

A Saskatchewan Example: Lessons from Sakitawak Group Home Inc.

A home for adults experiencing intellectual disability was always a dream for parent Andrew Bouvier of Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan. He wanted a safe and inviting home in their community for his son as he got older. He also wanted to bring other people home to Île-à-la-Crosse, who had been moved to other communities, but wanted to be closer to their families and be in a place they could call their own. With that thought in mind Andrew recruited another parent, Marie Adele Desjarlais, whose son had moved to a group home in Meadow Lake, more than 200km away. He also recruited the help of another community member, Calla Gordon, who worked in mental health services and had experience working at Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw. Together with other interested family members and supporters, they formed a group of twelve volunteer Board members and incorporated Sakitawak Group Home Inc. on January 13th, 2009 – seven years after Andrew first started working towards his dream.

Once incorporated, the group worked closely with the Government of Saskatchewan - Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) to secure a funding contract to build and open a group home and day program. In consultation with the Facility Planner at SARC, construction got under way for the group home and day program buildings.

On November 1st, 2010, nearly ten months after incorporation, Cindy Hodgson was hired on as the Executive Director. She set to work learning all she could about her role and developing policies and procedures for the new organization. She worked closely with other organizations, particularly Multiworks Corporation in Meadow Lake and SARC.

The group home and the day program buildings were finished in August 2011 and the Grand Opening was held on August 15th, 2011.

In the fall of 2011, the first support staff were hired and trainers came from SARC and CLSD to assist with training. The new staff had two very full weeks of training, and also traveled to Meadow Lake to do job shadowing at Multiworks Corporation and get a better understanding of the work they would be doing. By December 2011 everything was ready and the first clients moved in.

When asked about the experience of working with a new organization in her community, Cindy really valued the support she had from others along the way. She had this to say:

It was all such an awesome experience and I am so grateful for all the people from the Ministry (CLSD) that were there to help me along the way. I would also like to say that without SARC and all the training I received I'm not sure where I would be, as well all the other group home management and staff from other organizations, especially Multiworks, for all their help.

I was so amazed at all the help I received from everyone in this field, it sure



made me feel accepted and that was a very good feeling. When we help other Group Homes we are helping everyone to prosper and make the lives of the clients a better experience for all.

Sakitawak Group Home Inc. continues to provide services for people in Île-à-la-Crosse and the surrounding area, including a group home, day program, and a respite space. Cindy shared the following: *“The best experience I've had is when you have people from other communities stay in our home for respite, and even after they return to their home, they want to come back. That is a feeling of great accomplishment!”*