



SCHIZOPHRENIA  
SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

# 2020 - 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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# OUR MISSION

To improve the quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis through education, support programs, public policy and research.



**SUPPORT**



**ADVOCACY**



**INCLUSION**

## POSITION STATEMENT ON RACISM AND INJUSTICE

For over 40 years, the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta (SSA) has sought to improve the quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis through education, support programs, public policy and research. We provide support to Albertans affected by schizophrenia, whether directly or as family, friends and caregivers.

The SSA stands in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) and other marginalized communities, and in particular, with our clients, employees, volunteers and supporters. Our goal is to ensure that everyone living with schizophrenia and psychosis has the supports they need to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life, regardless of race, ability, gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, religion, or other considerations.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

## 2020-2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Thomas Raedler, Chair
- Curtis Boyd, Vice Chair
- Dwayne Perry, Treasurer
- Julia Loney, Secretary
- Anna Schuurman, Director
- Imogen Pohl, Director
- Vintti Jakhar, Director

Over the last 18 months, the services of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta have changed significantly. Within a short period of time, our activities switched from being offered face-to-face to being predominantly virtual. A special thank you goes to the provincial office and regional teams. Without your willingness to look for and implement new approaches and solutions, the activities of our society would have come to a grinding halt.

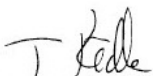
At the time of our 2020 AGM, we had hoped that the worst was already behind us with regards to COVID-19. In September 2020, the number of COVID-19 infections was just surpassing the number of Albertans living with schizophrenia (around 40,000 people). We now know that the overall situation had to get a lot worse before we were starting to see an improvement. The availability of very efficient and well tolerated vaccines and more efficient treatment options for COVID-19 make me optimistic that we will eventually overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. Eventually our society will be able to resume our face-to-face activities and we will also have an opportunity to get together and celebrate again.

Nobody knows what the world will look like after COVID-19. The disruption of the last 18 months will most likely cause long-lasting effects. We need to renew our efforts to support those affected by schizophrenia as they lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. We need to continue to spread the word that 'THERE is HOPE in living with SCHIZOPHRENIA'. We also need to advocate for adequate services for people with schizophrenia as our province may be facing significant cuts over the next years.

I would like to thank the Board members of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta for their ongoing support over the last year. A special welcome goes to Anna Schuurman who joined the Board of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta after the 2020 AGM. Anna brings a unique skill-set to our Board. Another special thank you goes to Vintti Jakhar, who completed three terms as a Director on our Board.

My thanks also go to the Executive Director and the SSA team across the province for their ongoing efforts to improve the lives of people affected with schizophrenia. Another special thank you goes to all the members, family members and volunteers of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, who have been supporting us over the past year. I hope that you will continue to support us over the years to come as plenty of obstacles remain for those affected by schizophrenia as well as their families.

Sincerely,



Thomas Raedler  
SSA Board Chair

Dear Members, Friends and Volunteers of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta:

It has been my honor and pleasure to act as Chair of the Board of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta for the past two years. The last year was a year of unique changes. Together, we managed to get through exceptionally difficult times. Thanks to everyone's enthusiasm, creativity, ingenuity and concern for people living with schizophrenia, we managed to provide excellent services despite unprecedented challenges.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The past year has been another extremely challenging one for all of us as we continued to experience uncertainty and change. Although we may be getting tired of COVID-19, the restrictions have been our reality and I'm so proud of the entire team for adapting and finding innovative ways to offer all of our programs and services while keeping everyone safe.



Reflecting over the past year, I can attest that all of us at SSA have learned a lot. The pandemic has showcased how resilient and adaptable we are and that we strive to find ways to support those affected by schizophrenia. With an increased demand for our programs, we offered additional online and phone support, and have seen growth in all areas.

This year, it was all about going virtual...

Rather than postpone our Annual Fundraising Campaign Kickoff, in October we hosted a virtual online live auction, in partnership with Auction Place Ltd. Our campaign ran until December 31, 2020, and despite the challenges of fundraising during these economic times, we surpassed our fund raising goal of \$125,000. A sincere thank you to all those that contributed to our campaign's success.

Prior to the pandemic, the SSA team had met in person annually for a staff retreat and professional development. This year we participated in training on Diversity and Cultural Awareness, facilitated online via zoom. I will admit I was hesitant and concerned how effective and engaging it would be, however I was so pleased with the outcome. I'm now familiar with the concept of breakout rooms, as this one was new to me. All staff enjoyed the day and some shared their appreciation for our diverse and inclusive team.

In May, we held our Strides of Hope Walk virtually and were thrilled with the participation from dignitaries, members and many supporters in communities throughout the province. Every photo and message shared on social media helped us to increase awareness and reduce the stigma for those living with schizophrenia.

Our team has become quite "tech" savvy, and these skills have come in handy as we hosted these events and continued the vital support programs we offer. We're now reaching far beyond those that attended the programs at our branches and look forward to reaching even further.

I commend our housing staff at both Iris Court and Kentwood, as they faced changing directives from the Chief Medical Officer and quickly adapted and implemented these measures. I know it wasn't easy for staff or the tenants and I'm so appreciative of your patience and perseverance.

A huge thank you to my Board of Directors for supporting me during this difficult year. Thank you for choosing SSA and for your commitment to those affected by schizophrenia.

Thanks to our funders, donors, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders for continuing to help us carry out our mission. I want to extend a special thanks to our clients for allowing SSA to be part of your recovery journey and the many teachings the SSA team has gained from all of you. I know it has been so challenging and I appreciate your flexibility and openness to participate in our modified programs.

Although we hope to be gathering and celebrating in person again soon, we have chosen to go virtual again this year for our Annual Campaign Kick-off evening and auction. I hope with the convenience of participating from your own home, that we'll see many of you joining us. As always, my focus in the year ahead will be to strengthen our existing partnerships, seek new supporters, and to advocate for timely and accessible services for those affected by schizophrenia.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to lead the SSA team, and to be inspired by our amazing clients every day.

In the coming year, SSA will continue to lead the way toward an inclusive community filled with kindness and caring.

Sincerely,

Rubyann Rice

Provincial Executive Director

# YEAR AT A GLANCE

SSA's proven adaptability due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Note\* We are still responding to needs created or intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic during our 20/21 year so this section will include our adaptation and learnings from our 2020/21 year and up to the time of this writing, August 2021.

When Covid-19 restrictions were put in place in March of 2020, and in person programming was no longer a possibility, SSA responded immediately with increased online programming and

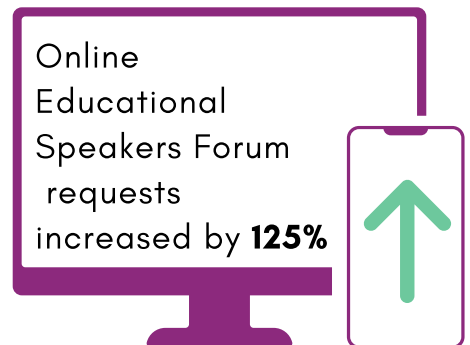
**49** different communities accessed our online programs in 2020/21

initiating teleconference support for those that did not have online capabilities. While our clients and family members missed being able to meet in person for support, many expressed how grateful they were to be able to remain in contact and support each other through a time that was very difficult for so many.

SSA's annual Strides of Hope awareness walk was held virtually on Tuesday, May 25th in recognition of World Schizophrenia Day. Photos and messages were shared on social media platforms to help raise awareness and reduce the stigma and discrimination around schizophrenia. With increased awareness and compassion, together we reduce stigma and provide hope!

This past year, many families struggled to support their loved ones, some with a new diagnosis, and some with increased symptoms of paranoia and anxiety due to the Covid-19 pandemic, while also working around the restrictions required during this time.

As the year progressed, members reached out more and more for individual phone support and our online and teleconference groups. As an example of the increased need, in a 4 month period we have hosted 4 back to back, five session, Family Recovery Journey educational programs, where we normally would have hosted one.



In August 2020, through the continued support of the Alliance of Otsuka and Lundbeck we were very pleased to award six \$2000 and two \$1000 Yes 2 Me scholarships to very deserving Alberta students living with schizophrenia and pursuing post secondary education. Congratulations to our winners and best wishes for your continued success with your education.



## WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING

“As a person living with schizophrenia, I find the Schizophrenia Society essential. I have been involved with the SSA for twenty years. When I was first diagnosed it was confusing and difficult. Discovering the Schizophrenia Society existed was like a lighthouse in the dark. They provided me with information about schizophrenia and the mental health system. More importantly, I was able to meet other people who were going through the same thing as me which was comforting and provided me with friendship and social activities. While in-person activities have been suspended due to covid, programs still occur on the internet and on conference call gatherings.”

“Covid has made this a difficult year, and I have struggled more than usual, as I live alone and experience some paranoia about the illness. The fact the SSA has still provided support and programs during this time, has helped me stay connected to my community and feel less alone.”

“Being a member of the SSA has allowed me to recover, grow and help others with this illness. I would not be who I am today without the support of the SSA. I have recently begun life as a senior and have counted on the SSA support for big segment of my life, and hope I can continue to rely on them in the future.”

“Two years ago, I was at a loss with my son. I was so tired and had little to no patience. I suffered like this for a year, before deciding I needed help. Last year I began to reach out to the SSA, through their online programming. I attend the educational speaker series as well as the online family support. Now a year later, I have been able to decrease my anxiety medication, I feel less stressed and I am able to actually rest and find time to help myself along with helping my son. I believe I am able to rest and take care of myself because I know the SSA has my back. Hearing success stories from other individuals and families gives me hope for my son’s recovery. The last time I phoned the branch, I asked the staff if they have time to talk, they responded with I always have time for you. This made me feel incredible! I felt valued, understood, and supported. Bless the SSA!”

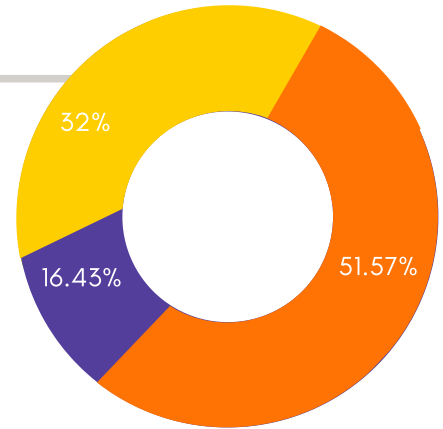
“I had tears in my eyes after listening to the presenter’s story, and stories like hers can have a great and positive impact on how the public might view schizophrenia. Outside of this presentation, I doubt highly that any of us would have had an opportunity to hear the experiences of someone with schizophrenia. This is such an important part of the presentation that I hope you people continue.”



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

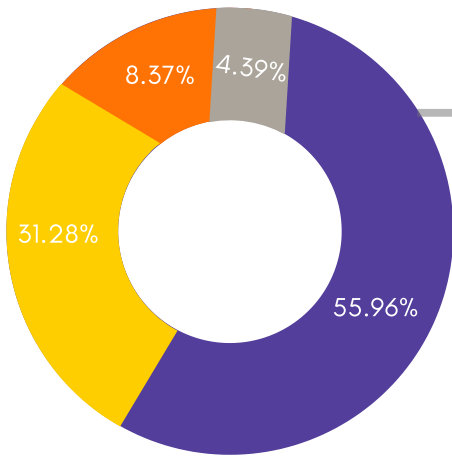
## REVENUE

- Grants
- Fundraising
- Other Revenue



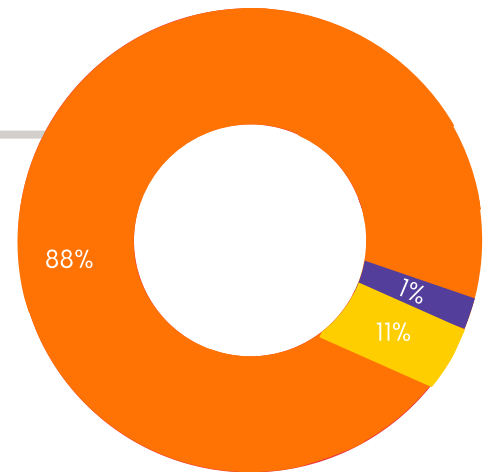
## REVENUE FROM GRANTS

- Alberta Health Services
- Homeward Trust
- United Way
- Other



## EXPENSES

- Support Programs and Community Education
- Administration
- Fundraising



# LOOKING FORWARD

## **Enhanced Online Support**

SSA quickly adapted and found innovative ways to continue offering our programs during the pandemic. Due to the success we found through our increased online and teleconference support groups, we're pleased to continue these programs once our in branch programs are open. This will provide our clients and family members another option for accessing supports, and particularly beneficial for those who find it difficult to attend in person due to transportation, distance, mobility, caregiver responsibilities, etc.

## **Going Virtual**

Our Annual Campaign Kick-off will be a live-stream virtual event this year. We missed getting together last year and wanted to make sure we continue creating awareness and sharing the amazing things that are happening at SSA. Our kick-off events in the past were held in Central Alberta, so we're looking forward to offering this inspirational evening online and inviting anyone throughout the province to join us conveniently from their own home.

## **Seniors Support**

In spring of 2021, SSA received funding from New Horizon's For Seniors to start a province wide teleconference support group for seniors age 55+. This peer support group provides an opportunity for seniors living with schizophrenia to support each other and to share and discuss information and resources as they prepare for and adjust to living as a senior.

## **We Care Too! Youth Support**

In late 2021, once funding has been secured, we will be piloting a family support youth group. This group will provide information, peer support and skill building, for youth age 12 to 18 who have a family member living with schizophrenia. Many young people play a significant role in supporting their loved one with schizophrenia and need to know that they are not alone, and the importance of looking after their own mental health.

## **Diversifying Our Fund Development Portfolio**

The pandemic has reminded us it's vital to diversify our fund development portfolio. In the past year SSA has been impacted significantly with lost revenue streams from key funders and no casino funds. The budget has been managed conservatively, however we're always researching and seeking new funding opportunities to support those living with schizophrenia and their families.

# OUR CURRENT FUNDERS



This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program



# 2020 - 2021 SPONSORS





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