thanks to the Department of Community Services for making this program possible.



Video Project

This was the fourth year of our **Video Project** group. Participants built on and developed social skills such as improved problem solving and conflict mediation, and life skills such as budgeting. Perhaps most importantly, *Video Project* showcased participants creativity and strength in film. A highlight this year was the writing of a murder mystery, "Invited to Death," which will be filmed and edited once COVID-19 restrictions allow for a safe return to in-person programming. Thank you to the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia for supporting this group and making this one-of-a-kind experience possible.

Women's Autism/Autistic Project

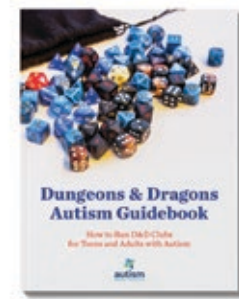
In the fall of 2019, the **Women's Autism/Autistic Project** (WAAP) was born from the vision of two autistic women. This pilot project is a monthly drop-in for women on the Autism Spectrum, a demographic often outnumbered, underrepresented, and underserved in traditional autism social spaces. We often hear from autistic women that their experiences are unique and that they often face different barriers that can lead to social isolation, even within the autism community. WAAP aims to provide autistic women lasting opportunities for peer and community connections in a safe and fun environment.

Adapting and Thriving Together During COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic was declared during the winter of 2020, Autism Nova Scotia had to quickly react and adapt to the abrupt changes and resulting restrictions put in place by Public Health. The health and safety of our staff, volunteers, clients, and community are our top priority, so we began to work remotely and innovate new ways to continue to offering programming.

Within two weeks, Autism Nova Scotia pivoted many of our programs online. We are proud of how nimble our staff and volunteers have proven to be and how we managed to open up some of our popular programs to participants not just across the province, but also throughout Atlantic Canada.

Dungeons & Dragons



Autism Nova Scotia adapted our **Dungeons & Dragons** club to an online platform to allow its continuation throughout the pandemic. We saw incredible interest and growth in this club, and were very pleased to be



able to continue offering it virtually.

Virtual Club

Using the Zoom online meeting platform, the **Virtual Club** was built using the *Social Group* model and had its first meeting of nearly 20 individuals on March 25th. The benefits of this online platform meant we could open the club to our Atlantic autism partners. Building safe peer connections in our Atlantic bubble became a welcomed reality!



Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism

Developed by: **Autism Nova Scotia**

Over the past year, with support from the Government of Canada, eight educators were recruited and trained in the delivery of **Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Autism** (HRSA) and subsequently began delivering the curriculum in four communities in Nova Scotia (Halifax, Truro, Pictou, and Hebble), as well as major communities in the Atlantic Provinces (Fredericton, Moncton, Charlottetown, and St. John's).

In March 2020, Autism Nova Scotia moved the HRSA program online. The feedback from the online transition indicates the curriculum is suited to the interactive online platform. Along with being

suited to the new platform, online delivery has removed barriers for individuals in more remote communities and/or to those who have accessibility challenges, like lack of transportation.

Although we are pleased to see this expanded reach for the program, we also understand that online delivery is not for everyone, and look forward to getting back to in-person programming in the fall, provided Public Health restrictions support it. A hybrid of in-person and online delivery may be part of our “new normal” moving forward.



Volunteers Make it All Possible

The success and reach of Autism Nova Scotia's programs and services would not be possible without the dedication of our students and volunteers. In addition to supporting our work with individuals and families, volunteer opportunities with Autism Nova Scotia provide hands-on experiences that allow people to work towards achieving personal, professional, and academic goals. We are so grateful for the generosity of all the volunteers and students who choose to give their time and talents to Autism Nova Scotia.

In the past year, we had 13,080 hours contributed by volunteers provincially.

We also had 20 students who tracked 3,218 hours of student placement time.

“

"Volunteering with Autism Nova Scotia allowed me to give back to the community in a positive, meaningful way."

– Alexandra, Volunteer

”

OUR SOCIAL & COMMUNITY INCLUSION PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Autism Arts, Bridges to Success, Chat N Chill, Dungeons & Dragons Club, Girl Strong Program, Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism, Life Skills Program, Netflix Virtual Watching Parties, SibsCONNECT, Supported Social Group, Teens & Adult Social Group, Video Project Club, Women's Autism/Autistic Project, summer camps, therapeutic horseback riding, swim programs, yoga, curling, cooking, and more.

To learn more, visit www.autismnovascotia.ca/programs

Provincial Volunteer Hours



- 6,580 hrs Social Programming
- 4,990 hrs Events
- 1,360 hrs Administrative Support
- 150 hrs CommunityWorks

"Thanks to Joan and Jack Craig, we have Autism Nova Scotia which has made itself a model for Canada and, I think, the world, in its progressive programs."

– Heather Downey, Member & Volunteer

Moving Forward with Volunteers

Our fundraising events would not be possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated volunteers. Over the last eight years, volunteer Colin Wood has built a community of supporters for the *Walk the Walk for Autism* event in Stellarton. In this time, this fundraiser has raised more than \$429,000! Thank you to Colin and all the amazing volunteers who make our events, and our work, possible.



Helping Parents Get a Head Start

QuickStart Nova Scotia is a parent-mediated coaching program designed to empower caregivers of toddlers with a suspected, provisional, or confirmed diagnosis of autism to teach and support their child's development. Overseen by two board certified behaviour analysts, and supported by a speech language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and four parent coaches, this program involves an individualized approach unique to each family's needs and provides a naturalistic teaching framework that is flexible, accessible, collaborative, and supportive.



SUMMARY OF PROGRAM'S SUCCESS

92

Program referrals

66

Eligible children enrolled

815

Staff visits with parents and their children

58

Average wait time (in days) from initial contact

2.8

Average age of child (in years) starting the program

643

Goals for families supported and developed

Goal Attainment

643

goals were developed

513

goals were coached

83%

of the additional goals families practiced without parent coach support progressed by the one month follow-up

95%

of the goals that families set progressed during the parent coaching phase

Anecdotal Report from Surveys

Q.

I feel I learned new skills during my participation.

97%



Q.

I feel my child learned new skills while participating.

98%



Q.

I was satisfied with the services I received through the QuickStart Nova Scotia program.

100%



Q.

I feel I received support accessing services with community providers.

94%



Q.

I feel confident that I have learned new strategies which I have been able to use successfully with my child during a variety of routines.

99%



“I’ve learned so much in the process! I feel more confident in helping and teaching my son.”

– QuickStart Nova Scotia Parent Participant



“His speech really took off and he continues to use the skills he learned everyday!”

– QuickStart Nova Scotia Parent Participant

Working Together – Partnerships, Pilot Projects, and Progress

Each year, while we continue to build on and improve our existing programs and services, we endeavour to address unmet needs through pilot programs and new partnerships.

Autism Coaching and Training for Teaching Assistants



In 2019-2020, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Tri-County Regional Centre for Education (TCRCE), and the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), Autism Nova Scotia launched a pilot program: *Autism Coaching and Training for Teaching Assistants*. This comprehensive program was piloted at five schools and involved 12 teaching assistants. Using a student-centred approach, the training was led by a board certified behavioural analyst trainer and coach from Autism Nova Scotia. The program's 10 modules focused on building knowledge about autism, generating student independence, and instructional strategies delivered through a combination of structured learning and direct coaching.

Transition Readiness & Autism Community Employment

In 2019, the **Transition Readiness & Autism Community Employment** (TRAACE) program, in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Education, adapted its materials and course delivery methods to be in line with the curriculum outcomes of the for-credit Career Development 11 course. The adaptations for students on the spectrum are delivered under four modules: career awareness, work cultures, financial planning, and employment profiles. The TRAACE adaptation of Career Development 11 is currently being piloted at a high school within the South Shore Regional Education Centre. We look forward to the expansion of this course across the province in the coming years.

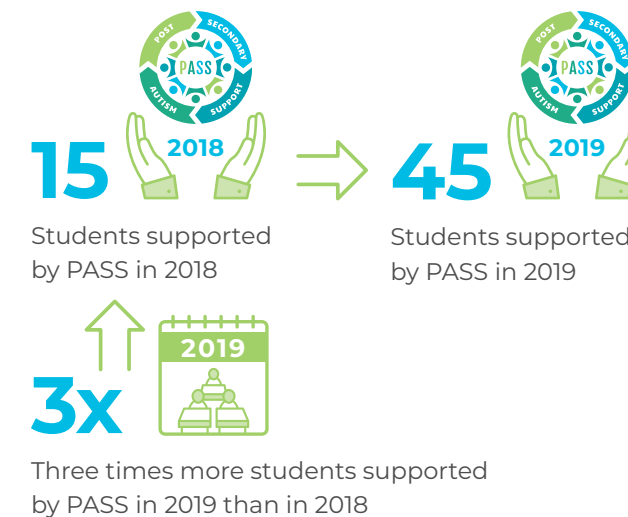
“It [Autism Coaching and Training for Teaching Assistants] helped me to build confidence in my role as a TA and gave me the tools and strategies to set my students up for success. My students were following my instructions much better and they were more motivated to learn. The one-on-one coaching was so beneficial to me because it helped reinforce what we learned and discussed in the classroom.”

– Teaching Assistant

Supporting Students Moving Forward in Education

Post-Secondary Autism Support Services

What began as a pilot project in 2018 has grown into a realized vision of helping post-secondary students achieve their education goals as they move towards their career aspirations. Last year, **Post-Secondary Autism Support Services** (PASS) supported 15 students with the goal of reaching 32 in 2019. We not only achieved that goal, we surpassed it, by offering support to 45 autistic students in various college and university settings across the province. That is three times more students than the previous year!



“I get help with planning, scheduling, study habits and how much to study so I don’t get overwhelmed.”

– PASS Student

Delivering a provincial program takes collaboration and partnerships. This year, Autism Nova Scotia had the opportunity to work with an engineering class at Saint Mary’s University to design and implement an email application to help students in the PASS program develop and hone emailing skills. This was a valued addition to the program and received positive feedback from the students and PASS specialists.

Like several of our programs, Autism Nova Scotia successfully transitioned PASS to an online support structure for all of its participants during COVID-19. Online learning can be challenging for many students, so maintaining this valuable support during unprecedented times was critical. We are pleased to say that all 45 students successfully completed the year and some even went on to take spring courses.

Delivering Collaborative Social Impact


LaunchPad is a comprehensive program that teaches essential skills for the workforce. Working in tandem with Autism Nova Scotia's social enterprise **The Pearl**, participants build professional experience in areas such as customer service, money management, and communication.

69% of LaunchPad participants are successful in attaching to the labour market upon completion of the program, with all participants gaining essential social and employment skills. With a national employment rate of autistic adults at 15 to 20%, LaunchPad is actively changing the inclusive labour market and helping adults gain meaningful employment.

"What makes me proud of what I've accomplished at *The Pearl* is the fact that I have been able to understand body language a lot more while being here."


– LaunchPad Participant

SUCCESS TO DATE 2019

84 
Total number of LaunchPad graduates

47 
Paid employment outcomes

3 
Entrepreneurial ventures launched

8 
Enrollment in post-secondary

58 
Success outcomes

69% 
Employment outcome



"Whenever I attended *The Pearl*, I was not only able to enjoy myself, but I was also able to accept the responsibilities with having a job. Originally, I believed that I was unable to figure out what to do, but with careful explanations, I not only managed to understand what to do; but I have also learned how to find the courage to relax in the job as well."

– LaunchPad Participant

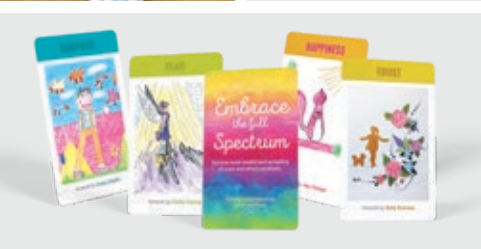


27 

Autistic artists created artwork for:

- 'Seas the Days' 2020 Calendar
- 'Embrace the Full Spectrum' Inspiration Cards
- Assorted Note Cards
- Canvas Tote Bags

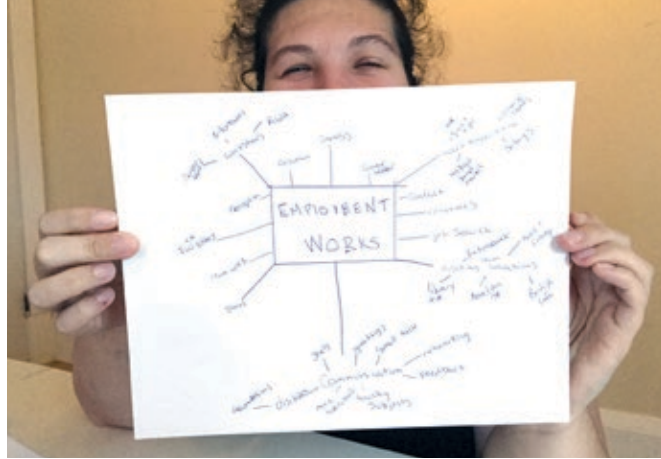
Thank you to all the artists for their beautiful and unique contributions!



The students of the NSCC Ivany Campus Faculty, Graphic & Print Production Program provided us with outstanding printing support. The pieces they have created turned into important tools to promote our programs and services while increasing our visibility in the community.

[SUPPORTAUTISM.CA](https://supportautism.ca)





Autism at Work

Obtaining meaningful employment is often a challenge for adults on the spectrum and those nearing adulthood. Through a wide variety of programs and services, Autism Nova Scotia strives to support autistic individuals in building the necessary skills for employment and works with employers to build awareness and understand the business case and benefits of hiring an employee with autism.

EmploymentWorks

Our **EmploymentWorks** (EW) program is an evidence-informed 24-week program that provides employment preparedness training and experiential community-based learning and work experience for individuals on the spectrum. Supporting individuals from ages 15 to 64 who are no longer in high school, EW expanded to the rural communities of Annapolis Valley, Truro, and Pictou County in 2019. During the past year, we supported 26 program participants and partnered with 19 employers, nine employment

agencies, five cafés, and three libraries. In 2020, we look forward to expand the program into the Cape Breton and Yarmouth regions.



Career Quest

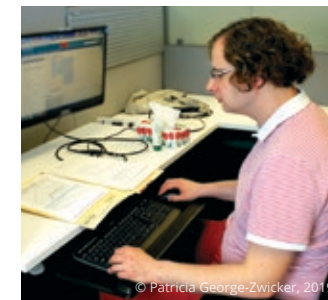
Career Quest is a job search program implemented last year to actively increase job seekers participation in searching for and successfully securing employment. *Career Quest* is open to graduates of our other programs, such as *EmploymentWorks*, as well as to active autistic jobseekers who may need a little structure and support in their search for employment. Prior to the development and implementation of *Career Quest*, only 6% of job seekers remained active in looking for work after they left a formal employment program. After *Career Quest* was launched, 93% of job seekers remained active and their success rate of securing paid employment also increased.



Employment Coaching

As identified in much of our work, there are often gaps in access to supports and services for autistic individuals living in rural areas. In 2019, Autism Nova Scotia expanded its *Employment Coaching Program* into rural Nova Scotia. Working with our regional chapters, coaches were hired, trained, and supported by the coaching team in HRM through an online platform. Individualized support builds increased opportunities for growth and job retention and we are pleased to now offer this programming beyond the boundaries of HRM.

Ready, Willing & Able



In October 2019, **Ready, Willing & Able** (RWA) was extended thanks to a three-year, \$12 million investment by the Federal Government of Canada. This funding renewed RWA's reach

to 20 communities across the country. For those in Nova Scotia, this meant we were able to hire an additional Labour Market Facilitator with our partner, the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, and significantly aided our vision of an inclusive labour market, in which the employment rate for persons with an intellectual disability and/or autism is on par with the national average.

RWA BY THE NUMBERS



New taxable income from participants supported this year: **\$245,573**

Total income generated in 2019-2020 from previously supported participants: **\$1,213,285**



*note: employer engagement in 2019 included pre-employment programs. The 2020 number is only employers engaged through RWA.

Bringing Together Autistic Voices

Since its founding in 2005 by Danny Melvin, a man on the spectrum who saw the need for autistic-led expression, **Autistics Aloud** has grown from a newsletter to a national publication. In 2019, Autism Nova Scotia launched a 10-part series through *Autistics Aloud* called *Lifespans* – a three-year project that shares the hopes, fears, dreams, wants, and needs of autistic Canadians. The first edition, “What is Autism?”, earned commendation in the Nova Scotia Legislature in a statement presented by MLA Claudia Chender. Members of Autism Nova Scotia, and the publication’s youngest contributor, Hugh Garber, proudly stood in the Galley of the Legislature to accept applause for this important project.

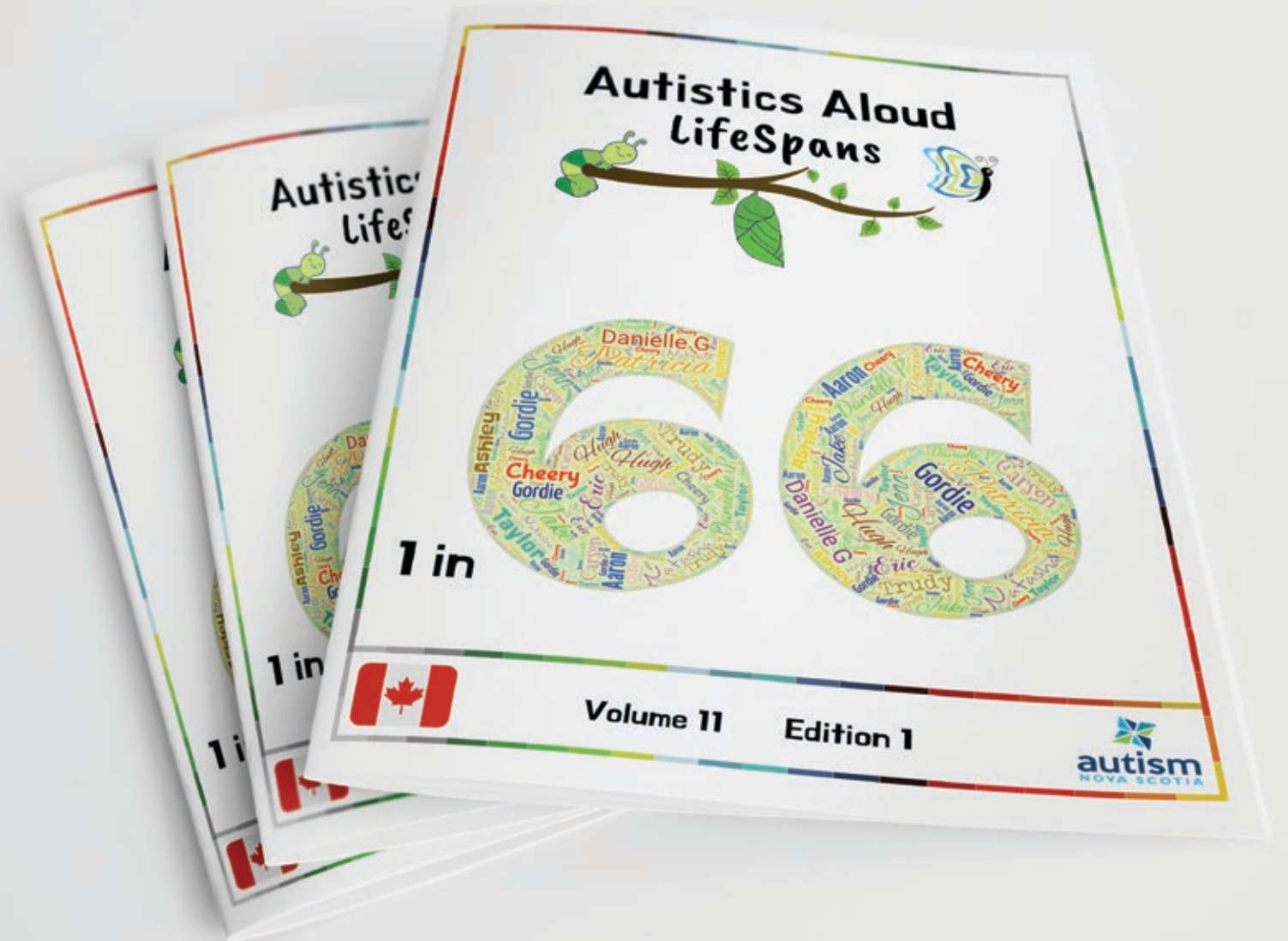
Other milestones for *Lifespans* include being added to circulation at the Isabel and Roy Jodrey Memorial Library in Hantsport, Nova Scotia, an author-reading invitation to one of its contributors, Jake Lewis, and the placement of the publication in the waiting area of the Adult Neuro-Developmental Services department of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health teaching hospital in Toronto, Ontario.



Patricia George-Zwicker, Editor of *Autistics Aloud*, hand-delivering ***Lifespans* Edition 1, "What Is Autism?"** to the Isabel and Roy Jodrey Memorial Library in Hantsport, NS.

“So what is autism? It is the breaking of the familiar, a solid rewrite to the definition of normal. And if autism is accepted as a variation of normal, then simple things like how we evaluate desirable qualities will need to be redefined.”

– **Jenn Lisi**, Contributor



Lifespans Edition 1 includes 15 autistic contributors ranging in age from nine to 50 and was distributed to 51 MLAs.

Growing Together Across the Province

As of April 2020, Autism Nova Scotia has 10 Chapters across the province: Halifax, Bedford-Sackville, South Shore, Annapolis Valley, Pictou, South West, Strait Area, Cape Breton, Cumberland, and Truro.

Since we opened our doors in 2002, Autism Nova Scotia has supported the growing needs of the autism community across the province. This year brought welcomed growth in the rural regions of the province including a second office location for the Annapolis Valley Chapter in Kentville. We also saw the expansion of programs like *EmploymentWorks*, *Career Quest*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and our *Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Autism* (HRSA) program. Growing our capacity and reach across the province has remained a priority for Autism Nova Scotia.

Each chapter reported growth in 2019-2020:

Annapolis Valley Chapter: In addition to a second location, the Annapolis Valley Chapter created a new ‘Autism Resource Guide – Annapolis Valley Edition’ and saw increased program participation and fundraising success.

Cape Breton Region Chapter: The newest chapter in Cape Breton brought the autism community together each month for family events like picnics, skating, and snow tubing. Fall 2020 will see the further expansion of the *LaunchPad* program into Sydney.

Cumberland County Chapter: Cumberland County expanded into a larger physical space to allow for improved programming and successfully launched the *Dungeons & Dragons* club in the Amherst area.

Pictou County Chapter: Our chapter in Pictou County experienced increased partnership and participation of adults with autism in programs like *Chat N Chill*, *EmploymentWorks* and HRSA.

South Shore Chapter: On the South Shore, a partnership with the South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE) allowed the chapter to provide education sessions for professional and para-professionals, community-based firefighters, SSRE bus drivers, and RCMP members.

South West Chapter: The South West Chapter secured office space and increased its presence and partnerships in the community with programs such as Nova Scotia Works and Early Intervention.

Strait Area Chapter: The Strait Area saw growth with the hiring of a new Autism Support Coordinator

position and the formal establishment of the Autism Resource Centre. Strait Area continued to offer family events throughout the year and will be welcoming the *EmploymentWorks* program in the winter of 2021.

Truro Chapter: Truro became one of the first chapters to implement the HRSA program, adopted the *EmploymentWorks* program, and hired a program educator.

Bedford-Sackville Chapter: Our Bedford-Sackville Chapter saw new families join their parent group last year. The chapter also continued to offer fun, smiles, and community connections through monthly swims, family dances, magic shows, reptile shows, a summer picnic, and the annual Christmas Bounce.



Community Support



Autism Nova Scotia Breakdown of Enquiries:

- 40% Family & Individual Support
- 27% Programs & Events
- 10% Employment
- 6% Donations
- 5% Education
- 5% Respite
- 3% The Pearl
- 4% Other

INCREASED CONNECTIONS

Autism Nova Scotia received over **5,000 calls** across the province, with a **43% increase** in calls in rural areas, and more than **10,000 connections and collaborations** with individuals, families, professionals, organizations, community members, and government.

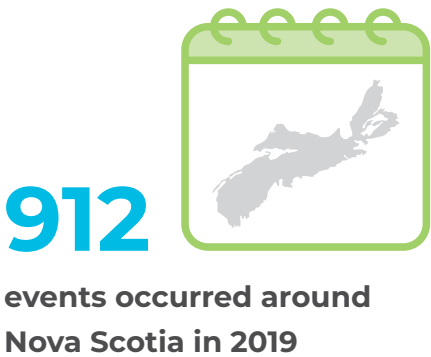
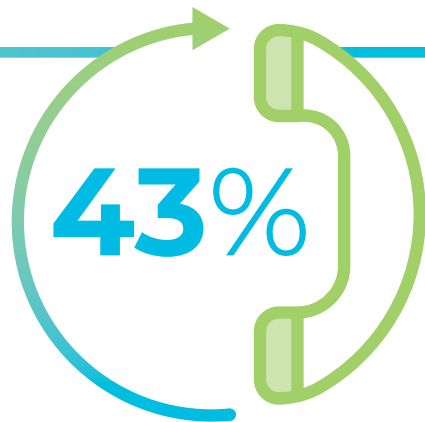


Chapters Across the Province

Regional Autism Centres



Calls to Chapters
increased in 2019 by



Programs & Services



Programs and Services
offered provincially
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IN SUPPORT OF AUTISM NOVA SCOTIA

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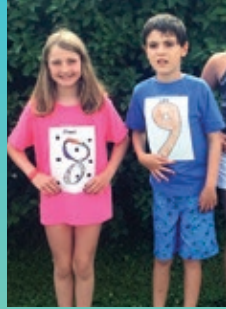
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Moving Forward with Donors



Many people are fortunate to have great friends and many people are fortunate to have great family – but it's extra special when we

have friends who are family. That's the case for cousins Flora Jackson and Luke Burns. Flora and Luke both celebrate their birthdays in February and for the past two years, Flora has chosen to celebrate her birthday in a meaningful way. Luke is on the Autism Spectrum and Flora knows how important it is for him to have access to programs and services that increase his inclusion in the community and support for his family. In lieu of traditional gifts, for her past two birthdays, Flora has hosted a 'Two Toonie' party where she has asked guests to bring two toonies – one for Flora and one to be donated to Autism Nova Scotia. Thanks to supporters like Flora, gifts of all shapes and sizes are making a difference for people like Luke right across the province.

Moving Forward Thanks to your Support

The work that we do is only possible because of the continued generous support of so many individuals, families, donors, volunteers, businesses, and organizations. Thank YOU for increasing understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for Nova Scotians on the Autism Spectrum and their families.

Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon



Last year, Autism Nova Scotia's Bluenose team raised more than \$10,000 through the Charity Challenge. Since 2011, our marathon teams have raised more than \$87,000 for programs and services across the province. Now that is something to shout about!

Thank you to our dedicated Bluenosers who champion our cause every year through their involvement in the Charity Challenge. We could not do it without you!

Individual and Corporate Giving



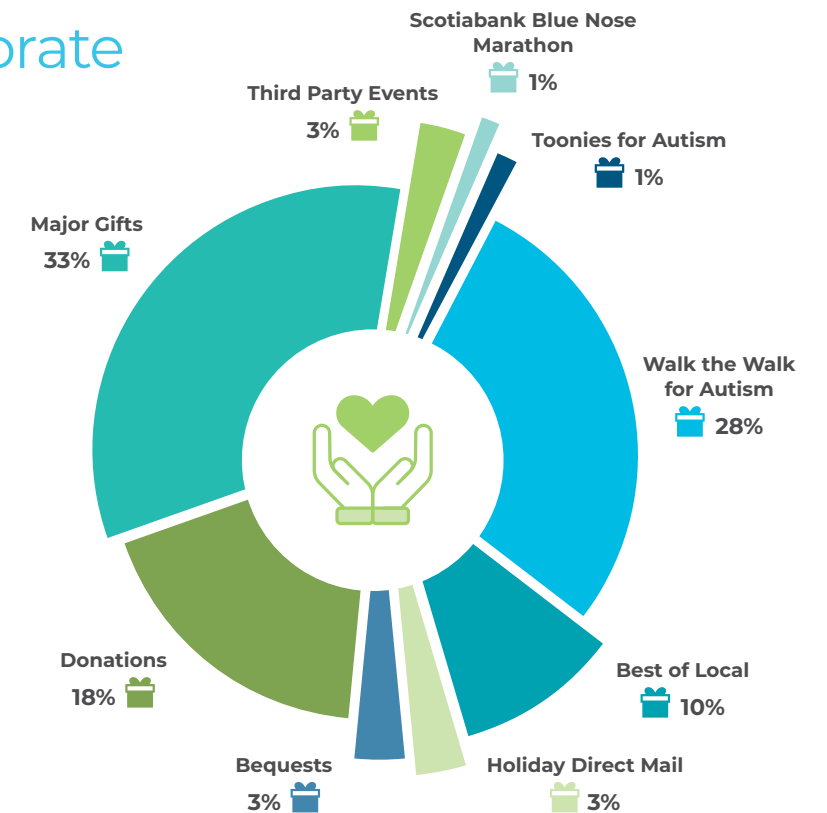
4,000+
Gifts



3,800+
Supporters

\$980,000+

Raised for programs & services
across the province



Working Together for Autism Nova Scotia

As a registered charity, there are many ways to support Autism Nova Scotia:

- Make a gift in support of an Autism Nova Scotia program
- Donate funds to the Autism Nova Scotia chapter in your region
- Celebrate a special person or occasion with a tribute gift
- Honour the life of a loved one through a memorial donation

Online donations via autismnovascotia.ca/donate are secure and easy to make. Gifts can also be made by contacting giving@autismns.ca or by calling **902-446-4995**.



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In Memoriam

We honour those remembered by friends and family with memorial gifts this year. May their loved ones find comfort in their happy memories. Their lives, and the kindness they have inspired, mean so much.

IN MEMORY

Peggy Lee Angela Atwell	William Langille
Braeden Bannister	Marlene LeBlanc
Michael John Beazley	Marguerite Lemoine
Carl Black	Nancy Logue
Deanna Bradley	Ethel MacDonald
Holly Parker Camp	Judith MacLellan
Scott Carroll	Evelyn Muise
Daniel Clifford "Ciffie" Carter	Joyce E. Murray
Rod Chiasson	Zelia Nardocchio
Lorette Marie Comeau Colbert	Sharon Palmer
Rodney Dana Collins	Alice Cathryn Pettis
Dr. Rodney Dana	Allena Phillips
Jackie Duggan	Joan Pink
Jessi Angela Denise Fogan	John Pope
Betty Frost	Barry Irving Ross
James Harvey Gillespie	G. Douglas Sabean
Bill Greenlaw	Arlene Smerdon
Lee P. Harnish	Jackie Smith
Gerald Hartling	Jerry Smith
Michael Hawkes	Marjorie Smith
Doug Johnston	Jacquelin Trapp
Danielle Jollimore	Justin Harold Westhaver
Margie Katikas	Constance Wilton
Juri Gerge Kriisk	Doug Wiseman

Robert "Scott" Carroll

October 9, 1963 – November 19, 2019

Robert “Scott” Carroll, known to most as Scottie, sadly passed away at the young age of 56 years. He was a bright light that brought life and humor to any room. Scott’s favourite time was spent with family and friends. He loved his backyard garden, trips to Cape Breton, Hawaii, and Vegas, and a cold beer on Sunday Football days while checking his sports pools.

Scott will be forever remembered by his parents, Robert and Cathy Carroll; his wife, Cynthia Carroll; his children Alexandra, Rachael, and Cory (Melissa); his brothers Dale (Cheryl) and Craig (Cindy); his nephews Dallin and Evan. His in-laws, George and Marilyn Wotton; his brother-in-law, Jeff and Olivia, Nathaniel and Elizabeth and the many other family and extended family members who loved him.

Scott’s legacy will live on through the many gifts his loved ones have made to Autism Nova Scotia’s endowment fund in his honour.

Joan Elizabeth Pink

April 10, 1949 – October 29, 2019

Joan Pink was not an ordinary woman. Joan was a force; in fact, her nickname was "The Force." Her grandchildren called her "Glammy" because grandma was just too ordinary. Her passion, talent, and many contributions to the community are legendary.

Having survived cancer in 2001, she knew the importance of living in the moment and living large, always reminding us that the only thing we take with us when we go are our memories. Joan's zest for life was only matched by her generosity for friends and strangers alike. She volunteered hundreds of hours to raise money for charity, cooked for hundreds at the Shaar Shalom

synagogue, and supported her children's countless extra-curricular activities. There was always an extra seat at the table, an extra bed for those in need, and extra time for one more kiss goodnight - and always on both cheeks.

Upon her passing, Joan’s family, friends, and loved ones remembered her with an outpouring of gifts to the *Ben James Summer Camp* program, where her grandson Eli has so much fun each summer.

Joan is survived by Ronald Pink, her loving husband of 45 years; her beloved children, David (Rhiannon Mosher), Rachel (Nathan Sutherland), Deborah, and Noah (Holly Langille), along with her grandchildren, Eli, Orli, and Stella.

Glammy, you will always be The Force. Your memory is a blessing.

Lasting Gifts

Your passion. Your values. Your legacy.

Autism Nova Scotia is proud and grateful to be the recipient of a number of legacy gifts. When donors choose to support our organization through a bequest or estate gift, their legacy endures for years to come.

For more information about Leaving a Legacy, please contact Elizabeth Smith at 902-446-4995, ext. 64 or esmith@autismns.ca.

Tribute Donors

Giving a donation in honour of or in memory of someone special is a thoughtful way to recognize those you care about and make a positive impact.

Our gratitude goes out to the generous donors who gave tribute gifts on behalf of loved ones and everyone who donated in their names between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020.

IN HONOUR

Stephanie Anderson
Landon Bungay
Bill & Bonnie Cameron
Cathy Chaddock
Joan Craig
Lisa Hayden-MacFarlane
Joey & Janet Isnor
Liam Kelly
Charlotte Kirkpatrick
Lisa & Owen
Bobby MacNamara
Arnold & Norma McAllister
Kristie McAllister
"Our very special grandson Henri"
Richard Ramey
Sollows Family
Staples Contact Centre Associates
Rob & Stephanie Strang
Lauren Sutherland
Dominic Syr
Matthew Wilson

Thank
You!



"As I reflect on the dream Jack and I shared, the work we have done, and the continuing needs of the autism community, I have chosen to designate my legacy gift to the *Cynthia Carroll Endowment for Autism* – a dedicated fund to help Autism Nova Scotia provide programs and services for many years to come. Please consider supporting Autism Nova Scotia with a gift or bequest in your will and, like me, leave a legacy you can be proud of."

– **Joan M. Craig**, Founder, Autism Nova Scotia

