CIF FEATURE STORY:
Northern Partnerships for Inclusion.

Community Initiatives Fund

Nov 2016

Feature Story: *Northern Partnerships for Inclusion, Saskatchewan Association for Community Living.*

In 2014 the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) launched Northern Partnerships for Inclusion (NPI) thanks to support from Cameco Corporation, Northern Lights Community Development Corporation, Community Initiatives Fund, Northern Resource Trucking and the Kitsaki Management Corporation. The SACL is a provincial nonprofit association that works on behalf of the 16,500 individuals in Saskatchewan who have an intellectual disability. The SACL has implemented NPI to build a case for better supports and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Northern Saskatchewan. Currently NPI is operating in La Ronge, Creighton, Pinehouse and Onion Lake.

"Northern Saskatchewan has a population of 37,000 people spread over nearly 300,000 square kilometers and 45 communities. The physical space separating communities is one of many reasons why this area has a chronic lack of supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Nearly half of the population lives on reserve land, meaning jurisdictional issues can create barriers to supports. Whereas roughly 1% of the general population of Canada is thought to have an intellectual disability, the rates are believed to be much higher in Northern Saskatchewan" shares Graham Dickson, Director of Community Engagement of SACL. **"Our preliminary community-based research indicates at least 8% of people in these three communities have self-disclosed that they have an intellectual disability, but the number may be much higher."**

> **"SACL is the first group of people I've seen to come to Pinehouse and truly engage with people in the north. I appreciate it, because you understood that you needed to come up to really see how we live."**
>
> - Gary Tinker, founder of the Gary Tinker Foundation

In La Ronge, the SACL is focusing on a lack of affordable housing for individuals by supporting multiple housing proposals for people living in the La Ronge area. In Creighton, the SACL is bringing in the expertise of its Employment, Education and Transition team to improve transition planning from high school to adult life. The SACL is working in close partnership with Community Living Service Delivery in the region to advance day program supports, vocational supports and supported living options. SACL is also working with Pinehouse and Onion Lake in many other capacities.

"We are working closely with partners in each community to find efficiencies, to smooth out jurisdictional barriers, to bridge the gaps in knowledge, and to develop locally based solutions for individuals with intellectual disabilities" says Dickson.

Since October 2015, NPI has engaged over 200 individuals in inclusive programming through 10 NPI led training events and sharing circles, hearing the concerns of each community, offering training and SACL supports, and crafting the public-private-civic partnerships that will lead to long term solutions. Some of these events have included social activities, to gather community members and build community. As one attendee of the October 30th ICAN Halloween event in La Ronge said, "This is the best party I've ever been to!"