



# WE ARE READY

What we heard about  
services, supports, and  
opportunities for at-risk  
youth outside of St. John's.



Let's Give them the  
Same opportunity to have  
a place they can call  
Home !!  
Honk if you care together  
We can end this!



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PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth homelessness impacts every corner of Newfoundland and Labrador, as do the challenges that create it and often leave youth entrenched in its effects. It is an issue which cuts across the many economic, social and regional challenges faced by our province. However this is a problem with known solutions and best practices. It is an issue we are ready to tackle strategically through coordinated and combined efforts for prevention, better supports, and smarter interventions.

Through the summer and fall of 2017, staff from Choices for Youth (CFY) hosted consultations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to inform CFY's plans to expand its own programming outside of St. John's and to gather input that will inform province-wide planning around these issues.

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## WHAT COULD EXPANSION LOOK LIKE FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH?

CFY has set a target of being active in six communities across the province within the next three years. "Active" could mean operating a satellite location, developing a housing project, helping local organizations with capacity-building, co-funding opportunities, training, partnering with

a local organization to deliver programs, or a combination of these approaches. This expansion could (and should) look different from community to community to reflect each community's unique needs.



26

COMMUNITIES VISITED

9

COMMUNITY FORUMS

201

FORUM ATTENDEES

66

DETAILED SURVEY RESPONSES

150

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

65

YOUTH IN FOCUS GROUPS

## WHAT WE KNEW GOING IN

**Young people make up a large proportion of Canada's homeless population, and being homeless has lifelong impacts:** approximately 20% of Canada's homeless population are youth between ages 13-24. These young people face a high risk of addictions, mental illness, suicide, bullying, and many more challenges.

**Many people experiencing homelessness in St. John's are from elsewhere:** Almost 40% of homeless individuals surveyed during the Point in Time Count in St. John's had arrived in the city within five years, and one in five had come specifically to access supportive services.

**Youth face distinct struggles in Newfoundland and Labrador:** In St. John's the average age of a young person's

first experience of homelessness is 16. Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth are heavily overrepresented in the homeless population. Many of these youth come out of the child protection system, where numbers have sharply increased in recent years. More broadly, on many social and health indicators relevant to at-risk youth, Newfoundland and Labrador sits at or near the bottom of all Canadian provinces.

**There are promising practices from across Canada that can be applied:** The Housing First for Youth Framework, integrated service delivery models, and early-intervention programs are all working well elsewhere and could have a significant impact in Newfoundland and Labrador.

# COMMON THEMES



Our conversations with communities across Newfoundland and Labrador found many common themes when it came to the needs of at-risk and homeless young people.

**MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS:** Youth across the province are facing more challenges with mental health and addictions, and often have very limited options for care. Moving services into the community and keeping a focus on youth in service redesign is an opportunity for change.

**CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND TO PLACE:** In communities across the province, young people told CFY how important getting out on the land was to them. There is a real opportunity to build on this sense of connection and community when developing programming for young people around the province.

**A GROWING DRUG CRISIS:** Young people are moving into using harder drugs – cocaine and opioids – at younger ages. Communities are looking for more on-the-ground support through things like needle exchanges and outreach workers, but also for more opportunities and physical spaces in which young people could be engaged in safer activities.

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** While there are many training and employment programs available, most of them are not a fit for young people facing complex and concurrent challenges with addiction, family breakdown, criminal justice involvement, and mental health. Social enterprises with appropriate youth supports could fill that gap.

**THE CHALLENGE OF STIGMA:** Stigmatization is a major force in the lives of marginalized and at-risk youth, and this is particularly evident in smaller communities. In many communities there is an opportunity to mitigate some of these issues through integrated service delivery locations.

**YOUNG ADULTS ARE FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS:** Outside of St. John's there are very few resources targeted specifically to emerging adults aged 16-24, and there are major challenges and service gaps for young people coming out of care between the ages of 16 and 18.

**TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES:** Many at-risk youth lack access to a vehicle, severely limiting their ability to access services, employment, or social opportunities. These transportation challenges also create an even larger gap between low-income families and others in terms of their ability to access opportunities.

**LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:** There are very few shelter beds or supportive housing units outside of St. John's, and almost none dedicated specifically to youth. Many people look at vacant buildings and land in their communities and see an opportunity for dedicated youth housing – both staffed, supportive units and scattered-site units, operated by community organizations, with a special focus on transitional housing for youth coming out of care.

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** Very few communities have an agency that serves as a “front door” for youth services, or a physical location at which personnel from different agencies and government departments can gather to provide one-stop services to youth. There is an opportunity to improve services by providing this space.

**RURAL-URBAN CONNECTIONS:** It is important to recognize that leaving home and coming to St. John's will always be the right option for some youth – whether to seek services or to pursue opportunities. The experience of coming to the city can be tough; some young people struggle and are forced to return home, which can be a big blow to self-confidence and mental health. Many people told us they would like to see a more coordinated reception in St. John's for at-risk youth who are moving to the city.

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Looking back on several months of conversations across the province, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the landscape young people in Newfoundland and Labrador will face in the coming years. There is a growing movement toward cross-departmental cooperation, a collaborative and innovative group of community organizations, and a strong national movement.

**FOCUSING ON THE MOST VULNERABLE:** The young people we work with at Choices for Youth are the most vulnerable youth in this province. Almost all of them face multiple, intersecting challenges, whether those be related to housing, family breakdown, mental health, addictions, or trauma. These youth – and particularly LGBTQ2S youth, Indigenous youth, and young families, who are extremely vulnerable subgroups within them – must be the focus of our efforts.

**CHALLENGES AHEAD:** There are still many challenges to overcome in building better outcomes for youth. Our distributed geography, limited adoption of harm reduction principles, a lack of consistency in services, training gaps for service providers, gaps in policy, and funding will all be challenges – but investing in the most at-risk also has an incredibly high long-term payoff. A coordinated and strategic approach can help achieve better outcomes with a reduction in long-term costs. This is especially important in the context of a struggle with poverty and the increasing cost of living

**THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROVINCIAL PLAN:** In our conversations, we saw many places where leadership at the provincial level could greatly improve the supports this province offers to young people. Addressing the challenges we heard about, and taking advantage of the resources we identified, demands a province-wide effort, ideally involving a dedicated leadership team in collaboration with the government.

**NL CAN BE A CANADIAN LEADER:** Programs and infrastructure for at-risk youth in Canada are overwhelmingly concentrated in larger cities, but there is a growing recognition that responding at the ground level in rural and remote communities is a strategic investment in prevention. Newfoundland and Labrador has an opportunity to step out in front of this dialogue and take national-level leadership on this issue.

**NEXT STEPS FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH:** Over the coming months we hope to hear back from communities across the province with feedback on this report and detailed ideas on how their community might engage further with CFY and the broader provincial conversation. We will be working on identifying our expansion locations, securing partners, and bringing the sector together for a major gathering in Spring 2018

Meeting with young people, service providers, governments, and businesses across Newfoundland and Labrador has been an inspiring process for Choices for Youth. There is a strong culture of collaboration and creativity and a real sense that change is coming. We are ready to be a part of it.



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# INTRODUCTION

On any given day, 40-60 young people gather for a meal at the Choices for Youth (CFY) Outreach Centre on Carter's Hill in Downtown St. John's. They come to eat, to stay warm, to see friends, and to tap into the many services available there, which range from a registered nurse on-site, to housing support to employment assistance.

These young people face a huge range of challenges – from family breakdown to mental illness and addiction to criminal justice involvement – and they come to Choices for Youth from communities all over Newfoundland and Labrador. Some are referred to CFY by other community agencies, or by government social workers. Others are brought to St. John's by their parents, recognizing that the challenges they face are too much to cope with at home. Still others arrive in St. John's on their own and make their way to our doors in search of support.

Many of the young people we work with have come to us from outside of St. John's. No matter what path brings these young people to the city, there is one thing that many of them have in common: that they could be better served by earlier interventions closer to home. By the time an at-risk or homeless young person makes their way to St. John's, they have likely been struggling for some time with challenges often beginning early in their lives. Once they arrive, they risk greater isolation and entrenchment into street culture that can lead to crisis-driven lifestyles and on-going cycles of unstable housing.

Other than one satellite program in Conception Bay South, CFY has, for its 25+ year history, been based in St. John's. We are now, for the first time, planning an expansion across the province, aiming to be active in six communities across the province within the next three years. To begin our planning process, we have been hosting consultations all over the province, recognizing first and foremost that we are

not the experts when it comes to how communities outside St. John's are working to support and empower their most vulnerable youth. This report summarizes what we heard from conversations with hundreds of people, as well as what we learned from digging into the data we could find at the regional level in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**We hope these findings will inspire action and new partnerships to better serve at-risk youth across the province.**

These conversations and insights are about more than how CFY could expand its own programs. Building on our "Towards a Solution" report<sup>1</sup>, we have continued our work to gather data and establish policy recommendations to build a coordinated provincial strategy on youth homelessness.

**The challenges that we know to exist in St. John's and that we heard about from communities across the province are too big for CFY or any other agency to handle on their own.**

Alongside these challenges, innovative solutions and best practices from our communities and across the globe alike are well documented and rooted in evidence. There is a chance to do better, to tap into a national movement that is changing how we approach youth homelessness and many social challenges that drive it. From what we heard, it is clear that as a province we are ready. This is an opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador to become a national and international leader in the shift towards prevention and in the provision of services in rural and remote communities.



# OUR APPROACH

We recognize first and foremost that Choices for Youth has limited expertise regarding on-the-ground realities in communities outside St. John's. This is particularly true in Indigenous communities, both on the island and in Labrador. With that in mind, there are a few key elements that we've incorporated into our approach to these conversations.

## DEDICATED STAFF

We have hired a Provincial Expansion Coordinator to guide this work, build relationships, and shape our approaches in communities outside of St. John's.

## ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

It has been critically important to get to know service providers, face to face whenever possible. These conversations build knowledge in CFY's staff team about how communities around the province are addressing these issues, and build awareness around the province of the resources CFY can bring to the table. After running a regional engagement session we regularly get calls from service providers excited to offer young people a new opportunity.

## UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Each of our province's regions has a very different set of services, networks, and attitudes towards the kind of work CFY does. It is important for the CFY leadership team to develop an understanding of these differences – and through their participation in the consultation process, this has begun to happen.

## ENGAGING WITH LOCAL YOUTH

Whenever possible, we have been organizing focus groups with local young people. From Healthy Baby Clubs to school classrooms, these sessions have given us local lived experience perspectives to bring into our meetings with service providers and community decision-makers.

## LISTENING WIDELY

As a cross cutting issue, developing an understanding of local youth challenges and opportunities, requires bringing together diverse perspectives and leadership from across the community. With this in mind we have been making an extra effort to include town councils, educators, business people, and law enforcement in our community dialogue process.

## IDENTIFYING LOCAL PARTNERS

A provincial expansion can only be sustainable if built on strong partnerships with local organizations who know their population and their context. CFY is looking for places where our goals align closely with local ideas and ambitions.

## BRINGING IN PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL VOICES

We have assembled a Working Group of key allies and experts from across the province and country. This team will serve to augment local insights with top-level expertise and best practices.

## DOING OUR RESEARCH

Along with extensive community consultation, we are also compiling statistical data on regions and the associated outcomes for young people to better understand they challenges and opportunities differ region to region.

## OUR PROCESS

Since May 2017, Choices for Youth has been on the move, on the phone, and online with people from across the province and across Canada. Here's what those consultations have looked like:

### SCOPING SURVEY

An online survey to service providers gathered 66 detailed responses.

### STATISTICAL RESEARCH

We gathered as much regional-level data as we could find in advance of launching consultations.

### ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

We have had on-the-phone and in-person interviews with more than 150 key stakeholders.

### EXPLORATORY VISITS TO LABRADOR

Recognizing the importance of relationship-building, particularly with Indigenous communities and leaders, staff spent 10 days meeting one-on-one with contacts in Labrador City, Goose Bay, Sheshatshiu, Nain, Hopedale, Rigolet, and Forteau.

### REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

CFY held multi-stakeholder conversations in Bonavista, Stephenville, Corner Brook, St. Anthony, Grand Falls – Windsor, Marystown, Conception Bay South, Clarenville, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. More than 200 people in total attended these sessions.

### ASSEMBLING A WORKING GROUP

To help inform our thinking going forward, CFY has assembled a working group of local and national experts.

## WHO WE SPOKE TO

- Youth with lived experience
- Community organizations (especially those serving young people)
- Health care providers
- Educators and guidance counsellors
- Provincial government departments (especially those who interact with the youth we work with)
- Municipal governments
- Indigenous governments
- Businesses and business development organizations

### WORKING GROUP ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

**LISA BROWNE**, Executive Director, Stella's Circle

**DAVID FRENCH**, Director of Policy and Planning, A Way Home Canada

**STEPHEN GAETZ**, Director, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness

**AISLING GOGAN**, Director, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

**TERRILEE KELFORD**, Chair, Cornerstone Youth Services

**MICHELLE KINNEY**, Director, Social Development, Nunatsiavut Government

**DAN MEADES**, Executive Director, Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

**BRUCE PEARCE**, Community Developer, End Homelessness St. John's

**SHELDON POLLETT**, Executive Director, Choices for Youth

**MELANIE REDMAN**, Executive Director, A Way Home

**COLLEEN SIMMS**, Director, Mental Health and Addictions, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

## BACKGROUND

# WHAT WE KNEW GOING IN

## YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE UP A LARGE PROPORTION OF CANADA'S HOMELESS POPULATION AND BEING HOMELESS HAS LIFELONG IMPACTS

Approximately 20% of Canada's homeless population are youth between ages 13-24.

Those who leave home at an early age are more likely to be chronically homeless, have involvement with child protective services, be tested for ADHD, experience bullying, experience mental health and addictions symptoms, experience a poor quality of life, and attempt suicide.<sup>2</sup>

The costs to society of youth homelessness are immense. They are paid by government systems as they put forward expensive emergency responses. They are paid by families who suffer from intergenerational poverty. Most importantly, they are paid by young people themselves.

## THE CHALLENGE OF GATHERING REGIONAL DATA IN NL

As you progress through this report, you'll notice that our community profiles include some region-by-region data related to youth. These data points are estimates only, largely for reasons of geography.

Different government departments and statistics agencies provide data on different geographies – the boundaries of the regions rarely match.

In this report, we reference statistics grouped by economic zone, census division, and by child protective services office locations.

All this data is presented per capita to allow for comparisons between regions; in the case of child protective services statistics we have used an estimate of the population each group of offices serves.

2 Gaetz et al., 2014, "Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey." <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/WithoutAHome-final.pdf>

## MANY PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN ST. JOHN'S ARE FROM ELSEWHERE

In 2016, End Homelessness St. John's implemented the city's first point-in-time (PiT) count of the city's homeless population. On the night of November 30th, 2016, at least 166 people were experiencing homelessness in the city. Just over half of those people participated in a survey, which found that 38.1% of them had moved to St. John's within the last five years; the figure for the city's overall population is 13.9%. Of those who had moved to St. John's recently, one in five had come specifically to access services and supports.<sup>3</sup>

There are many other push factors that work together to bring at-risk youth into St. John's, or other cities like it. Cities offer more economic opportunities, more housing options, and (often importantly), more anonymity.<sup>4</sup> In many instances however, youth may be pressured to leave by their families, by service providers, or by the community.

When we spoke to our clients in St. John's who were from elsewhere, the conversation often returned to the close-knit nature of their home communities – both as something they missed, but also as something that had driven them away.

**Struggling with an addiction, or with mental illness is difficult enough; going through it knowing that the whole community knows about it is even harder.**

At the same time, the decision to come to St. John's has disconnected these young people from their personal networks and support systems.

## DEFINING "YOUTH HOMELESSNESS" AND "AT-RISK YOUTH"

The definition of "youth" varies somewhat from organization to organization and study to study. Choices for Youth serves people from ages 16-29, although the vast majority are under 25. In "Without a Home", the national study on youth homelessness, "youth" is defined as 13-24, while in the St. John's point-in-time count used 16-24.

Across all these examples, it is important to note that in all cases "youth" starts in the teens and extends into at least the mid-twenties. Many of these young people may be parents themselves.

In this report we use the same definition of "homelessness" as the St. John's point-in-time count: as "not having the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence"

This report, and much of the literature, also regularly uses the term "at-risk youth," which we use to describe young people who are facing any of the challenges that can lead to homelessness: family breakdown or conflict, addictions and substance use, loss of culture, mental health challenges, displacement, criminal justice involvement, disconnection from education, and inability to secure employment.

We also heard in our consultations that not all organizations or communities identify with this phrasing; some feel that it separates out a certain group of youth to an undue degree, while others prefer more positive framings such as "youth facing challenges."

<sup>3</sup> Everyone Counts: St. John's Homeless Point-In-Time Count 2016, <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/everyone-counts-st-johns-homelessness-point-time-count-2016>, P. 25-26

<sup>4</sup> Turner, Alina. 2014. "Why rural homelessness is different" <http://homelesshub.ca/blog/why-rural-homelessness-different>

# YOUTH FACE DISTINCT STRUGGLES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

In St. John's, the average age of a person's first experience of homelessness is just 16. Almost half of the respondents had been involved with child protection services – a number that rises close to 63% amongst Choices for Youth clients.<sup>5</sup> Notably, the share of the homeless population in St. John's made up of youth is approximately 30%, significantly higher than the national figure of 20%.

Just as in national-level statistics, Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth are heavily overrepresented in the homeless population in St. John's<sup>6</sup> when compared to the general population. The share of homeless youth identifying as members of these groups is greater than in homeless adults.

Similarly, at the provincial level, statistics also point to the many challenges faced by young people. Between 2003-4 and 2014-15, a government decision to prioritize apprehensions as the preferred tool for working with vulnerable families led to the number of children in care and protective intervention to increase by approximately 60%, even as the overall population of children fell.<sup>7</sup> Educational outcomes for these children are substantially worse than in the general population<sup>8</sup>, and they make up a significant share of Choices for Youth's clients.

On many social and health indicators relevant to at-risk young people, Newfoundland and Labrador sits at or near the bottom of all Canadian provinces (Nunavut and the territories excepted). This is true for our high school graduation rate<sup>9</sup>, rates of smoking in youth<sup>10</sup>, youth unemployment rate<sup>11</sup>, literacy rate<sup>12</sup>, rates of alcohol abuse<sup>13</sup>, available shelter beds<sup>14</sup>, and more. This presents many challenges for the youth CFY works with.

5 Everyone Counts: St. John's Homeless Point-In-Time Count 2016, <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/everyone-counts-st-johns-homelessness-point-time-count-2016>

6 Ibid

7 Cochrane, Rachelle. 2016. Children and Youth In-Care in Newfoundland and Labrador

8 Ibid

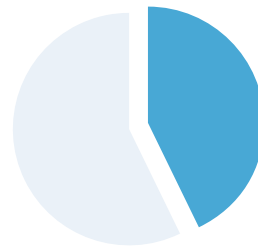
9 Statistics Canada, 2011. "National Household Survey" <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011001-eng.cfm#a6>

10 Statistics Canada, 2012. "Current daily or occasional smokers among children and youth, by province and territory" <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/c-e/tbl/tbl09-eng.htm>

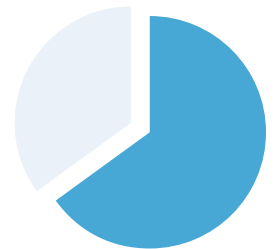
11 Conference Board of Canada, 2014. "Jobless Youth" <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/society/jobless-youth.aspx>

12 Conference Board of Canada, 2014. "Adults with Inadequate Literacy Skills." <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/education/adlt-lowlit.aspx>

13 Statistics Canada, 2011. "Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey." <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-concerns/drug-prevention-treatment/drug-alcohol-use-statistics/canadian-alcohol-drug-use-monitoring-survey-tables-2011.html#t7>



43% of PIT count respondents were homeless **within one year of leaving child protective services**



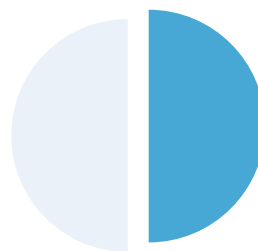
65% of homeless youth in St. John's **concurrently need 4 or more services from public systems**



32.4% of homeless youth in St. John's **identify as LGBTQ2S** (29.5% nationally)



40.6% of homeless youth in St. John's **identify as female** (36.5% nationally)

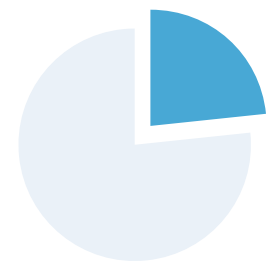


50% of homeless youth in St. John's **identify as male** (57.6% nationally)

Source: Everyone Counts: St. John's Homeless Point-In-Time Count 2016, <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/everyone-counts-st-johns-homelessness-point-time-count-2016>



58.8% of youth became homeless for the first time because of **conflict at home**



23.5% became homeless for the first time because of **addictions or substance use**

14 Statistics Canada, 2016. "Shelter Capacity Report 2016." <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/communities/homelessness/publications-bulletins/shelter-capacity-2016.html#h2.6>

## PROMISING PRACTICES FROM AROUND CANADA

The many challenges local youth face, though, are matched with many solutions. Choices for Youth has long been part of a national dialogue around creative approaches to youth homelessness and the development of the Housing First Framework for Youth<sup>15</sup>. This approach has five core principles:

### IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO HOUSING WITH NO PRECONDITIONS

This is the most familiar Housing First principle – that young people must not be required to demonstrate that they are “ready” for housing, or to demonstrate sobriety or abstinence. For young people, immediate access is especially important in the context of avoiding long stays in emergency shelters.

### YOUTH CHOICE AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Young people need to have as much choices as possible in housing type, support services, access to education and training, and engagement with harm reduction environments.

### POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION

This means applying asset-based models of support for young people that help them towards not just a transition to living independently, but rather a healthy transition into adulthood. A recognition of the impact of trauma on young people is critical.

### INDIVIDUALIZED AND CLIENT-DRIVEN SUPPORTS

Interventions with young people need to be adaptable to each young person’s distinct strengths and needs, and be flexible in their timeframes.

### SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Loneliness and isolation are major issues for young people; housing first programs must create opportunities for social and cultural engagement, meaningful activities, and family reconnection.



Building on the Housing First for Youth model, Choices for Youth is also designing its programs around “Family First” and “Employment First” models that likewise prioritize low-barrier supported access to the labour market and to family relationships.

To employ a family first approach, CFY is operating two programs: Momma Moments and Family Reconnect. Momma Moments is an intensive program focused on group support, community building and case management for pregnant and parenting young women and their children. Family Reconnect is a team devoted to helping young people build safe and positive relationships with anyone they define as family.

To implement the employment first approach, CFY has re-organized its range of employment supports into a “Centralized Employment Support Program.” This program has created a core team of employment support workers who take a case management approach to helping young people through pre-employment skills training, training for the specific skills used in CFY’s social enterprise businesses, supportive employment opportunities offered by those social enterprises, and support to help youth succeed with private employers.

CFY is also engaged in a national dialogue around how to adapt these practices to rural and remote settings – the necessary work that will need to happen for CFY to bring its own programs outside of St. John’s.

<sup>15</sup> Gaetz, Stephen, 2014. “A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth” <http://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/safe-and-decent-place-live-towards-housing-first-framework-youth>

# COMMON THEMES

Our conversations with communities across Newfoundland and Labrador found many common themes when it came to the needs of at-risk and homeless young people.



**MENTAL HEALTH  
AND ADDICTIONS**



**RURAL-URBAN  
CONNECTIONS**



**CONNECTION TO THE  
LAND AND TO PLACE**



**YOUNG ADULTS ARE  
FALLING THROUGH  
THE CRACKS**



**A GROWING  
DRUG CRISIS**



**TRANSPORTATION  
CHALLENGES**



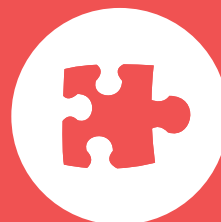
**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND  
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES**



**LITTLE EMERGENCY  
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**THE CHALLENGE  
OF STIGMA**



**OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
INTEGRATED SERVICE  
DELIVERY**

## COMMON THEMES

### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Across the province, service providers are seeing more severe mental health and addictions challenges in young people. In particular, many reported seeing high levels of anxiety. The uncertainty and risk many of these youth face due to other life circumstances – family breakdown, poverty, homelessness – only exacerbate these challenges. Access to mental health care for young people is often tenuous, as there are long waiting lists, limited hours that rarely extend beyond the workday, and many mental health services are located in spaces where at-risk youth are not comfortable going. With the implementation of the recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, this landscape will hopefully change for the better.



### CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND TO PLACE

In communities across the province, young people told CFY how important getting out on the land was to them. Getting out into the woods, going fishing with their family, or spending time camping are things that tie youth to their communities. They are also things that the most at-risk young people may not have access to. This relationship to land and place is particularly important for Indigenous youth, for whom land-based programming is clearly a best practice (with some great examples happening in Labrador). There is an opportunity to build on this sense of connection and community when building programming for young people around the province.



More broadly, many of the young people we met were deeply committed to their homes. They wanted to find ways to stay there and be a part of their community's future. This is a huge asset, and there is an opportunity to engage these young people into work with their peers.

### A GROWING DRUG CRISIS

We heard a lot about drug use amongst youth, both from youth themselves and from service providers. Broadly speaking, young people are moving into using harder drugs – cocaine and opioids – at younger ages (often as young as 12). Many identified cocaine use as increasing. Cocaine, which is difficult to detect with drug testing, is entering local communities through adults employed with large resource projects. Many others spoke to us about the increasing presence of opioids. There was, though, some significant regional differences in the perceived severity of the drug crisis amongst youth, with Southwestern Newfoundland and the Burin Peninsula standing out in our consultations as hotspots.



Communities also had a lot to say about solutions. They were looking for more on-the-ground support through things like needle exchanges and outreach workers, but also for more opportunities and physical spaces in which young people could be engaged in safer activities. They recognize that boredom and social isolation are risk factors, and that a more vibrant community can help mitigate some of these issues before they become long-term crises.

### SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Securing employment for at-risk youth is a challenge in communities across the province. While there are many training and employment programs available, most of them are not a fit for young people facing complex and concurrent challenges with addiction, family breakdown, criminal justice involvement, and mental health. Many of these youth want to work, but are not yet ready to be in a workplace unsupported. At the same time, there are business opportunities open in communities across the province, gaps that could be filled by social enterprises focused on employing at-risk youth paired with service providers offering the necessary supports to ensure their success in the workplace.





# COMMON THEMES

## THE CHALLENGE OF STIGMA



Stigmatization is a major force in the lives of marginalized and at-risk youth, and this is particularly evident in smaller communities where everyone is likely to know the details of a young person and their family's story. Young people with mental health, addictions, or criminal justice issues quickly become known to landlords and to employers, further shrinking an already-limited landscape of opportunity. They are at times wary of service providers who are from that same small community, and often avoid accessing services if they are in public view.

In many communities there is a real opportunity to mitigate some of these issues through integrated service delivery locations – buildings that co-locate many different services for young people, potentially including less stigmatized uses such as recreation. A young person can much more easily step through the door of a building looking for help if passers-by thought they were headed to the gym, or the music room, for example.

## RURAL-URBAN CONNECTIONS



Although we are building this project with the knowledge that many youth would be better served with services closer to home, it is very important to recognize that this isn't true for every young person. Some young people will always need to leave their communities and journey to the city. That might be driven by a need to escape unhealthy relationships or tensions with the community, or it might be driven by a desire to pursue new opportunities or education. Either way, coming to the city is not a failure. We did hear a great deal in our consultations about the risks posed by these journeys – when young people come to St. John's and don't succeed there, the time when they return to their home communities with a feeling of failure is a very risky one for them. Many community agencies suggested there could be more of an organized reception for at-risk young people who are heading to St. John's; even a quick welcome and coffee with a support worker would help make it clear that there are resources there for them if they're needed.

## YOUNG ADULTS ARE FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS



Choices for Youth serves young people ages 16-29, with the majority of clients in the 18-24 age range. Outside of St. John's there are very few resources targeted specifically to these emerging adults. There are also little to no cost-free spaces for youth older than 18 to gather in communities outside of St. John's. Youth under 18 are somewhat better served, between school-based programming and youth centres operated by Community Youth Networks (CYNs). Once young people age out of these programs, though, their options become very limited. Many communities had stories about now-closed pool halls or other venues that had served as youth spaces in the past. Without gathering spaces, youth can be caught up either in social isolation or in the kind of problematic behaviors that often emerge when informal spaces (alleyways, the woods, etc.) become the centre of social life.

Although there are more services for under-18s, there is nonetheless a serious gap that is affecting many of the most vulnerable youth at that age. At age 16, it becomes possible for young people in the child protection system to sign themselves out of care. However these young people, can struggle to find housing as landlords rarely wish to rent to them; they are also reliant on CSSD supports, as income support eligibility only begins at 18. This gap was highlighted as a major issue at every session and meeting CFY held.

**In the general population, more than 40% of 20-29 year-olds still live at home<sup>16</sup> – and yet our social support system, as currently designed, expects the most at-risk young people in our communities to be ready for independent living at ages 16-18.**

Here, the solutions people identified to us were often around policy change that would adjust the age thresholds for access to support or intentional policy design to allow for some degree of overlapping mandates. At the community level there is also space for new programming that would focus on positively engaging young adults with their peers.

16 Statistics Canada, 2016. "Insights on Canadian Society: Diversity of young adults living with their parents" <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14639-eng.htm>

## COMMON THEMES

### TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

Outside of St. John's and Corner Brook, and the one daily bus along the Trans-Canada highway, there is little public transportation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some communities are served by small van lines, which largely shuttle people in and out of larger centres for medical appointments.

**With many at-risk youth lacking access to a vehicle, their ability to access services, employment, or social opportunities is severely limited.**

Where possible, local program staff do drive young people to and from engagements, but the distances involved mean a significant commitment of time to do so for already overstretched staff. These transportation challenges also create an even larger gap between low-income families and others in terms of their ability to access opportunities; money that goes to gas and car payments is often money taken from budgets for food, or extracurricular opportunities.

The communities we consulted offered ideas for changes to the transportation landscape. They suggested that better relationships could be built with the small local transportation providers that already exist, perhaps through subsidy arrangements or guaranteed trips to bring young people to programs. In some cases, coalitions of organizations have banded together to create transportation options. There is a potential synergy with the province's booming tourism industry, which also suffers from the lack of public transport in rural areas.



### LITTLE EMERGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE AND LITTLE HOUSING BEYOND IT



Although visible homelessness – people sleeping outdoors – is rare in small and rural communities, significant numbers of youth are reaching out to service providers in need of emergency housing. Their options, though, are severely limited. There is usually funding through government or church sources for a few nights in a motel, but beyond that there are very few emergency shelter beds outside of St. John's. This is particularly true for young people who identify as male (young women may have access to space at transition houses). Even if an emergency housing solution is found, the options for young people for longer-term housing are severely limited.

**There are very few supportive housing units outside of St. John's, and none dedicated specifically to youth.**

There are also very few bedsitting rooms or affordable rentals available in smaller communities, and landlords are often reluctant to rent to youth who are perceived as "at-risk."

The people we spoke to around this province were quite clear about how they thought this would be solved: through both supply and navigation. On the supply side, many look at vacant buildings and land in their communities and see an opportunity for dedicated youth housing – both staffed, supportive units and scattered-site units, operated by community organizations, with a special focus on transitional housing for youth coming out of care. On the navigation side, the existing Housing Support Workers are doing excellent work – but they carry a heavy burden; expanding these teams would be a great help.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY



Although every community we spoke with did highlight significant service gaps, many of them (particularly the larger regional centres) do have well-established programs and supports that are available to young people. What very few communities have, though, is an agency that serves as a “front door” for all these services, or a physical location at which personnel from different agencies and government departments can gather to provide one-stop services to youth. This approach is especially effective at reaching the most at-risk young people, who are falling through the cracks all over the province. These young people often feel unwelcome in existing community and service spaces.

**There is a real opportunity for a relatively small investment in staff time for coordination to catalyze a major improvement in service access for young people in communities all over the province.**

If done right, the physical spaces used for this coordinated service access can also be gathering spaces for young people, helping to fill that gap as well. Even absent a single physical space, though, having a staff person dedicated to service coordination and navigation for young people can make a huge difference.

## CFY'S OUTREACH AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CENTRE

Since 2005, CFY has operated a facility on Carter's Hill in St. John's that serves as an integrated service delivery location. The Outreach and Youth Engagement (OYE) Centre is our first point of contact with some of the most vulnerable young people in our community. Every day we meet individuals seeking anything from personal care items to access to a phone, from medical care to legal assistance, from a hot meal to counselling services.

Through a safe space, a shared meal, or a meaningful conversation staff can rapidly build trust and offer individualized supports. These relationships are critical to helping youth take steps towards a better life. Staff support youth with the development of Individual Support Plans, and work with them as they access other supports at the organization or within the broader community.

In this way, OYE acts as a service hub. Other service providers, organizations and agencies send representatives to attend drop-in hours as a way to better connect youth to the services they need. Additionally, OYE permanently hosts a registered nurse on-site and is an official SWAP site.

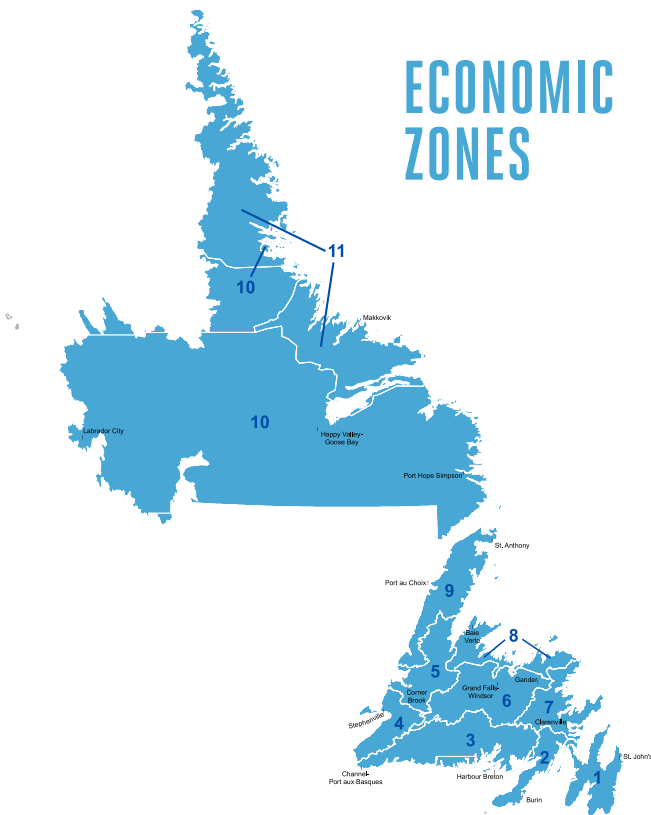
CFY staff at OYE act as facilitators between youth and other systems of support, while helping youth maintain their goals with interventions, one-on-one support, and on-going preventative and harm reduction strategies. By building trust and bringing youth-specific services to young people they are able to find appropriate support, avoid navigating the complex social service systems in the province, and form longer-term support relationships that can help as their needs evolve. Through the delivery of individualized and intensive supports, the team is able to help youth move beyond a crisis-driven lifestyle and begin transitioning towards stability, safety and a more positive life trajectory.



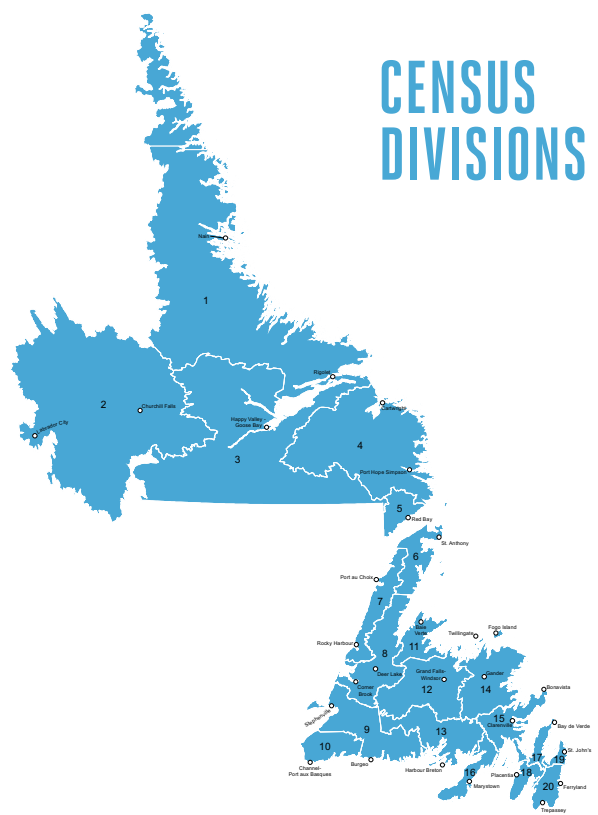
# REGIONAL PROFILES



## ECONOMIC ZONES



## CENSUS DIVISIONS



# REGIONS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

The map of Newfoundland and Labrador is divided into a number of different regions by different agencies. From a data-gathering perspective, most social indicators are at the level of economic zone or census division. Our engagement process had respondents from every region on these maps, and much of the remainder of this report is structured around regional profiles that, by necessity, combine data from regions with different boundaries.

We also gathered some of our data from the Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development (CSSD), which categorizes family interventions by the office where staff are based. Functionally, this provides a regional picture for the intensity of this work, however, it is difficult to map the CSSD data onto the maps above.

## CSSD ZONES

**ZONE L** Sheshatshiu

**ZONE M** Hopedale, Makkovik, Nain, and Rigolet.

**ZONE N** Natuashish  
St. John's Metro, Bell Island and Ferryland offices

**ZONE K** Cartwright, Forteau, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador City.

**ZONE F** CBS, Holyrood, Marystown, Placentia, and Whitbourne

**ZONE E** Bay Roberts, Bonavista, Clarenville, and Harbour Grace

**ZONE H** Corner Brook, Deer Lake, and Woody Point

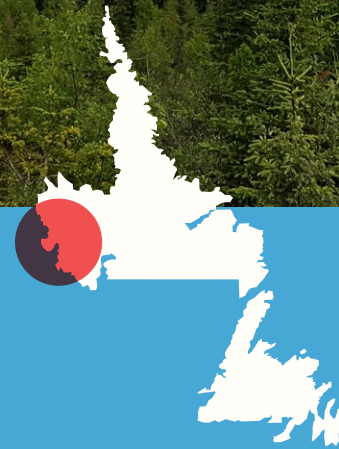
**ZONE I** Baie Verte, Port Aux Basques, Roddickton, Springdale, St. Anthony, and Stephenville

**ZONE G** Botwood, Conne River, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Lewisporte, Musgrave Harbour, St. Alban's, and Summerford



## REGIONAL PROFILE

# LABRADOR WEST



Made up of the twin towns of Labrador City and Wabush, Labrador West is distinct in many ways from the rest of the province. With a boom-and-bust mining economy, a substantial immigrant and Canadian migrant population, and huge physical distances to other service centres, Labrador West faces distinct challenges and opportunities.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

In Labrador West, CFY held a series of face-to-face meetings in July 2017 with key local stakeholders, including members of the Community Advisory Board on Housing and Homelessness, staff from the Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development (CSSD), town staff, the Chamber of Commerce, and local churches.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

In Labrador West, the boom-and-bust, resource-dependent local economy has a huge impact on the landscape for youth. The price and availability of housing has fluctuated wildly, and youth often have access to more money than they would in other parts of the province. There are many service-sector jobs available for youth in the community, but the most vulnerable young people are generally not able to access them. In recent years, the community has seen an influx of Indigenous people from elsewhere in Labrador being placed in affordable housing in Lab West, where there are vacancies – but there are very few Indigenous cultural resources in the community to support them.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUG USE:** Service providers report a strong culture of cocaine use amongst youth, and indicated this was partly driven by the presence of the mine (cocaine doesn't show on drug tests as easily as other drugs).

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Service providers also reported an increase in youth at the hospital's mental health unit and a spike in anxiety levels.

**GATHERING SPACE:** There is no dedicated space for young people to gather in the area; previously funded youth centres have all now closed.

**HOUSING:** There are no boarding homes or bedsitting units available; the primary housing stock is apartments, often unaffordable or inaccessible for young people who for whatever reason cannot live at home. There is also no emergency housing in the community; clients have been, at times, sent as far as St. John's.

**EMPLOYMENT:** As a relatively prosperous community with many service jobs available, many youth in Labrador West do have access to money, however this can further isolate those who don't and facilitate access to drugs and alcohol; there are also no wrap-around supports for youth with bigger challenges such as addictions to function in the workplace.

**THE 16-18 GAP:** Services for youth in this age range, particularly those coming out of care, are minimal.



## LOCAL RESOURCES

**HOUSING:** Courtyard Place, a 10-unit affordable housing development (ages 18+), opened in 2016 and also hosts a community space and the office of the Housing Support Worker; Hope Haven, the local transition house, offers 9 beds for women escaping violence.

**CHURCHES:** Local churches – led by the Salvation Army – are at the forefront of emergency responses to homelessness in Labrador West. They step in to fund whatever expenses are not covered by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills, and Labour for individuals facing homelessness.

**BUSINESS:** The Iron Ore Company (IOC) is quite active in the community, both as a funder and at planning tables.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are a significant number of vacant units in the community owned by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC).



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**HOUSING:** Repurposing vacant NLHC properties to provide emergency beds and supportive housing units for youth.



**EMPLOYMENT:** Providing wrap-around employment supports to youth who have been unable to access the labour market.



**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** Establishing a physical space that could serve as both a gathering/social space for youth and a space for service providers to reach them could make a major impact on young people's mental and physical health.



## LABRADOR WEST BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 9,862

**ECONOMIC ZONE**  
*Zone 2 (Labrador West)*

**CSSD REGION**  
*Zone K (Includes Goose Bay and South Coast)*

**CENSUS DIVISION**  
*CD 10 (Includes Goose Bay and South Coast)*

**OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES,  
ZONE 2 HAS...**

**OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS,  
ZONE K HAS...**

**OUT OF 11 CENSUS  
DIVISIONS, CD10 HAS...**

The third highest teen birth rate

The fifth highest rate of protective interventions.

The third lowest high school graduation rate.

The third highest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The second lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The third lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The fourth highest share of children in care.

The eleventh highest share of under-25s on income support.

The third highest share of youth in residential youth services.

The second lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016, per capita based on estimates of the population within each zone.





## REGIONAL PROFILE

# CENTRAL LABRADOR

Central Labrador contains both Happy Valley-Goose Bay (the primary service centre for Labrador) and Sheshatshiu First Nation, one of two Innu First Nations in the province. The leadership of NunatuKavut (the Southern Inuit) is based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, while the Nunatsiavut Government (the regional government of the Northern Inuit) also has a significant presence there.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff visited Central Labrador twice, holding exploratory meetings with key local stakeholders in both Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Sheshatshiu in July 2017, and then returning in November to host a public forum attended by 19 people as well as a youth focus group and a series of stakeholder meetings.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

With three Indigenous governments, the provincial government, the municipal government in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and a variety of community organizations, this area is relatively well-supplied with service providers. There is, however, a need for more coordination around services for young people. The most at-risk youth in the community face a much more limited set of options for support. The economic boom brought on by the Muskrat Falls project has also been a strain, and as that project winds down further social impacts are anticipated.



# LOCAL CHALLENGES

## KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA:** With a large Indigenous population, many local youth must grapple with the impact of colonialism and residential schooling on their families, their mental health, and their culture.

**DRUG USE:** Young people are engaging in drug use earlier in their lives, and the economic boom has brought an influx of harder drugs such as cocaine into the area.

**RACISM:** Indigenous youth often face racism when seeking services and pursuing employment opportunities.

**LACK OF GATHERING SPACES:** There are no gathering spaces in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for youth (Sheshatshiu has a new and active youth centre). Boredom is a real risk factor for many.

**SERVICE GAPS:** Local stakeholders highlighted services for youth aged 16-18, mental health services, and harm-reduction services for youth with complex needs as the most pressing gaps.



# LOCAL RESOURCES

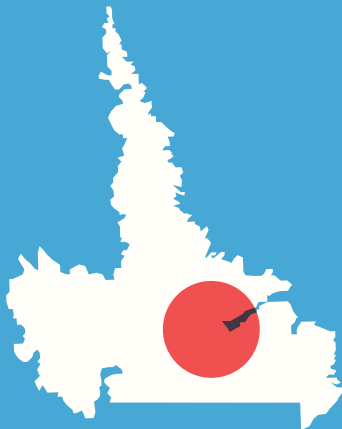
**COMMUNITY AGENCIES:** The primary youth-facing community agency is the Community Youth Network, housed within the Labrador Friendship Centre. Service clubs, the food bank, and economic development agencies such as the Community Business Development Corporation are also active. In Sheshatshiu the Charles J. Andrews Treatment Centre operates a number of innovative addictions programs.

**INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS:** Much of the front-line responses to homelessness in the area are led by Indigenous governments. The Nunatsiavut Government operates a shelter and a number of supportive living units in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Sheshatshiu First Nation operates emergency houses in that community. More broadly, these governments employ youth outreach workers and offer a variety of programming, as does NunatuKavut.

**CHURCHES:** Local faith groups have a ministerial coalition that regularly meets to discuss broader community needs.

**EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS:** A coalition has been formed to drive the creation of a youth centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

**GOVERNMENT SERVICES:** as the regional service centre, Happy Valley-Goose Bay has offices for the departments that work with youth, as well as a range of health-related services.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** There is an identified need in the community for a single location in which services could be provided to the most at-risk youth, who currently have few options beyond the shelter. CFY could potentially play a catalyst role in developing such a location and populating it with service providers.



**CAPACITY BUILDING:** Local partners identified a number of areas in which CFY's experience could be useful, particularly with regards to building an understanding in local organizations of harm reduction and its implications in youth services.



**SERVICE COORDINATION:** There is currently no one person responsible for coordinating the various existing services available to youth. A staffed role to take this on could provide a shorter-term boost to services and help lay the groundwork for an integrated service delivery site.



**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** There is significant interest from Indigenous governments and local community partners in social enterprise opportunities that would engage youth. CFY could play a role in developing or operating them.



## CENTRAL LABRADOR BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 9,473

### ECONOMIC ZONE

*Zone 3 (Doesn't include any coastal communities)*

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES,  
CENTRAL LABRADOR HAS...

The second highest teen birth rate

The second highest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The highest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The highest share of under-25s on income support.

### CSSD REGION

*Zone K (Includes Goose Bay and South Coast)*

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS,  
ZONE K HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The sixth highest rate of protective interventions.

The second lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The fourth highest share of children in care.

The third highest share youth in residential youth services.

The second lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

### CENSUS DIVISION

*CD 10 (Includes Goose Bay and South Coast)*

OUT OF 11 CENSUS  
DIVISIONS, CD10 HAS...

The third highest share of youth with no high school diploma.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016, per capita based on estimates of the population within each zone.



PHOTO BY BARRET & MACKAY PHOTOGRAPHY / NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

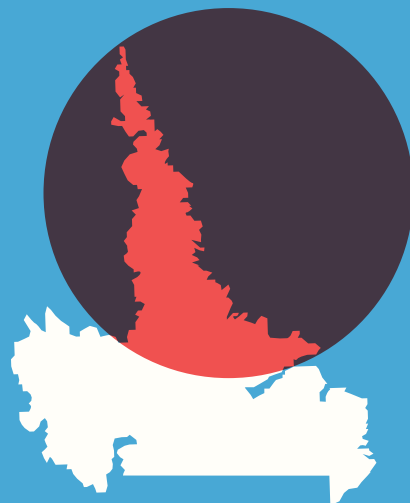
## REGIONAL PROFILE

# NORTH COAST OF LABRADOR

The North Coast of Labrador contains the five communities that make up the autonomous Inuit region of Nunatsiavut as well as the Innu First Nation of Natuashish. All of these communities are remote, with access only by plane or (in summer and fall) coastal ferry.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff visited the North Coast in July 2017, stopping briefly in all the Nunatsiavut communities and staying in Nain (the primary administrative centre) for an extended series of meetings and to observe portions of the National Inuit Youth Summit. Our staff are planning to visit Natuashish at the next opportunity.



# OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

## KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

In our conversations on the North Coast we heard a great deal about connection to the land – how important going off on the land is for young people’s mental and physical health, how low-income families can be excluded from it, and how climate change is shortening the season in which it is possible. Youth in these communities face many challenges from their isolation, from intergenerational trauma, from addictions, and from a severe shortage of housing, but we also saw a rich and innovative set of programs being operated for youth by the Indigenous government. We also heard a great deal of interest in social enterprise opportunities as a way of generating new economic opportunities and engaging the young people facing the biggest challenges in training and employment.

## LOCAL RESOURCES

**INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS:** In the Inuit communities of Nunatsiavut, there are a variety of Nunatsiavut Government programs focused on youth, including the Going Off Going Strong program that gets young people out on the land, a new youth centre in Nain that provides a safe overnight space, and the Community Shed program that provides youth with a space to learn and practice carpentry and other skills. In Natuashish recreation programs run by the First Nation provide a refuge for youth in the evenings.

**HEALTH SUPPORTS:** Labrador-Grenfell health employs mental health and addictions counsellors, community clinics, and other services.

**ELDERS AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE:** There are elders present in these communities who can pass on traditional skills and knowledge to young people.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** Recreation/community centres and youth centres exist in several communities and can be spaces for youth-focused programming.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA:** The impacts of colonialism and residential schooling on the community extend across generations, disrupting home lives, mental health, and much more. Payments from residential school settlements are coming in; the community recognizes that these payments can make a positive difference, however there remains a critical need for support to help traumatized families heal and an identified risk of settlements exacerbating the on-going effects of trauma.

**DRUG USE:** Alcohol is the primary drug of concern for youth in these communities, although other substances (including solvents) are also a concern.

**ACCESS TO THE LAND:** Going off on the land is a central element of both Innu and Inuit cultures and a critical element of physical and mental health for people in these communities. Young people’s access to the land, though, is limited both by the cost of these activities (gas for snowmobiles, for example) and increasingly by the impact of climate change, which is shortening the season during which it is safe to travel over ice (among other impacts).

**HOUSING:** There is a severe shortage of housing in all of these communities, limiting options for young people.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** With a strong interest in developing social enterprises in these communities, there may be a role for Choices for Youth to provide support and expertise, particularly regarding supporting the engagement of the most at-risk youth.



**CAPACITY BUILDING:** With an expanding array of programs for youth in the region, there may be space for CFY staff to engage in capacity-building, particularly around working with youth who face the most acute challenges; there is also an opportunity for local staff to do capacity-building for CFY in a number of areas, particularly around intergenerational trauma.



**FUNDING SUPPORT:** CFY may have access to or experience with funding streams that have not yet been tapped into to support youth-related programming on the North Coast.



## NORTH COAST OF LABRADOR BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 3,548

### ECONOMIC ZONE *Zone 1*

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES,  
ZONE 1 HAS...

The highest teen birth rate.

The highest youth hospital morbidity.

The second lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The second lowest share of under-25s on income support.

### CSSD REGION *Zone M (Does not include Natuashish)*

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS,  
ZONE M HAS...

The third highest rate of protective interventions.

The third highest share of youth in kinship services.

The third highest rate of children in care.

The second highest share of youth in residential youth services\*.

The third highest share of youth in community youth corrections\*.

### CENSUS DIVISION *CD 11 (Nunatsiavut)*

OUT OF 11 CENSUS  
DIVISIONS, CD11 HAS...

The highest share of youth with no high school diploma.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016, per capita based on estimates of the population within each zone.

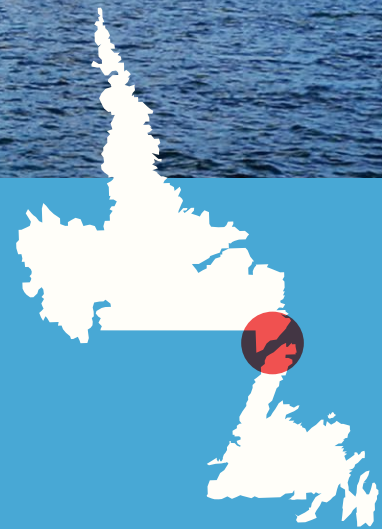
\* This is an estimate. Data list "Under 5" as the number of youth in these arrangements, but do not provide an exact number. Ranking is accurate for any number between 2 and 5.



PHOTO BY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# NORTHERN PENINSULA AND LABRADOR STRAITS



Connected by the ferry route across the Labrador Strait, this is a region of very small communities spread out along long stretches of coastline, with a relatively large service centre in the town of St. Anthony.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

In September 2017, CFY staff travelled to meet community stakeholders in Forteau in Labrador, held a community forum in St. Anthony, and held a youth focus group in Flower's Cove in partnership with the local Community Youth Network.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

In this region, CFY's team found young people with a strong connection to getting out on the land, and to a sense of community in the area. Stakeholders flagged poverty as less of a concern in this region than in many others, but were vocal with regards to the demographic pressures of the area's aging and shrinking population. Tied into this were concerns about the continuity of services, with the area having trouble retaining doctors, teachers, and the like. It was also evident that economic opportunities in the community, and specifically for at-risk youth, were not yet being fully leveraged.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUG USE:** Harder drugs – particularly cocaine – are increasingly accessible; there is no safe injection infrastructure and few people trained to use naloxone; service providers noted that experimentation, rather than addiction, is the issue with local youth.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES:** Retention of skilled professionals is a major challenge, and those who are on the ground often cover huge distances. There are relatively few community organizations on the ground.

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Open discussion of mental health issues does not happen as often as it should; there is still stigma around identifying with them, and access to care is very limited in the area.

**TRANSPORTATION:** The population of the region is very distributed, with no public transit to speak of; this severely constrains access to programs and jobs and increases social isolation.

**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS:** There is no visible homelessness, but couch-surfing is happening, and the region does not have a Housing Support Worker to help people find housing. There is very limited access to rental accommodation; rentals are rarely advertised.

**EMPLOYMENT:** There are no supports for the most at-risk youth to sustain employment, and relatively few jobs available for young people in the area.



## LOCAL RESOURCES

**GATHERING SPACES:** there are number of community centres, including a new one in Main Brook, and St. Anthony has lots of programming space available.

**YOUTH PROGRAMMING:** For youth under 18, there are several active youth centres run by Community Youth Networks (though these are not necessarily intended or equipped to work with the most high-risk populations).

**CHURCHES:** Local churches are operating food banks, thrift stores, and outreach programs.

**HEALTH CARE:** St. Anthony is the regional health-care centre and has a hospital. There is a local mental health and addictions unit with workers based in some of the small communities in the region. Access to psychiatrists is minimal and often by telehealth.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** Tourism and food security were identified as specific areas where social enterprises could engage and employ local at-risk youth. Food security businesses could include establishing local vegetable supplies or creating secondary markets in partnership with local fish plants that are currently disposing of fish tongues and cheeks, for example.



**EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS:** Many people from this region spoke to a lack of awareness around mental health, addictions, and homelessness in the area. Having an organization present with a mandate to talk about these topics could help shift the culture, services and stigma around them.



**HOUSING FOR YOUTH:** Outside of St. Anthony, it is often inexpensive to acquire property in the region; this could make it economically viable to create affordable rental units in smaller communities that would be targeted to young people, particularly if young people could also be engaged in the necessary renovations



**PARTNERSHIPS:** This region was the base for Sir Wilfrid Grenfell, and the charitable association he founded (The International Grenfell Association) is still active and providing significant amounts of funding for local projects around education, community development, cultural development, and health care.

## NORTHERN PENINSULA AND LABRADOR STRAITS BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 9,980

### ECONOMIC ZONE

Zone 5 (Labrador Side) and Zone 6 (St. Anthony Area)

### CSSD REGION

Closest (but not great) fit is Zone 1 (Baie Verte, Port Aux Basques, Roddickton, Springdale, St. Anthony, and Stephenville)

### CENSUS DIVISION

Closest match is CD 9 (Northern Peninsula)

### OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES...

The Labrador side has the fifth highest rate of youth hospital morbidity; the St. Anthony side has the sixth highest rate.

The Labrador side has the second highest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged; the St. Anthony side has the eighth highest.

### OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE 1 HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The lowest rate of protective interventions.

The lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The fifth highest share of children in care.

The second lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The fifth highest share of youth in community youth corrections.

### OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, CD9 HAS...

The 3rd highest high school graduation rate.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016, per capita based on estimates of the population within each zone.



PHOTO BY BARRET & MACKAY PHOTOGRAPHY / NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND



This region includes the area around Port aux Basques, areas of the South Coast around Burgeo, and the Bay St. George region, which surrounds the primary regional service centre, Stephenville.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

In September 2017, CFY staff held a forum, youth focus group, and stakeholder meetings in Stephenville with a total of 24 attendees; staff returned to the region in November to deliver a keynote and attend the Annual General Meeting of the Community Education Network, which brought together many key community stakeholders from around the region and 60+ youth.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Youth in Southwestern Newfoundland face significant challenges; there is a drug crisis in the region, employment opportunities are thin on the ground, and geographical isolation challenges service delivery. The region, however, stands out for a high level of coordination and collaboration between service providers, and for the level of services available in what are still relatively small communities. There is also a strong interest in expanding these services further.

# LOCAL CHALLENGES

## KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**HOUSING:** With an increase in economic activity due to the construction of the Maritime Link project, housing prices have skyrocketed and there is very limited access to bedsitting rooms or spaces in affordable housing units. Influxes of college students also impact the housing market in the Stephenville area.

**DRUG USE:** As in other communities, cocaine use has become much more visible in youth, and both intravenous drug use and opiate use are a major issue, often beginning at a young age.

**THE 16-18 GAP:** Local service providers identified services for ages 16-18 as a critical gap in the area. At 16, as youth come out of care, they do not yet qualify for income support and are rarely accepted by landlords into housing.

**EMPLOYMENT:** There are employment opportunities for youth in the region, but the most at-risk youth struggle to take advantage of them. There are no programs for wrap-around support, and youth with any criminal justice involvement struggle with background checks and stigmatization

**GEOGRAPHY:** Many youth in the region live in small communities with no public transportation available other than unaffordable taxi rides. This leads to social isolation and limited access to services, and makes heavy demands on service providers' time as they travel to meet clients.

**GATHERING SPACES:** There are no gathering spaces in the region for young adults; programs and recreation targeted at youth tend to fall off at age 18 or with the end of high school.



# LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** The region has a vibrant community sector. The Community Education Network and Associates (CEN) operates a range of programs, including emergency shelter facilities, employment programs, and community youth networks in the region. They also host the region's Housing Support Worker. The local Lions Club is one of the more active in the province on social issues, and there is a newly-founded Friendship Centre as well as activity from the Qalipu First Nation. There is also a local furniture bank.

**BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE:** In Stephenville there is a former Youth Assessment Centre (a correctional facility) that is sitting vacant and owned by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. CEN has recently been granted a lease on the property with the intention of renovating the building into supportive housing for youth. There is also interest in the community in redeveloping the former air base, a massive site in the centre of town, possibly as a green industrial hub.

**EXISTING COLLABORATIONS:** Local organizations are well-networked through a number of bodies including the Housing Stability Initiative. The Chamber of Commerce is well-connected to the community sector and municipal governments are positively engaged.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**HOUSING FOR YOUTH:** CEN is moving forward with designs and plans to create a supportive housing space for youth in the former Youth Assessment Centre. These would be the first supportive housing units for youth in the province outside of St. John's. There are opportunities for CFY to assist with the development of policies and procedures based on our own experiences with the Lilly Building in St. John's; there may also be opportunities to engage CFY's social enterprise construction firm to bid on the physical renovations, or to work together on staffing models for the facility.



**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** The most at-risk youth in the area could benefit from a centralized employment support model similar to the one used by CFY in St. John's, which offers wrap-around supports, training and opportunities for young people through range of social enterprises.



**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** young adults in the area would benefit from a space to both gather and access a variety of services provided by community and government agencies.



## SOUTHWESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 21,306

### ECONOMIC ZONE

Zone 9 (Bay St. George and South Coast)  
Zone 10 (Port aux Basques area)

### CSSD REGION

Closest (but not great) fit is Zone 1 (Baie Verte, Port Aux Basques, Roddickton, Springdale, St. Anthony, and Stephenville)

### CENSUS DIVISION

Closest matches are CD 4 (Bay St. George area) and CD 3 (South Coast)

### OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES...

Zone 9 has the seventh highest and Zone 10 has the tenth highest rates youth hospital morbidity.

Zone 9 has the tenth highest and Zone 10 the fifth highest rates of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

Zone 9 has the seventh-highest and Zone 10 the fifth highest share of under-25s on income support.

### OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE 1 HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The lowest rate of protective interventions.

The lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The fifth highest share children in care.

The second lowest share of for youth in residential youth services.

The fifth lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

### OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, THESE HAVE..

The fifth highest and second highest high school graduation rates.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



PHOTO BY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# WESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND



This region includes the city of Corner Brook, as well as the surrounding areas of the Bay of Islands, Gros Morne, and Deer Lake. As the largest community in the province outside of the Avalon Peninsula, Corner Brook is a major service centre.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

In September 2017, CFY staff held a large public forum, a series of stakeholder meetings, and a youth focus group in Corner Brook. More than 50 people participated from government, community, and business as well as local youth.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

As a major service centre, Corner Brook in particular is relatively well supplied with programs and services (though there are still major gaps in both housing and youth-specific services). There is a significant amount of intergenerational poverty and stigmatization, particularly in city neighbourhoods. While there are many services present, there is little in the way of service-coordination capacity, particularly around youth. Despite some feelings of burnout due to several past attempts to create more infrastructure, there is a strong core group of committed and communicative service providers keen to work towards integrated services delivery.

# LOCAL CHALLENGES

## KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

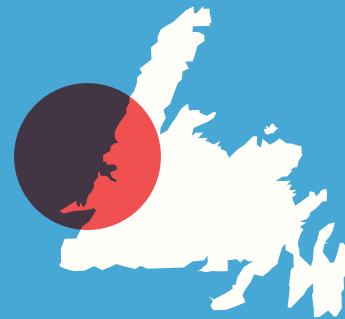
**SYSTEMS NAVIGATION:** Many participants in our consultations cited this as a major risk factor for youth in the region; it is not always clear who to go to for help or where mandates begin and end.

**FAMILY SUPPORTS:** Challenges at home are a major factor in the lives of at-risk youth in the region. Participants spoke to a lack of support for parents and a resulting lack of life and coping skills in local young people.

**DRUG USE:** Easy availability of drugs and alcohol is a major issue, although harder drugs (opioids, intravenous drugs, cocaine) were not as big of a concern as in some other communities, but everyone CFY consulted noted an early age for drug use in the area.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES:** There are no emergency shelter beds for young men in the region (some women can be accommodated at the local transition house). Between government and church funding sources, hotel accommodations can often be found for a few nights, but beyond that there are few options other than travelling to St. John's.

**EMPLOYMENT:** There are very limited employment support options in the community for the most at-risk youth, who struggle with stigma, lack of transportation, low education, and lack of on-the-job supports.



# LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** The primary youth-facing organizations are the local Community Youth Network, in partnership with the YMCA. There is a Housing Support Worker based in Corner Brook who also serves many youth clients. Consultation participants also repeatedly mentioned the Women's Centre, Salvation Army, Vine Place Community Centre, the Community Mental Health Initiative, SWAP, the Pathfinders, and a number of other community groups as playing a role.

**GOVERNMENT SERVICES:** Corner Brook is the primary centre, with access to Children, Seniors and Social Development, Advanced Education, Skills, and Labour, an Accelerated Community Treatment Team, a Mental Health and Addictions unit, and more.

**BUSINESSES:** There are a few high-profile businesses based in Corner Brook, including Colemans (which is regarded as community-engaged) and the paper mill.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are a significant number of vacant Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in the community, and two vacant schools. There is also some integrated service delivery already happening through the Blomidon Place space, which provides mental health supports for youth under 19 and their families.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** Expanding on the Blomidon Place model to include a wider range of services to a wider age range would help address the challenges youth face in navigating services in the region. There could be a role for CFY in providing coordination and leadership in this, and in the related interagency coordination work.



**FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS:** CFY's capacity to raise and leverage funds from both government and private donors could be used to re-animate already-developed plans that were unable to secure resources.



**HOUSING FOR YOUTH:** Vacant Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units present an opportunity for CFY to operate scattered-site supportive or emergency units focused specifically on youth.



**FAMILY SUPPORTS:** With family dynamics identified so often as a challenge in the area, there is a strong case for adapting CFY's suite of family-focused programs (Momma Moments and Family Reconnect) to the local context.



## WESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 41,004

### ECONOMIC ZONE

*Zone 8 (Does not include Gros Morne area, does include Deer Lake)*

### CSSD REGION

*Zone H (Corner Brook, Deer Lake, and Woody Point)*

### CENSUS DIVISION

*CD 5*

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES, ZONE 8 HAS...

The 9th highest teen birth rate.

The 8th highest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The third-lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The fifth-lowest share of under-25s on income support.

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE H HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The third-lowest rate of protective interventions.

The 6th highest share of youth in kinship services.

The second lowest share of children in care.

The third-lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The fourth highest share of youth in community youth corrections.

OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, CD 5 HAS...

The 4th highest high school graduation rate.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



PHOTO BY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND



This region includes the large towns of Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander as well as the Baie Verte Peninsula and the mining towns of the interior. CFY also included Harbour Breton and surrounding communities in our outreach to the region, since their primary service centre is in Grand Falls-Windsor and people from these areas attended our regional engagement session.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff made several visits to the region between July and September 2017, holding meetings with stakeholders in Conne River, Harbour Breton, and Grand Falls-Windsor as well as a large forum in Grand Falls-Windsor that attracted 60 attendees from all over the region.



## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Both Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander act as service hubs for a very widely distributed population. There are many service providers on the ground, particularly in Grand Falls, with lots of interest in shared service-delivery models. Addictions and family breakdown are major challenges, as are broader issues of service coordination and navigation for young people, who do not have any one “front door” to go to for services in the region. The region also contains the Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River, a Mik'maw community with its own distinct array of services and challenges; there is a particular interest there in strengthening land-based programs.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUG USE:** Service providers highlighted drug use as the biggest local risk factor for youth. Youth with addictions challenges also arrive in the region for treatment at the Hope Valley Centre and may stay after the centre releases them at age 18.

**FAMILY BREAKDOWN:** Young people in the region often face challenges at home, with relatively little support available for parents and families.

**POVERTY:** Community stakeholders returned many times in our consultations to the impact of poverty in both the large and small communities of the region, primarily caused by lack of employment opportunities.

**SERVICE NAVIGATION:** Although there are many services available to at-risk youth in Central Newfoundland, the process of navigating through them is unclear, and youth may not know where to present for help.

## LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** There are many community organizations on the ground in Central, particularly in Grand Falls-Windsor. Serving youth are the Community Youth Networks (there are 8 in Central, serving ages up to 18), Boys and Girls Clubs and the Family Resource Centres which serve young parents; the Exploits Community Centre is also very active. The Central Housing and Homelessness Network, Canadian Mental Health Association, Violence Prevention South and Central, the YMCA, and the Women's Centre were all also repeatedly mentioned.

**GOVERNMENT SERVICES:** Participants in our consultations highlighted the presence of mental health and addictions units (including a mental health inpatient unit), the Hope Valley youth treatment centre, Advanced Education Skills and Labour offices, an Accelerated Community Treatment Team, and more – primarily located in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor. Miawpukek First Nation also has staff dedicated to working with local youth and a variety of programs.

**CHURCHES:** The Salvation Army and the local Pentecostal Church were highlighted by community members as especially engaged on these issues.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are a number of vacant buildings in the area that could be repurposed, including a school and some commercial spaces.

**EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS:** In Grand Falls-Windsor a local alliance of community groups (the Social Justice Coalition) is working on a shared space and services model (to be called the Centre for Social Change) for a number of organizations focused on homelessness, violence prevention, mental health, and related issues.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** CFY could play a role in coordinating service delivery for at-risk youth in the region, ideally from a one-stop location. There could be an opportunity to partner with existing shared-space plans to integrate a youth-services element and/or drop-in space.



**HOUSING:** there are no housing options targeted at youth in the region, and a short supply of affordable apartments or bedsits; there could be an opportunity to develop scattered-site supportive or affordable housing to meet this need.



**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT:** CFY heard many ideas for social enterprises that could engage at-risk youth in the region, including laundromats, agricultural businesses, and more. There could be a role for CFY to play in making these a reality with the appropriate wrap-around supports.



**FAMILY SUPPORTS:** With family breakdown and intergenerational poverty identified as major risk factors for local youth, CFY programs



## CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND BY THE NUMBERS

**POPULATION: 80,100** (26,206 in EZ12, 7259 in EZ13, 46,635 in EZ14)

### ECONOMIC ZONE

- 12 – Grand Falls Windsor and surrounding areas
- 13 – Bay of Islands and Conne River
- 14 – Gander, Twillingate, Fogo, and surrounds

### CSSD REGION

- Zone G (Botwood, Conne River, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Lewisporte, Musgrave Harbour, St. Alban's, Summerford)

### CENSUS DIVISION

- CD 6 is the closest match (Grand Falls-Windsor and surrounds)

### OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES...

Zone 12 has the sixth lowest rate of youth hospital morbidity, Zone 13 the seventh lowest, and Zone 14 the third lowest.

Zone 12 has the sixth lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged. Zone 13 has the eighth lowest, and Zone 13 the seventh lowest.

Zone 12 has the third lowest share of under-25s on income support. Zone 13 has the tenth lowest, and Zone 14 the fifth lowest.

### OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE G HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The second lowest rate of protective interventions.

The second lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The lowest share of children in care.

The lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The fourth lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

### OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, CD 5 HAS...

The fifth highest high school graduation rate.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



PHOTO BY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# BURIN PENINSULA

This region encompasses all the communities located on the Burin Peninsula, with the primary service centre located in Marystown.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff held a series of meetings with key community organizations as well as a public forum in Marystown in September 2017. More than 40 people participated.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

The Burin Peninsula stands out for its tight and collaborative network of service providers, but also for a disconnect between the limited level of services available and the scale of the challenges the communities in the area are facing. Many people spoke to CFY about the severity of the addictions crisis in the region, as well as a recent series of suicides. There is a strong interest in strengthening services for youth in the region.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUG USE:** Most people we talked to identified drugs – particularly opioids – as the primary risk factor for youth. Support services in this area are severely limited, with only one addictions counsellor for the region, limited naloxone training, and no needle exchange.

**GEOGRAPHY:** With little to no public transportation options in the region, geography is a major barrier for young people, who have trouble accessing services or sustaining employment, particularly if they are not able to maintain ownership of a vehicle.

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Young people’s mental health – and the limited supports available for young people in need locally – are a major issue in the area.

**STIGMA:** Young people face a lack of understanding of their challenges from service providers, potential employers, their families, and the community.

**HOUSING:** There is no emergency housing or shelter for young men in the region, very few bed-sitting rooms, and limited affordable housing options.



## LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** The Smallwood Community Centre, Grace Sparkes House (a transition house), the Brighter Futures Family Resource Centre and the CYNs in St. Lawrence and Grand Bank are the primary youth-serving organizations. Many of these however limit their services to young below the age of 18. Grace Sparkes House also hosts the local Housing Support Worker and a community social worker (the only one in the region). The YMCA just completed a large facility in Marystown as well, and there are a number of active service clubs.

**CHURCHES:** In Marystown, The Merge (a local church) has taken a leadership role in housing and homelessness work.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are vacant Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in the community that could be repurposed as supportive or affordable housing for youth. The TJ MacDonald Building, a former Youth Assessment Centre, is also vacant and owned by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

**BUSINESSES:** There are a few high-profile local businesses who could be engaged – Kiewit in Marystown, for example, and Canada Fluorspar in St. Lawrence.



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**HOUSING:** CFY could partner with in redeveloping and/or operating supportive and emergency housing for youth in the TJ MacDonald Building and/or vacant NLHC units. There is an opportunity to combine this with similar ongoing plans in Stephenville.



**COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING:** There was significant interest in leveraging CFY as a resource to help build capacity in local organizations; this could happen through training, staff exchanges, or other partnerships.



**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** There is no gathering space for young adults on the Burin Peninsula at the moment; there could be potential in creating some kind of drop-in service delivery location in which other service providers could co-locate.



## BURIN PENINSULA BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 20,751

**ECONOMIC ZONE**  
EZ 16 (Burin Peninsula)

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES,  
EZ 16 HAS...

The seventh highest teen birth rate.

The second lowest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The seventh highest share of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The seventh lowest share of under-25s on income support.

**CSSD REGION**  
Zone F (Also includes CBS, Placentia, Whitbourne)

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS,  
ZONE F HAS (PER CAPITA)...

The fifth lowest rate of protective interventions.

The fifth lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The third lowest share of children in care.

The fifth lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

**CENSUS DIVISION**  
CD 2 (Burin Peninsula)

OUT OF 11 CENSUS  
DIVISIONS, CD 2 HAS...

The fourth lowest high school graduation rate.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



PHOTO BY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# CLARENVILLE-BONAVISTA

This region includes all of the communities on the Bonavista Peninsula as well as the main regional service centre in Clarenville. In recent years this area has become a tourism and small business hotspot as well as a centre for employees working on large resource projects nearby.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY visited the region twice; the Bonavista area was the site of the initial pilot of our community engagement model and while there in July we hosted two youth focus groups, a number of stakeholder meetings, and a public session in Port Union. CFY staff returned to the region in November 2017 to meet with youth and host a community forum in Clarenville. Between the two engagements, more than 50 people participated.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

This is a region on the move, with lots of activity around small business, tourism and social enterprise at the Bonavista end, and an increasingly vibrant community in Clarenville. Organizations tend to work together in two clusters, one in the Clarenville area and another around Bonavista. A clear challenge is ensuring that the most vulnerable young people in the region are able to fully participate in all of this activity. Drug use is taking its toll, and the close-knit nature of local communities also leads to struggles with stigma.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUGS:** People all over the peninsula spoke to us about the increase they were seeing in drug use among young people, beginning at younger ages. This was particularly pronounced in the Bonavista area, connected to the sense of isolation and boredom that many youth feel living in a small community.

**GEOGRAPHY:** There is very little public transportation available in the region, and many major services (methadone treatment, for example), are concentrated in Clarenville. Young people struggle to access these services, as well as to access employment opportunities.

**STIGMA:** Young people shy away from accessing services when they are too visible (particularly around mental health and addictions), and must work with service providers who are also community members that know their families and friends. Developing a reputation can severely limit access to both housing and employment opportunities.

**SERVICE GAPS:** As is true elsewhere, there are very few services available for 16-18 year olds; local youth and service providers also highlighted an absence of services targeted at older youth, who lose access to school-based programs and many local recreation programs once they get older than 18.



## LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** There are two community youth networks, family resource centres, the Tip-a-Vista Wellness foundation, many service clubs, Ability Employment, and a number of others providing direct services. There are also a number of community organizations engaged in tourism and economic development which are interested in playing a role with local youth, particularly the Coaker Foundation in Port Union.

**CHURCHES:** In Clarenville, a local congregation has taken the lead role on affordable housing and recently opened a 10-unit development there.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** in Bonavista a former school in the centre of the community has been gutted with the intention of transforming it into a wellness centre. In Port Union, the Coaker Foundation has a huge portfolio of properties built by the Fisherman's Protective Union that they aim to redevelop for a variety of community uses.

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:** There are CNA Campuses in Clarenville and Bonavista that both want to be engaged on community issues.

**EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS:** Local organizations around Bonavista are quite tightly networked with each other through several groups. In Clarenville, seniors' groups have built a highly successful collaboration that includes the provision of transportation services (The CREST Bus).

# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** in Bonavista, CFY could potentially fit into the array of services being planned for the Wellness Centres; such spaces are often much easier for young people to comfortably access than more clinical ones. In Clarenville there is also strong demand for an organization with a youth specific mandate to coordinate the existing local services, potentially under one physical roof.



**HOUSING:** Tied into the social enterprise work, there is an opportunity for CFY to play a role in establishing and/or staffing dedicated housing units for young people; this could fit well with the local desire to protect and preserve heritage structures.



**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** There were numerous social enterprise opportunities identified for CFY in this region, primarily in partnership with the Coaker Foundation in Port Union, who has a strong social mandate attached to their work. CFY's existing expertise operating a construction business could be put to use to engage at-risk youth in the renovation and reconstruction of structures in Port Union, as well as potentially playing a role in more service-oriented business opportunities all around the region.



## CLARENVILLE-BONAVISTA BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 27,537

**ECONOMIC ZONE**  
EZ 15 (Clarenville-Bonavista)

**OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES,  
EZ 16 HAS...**

The seventh lowest teen birth rate.

The ninth highest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The sixth highest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The eighth highest share of under-25s on income support.

**CSSD REGION**  
Zone E (Also includes Conception Bay North)

**OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS,  
ZONE E HAS (PER CAPITA)...**

The third lowest rate of protective interventions.

The fourth lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The third lowest share of children in care.

The fifth lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The fifth lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

**CENSUS DIVISION**  
CD 7 (Clarenville-Bonavista)

**OUT OF 11 CENSUS  
DIVISIONS, CD 7 HAS...**

The fifth lowest high school graduation rate.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.





PHOTO BY BARRET & MACKAY PHOTOGRAPHY / NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM



## REGIONAL PROFILE

# CONCEPTION BAY NORTH

This region (for the purposes of this report) consists of the communities extending along the coast of Conception Bay, north and northeast of Holyrood. We also include the communities on the south side of Trinity Bay, for whom the large communities of Conception Bay North (CBN) are the primary service centres.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff held a regional engagement session in Carbonear in September 2017, as well as a series of phone interviews with local organization representatives.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

With a large population spread out across many small and medium-sized communities, providing services in this region is challenging – made more so by a lack of transportation and at times a lack of coordination between community agencies, law enforcement, and health care. Drug abuse – particularly of prescription drugs – is a challenge. There are, however, a number of community agencies and committed local volunteers working hard on providing services.



## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**SERVICE ACCESS:** There are long wait lists for services in the area, particularly around mental health and addictions, and a lack of coordination or awareness of options among the different people who might engage with an at-risk young person (law enforcement, community agencies, schools, etc.).

**DRUG USE:** Local contacts identified opioids as the primary issue, but also noted the increasing presence of intravenous drug use and the lack of needle exchange resources.

**HOUSING:** There are very few affordable housing options in the region – few available NLHC units, no boarding houses or bedsits, and no supportive housing units. There are also very few emergency beds available to young people – one at the addictions treatment unit in Harbour Grace and a few for women at the local transition house. Emergency bed space in local hotels is also very limited.

**AGE GAPS:** There is the common gap in services for the most at-risk youth aged 16-18, and an absence of youth-focused services for ages 18-29 (other than parenting resources through the Family Resource Centres).



## LOCAL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** The SPLASH Centre CYN in Harbour Grace is the primary youth-focused organization, and hosts the local anti-violence coalition. There is a Housing Support Worker based in the area and two active local food banks.

**HEALTH SERVICES:** The U-Turn drop-in addictions treatment centre is in Carbonear, and there is also the Grace Centre (an addictions treatment centre for adults aged 18 and up) in Harbour Grace. Eastern Health also employs a mental health youth outreach worker who goes out into the communities.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are a number of vacant local buildings, including two former seniors' homes that could be converted into supportive or affordable housing units.

# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**HOUSING:** There are several ideas being worked on locally around the redevelopment of vacant properties, including one of the seniors' homes and a social enterprise focused space in Harbour Grace that already has a completed business plan. CFY could potentially play a role in building or operating one of these projects.



**CAPACITY-BUILDING:** Local organizations could benefit from job-shadowing, exchanges, and assistance with proposal-writing from CFY.



**SERVICE COORDINATION:** Local contacts repeatedly stressed the challenges the region faces in developing communication and coordination between existing service providers. There might be a role for CFY to help build these connections.



## CONCEPTION BAY NORTH BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 40,189

### ECONOMIC ZONE

*EZ 17 (Baccalieu Trail)*

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES, EZ 17 HAS...

The eighth highest teen birth rate.

The sixth lowest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The second lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The lowest share of under-25s on income support.

### CSSD REGION

*Zone E (Also includes Bonavista and Clarenville)*

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE E IS (PER CAPITA)...

The third lowest rate of protective interventions.

The fourth lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The third lowest share of children in care.

The fifth lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The fifth lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

### CENSUS DIVISION

*CD 1 (Avalon Peninsula, including St. John's)*

OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, CD 1 HAS...

The lowest share of youth with no high school diploma.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## REGIONAL PROFILE

# CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH



Stretching from Holyrood to Topsail, Conception Bay South is the site of CFY's only existing program outside of St. John's (a satellite program of our Momma Moments program). Closely connected by commuters to the St. John's area, these are nonetheless distinct communities with their own services and centres.

## OUR CONSULTATIONS

CFY staff visited CBS three times for a series of stakeholder meetings, a focus group with the young parents of our own local Momma Moments group, and an open community forum. Approximately 30 people participated in these consultations.

## OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Conception Bay South is sometimes perceived as being part of Metro St. John's, and while it is indeed close by, this can act as a barrier to building out adequate services for local youth, who are often required to travel into the city to access them. With no bus service and little vehicle access for at-risk youth, this is a challenge. Similarly, the perception of CBS as a prosperous community can hide some of the more challenging circumstances happening there. There are, however, a large number of passionate people in the community who are working to help the most vulnerable.

# LOCAL CHALLENGES

## KEY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

**DRUG USE:** Both youth and service providers flagged an increase in intravenous drug use in recent months, and a major issue with opioids among local youth. There are limited services and limited access to methadone.

**GEOGRAPHY:** With little to no public transportation and many key services located in St. John's, geography has a major impact on at-risk youth and their ability to access services, education, and employment.

**GATHERING SPACES:** There is no gathering space in the community for young adults, and little drop-in access to services or supports.

**STIGMA:** There are barriers in the community to open discussion of poverty, addictions, and mental health issues among local young people; this stigma also carries over into the employment market.



# LOCAL RESOURCES

**CHURCHES:** Local churches, particularly All Saints Parish, have taken a lead role on many programs (including hosting CFY's own satellite location) and are interested in doing more.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:** There are many service clubs and a Family Resource Centre active in the community.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** All Saints' Parish Hall is a large structure that could house programming; there is also a nearby vacant school and a number of other vacant properties that could be repurposed for housing



# POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** There is a strong desire for a single location that could serve local young people with services such as needle exchange, as well as drop-in safe space.



**HOUSING:** There are local partners such as service clubs who might be partners in the development of supportive housing units for youth in the community.



**CAPACITY-BUILDING:** CFY could play a role in helping local organizations build up their own capacity to work with vulnerable youth; this might include working more closely with schools.



## CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION: 54,687

**ECONOMIC ZONE**  
EZ 19 (Includes St. John's Metro)

**CSSD REGION**  
Zone F (Also includes Burin, Placentia, Whitbourne)

**CENSUS DIVISION**  
CD 1 (Avalon Peninsula, including St. John's)

OUT OF 20 ECONOMIC ZONES, EZ 19 HAS...

The eleventh highest teen birth rate.

The tenth highest rate of youth hospital morbidity.

The third lowest rate of youth 12-17 being criminally charged.

The second lowest share of under-25s on income support.

OUT OF 10 CSSD REGIONS, ZONE F IS (PER CAPITA)...

The fifth lowest rate of protective interventions.

The fifth lowest share of youth in kinship services.

The third lowest share of children in care.

The fifth lowest share of youth in residential youth services.

The lowest share of youth in community youth corrections.

OUT OF 11 CENSUS DIVISIONS, CD 1 HAS...

The lowest share of youth with no high school diploma.

**NOTE:** CSSD stats are as of December 31, 2016. These are per capita estimates based on estimates of the population within each zone using the population of the corresponding economic zones.



# CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Looking back on several months of conversations across the province, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the landscape young people in Newfoundland and Labrador will face in the coming years.

At the community level, important and creative responses to youth homelessness and the factors behind it are happening even in the smallest communities. Sometimes it's a regular coffee meeting between an RCMP officer, a youth worker, and a guidance counselor. Sometimes it's a local church stepping up to pay for a youth's hotel stay, and sometimes it's a fully developed, innovative new program. In the absence of many resources, communities are trying their best to provide the support young people need.

We also heard a lot of inspiring ideas from young people themselves. They told us about their deep connections to their communities, their desire for more spaces to call their own.

At the government level, we are seeing a new commitment to interdepartmental cooperation and integrated services. Between the implementation of the recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and those of the Premier's Task Force on Educational Outcomes, there is a great deal of conversation happening about how to coordinate social and health supports better, and a recognition that changing outcomes for young people, in particular, involves a wide-ranging look at the environments they face at home, in school, in the community, and with service providers. Additionally, the recent announcement of a national housing strategy paired with our province's commitment to a housing and homelessness plan offers further evidence that the need for a new approach - one that relies on collaboration across multiple departments and mandates - is regarded as an important task.

Outside of Newfoundland and Labrador there is a vibrant group of community organizations and researchers working on these issues and an emerging consensus about the core elements to a successful strategic approach to youth homelessness. There is also an increasing amount of attention being paid to the particular challenges of doing this work in rural and remote communities; with Newfoundland and Labrador having the most rural population of any province, this is a key conversation.

# FOCUSING ON THE MOST VULNERABLE

The young people we work with at Choices for Youth are the most vulnerable youth in this province. Almost all of them face multiple, intersecting challenges, whether those be related to housing, family breakdown, mental health, addictions, or trauma. Many do not feel welcomed into community spaces that target youth more broadly; that is as true in St. John's as it is outside of the city. Building bridges with these young people takes skill, patience and understanding. This work pays is successful only if we all are rooted in the belief that all young people – irrespective of background, education, culture, identity or income – have immense potential.

Early interventions in their lives can divert youth from many challenges down the road, and avoid the incredibly high cost of emergency responses. More broadly, designing programs with these young people in mind results in lowered barriers and improved services for everyone.

As we travelled the province, we heard over and over that these most vulnerable young people are falling through the cracks. Employment programs don't have the wrap-around supports needed to engage them, community programs don't have the resources and time to support them, community spaces don't always include them, and often the issues are too complex to manage without access to training and additional resources. To reach these young people, existing programs sometimes have to bend their mandates and change their programs in drastic ways. It's incredible to see the results this can achieve on a shoestring budget, but it is not a sustainable approach.

Within an already vulnerable group of young people, it is important to highlight the need to develop distinct responses to those who are overrepresented within it: Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth. There are important conversations to be had around inclusion, identity, stigma, trauma and harm reduction, and it has been inspiring to see how driven people are to participate in them.

# INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Overrepresented in homeless populations across the country, including here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Indigenous youth face additional challenges from intergenerational trauma, racism, and disconnection from their cultures. Just this year, a new definition of Indigenous homelessness was developed and released, which highlights the many ways in which the experience of homelessness is different for Indigenous people. Indigenous homelessness has, by this framing, 12 distinct dimensions<sup>17</sup>:

## 1. HISTORIC DISPLACEMENT HOMELESSNESS:

Indigenous communities and nations made historically homeless after being displaced from pre-colonial Indigenous lands.

## 2. CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC SEPARATION

**HOMELESSNESS:** An Indigenous individual's or community's separation from post-colonial Indigenous lands.

## 3. SPIRITUAL DISCONNECTION HOMELESSNESS:

An Indigenous individual's or community's separation from Indigenous worldviews or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity.

## 4. MENTAL DISRUPTION AND IMBALANCE

**HOMELESSNESS:** Mental homelessness, described as an imbalance of mental faculties, experienced by Indigenous individuals and communities caused by colonization's entrenched social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

## 5. CULTURAL DISINTEGRATION AND LOSS

**HOMELESSNESS:** Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as "All My Relations."

**6. OVERCROWDING HOMELESSNESS:** The number of people per dwelling in urban and rural Indigenous households that exceeds the national Canadian household average, thus contributing to and creating unsafe, unhealthy and overcrowded living spaces, in turn causing homelessness.

<sup>17</sup> Thistle, Jesse. 2017. "Defining Indigenous Homelessness," Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHIndigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf>



**7. RELOCATION AND MOBILITY HOMELESSNESS:** Mobile Indigenous homeless people travelling over geographic distances between urban and rural spaces for access to work, health, education, recreation, legal and childcare services, to attend spiritual events and ceremonies, have access to affordable housing, and to see family, friends and community members.

**8. GOING HOME HOMELESSNESS:** An Indigenous individual or family who has grown up or lived outside their home community for a period of time, and on returning “home,” are often seen as outsiders, making them unable to secure a physical structure in which to live, due to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal bureaucratic barriers, uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation.

**9. NOWHERE TO GO HOMELESSNESS:** A complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go.

**10. ESCAPING OR EVADING HARM HOMELESSNESS:** Indigenous persons fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to obtain a measure of safety or to survive. Young people, women and LGBTQ2S people are particularly vulnerable.

**11. EMERGENCY CRISIS HOMELESSNESS:** Natural disasters, large-scale environmental manipulation and acts of human mischief and destruction, along with bureaucratic red tape, combining to cause Indigenous people to lose their homes because the system is not ready or willing to cope with an immediate demand for housing.

**12. CLIMATIC REFUGEE HOMELESSNESS:** Indigenous peoples whose lifestyle, subsistence patterns and food sources, relationship to animals, and connection to land and water have been greatly altered by drastic and cumulative weather shifts due to climate change. These shifts have made individuals and entire Indigenous communities homeless.

Indigenous youth in Newfoundland and Labrador are facing all these different dimensions of homelessness, and this definition calls on community organizations and governments to take a long, hard look at how to engage with them.

**This cannot only be the mandate of organizations that specifically serve indigenous people. Instead, it must become a part of any strategy focused on housing, homelessness, and poverty reduction.**

Part of CFY’s journey during these months of consultations has been through the data, which shed a stark light on the challenges young people face in our province’s indigenous communities. In particular, rates of child apprehension in these communities are shockingly high. We already know that involvement with the child welfare system rarely leads to good outcomes later in life, and this is even more true when it compounds a long colonial history of removing Indigenous children from their communities.

More broadly, it is incumbent on all of us to think about how our organizations – community, government, religious, or business – are engaging with the process of reconciliation and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Among 94 calls to action<sup>18</sup>, 14 of them specifically deal with children and youth, and many more touch on the interventions needed in health, justice, and education that would help build a more equitable system of supports for Indigenous youth in this province.

For Choices for Youth, the way forward involves much more listening to, and learning from, Indigenous peoples in this province. We have already heard about the importance of supporting land-based programming wherever possible, and connection to the land is one of the many places where we heard very similar things from Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people. In many places, Indigenous communities and governments in this province have pioneered approaches that can serve as a model for others. For all organizations – community and government alike – taking an Indigenous lens to this work means a hard look inward at our hiring practices, our institutional cultures, and the training offered to our staff to ensure that the unique needs of this population are met.

<sup>18</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015. “Calls to Action” [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

# LGBTQ2S YOUTH

The second heavily overrepresented group within homeless young people are those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or two-spirited (LGBTQ2S). Any work to expand programming for young people must take this into account.

In our conversations around the province, we heard many times about a need for more targeted support for LGBTQ2S youth in communities outside St. John's, where there are rarely dedicated organizations working on these issues. This makes it especially important for existing organizations to take a look at their programming through an LGBTQ2S lens.

Compared to the broader population of homeless youth, LGBTQ2S youth leave home at a younger age, are more likely to have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness, and are much more likely to report parental conflict and childhood abuse as contributing factors to their homelessness. They are also much more likely to have been involved with child protective services, face violence and sexual assault once homeless, face mental health challenges and suicide risk, face discrimination and barriers to accessing health care, and much more.<sup>19</sup> Reorganizing the mental health care system to better serve these young people is absolutely critical.

In the Newfoundland and Labrador context, this means thinking about where we can create LGBTQ2S spaces, how we can make existing spaces and programs more inclusive, and thinking very seriously about how to do outreach to this population in rural and remote communities. In our conversations around the province it was encouraging to hear the commitment service providers and educators have to serving this population, but we all have work to do to translate that commitment into real inclusion for these youth. This means looking inward at how all of our organizations and programs hire and train people, and at our institutional cultures.

# CHALLENGES AHEAD

As a collection of communities, we must be optimistic about what is possible and focus on solutions. At CFY, we are committed to spending the majority of our time and efforts on discovering, applying and sharing these solutions. To do this well however, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that lie in building better systems, services and outcomes for young people outside of St. John's.

## DEALING WITH GEOGRAPHY

The highly distributed population of the province will always be a challenge to service providers, especially in working with vulnerable youth. In-person contact is a critically important element of most successful programming, and that means getting staff out to young people, or young people in to see staff. Young people grappling with an addiction or a mental health barrier are often not in a place where they can navigate online services or forms, and many lack reliable internet access. Taken together, this puts transportation services and subsidies at the centre of many conversations going forward; it also further speaks in favour of integrated service delivery locations – if youth are going to travel, at least they will only have to travel to one location.

## ENGAGING WITH HARM REDUCTION

Taking a truly low barrier, harm-reduction and trauma informed approach to the issues young people face can mean some uncomfortable conversations at the community and service provider level. Whether the conversation is about confronting our own biases and stigmas, offering a needle exchange, allowing intoxicated youth into a safe space, or any other harm reduction issue, service providers need to be provided with the training and resource that will allow them to develop low-barrier solutions and confront the associated stigma of these services.

<sup>19</sup> Gaetz et al., 2014, "Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey," <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/WithoutAHome-final.pdf>, p.8

## PROVIDING CONSISTENCY

In many of CFY's conversations across the province, we spent quite a while looking backwards at programs that had once existed and were now unfunded, or hopes that had been raised and then dashed. Instability characterizes the lives of the young people CFY works with. It is critical that in developing more responses to their struggles, we don't make this instability even worse. Community organizations working with young people often shared their frustrations with funding systems that funds projects, but won't fund salaries. A number of viable, well-planned initiatives we heard about had died out after the proponents were unable to source any resources for core staffing needs. In many cases, the solutions identified in this report depend on having a consistent presence on the ground – funding systems need to change to make this change

## TRAINING SERVICE PROVIDERS

All over the province, people are making heroic efforts to reach out to young people. In smaller communities, this will always land on the desks of people who have other jobs. Keeping these people up-to-date on approaches to working with at-risk youth is critical, but will be a challenge. This is also an absolute necessity for ground-level staff of government departments in communities around the province, who often play an important front-line role. Opportunities must also be extended to support the key relationships in a young person's life. Guidance counselors, parents and employers play a critical role in this work but without adequate connection to resources and training, they are often unable to play a supporting role.

## PAYING FOR IT

Newfoundland and Labrador faces a difficult fiscal future, and this can cut off conversations about investing more resources into social supports. In this context, it is especially important to look at the importance and impact of prevention programs. Emergency interventions with youth are incredibly expensive; a shift towards prevention can free up much-needed resources and achieve disproportionately better outcomes. Investments already committed to improving mental health care will also provide some of the needed resources.

There is a need here for a shift in mindset. In many other areas governments already take quite a long view: for example, they build financial projections on an analysis of resource markets over a five-year period. It's possible to take a similar long view on support for young people, with the understanding that investments now will substantially lower long-term costs.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROVINCIAL PLAN

Choices for Youth is committed to expanding its programming outside of St. John's and the conversations this report summarizes are an important first step in understanding what this might look like. That said, we cannot and should not be everywhere. Addressing the challenges we heard about, and taking advantage of the resources we identified, demands a province-wide effort, ideally involving a dedicated leadership team in collaboration with the government.

In our conversations, we saw many places where leadership at the provincial level could greatly improve the supports this province offers to young people:

**FOCUSING ON MENTAL HEALTH:** Mental health is a pervasive issue for young people in Newfoundland and Labrador today, and dealing with it effectively goes far beyond the health authorities. Mental health programming needs to be a core element of housing, education, family, and employment programs that reach young people.

**INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:** In many communities, services for young people could take a huge leap forward through co-location in youth-friendly facilities. Even before adding staff, bringing people from the health authorities, Children, Seniors and Social Development, Advanced Education, Skills, and Labour, and others out into the community in a coordinated way is a proven way to better reach young people.

**LEVERAGING THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK:** Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units could play a core role in improving outcomes for youth across the province. Building on the success of the Rally Forward program in St. John's, multi-bedroom units can be used as scattered-site supportive housing with wrap-around supports from community partners while the former youth assessment centres are potential sites for staffed supportive housing.

**CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL CONVERSATIONS:** It is still too common to see government programs and departments working at cross-purposes in the lives of the most vulnerable youth. A strategic approach to this internally would add to the ongoing conversations driven by the implementation of recommendations around mental health and educational outcomes.

**LONG-TERM VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** A formal provincial plan (similar to the one recently introduced in Alberta) would help provide some longer-term stability for all the many organizations and governments who play a role in ending youth homelessness.

## EXAMPLE: ALBERTA'S PLAN

In 2015, after extensive consultations, the Government of Alberta launched *Supporting Healthy and Successful Transitions to Adulthood: A plan to prevent and reduce youth homelessness*.

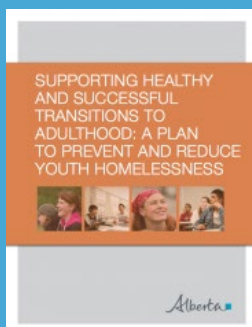
This plan provides a framework for action on youth homelessness in Alberta, identifying best practices, roles for different stakeholders and sectors, and a long list of actions gathered into five priorities:

- Prevention and Awareness
- Early Intervention
- Client-Centred Supports
- Research and Evaluation
- Stakeholder Engagement

This plan is the first document of its kind in Canada focused on coordinated planning at the provincial scale around youth homelessness. Several people involved in its creation are now members of CFY's Working Group on Youth Homelessness.

Find the full report at:

<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/plan-to-prevent-and-reduce-youth-homelessness.pdf>



# NL CAN BE A CANADIAN LEADER

Programs and infrastructure for at-risk youth in Canada are overwhelmingly concentrated in larger cities, but there is a growing recognition that responding at the ground level in rural and remote communities is a strategic investment in prevention. There is also a growing awareness that these responses will look quite different than they would in a large city. This conversation, however, is in its early stages.

Newfoundland and Labrador has an opportunity to step out in front of this dialogue and take national-level leadership on this issue. In some areas of housing programming, we are already there; this document relied heavily on the community networks built up by Newfoundland and Labrador's regionally-based Housing Support Workers. This program, which places these NLHC-funded workers in host organizations around the province, is an asset many other provinces do not have. In the coming years, by developing a built-out portfolio of youth housing, strengthening integrated service delivery, and focusing on coordinated policy approaches, our province can demonstrate true leadership in addressing social and economic challenges facing jurisdictions across the entire country.

As part of Choices for Youth's commitment to aid in this work, we are producing a series of toolkits for other organizations around the country aimed at reproducing local innovations; forming a working group of experts from across Canada; expanding our services, and continuing our call for innovative policy changes and for the creation of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness.

# NEXT STEPS & USING THIS DOCUMENT

This document is meant to be the beginning of a province-wide conversation about how we can serve youth better.

## NEXT STEPS FOR CHOICES FOR YOUTH

Over the coming months we hope to hear back from communities across the province with feedback on this report and detailed ideas on how their community might engage further both with CFY and with the broader provincial conversation. Within this process, there are a few things readers of this report can expect to see:

**PARTNER IDENTIFICATION:** Through the early months of 2018 we will be working on identifying the first round of partners for the expansion of our own programs, and on resourcing these partnerships.

**PROVINCIAL GATHERING:** In late Spring of 2018 CFY will be hosting a major provincial gathering focused on skill-building, knowledge exchange, and action planning around at-risk and homeless youth.

**INPUT FROM NATIONAL PARTNERS:** CFY will continue to engage our national Working Group for their input on our plans and the broader conversation on these issues in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## USING THIS DOCUMENT

Choices for Youth hopes that readers of this document will see their communities' challenges and opportunities reflected in it. We encourage all readers to think carefully and critically about what doors are open in their communities for young people facing incredibly challenging and overlapping barriers. Beyond that broad request, though, there are some specific uses we hope to see:

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

**FEEDBACK TO CFY:** We are still new to communities outside of St. John's, and would love feedback about what we got right in this report and what we missed.

**COALITION AND PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING:** CFY is looking for strong, committed community partners for the expansion of our programs. If you are enthusiastic about one of the opportunities identified in this report, start pulling people together and get in touch.

**YOUTH VOICES:** We are always interested in opportunities to hear more from local youth; if your community group is organizing an activity which could provide some of this input, please let us know.

## GOVERNMENTS

**FEEDBACK TO CFY:** We would also appreciate hearing from our government colleagues about whether our impressions fit with theirs.

**DATA:** CFY is working with limited and fragmentary statistical data; if you have ideas about other data sources at the local or regional level in the province that would tell a story about local youth, please let us know.

**COALITION AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING:** Government agencies will be key partners in delivering better services for youth. We look forward to engaging in conversations about how to make this happen.

**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN:** Leverage the findings in this report, our submissions of policy recommendations, and solicit additional conversations with CFY and other agencies to ensure a strategy specific to ending youth homelessness is a core tenant of this plan.

## BUSINESSES

**THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES:** Are there business opportunities in your region that a social enterprise could engage young people to fill? CFY would love to hear about them.

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Outside of the CFY offices, Heidi Ryan from the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency was a great help in pulling together some of the statistics used to put consultation results in context. Across the province, the Community Youth Networks and Housing Support Workers were invaluable partners in pulling people together and in helping CFY understand the unique context of each region.

Finally, of course, many thanks to the hundreds of people who spent time with the CFY team in person, online, and on the phone sharing their ideas, their stories, and their hopes. In particular, it has to be noted that this report includes the voices and ideas of many young people for whom these conversations were not always easy; as always, no effort at CFY would happen without their involvement and we thank them for their time.

## FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Choices for Youth is fortunate to receive support from numerous departments within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the support of many charitable foundations and private donors.

The planning process for a provincial expansion of CFY's work is funded by the Government of Canada and is part of a broader Social Innovation Project at CFY. The project focuses on youth employment, social enterprise, vulnerable families, young parents, and strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness. Additionally, the development of a social return on investment framework and reporting tool for this work is a core commitment of the partnership. Note that the opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of CFY and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.


 The word "Canada" in a black serif font, with a small Canadian flag icon above the letter 'a'.


 The words "Newfoundland" and "Labrador" in a blue sans-serif font, with a stylized red and green flower icon above the word "Newfoundland".


 The words "CHOICES" and "FOR YOUTH" in a black sans-serif font, with a stylized blue and green flower icon above the word "FOR".



DEC 2017



# WE ARE READY

What we heard about  
services, supports, and  
opportunities for at-risk  
youth outside of St. John's

